Looking at buildings; looking twice, five times, ten times. Not only do I like such looking, I am obsessed with haunting the premises. I photograph buildings' relationships to each other, I photograph the way people use them or pass them by, I ask what secrets their windows conceal, reveal, or reflect. I wonder where their openings lead. Which buildings attract each other? Which buildings hug each other, the street, or the landscape? My camera clarifies my thoughts about buildings and records my designs on their existence.

Yes, designs on their existence. The photographic image is a special, perhaps mysterious, surrogate for the building itself, the place itself. We may no longer know whether the building is here, with us, or there, from us. All the photographs we have ever seen, or taken, begin to form a collective memory. In our search for a certain building, we may stop at a photographic image. In other words, photographs breed photographs.

In Rome, I was on the trail of a building I had first seen as a photograph in a book on eighteenth-century Roman architecture. Christian Elling's photograph of San Biagio (which appears in my article "Travel Documents," Places 3:2) showed the church against a wide street with no cars and one person. The image depicted an isolation of building and person in a large space, a wall with shimmering light, an idea of a long walk, a kind of elation before the facade.

Now that space exists only in the image Elling formulated more than 40 years ago. The road in front of San Biagio was closed to allow for
more excavations around the amphitheater of Marcellus. The
evacative space of the photograph
is now filled with cars, parked; and
the new road, moved closer around
the base of the Capitol Hill, is
filled with cars, moving at high
speed. So I am pushed up against
the building, along a narrow street.
I look up. If I am adept at not
getting run over, I can keep looking
up. The message seems to be in the
sky. San Biagio seems to grasp its
neighbor in a special sky room.

In Florence, beautiful volutes are a
kind of architectural cloud attached
just about where Santo Spirito
meets the sky, hinting at other
designs within the structure and
beyond. Just beyond the edge, just
inside the door, just around the
corner, are other architectural
dreams.

A photograph is the design of a
dream. That dream may be a
composite of many visits and
memories. How many times did I
actually walk the long path to the
Flavian Amphitheater? On what
day was the monument stark
against the sky? On what other
days was it hidden in scaffolding
from the intensity of my gaze and
the lens of my camera? The dream,
the photographic image, is designed
to collect and house all the layers
of memory, all the looking.