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Leonardo Ricci and Umberto Eco. The Merging of Parallel Visions on the Scientificity and Openness of Experience in the "Ricci-Eco Motion"

Structuralism, Open Work, Semiotics and Architecture, Urban Design, Visual Design

/Abstract

Leonardo Ricci and Umberto Eco's collaboration at the Faculty of Architecture in Florence in the Sixties brought to the end of the student revolt in 1968 and to the publication of Eco's *La Struttura Assente. La ricerca semiotica e il metodo strutturale* (1968). Eco dedicated the book, firstly titled *Appunti per una semiologia delle comunicazioni visive*, to Ricci, it was released in 1968 and immediately entered the heart of the debate on Structuralism - the theory that most dominated the cultural climate of those years and that seemed to deliver the sense, the knowledge, and a cultural new destiny to the specificities of history. More in detail, Ricci's idea of "open work" in architecture is analyzed. The concept of "open work" was firstly forged by Eco in his text "Il problema dell'opera aperta" (1958) published in the second part of the collection of essays *La Definizione dell'Arte. Dall'estetica medievale alle avanguardie, dall'opera aperta alla morte dell'arte* titled "Il concetto di forma nelle poetiche contemporanee" which encompassed Eco's writings about Art, Music, Photography, Aesthetics, and Theater and led to the completion of his *Opera Aperta* in 1962. The purpose of this text is to explain, by means of a direct comparison between Ricci and Eco's thinking on each analyzed aspect, to what extent Visual Design, and Urban Design, even to a minor degree, constituted the connection between Ricci and Eco's work, the core of their collaboration at the Faculty of Architecture in Florence, that showed a main affinity in the "Open Work" derived from the concept of "Open Formativity" firstly theorized by Benedetto Croce and then by Eco's master Luigi Pareyson.

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Her interests are in post-war architecture and her PhD research project concerned the figure of the Italian architect Leonardo Ricci focusing on his American transfer during the period 1952-1972, which is going to be published with the title *Leonardo Ricci in the United States (1952-1972)* by LetteraVentidue. She has collaborated on architecture exhibitions in 2019 and 2020 about Leonardo Ricci as well as on national and international research projects: she was free researcher at UBA for the interdipartimental project SPEME (Questioning Traumatic Heritage: Spaces of Memory in Europe, Argentina, Colombia) in 2018, helping in collecting research materials on the traumatic memory of the dictatorship in Argentina, then free researcher at MIT in 2019 and 2022.

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Introduction

Leonardo Ricci and Umberto Eco's collaboration at the Faculty of Architecture in Florence in the Sixties brought to the end of the student revolt in 1968 and to the publication of Eco's *La Struttura Assente. La ricerca semiotica e il metodo strutturale* (1968)[1]. Eco dedicated the book, firstly titled *Appunti per una semiologia delle comunicazioni visive* to Ricci[2], it was released in 1968 and immediatly entered the heart of the debate on Structuralism - the theory that most dominated the cultural climate of those years and that seemed to deliver the sense, the knowledge, and a cultural new destiny to the specificities of history.

More in detail, Ricci's work could be interpreted as a whole through the lens of the concept of "open work" in architecture[3], traceable in Ricci's work and forged by Umberto Eco in his text "Il problema dell'opera aperta" (1958) published in the second part of the collection of essays *La Definizione dell'Arte. Dall'estetica medievale alle avanguardie, dall'opera aperta alla morte dell'arte*[4] titled "Il concetto di forma nelle poetiche contemporanee" which encompassed Eco's writings about Art, Music, Photography, Aesthetics, and Theater and led to the completion of his *Opera Aperta* in 1962[5], published in 1962 as the first edition of Ricci's *Anonymous (XX century)*[6].

The purpose of this text is to explain to what extent Visual Design, and Urban Design, though perhaps to a minor degree, constituted the connection between Ricci and Eco's work, the core of their collaboration at the Faculty of Architecture in Florence, that showed a main affinity in the concept of "Open Work" derived from the "Open Formativity" firstly theorized by Benedetto Croce and then by Eco's master Luigi Pareyson[7].

Despite no direct correspondence between Ricci and Eco is at present available[8], it is possible to infer, through an exegesis of the texts they wrote and through their political action, that Ricci and Eco shared ideas on the notion of "open work" actually extended to the openness of Architecture and Urban

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1   Umberto Eco, *La struttura assente. La ricerca semiotica e il metodo strutturale* (Milano: Bompiani, 1968).

2   Umberto Eco, *Appunti per una semiologia delle comunicazioni visive* (Milano: Bompiani, 1967).

3   In this lies the author's critical analysis and interpretation about Leonardo Ricci's work as an "open work in architecture" in the light of his research in the United States about Urban and Visual Design: Ilaria Cattabriga, "Leonardo Ricci in the United States" (PhD Diss., University of Bologna, 2021).

4   The chapters of the book collect Eco's essays and texts written between 1955 and 1963. As Eco specifies in the book's introduction "they stop in 1963 because the studies of the second part anticipate, introduce or comment the research explained in Opera Aperta" of 1962". Umberto Eco, *La definizione dell'arte. Dall'estetica medievale alle avanguardie, dall'opera aperta alla morte dell'arte* (Milano: Mursia &Co., 1978), introductory note, 5.

5   Umberto Eco, *Opera Aperta* (Milano: Bompiani, 1962).

6   Leonardo Ricci, *Anonymous (XX century)* (New York: Braziller, 1962).

7   See: Vittorio Sainati, *L'estetica di Benedetto Croce. Dall'intuizione visiva all'intuizione catartica* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1953); Luigi Pareyson, *Estetica. Teoria della formatività* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1954); Henry Focillon, *Vie des Formes* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1964); Gian Napoleone Giordano Orsini, *Benedetto Croce Philosopher of Art and Literary Critic* (Carbondale: Illinois University Press, 1961), trans. *L'estetica e la critica di Benedetto Croce* (Milano: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1976); Eugenio Battisti, *Contributo ad una estetica della forma: tesi di laurea in filosofia, 7 luglio 1947* edited by Giuseppa Saccaro Del Buffa (Firenze: Olschki, 2017).

8   Umberto Eco's archive and library are being catalogued by the Eco home study staff in Milan, therefore the documents cannot be published yet. In Leonardo Ricci's archives instead there are no letters unfolding their relationship that mainly began and developed in the corridors of the Faculty of Architecture in Florence during the most difficult years of the Sixties.

Design, on one side, and Arts and Visual Communication to the other side. Their reflections displayed in different ways and at different levels of in-depth study across their intellectual activity, but they matched their ideas in the formulation of the "Ricci-Eco motion" of 1968, that solved the fight between institutions and students during the occupation of the Faculty of Architecture.

Therefore, the analysis of Eco's early semiotic work and Ricci's design experiments developed as academic exercises, is not the ultimate goal of this paper; they are used as research tools for the understanding of the idea of "open work" in their tentative to suggest a possible suitable design of the new mass society environment and on their work impact on the teaching reform and Superarchitecture. The paper is not aimed at analyzing Eco and Ricci's *oeuvre*, but it is concerned on the specific point of intersection between Urban and Visual Design, Architecture and Semiology, that permitted a unique occurrence in Florence.

The paper wants also to guide the reader through the meanings of "open work" explaining how they were able to translate it into the idea of university as "open place" for all academic roles, discussions and, tangibly, in the formulation of new aims for the disciplines of architecture and urban planning and of a new academic program for the Faculty of Architecture. Spread to a wider social dimension aimed at meeting all human needs, Ricci and Eco's thinking importance lies in the role they cut for culture, and, more in detail, for architecture and urban planning as cultural manifestations and disciplines able to trigger the new society values by building and structuring the suitable urban environment for the new society.

The Florentine Department and the Semiology of Architecture

The concept of "Open Work" is central to explain Leonardo Ricci's work, to which it is connected not only thanks to to the direct contact with Umberto Eco and the science of communication, but also since the very beginning of his architectural activity thanks to Giovanni Michelucci's teaching on the potentiality of the city to host urban variability and human acts[9].

In the Sixties Ricci was Professor of Elements of Architectural Composition and Urban Design (1964-1965), Director of the Town Planning Institute (since 1965) and Professor of Town Planning (1966-1970), while he was carrying on his teaching both at the Pennsylvania State University (PSU) as Research Professor in Urban Design (1965-1969) and at the University of Florida as Undergraduate Research Professor of Urban Design (1968-1972). In Ricci's courses important social themes were discussed with the students and, after the flood that

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9 The "variable city" of Michelucci, matured in the sketches for the reconstruction of the "screaming ruins" of the areas around Ponte Vecchio, sought a spatiality of a medieval matrix devoid of any rule other than spontaneity or function so that the city was the continuation of the interiors of a building and presented the same vital characteristics in a general continuity of relationships and internality. Giovanni Michelucci, "La città variabile", *La Nuova Città*, no. 13 (January 1954); Fabio Fabbrizzi, *Giovanni Michelucci. Lo spazio che accoglie* (Firenze: Edifir, 2015).

destroyed Florence in 1966, his course of Town Planning was dedicated to the design of a continuous city in the Arno Valley by means of an interdisciplinary study.

Umberto Eco had already published *Opera Aperta* (1962) and *Apocalittici e Integrati* (1964) when he arrived in Florence after having taught at the Politecnico di Milano from 1961 to 1964. In Milan Eco had worked on the fields of television and architecture, there he found the contact with the phenomenologist Enzo Paci, who became a reference for Ricci as well[10], and Eco's research found support in the friendship with Vittorio Gregotti[11]. In those years of revolt, the course of Decoration, as it was set and structured for the students of the first two-years of Architecture, seemed increasingly anachronistic. Therefore, Gillo Dorfles was firstly called to actualize and manage it in content, then Umberto Eco[12] took over him from 1966 to 1969 and renamed the course "Semiologia delle Comunicazioni Visive". Eco's assistants of the course were Paolo Fabbri[13] and Gianfranco Petrelli, one of the most influential scholars in Semiotics and Linguistics and an engineer, one of Ricci's collaborators for many projects.

The field studied by Eco during his tenure in Florence was Semiotic, the general science of signs first postulated in Ferdinand de Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale* (1916) and re-envisioned almost half a century later by Roland Barthes in "Éléments de sémiologie" (1964)[14]. In Milan and in Florence Eco worked on the shift from the pre-semiotic *Opera aperta* to the first systematic theory of Semiotics, that took form, thanks to his direct contact with French intellectual circles, continuous after 1962, after the publication of *Opera Aperta* while he was working on its French translation of 1965. Roland Barthes was a fundamental interlocutor, a reference to Eco, and his compendium for

10   Ricci quoted Enzo Paci in his unpublished typescript "Prolusione al corso di Urbanistica II ed Elementi di Composizione" kept in Casa Studio Ricci: «[…] To make you understand the historical situation of a current so-called middle generation that, torn from the war by an idealistic culture has forced a new research position, which we can call roughly existential. That is, generation that passed as Paci says from a philosophy of error to a philosophy of existence although in this case the word philosophy begins to become equivocal because a philosophical position cannot be existential».

11   Vittorio Gregotti tells about his friendship and gratitude to Eco in Vittorio Gregotti, *Il territorio dell'architettura* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1966). See also: Massimiliano Savorra, "Milano 1964 – Vittorio Gregotti, Umberto Eco e la storiografia del design come 'opera aperta'", *Studi e ricerche di Storia dell'Architettura. Rivista dell'Associazione Italiana Storici dell'Architettura*, no. 5 (2019): 40-59.

12   Marco Dezzi Bardeschi, "Apocalittici e Integrati: 50 anni dopo, editoriale ricordando Umberto Eco", *Ananke*, no. 78 (maggio 2016): 2-6.

13   See https://www.paolofabbri.it/ (last accessed April, 24 2023)

14   Roland Barthes, "Éléments de Sémiologie" was originally published in the French review *Communications*, no. 4 (1964): 91–135. Then it was published in French by Editions du Seuil, Paris in 1964, translated in English by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith, published independently as a short book: Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), and also in Italian by Einaudi with the title *Elementi di Semiologia* (Torino: Einaudi, 1966). It wa salso published in Roland Barthes, "Sémiologie et urbanisme", *L'aventure Sémiologique 1967*, Paris, Du Seuil, 261-27, then in *Architecture d'Aujourd' hui*, no. 153 (December 1970-January 1971): 11-24.
Eco's pre-semiotic work, developed in Florence from 1966 to 1969 is quite ignored and it was criticzed by historians of architecture. As Amit Wolf states Manfredo Tafuri and Cesare Brandi challenged Eco's studies and "the support lent by Eco's work to the architectural neo-avant-garde in pursuing its 'poetica dell'aleatorio' (Manfredo Tafuri, *Storia dell'architettura italiana: 1944-1985* (Torino: Einaudi, 1982), 116-117; Cesare Brandi, *Teoria generale della critica* (Torino: Einaudi, 1974), 267). A more positive view is found in Franco De Faveri's appendix to Pigafetta's *Architettura moderna e ragione storica* (Franco De Faveri, "Appendice: a proposito della 'Ragione Storica'", in Giorgio Pigafetta,ed., *Architettura moderna e ragione storica: la storiografia italiana sull'architettura moderna, 1928-1976*, 245-57 (Milano: Guerini Studio, 1993), where the relevance of Eco's *Opera aperta* of 1962 for Italian architectural history is clearly recognized. Amit Wolf, "Superurbeffimero n. 7: Umberto Eco's Semiologia and the Architectural Rituals of the U.F.O.", *Escholarship*, no. 2 (2011).

the creation of Semiology, the very successful "Éléments de sémiologie" constituted the most decisive moment in this turn[15].

In the archives of the Faculty of Architecture in Florence the documents confirm that Eco taught in Florence only from 1966 to 1969[16]. After 1969 he was convened at the New York University for the Autumn term to held a course on Semiotics and Visual Communications and, in a letter addressed to the Chancellor and to the Dean of the Faculty of Architecture of Florence, he asked to have the months of October, November and December 1969 free to move to the United States. If not possible, he would have stopped to teach in Florence from 1970 onwards[17]. After 1969 Eco temporarily regained his position at the Politecnico di Milano, to take up the first appointment as Professor of Semiotics in the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy at the University of Bologna in 1971. From 1970, after the publication of *La Struttura Assente*, Eco's studies had a strong impact abroad: in Europe he held lectures and conferences in Dublin, Bordeaux, Bruxelles and Paris. He took part in the constitution of the International Association for Semiotic Studies (Association Internationale de Sémiotique, IASS-AIS): the major world organisation of semioticians, established in 1969. Milan became an important reference for the International Association for Semiotic Studies, which had its counterparts in both North and South America, in Buenos Aires and New York. When founded, the members of the association included Algirdas Julien Greimas, Roman Jakobson, Julia Kristeva, Emile Benveniste, André Martinet, Roland Barthes, Juri Lotman, Thomas A. Sebeok, and Umberto Eco[18].

When Eco arrived in Florence the teaching reform against the Traditional School was taking shape, then *Group 63*, of which Umberto Eco was also a member, was at work[19], Italo Calvino was writing *Le città invisibili* (1967) after the 1967 Paris Youth Biennial, and visual poets (Lamberto Pignotti, Egidio Mucci) and influential contemporary art critics such as Lara Vinca Masini and Bonito Oliva were active. Eco was working on the notion of culture, as the mass culture was spreading, and understood architecture as a cultural, sign-like phenomenon, in three dimensions. He was the first to articulate the structuralist

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15   Eco, *La struttura assente*, ii; Roland Barthes, "Éléments de sémiologie", *Communications*, no. 4 (1964): 91-165.

16   Here all the documents concerning Eco's appointment at the Faculty of Architecture in Florence, about his contract and instructors are kept. Archivio di deposito e storico dell'Università di Firenze, folder Umberto Eco, A1356.

17   Letter by Umberto Eco to the Chancellor of the University of Florence and to the Dean of the Faculty of Architecture of Florence, September 13 1969. Archivio di deposito e storico dell'Università di Firenze, A1356.

18   The official journal of the association is Semiotica, published by De Gruyter Mouton. See Thomas A. Sebeok, Jean Umiker-Sebeok, *The Semiotic Web 1986* (Paris: De Gruyter Mouton, 2018).

19   Italian avant-garde literary movement formed in Palermo in 1963 and active until the end of the decade, which opposed the now declining neorealist experience with the most extreme linguistic experimentalism in order to elaborate a literature capable of dialoguing with the new social reality of the economic boom. They included, among others, A. Giuliani, E. Sanguineti, N. Balestrini, A. Arbasino, U. Eco, G. Manganelli. See Nanni Balestrini (ed.), *Gruppo 63. The experimental novel* (Bologna: Feltrinelli, 1966) and Andrea Cortellessa (ed.), *Col senno di poi* (Rome: L'orma, 2013).

thought in architecture[20] by working on the conception of culture and, relevant to it, the way to perceive, understand, and study it. This was the core of *Apocalittici e Integrati*, born as a collection of writings presented to take part in the first academic competition for the chair of "Psychology and Pedagogy of the mass communications" that had no winners but let Eco build a volume based on the treatise of hendyadis dedicated to the study of the mass culture that represented a new horizon to explore of profound interest[21]. Indeed, Eco explained in what the contrast between élite and mass culture consisted in the book preface:

> If culture is an aristocratic affair, the jealous cultivation, assiduous and solitary, of an interiority that is refined and opposed to the vulgarity of the crowd [...], then the mere thought of a culture shared by all, produced in such a way that it suits all, and elaborated on the measure of all, is a monstrous nonsense. Mass culture is the anti-culture. But because it arises at the moment when the presence of the masses in the associated culture becomes the most obvious phenomenon of a historical context, "mass culture" does not mark a transient and limited aberration: it becomes the sign of an irretrievable fall, in the face of which the man of culture (the last survivor of prehistory destined to become extinct) can only bear extreme witness in terms of Apocalypse.

> In contrast, the optimistic response of the integrated. Since television, newspaper, radio, film and comics, the popular novel and Reader's Digest now make cultural goods available to all, making the absorption of notions and the reception of information lovable and light, we are living in an era of enlargement of the cultural area in which the circulation of a 'popular' art and culture is finally taking place at a broad level, with the concurrence of the best. Whether this culture rises from below or is packaged from above for helpless consumers is not a problem that the integrated poses. Not least because, if the apocalyptics survive precisely by packag-

20   As a matter of fact, however, after the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale* (1913), in which the author firstly thought about the possibility of "a science that studies the life of signs within the framework of social life" of which Linguistics was to be a part of, in turn, Semiology was to be part of the larger area of social psychology. Indeed, the very definition of sign in Saussure is linked on the one hand to a psychological perspective (due to the association of the concept of sign to an acoustic image leading to the formulation of a concept) and on the other hand to a social perspective (arbitrariness of sign and concept of langue as a socially shared linguistic system). Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale* (Lausanne – Paris: Payot, 1913). After Saussure, Semiology found its first institutional definition at the beginning of the 1960s; in this sense it is traditionally identified in Roland Barthes' *Elements of Semiotics* published in 1964 (Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiotics* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968)). The semiological-linguistic line of the discipline founded by Saussure, then by the Danish linguist Louis Trolle Hjelmslev (Louis Trolle Hjelmslev, *Omkring sprogteoriens grundlasggelse* (Kobenhavn: Munksgaard, 1943); Italian edition: Louis Trolle Hjelmslev, *I fondamenti della teoria del linguaggio* (Milano: Einaudi, 1968)), and Roland Barthes, followed new paths as the two of the most interesting perspectives in contemporary semiotics: the "structural and "generative semiotics" of Algirdas Julien Greimas, and "sociosemiotics," which can be traced to the names of Jean-Marie Floch and Eric Landowski. Therefore Structuralism was enhanced by Barthes, then by Greimas and found new application fields in Anthropology with Claude Lévi-Strauss and in Psychology with Jaques Lacan, in addition to Sociology and Literature Analysis and Theory.

21   In occasion of the fiftieth anniversary from the publication of *Apocalittici e Integrati* two conferences took place in Bologna and in Teramo in 2014 to remind Eco's writings possible actualizations. The interventions were published in Anna Maria Lorusso, ed., *50 anni dopo Apocalittici e Integrati di Umberto Eco* (Milano, [Roma]: Alfabeta; DeriveApprodi, 2015). The volume collects contributions of the most Italian authoritatve scholars of media, Semiotics and Communication in dialogue with Umberto Eco: Alberto Abruzzese, Daniele Barbieri, Marco Belpoliti, Clotilde Bertoni, Luigi Bonfante, Vanni Codeluppi, Fausto Colombo, Paolo Fabbri, Guido Ferraro, Riccardo Finocchi, Stefano Jacoviello, Francesco Mangiapane, Giacomo Manzoli, Gianfranco Marrone, Federico Montanari, Daniela Panosetti, Isabella Pezzini, Maria Pia Pozzato, Lucio Spaziante.

ing theories of decadence, the integrated rarely theorize, and more easily operate, produce, and issue their messages daily at every level[22]

A supposed form of counterculture, mass culture was then to Eco an absolute novelty to be investigated to understand the revolutionary cultural and social incentives of the Sixties. To Ricci it represented the main change of contemporary society's needs, for which architecture had to find new solutions.

Structuralism and Architecture as a "Sign Text"

The connection between communication system, mass culture and counterculture and the concept of "open work" in architecture lies in the relational value of its elements studied by Structuralism[23] which arose as an alternative epistemological paradigm to Positivism in the mathematical and natural sciences, based on the concept of structure, applied to sciences and humanities, derived from the research carried out in the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the next century in the fields of *Gestalt* Psychology and Linguistics.

Marcel Mauss' *Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques*, firstly published in France in 1923-1924, represented the transition text from Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*, published close to its author's death in 1913, the most effective elaboration of the structuralist thinking, then developed by Lévi Strauss in Anthropology, from the field of Linguistics to that of Ethnology. The structure constituted a unitary system made of elements determined by mutual relations that could not be grasped individually as isolated items. Structure to Saussure was "a system of pure values" organized according to regulating principles that established the

patterns or internal laws of its operation. The method of Structuralism then consisted in identifying, understanding and describing such patterns immanently, that is, sticking to the field of relations under observation without relying on laws derived from other structures, different from those being analyzed.

Structuralism was therefore based on a fundamental basic distinction between invariant patterns, which represented the backbone of the system, and variable patterns, which constituted its historical component. Between invariants and variables there were relations, obtained from the interactions between the two levels, which Structuralism aimed to study[24]. In the same way, the "open work" realization in art happened in the interaction between the producer of the work of art, the artist, and the user, actively and freely involved in the development of the artistic result as well as in its interpretation.

Precisely because of its systemic and relational vision, which analyzed the totality through laws, relations and internal processes of transformation, Structuralism found applications and possible interpretations in both sciences and humanities and pursued a double idea of scientificity and openness to the flexibility of concrete experience. In the second half of the twentieth century, therefore, Structuralism extended to a range of disciplines that did not feel adequately represented by either the methods of scientific knowledge or the tradition of the "spiritual sciences": not only Linguistics, Psychology and Anthropology, the studies that had given rise to Structuralism, but also Sociology, Architecture, Political Theory, Aesthetics and Art History found new applications. Eco synthesized all interdisciplinary perspectives and different approaches in his *La Struttura Assente* by merging the double level architecture acted on: a level of a system of signs and a set of mass communication codes[25], thus recalling, as Massimiliano Savorra states[26], Renato De Fusco's *Architettura come mass medium. Note per una semiologia architettonica* (1967)[27].

In the field of architecture, many architects active between the 1960s and 1970s adopted principles of Structuralism even when they did not explicitly

24   For this reason, structuralism has distanced itself from the two prevailing directions in twentieth-century epistemology: logical atomism, which puts the relationality of the system before the possibility of isolating a few basic simple elements, and historicism, which relativizes structural phenomena by tracing them back to their developmental processes.

25   As representative examples, coeval to Eco's La Struttura Assente: in Philosophy Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Michael Foucault, and Tel quel Groupe published *Théorie d'ensemble: (choix)* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1968); in Gestalt Phychology and Visual Design the work done by György Kepes was funding, mainly published in a series of books edited by Braziller, among which the most important here are: György Kepes, ed., *Education of Vision* (New York: Braziller, 1965); György Kepes, ed., *Structure in Art and Science* (New York: Braziller, 1965); and György Kepes, ed., *Sign, Image, Symbol* (New York: Braziller, 1966). In Pshychology: Jean Piaget, *Le Structuralisme* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1968); in Anthropology Dan Sperber, *Le Structuralisme en Anthropologie* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1968); Moustapha Safouan, *Le structuralisme en psychanalyse* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1968). On Sr ucturalism see also: Bastide Roger, ed., *Sens et usages du terme structure*, (Paris: Mouton, 1962), trans. *Usi e significati del termine struttura* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1962); François Wahl, *Quest-ce Que Le Structuralisme?* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1968), trans. *Che cos'è lo strutturalismo?* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1971); Jean-Marie Benost, *La Révolution structurale* (Paris: Denoël-Gonthier, 1980); François Dosse, *Histoire du Structuralisme* (Paris: PUF, 1992).

26   Massimiliano Savorra, "Structuralism and Communication Systems. The Historiography of Architecture in Italy and Semiological Criticism: 1964-1984", in *Lo Construido y lo pensado. Correspondencias Europeas y Transatlánticas en la Historiografía de la Arquitectura/Built and Thought. European and Transatlantic Correspondence in the Historiography of Architecture*, eds. Salvador Guerrero and Joaquín Medina Warmburg (Paterna-Valencia: La Imprenta CG, 2022), 214-227.

27   Renato De Fusco, *Architettura come mass medium. Note per una semiologia architettonica* (Bari: Dedalo, 1967).

recognize themselves in a structuralist aesthetic: Kenzo Tange, Moshe Safdie, Lucien Kroll, Richard Rogers, Renzo Piano, and Giancarlo De Carlo are some of them. On a strictly theoretical level, these authors made explicit reference to the application to the history of architecture of the concept of "abstance," developed by Cesare Brandi, characterizing those artistic phenomena that manifest themselves as a set of relations and not as simple elements[28]. The structuralist matrix in architectural thought existed as early as the late 1950s, when Structuralism helped to bring concrete social phenomena to the center of the debate on urban planning and the design of individual buildings always referring to the impulse coming from the studies of Claude Lévi-Strauss. In explicit polemic against the rationalist orientation, prevalent since the 1930s in international meetings such as CIAM (Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne), Dutch architects such as Aldo van Eyck (1918-1999) and John Habraken (1928 -) sought to restore value to the non-scientific elements of design. The structuralist vision offered the possibility to find an appropriate language and method and new theoretical references[29].

In the decade of the Sixties, Structuralism recognized architecture as a "sign text" on a par with any other cultural phenomenon, thus readable by semiological parameters thanks to Ferdinand de Saussure's studies in Linguistics. With Benveniste, Jakobson and Mukarovsky, the possibility of describing the working structure of any system and of artistic phenomena with scientifically oriented linguistic methods was being defined, by using abstract symbolic language to describe them. Any aesthetic phenomenon, as a linguistic and communication one, turned out to be traceable to a clear, abstract and shared code through the processes of denotation and connotation.

The "Discoursive Power" of Architecture

By mid of the 1960s a few architectural historians began to assume that the scientific discipline dedicated and applied to cultural phenomena, seen as communication, could include the discipline of architecture by its nature: its power to modify the environment. These themes, apparently only semiotic, were used to build an "operative criticism" useful for the foundation of a new "architectural theory" strongly connected with the history of architecture. This occurred in Italy thanks to Bruno Zevi's articulated meditations about language and form, and

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28   Cesare Brandi, *Eliante o Dell'Architettura* (Torino Einaudi, 1956); Cesare Brandi, *Struttura e Architettura* (Torino: Einaudi, 1968).

29   Aldo van Eyck founded the magazine *Forum* in 1959, and although he did not use the word "structuralism", he often referred to a view of architecture as a phenomenon integrated into human social space. The design of the orphanage in Amsterdam, built between 1955 and 1960 as a miniature urban structure, inspired by the ethnological forms of African and indigenous American villages, was the basis of an approach that was at once very concrete and highly idealized, the long-lasting effects of which can still be seen on an entire genealogy of Nordic, and Dutch architecture in particular, reaching all the way back to the early design and theoretical evidence of Rem Koolhaas. On the other hand, the very idea of "participatory" architecture, promoted by Habraken since his publications in the early 1960s (such as De Dragers en de Mensen,1961), is based on the possibility of distinguishing different levels of structure, some of which may vary according to use and individual needs. As Herman Hertzberger has written, this is a distinction between "long life-cycle structures" and "short life-cycle structures" that corresponds to that made by Structuralism between invariants and variables of a systemic totality. Herman Hertzberger, *Space and the Architect: Lessons in Architecture 2* (Rotterdam: 010 Uitgeverij, 2010).

the foundation of the journal *Op. Cit.* in 1964, with the publication of texts by Renato De Fusco and Maria Luisa Scalvini, while abroad Roland Barthes firstly understood Structuralism as the logic behind Urban Design and in Kevin Lynch's research. Indeed, Roland Barthes, in "Sémiologie et Urbanisme" dealt with the awareness that encountered and enabled the interrelationship of symbols and functions in urban space, understood as invariants and variables of a systemic totality[30].

On one side, even in the previous decades, in Italy the "discoursive power" of architecture Roland Barthes also dealt with in "Sémiologie et Urbanisme" had been already noticed with respect to temporary exhibitions by Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti, who saw the exhibitions importance as mediators between public and museum, and as a response to the aesthetic education of the public thanks to their "discoursive power". The exhibition was a device that allowed the work to express itself at its best thanks also to the combinations with other works that allowed it to be read as a system with the text of the history of art[31]. On the other side, the research on new possible readings of architecture through the structuralist semiotic methodological approach began at the end of the 1950s actually, with the contribution of some scholars as Sergio Bettini, Galvano della Volpe and Gillo Dorfles[32], who suggested a structuralist idea of arts and architecture and introduced further Italian intellectuals' work such as that of Maria Luisa Scalvini, Emilio Garroni, Vittorio Gregotti and Renato De Fusco, who tried to refund the historiographical path of architecture through Semiotic, inevitably reconsidering the subject and its methodologies under the anthropological, philosophical, aesthetic, linguistic, psychological, sociological and semiological perspectives thus borrowing their interpretative tools. More in detail, in the Sixties the narrowing of Art History, in the figure of Cesare Brandi, and Semiotics, with Emilio Garroni and Umberto Eco, happened as an attempt to review the scientific analysis of cultural phenomena through communication and the science of signs which brought to the theoretical refoundation of Architecture among the arts. Therefore, Aesthetics and Linguistics were the most involved disciplines in the debate centred on the notion of "value" in Aesthetics, on the one hand, and the application of Linguistics to Architecture, by the science of signs, on the other. Massimiliano Savorra has proposed an interesting overview on the matter with a complete bibliography, on the influence of semiological studies and tools on the History of Architecture by focusing in detail on Maria Luisa Scalvini's work as

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30   Barthes, "Sémiologie et urbanisme", *L'Aventure Sémiologique 1967*, Paris, Du Seuil, 261-27.

31   Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti, "Le rassegne d'arte in Italia", *Critica d'Arte*, no. 69 (1965): 65-70.

32   Sergio Bettini, "Critica semantica e continuità storica dell'architettura", *Zodiac*, no. 2 (1958): 7-25; Galvano Della Volpe, *Critica del gusto* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1960); Gillo Dorfles, *Simbolo, comunicazione, consumo* (Torino: Einaudi, 1960).

the most clarifying and leading in the "semiological criticism" of Architecture[33], with the aim to frame "the ways in which such semiotic themes were addressed, as "operative criticism", toward the foundation of a theory of architecture, increasingly intertwined with the history of architecture"[34].

In those years in Florence, a group of scholars and architects who dedicated part of their studies to the connection between Architecture and Semiology existed and they could be treated as a "control group" for further investigation because they conducted an anlysis of their creative activity based on symbolic-communicative elements in architecture, industrial design and advertisement[35]. The conception and elaboration of semiology came through the work of the art critic Gillo Dorfles, appointed professor of "Decorazione" in 1959. The impact of linguistic theory on architecture is described in depth in his *Simbolo, comunicazione, consumo* (1960)[36]. This work also afforded a clear examination of the Florentine debate in the early 1960s, before Eco's arrival. It introduced additional protagonists to the Florentine discussion with three major concerns: the definition of a new curriculum centered on architectural composition: Italo Gamberini who was sudying how architectural elements could be intended as "words"of the language of architecture[37] and Giovanni Klaus Koening who had already published *Lezioni del corso di Plastica* (1959)[38] including two parts dedicated to the study of the relations between architecture and arts as well as to the analysis of drawings and models as texts, and a third part titled "Prolegomeni all'analisi del linguaggio architettonico", then *Analisi del Linguaggio*

33   Maria Luisa Scalvini (1934-2017) explored many investigation fields connected to architecture as Semiotic and Linguistics, especially during her collaboration with Renato De Fusco to the journal *Op. Cit.* from 1964 to 1979 (Renato De Fusco and Maria Luisa Scalvini, "I quindici anni della nostra rivista", *Op. Cit.*, no. 46 (September 1979): 5-13) that led her to the publication of one of her most important books *L'architettura come semiotica connotativa* (1975). The semiological approach to architecture, the structuralist vision and the importance of the metaphorical use of linguistc analogy to understand the urban architectural language, the semantic contents and the symbolic values subtended to the historical architectural and urban signs were the pillars of her reflection she firstly faced in another book titled *Spazio come campo semantico* of 1968 that entered the debate on the "semiological criticism". She worked also on the history of historiography, filology and theory of architecture. About Scalvini's heterogeneous and comprehensive work see: Maria Luisa Scalvini, *Lo spazio come campo semantico* (Napoli: Istituto di architettura e urbanistica, Facoltà di ingegneria, 1968); Maria Luisa Scalvini, *L'architettura come semiotica connotativa* (Milano: Bompiani, 1975); Maria Luisa Scalvini and Maria Grazia Sandri, *L'immagine storiografica dell'architettura contemporanea da Platz a Giedion* (Roma: Officina Ed., 1984); Maria Luisa Scalvini, Gian Piero Calza and Paola Finardi, *Bergamo* (Roma: Laterza: 1987); Maria Luisa Scalvini, Fabio Mangone, Giulio Ulisse Arata and Mimmo Jodice, *Arata a Napoli tra liberty e neoeclettismo* (Napoli: Electa, 1990); Claude Perrault, Maria Luisa Scalvini e Sergio Villari, *L'ordine dell'architettura* (Palermo: Centro internazionale studi di estetica, 1991); Maria Luisa Scalvini, Sergio Villari and François Bernin de Saint-Hilarion, *Il manoscritto sulle proporzioni di François Bernin de Saint-Hilarion* (Palermo: Centro internazionale studi di estetica, 1994); Maria Luisa Scalvini, Fabio Mangone and Olga Ghiringhelli, *Alfredo Melani e l'architettura moderna in Italia: antologia critica 1882-1910* (Roma: Officina, 1998); Maria Luisa Scalvini, Fabio Mangone and Massimiliano Savorra, *Verso il Vittoriano : l'Italia unita e i concorsi di architettura: i disegni della Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Roma*, 1881 (Napoli: Electa, 2002); Maria Luisa Scalvini and Fabio Mangone, *Dizionario dell'Architettura del XX secolo* (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 2003-2004); Maria Luisa Scalvini, *Il gusto della congettura, L'onere della prova* (Siracusa: LetteraVentidue, 2018).

34   Savorra, "Structuralism and Communication Systems", 214-227.

35   See Gabriele Corsani and Marco Bini, eds., *La Facoltà di architettura di Firenze fra tradizione e cambiamento, proceedings of the conference* (Florence, April 29-30, 2004) (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2007).

36   In his book, Dorfles writes about the semantic and psychological assumptions mainly based on the American critic Susanne Langers's aesthetics, then he dismisses the "behaviourism approach" to underline the importance of linguistic theories and everything to do with previous "conceptualization of sign", and critiques the simple language-like rapport between user and architecture that the Florentine Rationalists were returning to in their analysis of the architectural sign (Dorfles, *Simbolo, comunicazione, consumo*).

37   Italo Gamberini, *Introduzione al primo corso di elementi di architettura e rilievo dei monumenti* (Firenze: Coppini, 1959).

38   Giovanni Klaus Koenig, *Lezioni del corso di Plastica* (Firenze, Editrice Universitaria, 1961).

Architettonico (1964), which referred to Structuralism applied to architecture, taking Charles Morris' pragmatism[39] as its main reference, in order to reinterpret it as a founding moment of design method[40]. Koenig was defining a historiographical direction reassessing Rationalist architecture, in support of a common vision of the mentioned authors whose ideas were conceived within the same institution, then published in *L'invecchiamento dell'architettura moderna ed altre dodici note*[41]. Finally Dorfles dealt with the use of linguistic theories in the nascent discipline of industrial design quoting Koenig's *Lezioni del corso di plastica* (1961)[42] and Pierluigi Spadolini's *Lezioni del corso di progettazione artistica per industrie* (1960) that fitted into the debate with his studies between Industrial Design and Semiotics, which led to consider the relation between industrial design, arts and architecture as languages ruled by a grammar[43].

In that theoretical debate Eco found an interesting ideal context for the application field of the themes he had so far studied in Linguistics in Milan[44]. Symbolic-communicative elements in architecture, industrial design and advertisement affected human life and creativity unless they were considered second rate disciplines if compared to "pure arts" [45]. Gillo Dorfles found in Italo Gamberini, Giovanni Klaus Koenig and Pierluigi Spadolini's work some of the most significant trials, even not perfectly fitting with his theories, to apply to architecture some of his considerations on the topic he had previously published in *Il divenire delle arti* (1959)[46].

The most striking attributes of Eco's *Appunti per una semiologia delle comunicazioni visive* are the breadth of sources and aims and the accomodation of disparate degrees of linguistic theory, moving from an analysis of stimulus and effect to more complex systems of connotation. It «arose partly out of Eco's work on some of the particular problems posed in this debate, which was strongly influenced by Koenig's elaborations in *Analisi del linguaggio architettonico* – section C's underlying reference text (1964). Additionally, it extends the application of linguistic theory for faculty who were not directly engaged in the debate during Dorfles' tenure, such as Leonardo Ricci and Leonardo Savioli, two of the major sustainers of Florentine Superarchitecture in the department»[47].

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39   See: Charles Morris, *Foundation of the Theory of Signs* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1938); *Signs, Language and Behaviour* (New York: Prantice-Hall, Inc., 1946); *The Pragmatic Movement in American Philosophy* (New York: Braziller, 1970).

40   See also Giovanni Klaus Koenig, "Il linguaggio dell'architettura: notazione di 'linguaggio comune'", *Criteri*, no. 9-10 (1960).

41   Giovanni Klaus Koenig, *L'invecchiamento dell'architettura moderna ed altre dodici note* (Florence: Libreria editrice fiorentina, 1967).

42   Koenig, *Lezioni del corso di plastica*.

43   Pierluigi Spadolini, *Dispense del corso di progettazione artistica per industrie* (Firenze: Editrice Universitaria, 1960).

44   Wolf, ""Superurbeffimero n. 7".

45   Dorfles, *Simbolo, comunicazione, consumo*, 175-176.

46   Gillo Dorfles, *Il divenire delle arti*, Collana Saggi n.243 (Torino: Einaudi, 1959).

47   Giovanni Klaus Koenig, Pier Angelo Cetica, and Francesco Gurrieri, *Pierluigi Spadolini: architettura e sistema* (Bari: Dedalo, 1985), 13.

Visual Design and Visual Communication

For his course "Semiologia delle Comunicazioni Visive", Eco drafted "Appunti per una Semiologia delle Comunicazioni Visive" as an handout for students' use only sold at production cost, cyclostyled at Bompiani. It circulated in low print runs, it was later republished as part A, B, and C of *La Struttura assente*, while the last section of the text was reproduced in a somewhat shortened version as "Proposte per una semiologia dell'architettura"[48]. In it Eco restarted and took up up the concept of the "open work", Eco's first attempt at systematizing his theory of cultural processes and at applying linguistic theories to mass produced visual objects – from comic strips to advertisement and television – while insisting on the central role of architecture. The magazine *Marcatré* and Eco's related publishing activities as editor of the Bompiani non-fiction division became the main stage for his reflections[49].

As Eco declared in the introduction to *La Struttura Assente*, most of the research it contained had been elaborated during three courses carried out in the Faculties of Architecture, in Milan, São Paulo and in Florence. The book was inspired and much owed to the students of architecture, because in them the author found the constant concern of «anchoring the universe of things to be communicated to the universe of things to be modified[50]».

Eco's studies on Visual Communication offered further considerations on the generation of form in architecture and enhanced the grounding of Ricci's "forma-atto" design method that implied the avoidance of predetermined forms. More in detail, Eco's interest, before the frequent and intense exchange in 1968 with Ricci, was driven by his intention to investigate into the relationship between architecture and communication, into the possibility for architecture to communicate, and be the expression of the generative processes that permeated society, the social needs, and Semiology, the new born discipline that studied all phenomena of culture as systems of signs or culture as communication. Architecture - in its various expressions such as design, architectural planning, urban design, scenographic and exhibition construction - could therefore be considered, unlike other cultural phenomena, as the concrete realization of culture and as a constructed three-dimensional reality of associated life, endowed with particular functions.

These topics were of the upmost interest to Ricci, who derived them from his previous research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where, in the Spring term 1959-1960, he was appointed *Boemis Visiting Professor*. There, thanks to the Harvard-MIT JCUS' interdisciplinary research on the design process of the city, Kevin Lynch's studies about the Perceptual Form of the City and the new representational tools of Visual Design used in the"studio work" by

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48   Umberto Eco, "Proposte per una semiologia dell'architettura", *Marcatré*, no. 34-36 (1967): 56-76.

49   See "Proposte per una semiologia dell'architettura" and "Il medium è il messaggio", *Marcatré*, no. 41-42 (1968): 36-39.

50   *Eco, La Struttura Assente, 43.*

György Kepes, he definitely based his belief on morphological generations avoiding *a priori* forms he had already expressed in his reflections on the Informal in painting and in the conferences held in 1952 at the Brooklyn University and at the University of South California[51]. Ricci strengthened his conviction that the design idea emerged from the artistic sign and not vice-versa. The influences among the arts in the design process, combined with the study of the History of Art and Architecture, gave birth to Urban Design, the discipline he would have taught at the PSU and University of Florida (UF) in the following years. Ricci's experience at MIT was a turning experience in teaching and design, not only because there he found new research fields and the roots of Urban Design, but also because he exported to Italy György Kepes' course of Visual Design.

In 1967 György Kepes founded at M.I.T. the Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS) by collecting a lot of work done by the Harvard-M.I.T. Joint Center for Urban Studies. Kepes arrived in the Visual Department of the Graduate Program at M.I.T. in 1946 and between 1947 and 1956 he concentrated on the production of his publication *The New Landscape in Art and Science*[52]. It was largely written in 1952 and took the form of an encyclopedic constellation of images describing the aesthetic qualities of scientific findings, as well as displaying the scientific origins of other aesthetic manifestations. Kepes restored the artistic and architectural production of Italian architects and artists achieving prominence right after World War II. Some examples were Pierluigi Nervi, Ernesto Nathan Rogers and Harry Bertoia. The book constituted a "radical visual academia" referred to a same way of thinking for all visual disciplines: design, architecture, town planning, art. These reflections gave birth to some fundamental studies such as Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City* (1960). In the Sixties several Italian scholars contributed to Kepes' *Vision+Value* series published by George Braziller: Gillo Dorfles with an essay in *The Nature and Art of Motion* (1965), Mirko Basaldella in *Education of Vision* (1965), Pier Luigi Nervi in *Structure in Art and Science* (1965), Ernesto Nathan Rogers in *Sign, Image, Symbol* (1966), and Leonardo Ricci with his essay "Form, the tangible expression of a reality" in *Man-Made Object* (1966)[53].

With the aim of helping his students acquire the mastery of drawing in two- and three-dimensions, Ricci studied in depth György Kepes' fundamental teaching

51   During his stay in the United States, Ricci wanted to investigate on precise themes he specified in the typescript of the conferences kept in Casa Studio Ricci, in Monterinaldi: these concerned the right place for works of art, the re-integration of the artist in society, and the re-integration of the arts by means of town planning.
In 1952 Leonardo Ricci left Italy to visit his brother Fausto Maria Ricci's house building site after the approval of his project and was invited to a series of four conferences dealing with painting and architecture that confirm his aim to investigate the relationship and the synthesis of the arts. This moment marked the beginning of Ricci's transfer aimed at investigating new approaches to urban design by means of the synthesis of the arts. At the University of Southern California he gave two lectures dedicated both to architecture and painting, respectively titled "An Architect facing the problems of a city" and "Architecture in relation to the other Arts", while, at the Brooklyn College he spoke to the scholars and students of the Department of Philosophy with two further interventions titled "Uomo moderno e città moderna" ["Modern man and modern city"] on November 14 and "The function of art in contemporary art" to the audience of the Department of Philosophy, on November 21. This last conference was also sponsored on the university journal, with the title "Art as an expression". See Cattabriga, "Leonardo Ricci in the United States", 69-80.

52   György Kepes, "The New Landscape in Art and Science", *Art in America*, no. 43 (1955): 34-39. György Kepes, *The New Landscape in Art and Science* (Chicago: Theobald, 1967).

53   Pep Aviles, "Pietro Belluschi and György Kepes. Massachusetts Institute of Technology Cambridge MA USA 1951-1965", *Radical Pedagogies A08*, (2018).

methods at M.I.T.: Professor Kepes taught the "studio work" which foresaw to experience all visual techniques useful for the architects to communicate their design ideas, from photography to collage techniques, combined with History of Art and Architecture. That kind of work fostered the skill of studying formativity: the rhythm of forms, how to reproduce it, drawing the expansion of a form by studying its inherent structure, natural structures and their variations, possible variations in architectural forms, forms, and counter-forms. Those exercises constituted the first important moment in the activities of Leonardo Ricci's courses and became a fundamental learning moment for the students. Ricci's methods could sound unusual for other design courses that were concentrating on the representation of an idea. By correcting and discussing with the students the Visual Design exercises both the professor and the students could trace the features of individual languages, grammars, and ideas, because, as in painting, the sign in the drawing could be translated as an expression of personal philosophical architectural thoughts. The idea was emerging from the drawing, thus from signs, and not *viceversa*[54].

Even though Ricci would have figured out more precisely all Visual Design teaching methods and applications during his first experience at MIT, as he could really get into the discipline there, a typescript kept in Casa Studio Ricci unveils the existence of Ricci's interest in Kepes' Visual Design before his arrival at MIT: a purpose to turn the course of "Plastica ornamentale" into "Visual Design". On October 16, 1959, a short time before leaving Italy to teach in Cambridge, Leonardo Ricci and Giovanni Klaus Koening presented a report to the Dean of the Faculty of Architecture in Florence concerning the teaching of plastic formativity to architects following Kepes' example and wrote a purpose for a new teaching program in that field[55].

In Italy, the subject "ornamental plastic" was a complementary exam in the first two years of the five-year course in architecture, which was considered a preparatory and introductory period to the discipline and had to prepare the students to understand those plastic values typical of sculpture that could be traced in architecture as well. The name "ornamental plastic" came from the conception that plastic decoration coincided with ornament in architectural phenomenology. Therefore, the academy had already attributed in the course title a specific didactic address to the discipline, which did not actually correspond to the right teaching in Ricci and Koenig's opinion.

Ricci and Koenig's report extensively explained how Visual Design and the study of the generation as well as the communicative possibilities of forms were fundamental to architecture, and had to constitute preliminary and not avoidable

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54   These exercises were collected in Leonardo Ricci's essay titled "Ricerche per una urbanistica non alienata" ["Researche for a non-alienated urban planning"] and the final results represent territorial plates like huge infrastructures and sculptures conceived at the territorial scale, models of urban macrostructures. The typescript of the essay is kept in Casa Studio Ricci.

55   Leonardo Ricci and Giovanni Klaus Koenig, "Sull'insegnamento della plastica nelle facoltà di architettura" ["On the teaching of plastic formativity in the courses of architecture"], October 16, 1959, typescript, Casa Studio Ricci. All the quotations from the original Italian typescript included in the present paragraph were done by the author.

steps in the ideation and understanding of a project. The rigid rationalist conception of architecture that refused any decorative element had prevented the material from intervening in any compositional and pre-compositional phase of the architectural project. At the end of the Fifties, a specific function in the formative process of architecture was attributed to plastic: no longer in the sense of "ornament" to a structure but in the sense of a structure that became plastic itself. The spatial configuration through the structure became form and «was enriched with three-dimensional and volumetric values born from the expressive possibilities offered by the structure and materials[56]».

According to Ricci and Koenig, this kind of study on the plastic possibilities of materials was fundamental in architectural teaching and Kepes' Visual Design course, consisting in teaching the students all the possible meanings of lines, space, volumes, colors, dimensions of the elements and the way these combined, the properties of some materials, the ways to treat them, internationally recognized, should have been inserted in the program of the graduate studies reform urging in those years. Ricci and Koenig's purpose about a Visual Design course in the first two years aimed at offering education in plastic education to «creative plastic faculties through historical study and experimental analysis of the properties of forms[57]» and it was divided into four parts: theoretical introduction to the world of forms, history of form teaching in the modern world, exercises on theoretical topics, exercises on materials. Each part retraced the theme of the refusal of predetermined forms and was a translation of what he learnt at MIT.

The first part implied the demonstration of two main thesis: the first general thesis that «each formed form ("Gestaltete Form") [was] not an a priori fact, but a direct consequence of the vision of the world of the creative personality, conditioned by society and in turn conditioning[58]» and that «every particular conformative principle (Byzantine painting, Renaissance architecture, abstract art, advertising art, etc.) [was] the mirror of a particular way of life (custom, society) that [chose] that language of forms as the most suitable for communication than with it wants to carry out[59]». The thesis would have been demonstrated through the historical study of the variations of figurative and architectural languages from the Middle Ages to the contemporary era. The second thesis dealt with the general tendency of art towards abstraction (with all the difficulties of the communicative process that this tendency brought within itself was a consequence of the conditions of the society) as direct consequence of the social conditions. It had to be demonstrated through the analysis of the relationships between contemporary architecture and non-figurative art, especially between Mies van der Rohe's work and Geometric Abstractionism (Mondrian, Van Doesburg), Wright and Phenomenology, Le Corbusier and Cubism, Gropius,

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56   Ricci and Koenig, "Sull'insegnamento della plastica nelle facoltà di architettura" 1.

57   Ricci and Koenig, "Sull'insegnamento della plastica nelle facoltà di architettura", 3.

58   Ricci and Koenig, "Sull'insegnamento della plastica nelle facoltà di architettura", 3.

59   Ricci and Koenig, "Sull'insegnamento della plastica nelle facoltà di architettura", 3.

Breuer, and Organic Abstractionism (Kandinsky, Klee, Pollock), Aalto and Naturalistic Abstractionism (Wirkkala), the last tendencies and the Informal. Once these thesis were demonstrated and assumed that the creation of a form was the logical interpretation of the world, and not of the artist's will, education in the world of forms became a problem of education of the pupil's figurative and sociological world[60]. The second part focused on the teaching of the last theorists of classical teaching as André Lurçart and Le Corbusier, on the first Psychology of form by the founders of the Gestaltheorie (Wohler, Wertheimer and Koffka), its five fundamental and its two general laws, on the attempts to work on psychological implications of forms (Gropius and the Bauhaus), and finally on Max Bill and György Kepes' teachings on plastic visual organization on the basis of the creative image, external forces, the visual and retinal fields, the dimensional field, the painting field, spatial forces, spatial forces fields, internal forces of the image, internal forces fields, the psychological field, the color balance, spatial tensions: dynamic balance, similarities and differences, continuity, interruptions, organization of the optical sequences, rhythms, organization of the spatial progression[61]. For the explanation of the third part of the program Leonardo Ricci and Giovanni Klaus Koenig's purpose directly quoted the American teaching methods as reference on which the exercises of the students had to be elaborated: the students had to compose lines, surfaces, colors, and masses to be guided by them and find the right consequent formal solutions. Therefore, Ricci transferred the MIT teachings methods to his courses in Florence. In the fourth part of the course the students had to exercise on the practical study of the expressive value of some chosen materials: iron, wood, concrete, glass, bricks, and stones. For some materials as wood the study was linked to the type of machine with which it was worked, and finally a study from life had to be carried out on the relationship between different materials such as wood and iron, or stone and brick in an experimental laboratory[62].

Ricci managed to revolutionize the course of Architectural Composition, renaming it Visual Design. The course, set on the integration between art and architecture with an experimental approach, provided as a final result the elaboration of multi-material models, some of which were developed during the

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60   For the first part of the course the bibliographical references were: Pierre Francastel, *Peinture et Societé, Lo spazio figurativo dal Rinascimento al Cubismo* (Torino: Einaudi, 1957); Gillo Dorfles, *Le oscillazioni del gusto* (Milano: Lerici 1959); Charles Morris, *Empirismo scientifico* (Milano: Bompiani, 1958); Giulio Carlo Argan, "Architettura ed arte non figurativa", *La Casa*, no, 6 (1959): 366; Dorfles, *Il divenire delle arti* (Torino: Einaudi, 1959); Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, *Filosofia della musica moderna* (Torino: Einaudi, 1958); Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, *Dissonanze* (Bologna: Feltrinelli, 1959). For the second thesis it was suggested a text to confute: Hans Sedlmayer, *La rivoluzione dell'arte moderna* (Milano: Garzanti, 1957).

61   The basic bibliographical reference for this part was György Kepes, *The Language of Vision* (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1951). The other texts were Le Corbusier, *Le Modulor: essai sur una mesure armonique et l'echelle humaine applicable universellement à la architecture et à la mécanique* (Boulogne: Ascoral, 1951); André Lurçart, *Formes, composition et lois d'harmonie. Elements d'une science de l'esthétique architectural* (Paris: Éditions Vincent, Fréal & C., 1953). For the psychology of form: David Katz, *La psicologia della forma* (Torino: Einaudi, 1950); Giovanni Klaus Koenig, *Elementi di architettura* (Firenze: LEF, 1958). The teaching of Gropius' teaching at the Bauhaus were fundamental for his studies on reality and illusion, unconscious reactions, the mechanism of human vision, optical illusions, psychological influences of forms and colors, relativity, human scale, relations of distance, space and time, the existence of changing, the common denominator of composition. All these issues were included in Walter Gropius, Scope of Total Architecture (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955): Italian edition: Walter Gropius, *Architettura integrata* (Milano: Mondadori, 1959).

62   Ricci and Koenig, "Sull'insegnamento della plastica nelle facoltà di architettura", 1-6.

cultural exchanges organized by Ricci among the students of PSU and the faculty of Architecture of Florence. They consisted in a series of polimateric models by applying an experimental approach, between architecture and art, and worked on the most famous "Model for an Integrated Town", also known as "MODEL I: Harbor-center with water-sea-earth communication routes", exhibited at the Montréal Expo of 1967, and required by the Centre Pompidou several years later for the exhibition "Vision Urbaines" (1992)[63]. Furthermore, Ricci's academic exercises included the direction of Maria Grazia Dallerba's research project[64] titled "Aspetti antro-sociologici degli atti umani" ["Anthro-sociological aspects of human acts"] with the support of Professor Tullio Seppilli, anthropologist and director of the Institute of Cultural Anthropology in Perugia, Professor Fausto Antonini of the Philosophy Department in Rome, and Professor Donald Kent, Dean of the School of Sociology at Pennsylvania State University[65].

The research was conducted at PSU, from 1965 to 1967, it was centered on new models, and aimed at studying all the possible spatial configurations based on human acts and at avoiding the settlements models where the minor economic, administrative-political, cultural, and religious models produced alienation due to zonig. It presented a phenomenological-existential approach and wanted to single out the methods of investigation and verification that could have helped in isolating those factors causing social – collective and individual - alienation. It was conducted thanks to a parallel study of the drawing instruments applicable on the environment[66]. The study was mainly based on the "alienation time" identified with the free time, one of the most important achievements of the mass society. It was intended as «one of the most conspicuous phenomena of the contemporary city, "spare time" - time alienated by definition, both as a result of our socio-economic system, and due to the inadequacy of urban and territorial structures[67]». The analysis of spare time could have highlighted the paradoxes of the contemporary urban structures for contemporary times in function of consumption, physical and social mass mobility, and education[68].

63   See Cattabriga, "Leonardo Ricci in the United States (1952-1972), 107-139 and Cattabriga, "A Project of the Synopia of the Future Integrated City. MODEL I: Harbor-Center with Water-Sea-Earth Communication Routes".

64   Ricci, "Prolusione al corso di Urbanistica II ed Elementi di Composizione", 5, 6.

65   The research and the Institute of Elements of Composition directed by Leonardo Ricci were supported by the CNR in the years 1965-1967. Maria Grazia Dallerba, "Aspetti antro-sociologici degli atti umani", typescript kept in Casa Studio Ricci.

66   Dallerba, "Aspetti antro-sociologici degli atti umani", 1; On the same theme see also Maria Grazia Dallerba, "City planning research at the University of Florence, under the direction of Leonardo Ricci", *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, no. 128 (October-November 1966): 54-56.

67   On the choice of "spare time" as investigation field: Dallerba, "Aspetti antro-sociologici degli atti umani", 36-39 and quotation at page 14.

68   Free time was also the theme of the XIII Triennale di Milano (Palazzo dell'Arte, 1964) . It was the first time that an exhibition faced the «quantitative and qualitative aspects of free time, the role of consumption and the relationship with working time », dealing with sports, entertainment, dance, hobbies, travel, and cinema. On that occasion architecture was working on the world of the mass society, in which time was sectorialized, the "working time" was the opposite of "spare time". What really interested Ricci and Dallerba's investigation was "lifetime" in its anthropological, technological, social, and psychological aspects. *Tredicesima Triennale di Milano* (Milano: Arti grafiche Crespi, 1964); *Milano. Centro Culturale San Fedele, I problemi umani del tempo libero: tavola rotonda organizzata dal Centro Culturale S. Fedele e dal Centro Studi Sociali in occasione della XIII Triennale di Milano* (Milano: Centro Culturale S. Fedele, 1964). See also: https://triennale.org/archivi-triennale/13 (last accessed December 22, 2020).

According to Corinna Vasič Vatovec, from the academic year 1964/1965, the Visual Design course officially took the name of "Ornamental Plastic"[69] and Leonardo Ricci remained the appointed professor of the course until October 1, 1967 without receiving any payment for his teaching. After him, his friend architect and artist Dusan Vasič, who was his extraordinary assistant, took over him. From February 1, 1964 Leonardo Ricci became the chairman of the course of Elements of Composition and director of the Institute of Elements of Composition until 1967. Later he moved to the Institute of Urban Planning as a professor in charge from 1 November 1966 and then full professor from 1 February 1967. He assumed the direction of the Institute from 1966 until 1973, the year of his resignation.

Eco's introductory lectures on Visual Communication were centered on the concept of sign, on its generation and generative power as well as on the istances of Visual Design and Gestalt as they tried to outline the connection between object, sign and function, which revolved the questions about how architectural objects communicate or do not communicate, what they communicate and whether or not they were conceived to communicate, if they were designed to communicate. The analysis develop in the connection between object, sign and function some publications of the last Fifties and Sixties dealt with such as Cesare Brandi's *Eliante o Dell'Architettura* (1956), and *Segno e Immagine* (1960), the already quoted Gillo Dorfles' *Simbolo, comunicazione, consumo* (1960), Giovanni Klaus Koenig's *Analisi del linguaggio architettonico* (1964), and Cesare Brandi's *Struttura e Architettura* (1968) have sought such an answer and must be considered as they anticipated Eco's work[70].

Eco expressed the difficulty to specify what "code" meant in architecture since a code was usually made up of a set of signs, among which an infinite set of relationships could be established, which in turn could generate infinite messages as those principles ruling megastructures did according to the notion of continuous and infinite growth.

One of the sectors in which Semiology was most challenged by the reality on which it tries to take hold is that of architecture[71]. For the Florentine Eco, Semiology was the science capable of studying all cultural phenomena as systems of signs and, among them, Architecture, despite the fact that what he calls the "objects" of architecture pose a challenge to Semiology since they apparently function but do not communicate. In his volume, Eco argues instead that this is only an appearance because architecture communicates and is definable as a fact of communication.

According to Eco, we enjoy architecture as a communicative phenomenon without excluding it from meeting functional needs. And of each architectural

69   Corinna Vasič Vatovec, Leonardo Ricci. Architetto "esistenzialista" (Firenze: Edifir, 2005), 35, 36.

70   See Brandi, *Eliante o Dell'Architettura*; Cesare Brandi, *Segno e Immagine* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1960); Dorfles, *Simbolo, comunicazione, consumo*; Giovanni Klaus Koenig, *Analisi del linguaggio architettonico* (Firenze: Libreria Ed. Fiorentina, 1964); Brandi, *Struttura e Architettura*; Eco, *La Struttura Assente*.

71   Eco, *La Struttura Assente*, 283.

element, both denotation and connotation are possible. The theory of denotation and connotation was recalled by Eco on the base of Barthes and Hjelmslev's studies[72].

Denotation has an intensive character, as it works either if an architectural element directly fulfils a function or if it suggests its past or possible function. It determines the function to which a form immediately refers, the form of the object should make the function possible and denote it clearly enough to make it desirable and easy[73].

Connotation, on the other hand, is extensive; in this case, in addition to the "first" function it refers to multiple meanings (for the cave, for example, in addition to that of shelter also those of family, nucleus, security, fear…). The object of use is, under communicative species, the signifier of the exactly conventionally denoted meaning that is its function. Of a building the denotative function is dwelling, of a window making light. But the form of these windows, their number, their arrangement on the façade (portholes, louvers, curtain walls…) does not only denote a function; it refers to a certain conception of dwelling and use, that is, it connotes an overall ideology that has presided over the operation of architecture. For Eco, all architectural solutions can be labelled within denotative and connotative semiological cages; and even if an architect presented something formally or typologically unprecedented, this would not be comprehensible until it finds a comparable function and name that allows for its labelling. While denotations are almost immutable, connotations are unlimited and can always be added. Some take precedence even over denotation[74].

To Eco, in architecture one can identify syntactic codes, proper to the structural parts, and semantic codes, which identify the contents of the architectural elements. The former concern the architectural structure and healthy beams, floors, vaults, arches, or pillars …It is possible to compose a list of these early "elements" which are the elements of the old Architectural Composition, the elementary parts listed in the architect's and surveyor's manuals. They are the "notes" of architecture, which must be composed to give expressive force. Semantic codes are of two types: architectural elements and typological genres. The former are divided into primary functions, the significant elements of architecture, secondary or symbolic functions, the decorative ones and the ideological ones of living as the rooms division into public and private spaces. The second, typological genres, are social types of buildings or spatial types as round plan temple or Latin cross churces.

This semiotic machine allowed, according to Structuralists, to describe any architecture of all times outside of personal, psychological or historicist

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72   On Louis Trolle Hjelmslev's studies on Linguistics and signification theories: Louis Trolle Hjelmslev, *Principes de grammaire générale* (Copenaghen: Høst, 1928), Italian edition: *Romeo Galassi and Massimiliano Picciarelli*, eds., *Principi di grammatica generale*, introduction by Tullio De Mauro (Bari, Levante, 1998), and Louis Trolle Hjelmslev, *I fondamenti della teoria del linguaggio* (Torino, Einaudi, 1968); see also Barthes, *Elementi di Semiologia*.

73   Eco, *La Strutttura Assente*, 300.

74   Eco, *La Strutttura Assente*, 302-304.

interpretations. The same thought permeated Ricci's view on the reuse of architecture for the future city, which mainly consisted in preserving the structures that could host the correct functions suitable to the future human life. To Ricci the ancient city still beared the signs of an ancient civilization, which could seem habitable, but were actually in decay because the values that were the basis of their construction became obsolete and worn out. Similarly, monuments, born to bear witness to life or to be used by men in certain historical periods with other existential values no longer valid today, become like "containers of new needs that should give birth to new types of cities" and "restraining forces to new possible objectifications of reality"[75]. Structuralism and the study of the relations between *connotata* and *denotata* could suggest the second functions of the city and its possible new adaptations against any process of urban decay and obsolescence.

Structuralism was configured as a Purovisibilism at its extreme consequences where the task of the architecture critic became to disassemble the work in order to describe it through the abstract language of Semiotic.

This complex scaffolding generated a variety of reflections, such as that of Maria Luisa Scalvini collected in *Architecture as connotative semiotics*, and also criticism, especially on such a rigid distinction between denotative and connotative aspects, as that of Gillo Dorfles in *Op. Cit.* number 16 in which the author argued that, on the contrary to what is possible in verbal language, the denotative and connotative aspect of architecture were mixed and it was not possible or even convenient to try to distinguish them. Thus, Eco's proposal to distinguish a first (denotative) function and a second (connotative) function, which could coexist or survive each other as appropriate, was discussed, and opened the debate on its possible wholesome acceptance[76].

1968

1968 was the year that completely changed the world when revolutions tried to subvert the established order and threatened it to find new perspectives both in Italy and in the United States. The movement marked every aspect of the social, cultural, and artistic life in the western world[77]. In architecture, the irrup-

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75 Leonardo Ricci, *Città della Terra. Disegno per una urbanistica non alienata*, 74. Unpublished typescript that described his idea of future city titled *The City of the Earth* kept in Casa Studio Ricci.

76 Gillo Dorfles, "Valori iconologici e semiotici in architettura", *Op. Cit.*, no. 16 (Settembre 1969): 27-40.

77 A year of student protests, social upheavals, armed struggles and political ideologies, 1968 was the year in which the mass movements made their value and their voice heard more. The political and social protest made their way through the folds of a changing world. The word "Sessantotto", therefore, which identifies a specific year has started to identify an entire period, which has made history in itself starting from the break with the past. After the Cold War between the US and the URSS in the mid-1960s, the Western world showed economic prosperity and social stability. During the economic recovery more families could afford things that, until a few years earlier, were seen as unattainable luxuries. But under the blanket of stability there was a germ of rebellion. In the long run, the society of that time proved to be provincial and a little bigoted, and revealed its first problems. For a general overview on the revolt: *Documenti della rivolta universitaria* (Bari: Laterza, 1968), Diego Giachetti, *Oltre il Sessantotto. Prima, durante e dopo il Movimento* (Pisa: BFS Edizioni, 1998); 68. Franco Ottaviano, *La rivolta giovane: cronache e documenti* (Roma: Harpo, 2018); Nando Simeone, *1968: la rivolta necessaria: controstoria dei movimenti giovanili in Italia: quando nascono, come si organizzano, perché sono destinati a svolgere un ruolo decisivo sulla scena del conflitto sociale* (Roma: Red Star Press, 2018).

tion of new views and approaches generated movements of reaction, opposition, and conservative trends. On one side there were the updates to the critique of Modernism and attempts to refund the discipline, new fields of theoretical exploration, visionary scenarios of technological utopias, new processes in the architectural practice, while, on the other side, conservative trends that wanted to produce a "return to order" in some fundamental experiences of 1970s to 1980s were taking shape.

Eco's Semiology was being conceived during the contestation period of 1968, when architecture could not be seen as a mirroring device for society, but rather as a contestation tool bearer of change. Any scheme or form previously arranged could not be considered by Eco and Ricci, who were taking part in the revolt on the students' side: they wanted to study open forms to satisfy past, present, and future needs[78]. To Eco architecture as an art would have not only suggested a way of living, but also its possible innovations and radical changes, assuming the risks of all the possible implications[79]. The architect could have accepted the social rules and worked at their service, elaborated and imposed new models of habitat for the same society, or re-designed the existing systems on a new technologically advanced and performing structure. The first attitude was passive against society, the third one was fearful and prudent, while the second one implied the conception of architecture as an art, for which the architect was a producer of history and change. The code to be used to fulfill this second attitude had to be renewed: designers had the words, but they had to formulate a new grammar, a new syntax. They could not do this alone, but with the help of Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, Politics, Economics and all the sciences dealing with human life. Only those disciplines could give architecture the right rules, because other (human) codes had to be considered, architecture could have not changed society with the help of its only rules, they were not enough. Language, painting, music could count on their rules, but architecture should have regulated a system of forms based on needs it did not have any power on. Therefore, the architect could have been considered the last humanistic figure of the contemporary time. He had to think of the collectivity in a total dimension. He had to think as a sociologist, anthropologist, politic, economist, etc.. Architecture's difficulty to be translated into a code was related to the continuous changing reality of the cities and of the society that lived them, in a constant recall of history and with a narrow connection between signifier and meaning.

This idea of openness of the city, or better of an open-ended entity was described in *Opera Aperta.* The notion of openness was based on the interactive relationship between the inputs and the work of art-receiver's world, both at the level of intelligence and perception, in a transaction moment between the act

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78   On the human instinct to revolt against superimposed models and schemes from an anthropological perspective: Desmond Morris, *La scimmia nuda* (Milano: Bompiani, 1968).

79   Architecture for the mass could have referred to ancient models (persuasive power of architecture), imposed models (psychagogic power of architecture), it could be experienced without any attention, it could have contained horrible meanings not even thought by the designer, it could have forced the inhabitants into unloved spaces or allowed them to a total flexibility. Finally, it could have been forgotten in its obsolescence or inserted in the circuit of goods. Eco, *La Struttura Assente*, 331-335.

of perceiving knowing intellectually that brought to education[80]. That moment inevitably affected the fruition of the work of art as well. The focus on the artistic reaction and the investigation on the moments when contemporary art tried to face disorder demonstrated the existence of a new positive attitude towards the breaking of the rules to conceive form.

Ricci lived that attitude both in painting and in architecture, but most of all the difficult condition of the architect in the contemporary world of the Sixties. He lived and suffered this condition and tried to explain it widely in his book *Anonymous (XX century)* from an existential point of view. In the book he declared a general pessimistic view about the architect's possibility to solve the urban crisis of the time but did not avoid applying the solution he had in his mind, leaving the theory of the "City of the Earth" as a testament in the last chapter[81].

The discussion on new methods to shape a form related to the common *Kunstwollen* must be considered to understand Leonardo Ricci's work. The concept of "Open Work" involves Ricci's design method if we think of the possible spatial configurations for the polymateric models he studied at PSU and to the urban solutions acheived with the matrix method.

According to Eco a new hope and the solution for architecture could be found in the new perspective of the open work, which was affecting art in general[82]. Dealing with architecture, in *Opera Aperta* Eco wrote about Frank Lloyd Wright's approach and introduced it as an open work since it was perfectly inserted in a mutual and changing relation with the environment, able to create a lot of new perspectives and an integration between the human and the natural spaces. That architecture was trying to answer to the new problems of coexistence, to offer a new democratic opportunity to act and leave the old social structure for a new possible society. This happened because the matter was the way human beings lived their relationship with the world. Therefore, the way of shaping things was the real reflection of this process. We all could see the solution to the problem of finding the relationship with the environment in a practical result at the structural level[83].

Wright's organic architecture and the conception of architecture as democratic device constituted the main connection between Ricci and Zevi's shared idea of spatial architectural research. Bruno Zevi was an important reader of both Leonardo Ricci and Umberto Eco's reflections: he recognized Ricci's "anonymous architecture" value as he shared with the architect the idea of a spatial architectural research derived from the conception of architecture as democratic device, but the reasons for the theoretical affinity between them lied in the notion of "open work" in architecture Zevi also dealt with in his writing "La

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80   Eco, *Opera Aperta*, 132.

81   Leonardo Ricci, "A Testament", in *Anonymous (XX century)*, 247-254; Bruno Zevi, "Il testamento di un architetto", *L'Espresso*, April 22, 1962.

82   Eco, *Opera Aperta*, 153.

83   Eco, "Introduzione alla prima edizione", *Opera Aperta*, 12-14.

poetica dell' 'opera aperta' in architettura" of 1962[84]. For Ricci and Zevi the "open work" in architecture referred to the open to the continuous changing of life-flow and constantly changed by human experience at the same time[85]. To Zevi, who saw in Expressionist architecture one of the results of the "open work" in architecture[86], Ricci's intervention's strength lied in overcoming the boundaries of the arts and in its being an informal work of art itself[87].

The "open work" could be read and lived out of any prescription on the "right way" to see, against any kind of structuralist vision, recalling Eco's opinion in *La Struttura Assente*. As Ricci's projects were open because they welcomed flexibility and were open to the users' intervention, Zevi focused on the same character as he «expanded the definition of function to include in it the ability of the users to enlarge their habitats according to their needs, so that the function became an important aspect of the "organic" process of the project[88]». Zevi investigated the artistic reaction of contemporary art to face disorder and demonstrate the existence of a new positive attitude towards the breaking of the existing rules to conceive form. He was convinced of the importance of the semantic value of architecture and in the dominance of the spatial dimension in the decoding of a building: internal spatiality was what conveyed meaning instead of functionality, as the voids and hollows constituted the "signified" whereas the exterior the "signifier"[89]. Furthermore, as for Ricci, who wanted to embody an open and unfinished, temporalized and constantly changing design, to Zevi the decoding of the language could happen in the space-time dimension[90] and was irreversibly connected to the interiors. The "operative criticism" that used the semiological approach was extensively confirming this theory.

Ricci and Eco strengthened their ideas on the concept of "open work" by translating it into their common political aims, as they merged their ideas, strong characters, and influence on the students to solve the 1968 revolt at the Faculty of Architecture in Florence that last from January 25 to April 17, 1968.

The students' revolt and the new collective social model, the lifestyle it led for

84   Bruno Zevi, "La poetica dell"opera aperta' in architettura" ["'Open Work' in architecture], *Architettura: cronache e storia*, no. 84 (October, 1962): 362-363. See also Ilaria Cattabriga, "Leonardo Ricci and Bruno Zevi: the Translation of 'Anonymous' and 'Organic' in the 'Open Work'", in *Bruno Zevi. History, Criticism and Architecture after World War II*, eds. Matteo Cassani Simonetti and Elena Dellapiana (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2021), 73-90.

85   Ricci's "anonymous" spatial research was consistent with Bruno Zevi's idea of organic architecture as democratic device, because of their translation in the poetics of the "open work" in architecture. The notions of "open work" and "anonymous architecture" were in line with the refusal of a priori form, particularly evident in Ricci's project of the set-up of the Expressionism Exhibition at Palazzo Strozzi in Florence in 1964 that Bruno Zevi described as an archi-sculpture or "sculpture à habiter". Bruno Zevi, "Sculpture à habiter/In Francia si torna alle caverne", *L'Espresso* (August 28, 1966), then collected in *Cronache di Architettura VI* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1970) 274-277.

86   Bruno Zevi, *Erich Mendelson. Opera Completa* (Milano, Etas Kompas, 1970).

87   Zevi, "Mostra dell'Espressionismo/temporalità antilessicale e sdegno materico", *L'Espresso*, (May 31, 1964), then collected in *Cronache di Architettura V* (Roma-Bari: Laterza: 1971), 318-321.

88   Alicia Imperiale, "Architettura organica come opera aperta", in *Gli Architetti di Zevi. Storia e controstoria dell'architettura italiana 1944-2000* (Roma: MAXXI Quodlibet, 2018), 150.

89   Bruno Zevi, *Verso un'Architettura Organica: saggio sullo sviluppo del pensiero architettonico negli ultimi cinquant'anni* (Torino: Einaudi, 1945), 28.

90   In this concept the sixth invariant of architecture theorized by Bruno Zevi consisted. He called it "termporality of space" and it is explained in the sixth chapter of Bruno Zevi, *Il Linguaggio Moderno dell'Architettura. Guida al codice anticlassico* (Torino: Einaudi, 1973), 51-56.

weeks inside the faculty of Architecture in Florence were consistent with Ricci's idea of collective work experience characterized by the sharing of thoughts and resources and with Eco's idea to be involved in a new type of culture that needed a new kind of intellectual. The revolt suggested the desire for a new lifestyle, so Ricci and Eco understood the students' claims which could have been easily translated into the need for a new design research as well, which could have substituted the obsolete design. Ricci had reflected on what was happening in the international scene as man, architect, artist and, most of all, as educator during his appointment at the UF. His reflections on the 1968 revolt are expressed in several typescript in English kept in Casa Studio Ricci titled "The Bourgeois in revolt against themselves. Cultural revolution in the United States", "The Possible Significance of the Student Revolt", "Cultural Revolution in the United States", "Appunti per un programma"[91], in the answers for an interview Ricci sent to Alfred Friendly for an interview published on the *New York Times*[92]. They are extremely important for three main reasons: they tell us firstly his strong conviction about the importance of the university as the institution which would have been the headquarter for the discussion and the place where students and teachers would have found the solution. Secondly, because it demonstrated the need for the social change the discipline of architecture should have expressed in the following years to build the right environment for the new man[93]. Thirdly because the support to the 1968 revolt and the intention to melt architecture and urban planning found Ricci and Eco's legacy in the view of the Radicals in Italy, who were students of the faculty of architecture of Florence attending Ricci's Urban Design courses and whose names appear among the designers of some analyzed polymateric models for the urban macrostructures[94].

During the students' revolt and the eighty-five days long occupation of the faculty of Architecture the courses were suspended. Professor Giorgio Gori's was the head of the faculty and, during his deanship, to stop the revolt, a General Assembly was instituted. The occupation of the Faculty of Architecture in Florence lasted from January 25 to April 17, 1968, and ended thanks to an agreement reached after numerous meetings of the Faculty Council, during which the documents proposed by the Student Movement in various assembly sessions were evaluated, which produced two concluding motions of the students: motion A, which decreed what the powers of the new General Assembly would be, and motion B, which concerned the reform of the teaching plan on

91   All are kept in Casa Studio Ricci. See also Cattabriga, "Leonardo Ricci in the United States", 238-251.

92   Alfred Friendly Jr., "Cultural revolt urged by Italian professor. Professor coming to U.S. Thinks it Will Be First", *New York Times*, December 17, 1968.

93   This gave voice to numerous experimentations in the redesign of university campuses that involved Architecture, Urban Planning and Sociology. See, as and example: Pietro Bellasi, *Rivolta studentesca e Campus Universitari* (Milano: Franco Angeli Editore, 1968). As Ricci lived part of 1968 in the United States, his project for the Miami-Dade Model Cities Program, downsized to the design of a university campus in Tampa, faced exactly that design program. See Cattabriga, "Leonardo Ricci in the United States", 266-276.

94   The drawings and the pictures of the models are kept in Casa Studio Ricci. To deepen their analysis see Lara-Vinca Masini, *Leonardo Ricci. Progetti di una Architettura per l'uomo del futuro. Un Libro Perduto e Ritrovato 1967-2019* (Pistoia: Gli Ori, 2019), Cattabriga, "Leonardo Ricci in the United States", 108-140; Ilaria Cattabriga, "A Project of the Synopia of the Future Integrated City. MODEL I: Harbor-Center with Water-Sea-Earth Communication Routes", *Histories of Postwar Architecture*, no. 9 (June 2021): 114 - 137.

the division into seminars and groups for the "general sector" or investigation field of architecture and urban planning. The Faculty Council approved the motion "Ricci-Eco "which interpreted, reformulated and accepted, and summarized, the main concepts. The Ricci-Eco Motion[95] was an important document embracing the Movimento Studentesco's requests and accepted both by students and Faculty members only in Ricci and Eco's formulation. The "Motion A" was salso formulated by other scholars as Carmine Jannaco, Demore Quilghini and Domenico Cardini, Marcello Cini and Giovanni Bacciardi with Michelangelo Caponetto. Two purposes were obect of the final assessment and approval: the "Quilghini-Cardini" and the "Ricci-Eco" motions. Even though at the beginning the first one, the so-called "full professors-motion" won with 15 votes against the 7 of the second one, the Ricci-Eco motion was finally accepted because the General Assembly recognized in it the correct formulation and intention of the assembly power. On the contrary, the "Quilghini-Cardini" motion was judged elusive with regard to the Student Movement requests[96].

The motion stated the importance of the Assembly as the institutional place where students and teachers would have discussed together the rising problems. This avoided any acceptance, on the students' side, of any possible other form of assembly of the faculty members. The students were advancing two main requests: to receive a salary as evidence of having the right to study to workers' children, and to avoid academic authoritarism, because it was seen as a tool the capitalistic plan used to obtain precise academic research favouring its dynamics.

The motion recognized the faculty as an "open place" where all the education categories –researchers, scholars, professors, assistants, and students- could have developed the exchange of ideas. The vote was the equal instrument to decide the future of the faculty to establish a democratic and balanced system. This formulation enabled the beginning of a new didactical experimentation at the Faculty of Architecture, organized in "groups" and "seminars".

Professors could have declared their consent or dissent with the general movement or with the single students' purposes. The Faculty Committee would have suggested the possible changes of the Faculty structures and their consistency with the existing laws and, finally, a Technical Committee was appointed to study with the Faculty Committee the convocation mode and operational aspects of the General Assembly[97]. Once approved the motion, the new teaching plan could begin and, on the part of the Faculty Council, it could no longer be refused that the Faculty Council was public, that the agenda of the Faculty Council did not include such topics as to involve, because of their importance, the political-cultural direction of the faculty without first discussing them in

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95   The Ricci-Eco Motion was signed on March 20, 1968, some weeks before the end of the protest, in Florence.

96   Excerpt from the report of the General Assembly, meeting of March 23 1968, document kept in Eco Home Study, 1.

97   The Ricci-Eco Motion was published in Giovanni Bartolozzi, *Nuovi Modelli Urbani* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2013), 16.

the General Assembly. The Faculty Council's task was only to redact decisions made by the General Assembly or to record violations of the new rules. Institute directors could not refuse to conduct full analyses of their institutes' activities and budgets, to be provided to the Assembly, which was to scrutinize the work plans they proposed and take control of the administration of funds.

According to the motion, an administrative secretariat composed of professors and lecturers was to be set up with the task of informing the Assembly of any transgressions, because it was extremely important that the seminaries, could freely meet in groups on the basis of common cultural and political assumptions.

The group was to appoint one out of every ten students, replaceable at any time, to form a permanent "active intermediate" of the faculty students, without any deliberative character, but with functions as a liaison between the Assembly and the groups and to support all activities of the student struggle, within the General Assembly[98].

In the motion, it was proposed to begin a new academic experimentation based on the autonomous choice by groups or seminars of the research to be conducted. The field of research was first identified in three areas: land-use and spatial organization, historical-critical-environmental evaluation, and technological implications referring to a changing society. The research work was to proceed in two main phases: an evaluation of the problems accompanied by the formulation of hypotheses considering the political and cultural framework, and a second phase in which design proposals were to be formulated in the field of Architecture and Urbanism.

Thus, a new course of study was implemented that completely revised the traditional disciplines established by the didactic programs as formulated at the founding of the Faculties of Architecture in Italy, so as to adhere more closely to the problems of contemporary society and to the new approach of the didactic relations between teachers and students, within a more articulated research perspective. The *curriculum* thus became interdisciplinary and overcame the distinction between subjects to facilitate confrontation with the technological, social, cultural, and political phenomena that the architect had to face, identifying new methods and new solutions.

Active participation was required on the part of students, while lecturers were responsible for publishing their work periodically by providing handouts. Lecturers were to activate discussions on the basis of opinions received from students every fortnight, the active intermediate was to periodically assist in processing the professors' materials or refine seminars or groups.

The work done by a seminar, the minimum unit of the university structure consisting of not less than fifteen and not more than twenty-five students,

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98   Excerpt from the minutes of the Faculty Council of Architecture, meeting of June 12, document kept in Eco Home Study, 24-26.

within a group, entitled to the validation of five examinations, to be taken in July or November, chosen by each student excluding those in the science subjects, which remained separate because their integration with the composition or urban planning subjects had to be found. The *curriculum* became official if approved by the General Assembly. It was initially decided to limit the new teaching-science methods to the design, historical-critical and humanities disciplines while the General Assembly decided to keep the same approach for science and technology subjects as well.

For the mentioned subjects, the experimentation aimed to identify new methods to form a new *curriculum* considering a possible departmental reorganization. The students themselves, working with teachers, were to identify topics, hypotheses and methods for a different scientific and educational organization. Boundaries between different subjects had to be overcome to correspond more easily to new content in which the culture of the time demanded renewal, so the teachers' evaluation of the work of the various groups also became crucial to guide this new front.

With the participation of almost all students, the groups actually formed on the basis of the different methodological and operational approaches, and on the choice of each research field. Subsequently, the groups, of varying numerical consistencies, split into seminars to further explore the initial research hypotheses, while other groups split into smaller units.

The dynamics of composition and breakdown into groups and seminars fostered the permeability intended by the new experimental teaching plan; students spontaneously grouped according to their ideological and cultural components, activating their participation in debates, thus facilitating their evaluation in the content expressed and methods. Once the topics of study of each group were specified following the debates, and the relationships between faculty and student body were thus intensified when students approached teachers according to their specific expertise to obtain proper methodological and didactic guidance. External consultants were also invited to intervene in the fields not included in the faculty's *curriculum*, and this made clear from the outset the new disciplines with which the figure of the contemporary architect had to interface and new cultural horizons to be known. In fact, the field of intervention contemplated dimensional scales ranging from territorial settlement and the creation of urban macrostructures to microstructures of industrial elements.

The groups and seminars were structured according to a "vertical" logic, so students from the various years of the course could participate in each one, each student was evaluated in the examination both on the work done in the groups on the basis of summary reports written at various times of the course of the activities in relation to the various research topics, statistical analyses, graphs, photographic materials, videos and drawings, both individually with

questions about the content addressed[99]. In an Excerpt from the minutes of the June 12, 1968, Faculty of Architecture Council meeting, after the experimentation had begun, it is possible to read Ricci and Eco's close comments on the management and operation of the experimental teaching program initiated, which proposed a "self-monitoring" of each group on student attendance, which periodically had to communicate its composition and the number of students attending (Ricci) as well as the appointment of an instructor with the functions of coordination for each group (Eco). Eco insisted on in-depth research of the categories of information to be provided to students, while Ricci on the importance of the constant, present and high-profile commitment of the faculty. These, while on the one hand were not to be discriminated by students because of their political positions, on the other hand they were to offer the research groups a high teaching profile[100]. The main difficulty was setting research topics on new bases, to be evaluated by traditional methods, a gap that the faculty asked the Ministry to fill, after making proposals on the matter[101].

At the end of the experiment, in July-August 1968, a new *curriculum* was proposed, and Ricci presumably contributed to its final preparation with his unpublished text "Appunti per un programma" ["Notes for a program"], preserved at Casa Studio Ricci, which will be discussed below.

Ricci and Eco's intention to change university and society succeeded in the activation of a new program Ricci precisely described in "Appunti per un programma", in which he systematized possible interventions and requests from students, professors, workers and government forces. He thought of a total reorganization of the Italian society[102], of a systematization of the existing forces for the mass society instead of the bourgeois one. The system was conceived in function of the political ideas: it was composed of the students and assistants that, as professors, belonged to different factions. Nonetheless, their ideas had to concur to the final asset of the faculty. Therefore, Ricci's purpose was to identify three reference figures inside the faculty to assist the dean: one professor for the external political issue, one for the internal, and one for the programs[103]. Ricci suggested to elect mixed commissions of students, assistants, and professors to face each single problem by using all the existing forces, helped by an efficient secretary office for the administrative and legal procedures. All the universities should cooperate for the correct functioning of the society, so a further

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99   It was Koenig who gave a precise definition of a synthesis report that was to be articulated, in Architecture, in ideological report with proposals for changes at the political level, urban planning with proposals for land use planning and zoning, architectural with design proposals for new architectural buildings, and design with design proposals for new objects. Excerpt from the minutes of the Faculty Council, Meeting of January 17, 1969, document kept in Eco Home Study,.

100   Excerpt from the minutes of the Faculty Council, Meeting of June 12, 1968, document kept in Eco Home Study, 3-4.

101   Excerpt from the minutes of the Faculty Council, Meeting of November 26, 1968, document kept in Eco Home Study.

102   Leonardo Ricci, "Appunti per un programma", undated typescript (approximately July 1971, since the academic year was going to begin on next November 5th, when Ricci had already been elected to the Faculty of Florence deanship). The typescript is introduced by a short letter addressed to the audience and it is kept in Casa Studio Ricci.

103   Ricci, "Appunti per un programma", 2.

system made of the faculty of architecture with the other courses would have helped to solve the situation, if common goals were identified. Moreover, the didactical roles, often confused among teachers, assistants, and professors, were sometimes combined, and coupled, but this affected the clear structure of the faculty and caused misunderstandings about the salaries and roles. Often the intermediate level teachers lacked because only the roles of assistants and enrolled professors were clear: the right way to follow was to include them in the faculty decisions.

The government should have allowed the dialogue with the university and fostered the contact between university and society, the main laboratory of university, and, most of all, of architectural or urban studies, where all architecture students and professor should have worked. The bureaucratic (political power), industry (economic power), and university (cultural power) could have worked together on the verifiable models mirroring the real society. Starting from this hypothesis, architecture students, assistants and Professors could have been considered workers of the society and nothing would have differentiated them from factory workers: university and factory workers were all workers, university would have found a dialogue with the workers class, and everyone could have been considered equally, men with the same needs, feelings and with a role in the society, by using Ricci's words, «to eliminate the difference between theory and practice[104]». All would have become workers for a unique factory: Ricci wrote a program for the Tuscany Region, which could have been used as a model to be expanded to the entire society[105].

Ricci and Eco's ideas especially influenced the radical criticisms of the design of modern architecture by Archizoom, Superstudio, and UFO[106] founded by students of Ricci and Savioli's courses in contact with Claudio Greppi, a student of the faculty of Architecture of Florence and militant of the "working class" Florentine group. They would have elaborated their own visions of architecture within the debate on the relationship between capitalism and architecture and on the phenomenon of massification.

The UFO were in direct contact with Eco and in their activity and in Hjelmslev's original understanding of "usage" as the social realization of language, by its insistence on the primacy of connotative systems recovery, Eco's "Appunti per una semiologia delle comunicazioni visive"'s legacy relies. On June 24, 1968, the city of San Giovanni Valdarno opened its sixth edition of the "Premio di pittura Masaccio" with a performance by eight students from the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Florence, grouped under the English acronym U.F.O. titled *Superurbeffimero n. 7,* result of a collaboration between Eco and his

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104   Ricci, "Appunti per un programma", 2.

105   Ricci, "Appunti per un programma", 2-4.

106   The UFO were in in direct contact with Eco and, On 24 June 1968, the city of San Giovanni Valdarno opened its sixth edition of "premio di pittura Masaccio" with a performance by eight students from the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Florence, grouped under the English acronym U.F.O.2Titled *Superurbeffimero n. 7,* it was in fact the last of the Urboeffemeri, a series of happenings performed regularly in Florence since the month of February.

students during his tenure at the Florentine Faculty of Architecture. It was the last of the *Urboeffemeri*, a series of happenings performed regularly in Florence since the month of February[107].

To conclude, Ricci and Eco collaboration can be certainly seen as an important application of a research in Architecture and Semiology, or better, in Urban Semiology, even though it was never seen as such. It could better represent an example of collaboration between an architect and a semiologist, as maybe further examples could be found in Italian and foreign historiography. Roland Barthes firstly recognized in Kevin Lynch's research the most important example of urban semiology experiment, as he tried to narrow the semiological urban problems in the moment he thought to investigate the perceptual form of the city in its users' mind. More in detail, Lynch's purpose to elaborate a method to understand and operate on the urban context starting from its voids, intended as readable spaces, from the "imageability" of its elements, the main semantic categories, constituted a semiological study of the city. The most significant problem in this kind of studies emerged, to Barthes, when a more "gestaltic" approach overcame the structural one, so that Urban and Visual Design melted to such an extent that they were not separable. In the same way, Ricci's work took into consideration both disciplines, but reached his highest results in teaching and theory, which were more effective than in practice. The collaboration with Eco found its best expression not in a design project but in the political action, and in teaching aims.

The reasons of this maybe lie in what Barthes portrayed as the difficulties of the reading of a city as a system of signs. Indeed, to Barthes the difficulty to design cities perfectly fitting the imaginary of its inhabitants and the symbols of a precise culture, was due to different contrasts: the contrast between functions of a part of the city, and its semantic content, to the conflict between the functions of contemporary life and its history semantic charge, to the contrast between the process of signification and the idea that each urban element should be recovered and maintained in the urban renewal.

The city is a text made of marked and non-marked elements that create a signification rhythm, made of the opposition, alternance and justapposition of marked and non-marked elements, to be respected. One last conflict exists between the signification and the charts objectivity: two neighborhoods can express two different second meanings, so they split in the city image: the signification is enlived in complete opposition to the given objectivities.

Semiology could have offered a new scientific support to overcome the metaphorical understanding of the city in favor of the description of the signification process. Barthes' suggestion we could maybe consider at present, would be not to analyze single neighborhoods nor to isolate them from the rest of the city, but to treat them as microstructures, semantically differentiated, to be studied before relating them to the macrostructure. This must be done by assuming

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107   Wolf, "Superurbeffimero n. 7".

that no definitive meaning and no definitive, asbsolute image or morphological results can exist, but each "signifiers" are "significants" for the previous ones and viceversa in an infinite metaphorical chain, the main object to be investigated, the design process and the relevant metaphorical chain, is inevitably linked to its possibility to be read, in its "imageability". As Barthes inferred, once the code of the city is worked out, the scientific method of urban semiology coud be defined in the analysis of syntax, and significant units "one can collect as fragments of a statement to actualize them in secret"[108].

Therefore, also the concept of "open work" had a fundamental importance because it suggested the possibility to give different interpretations of the same concept or of a single experimentation in the architectural research, avoiding, firstly the imposition of a form, but accepting, on the contrary, that the starting point was the research around a problem to solve: the project consisted in the process to achieve the result and not in the result. As Giovanni Michelucci had suggested several years before, the form was in the research, the results in the different solutions, interpretations[109]. Ricci's projects for a "Theoretical House", for the exhibitions "La Casa Abitata" and "Espressionismo: pittura scultura architettura", for the Arno Valley, and for the Miami Model Cities Plan, designed for different scales of intervention, were perfect examples of this guiding principle[110].

The question is indeed where the research aims and the final form is achieved. Semiology gives the answer, because it never admits the achievement of a final meaning and «in any cultural, or even psychological complex, we are faced with infinite metaphorical chains whose meaning is always deferred or becomes signifier itself[111]». Therefore, as Ricci also maintained in the tenth chapter of the unpublished *Città della Terra* titled "Antico e nuovo"[112] or in his speech to the INU conference in Lucca ten years before[113] and in several further occasions, the process is one and continuous in history. In it, different results according to the historical needs, are reached, and none of them is definitive. Therefore "filling the structure" was not the first goal of urban design, but rather to go along with the structure, because it had a longer life than the living units or facilities it had to host. The designed form had to fit the movement of the human fluxes across history.

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108   Barthes, "Sémiologie et Urbanisme", 11-13. Quotation at page 13, original text: "l'usager de la ville (ce que nous sommes tous) est un sortre de lecteur qui, selon ses obligations et ses déplacements, prélève des fragments de l'énoncé pour les actualiser en secret".

109   As Giulio Carlo Argan had stated in *Progetto e Destino* (Argan, *Progetto e Destino*), history, as a cyclical deceit, was the first responsible for the open form since it had always been leaving space for the design of the developing urban and architectural models. Furthermore, a particular reading of this was given by Roland Barthes in Semiology, and here lies the importance of the connection between Semiology and Architecture to understand the meaning of "open work" in Leonardo Ricci's work. (See also Roland Barthes's text, in Itania, "Semiologia e Urbanistica", *Op. Cit.*, no. 10 (1967)),

110   The connections between Architecture and Semiology were also studied by Koenig, *Analisi del Linguaggio Architettonico*.

111   Barthes, "Semiologia e Urbanistica", quoted in Eco, *La Struttura Assente*, 318.

112   Ricci, Città della Terra, unpublished, 195-212.

113   Leonardo Ricci's intervention at the INU conference is kept in Casa Studio Ricci and was published in "Il Convegno dell'INU a Lucca", *Bollettino Tecnico degli Architetti e Ingegneri della Toscana* (December 1957): 3-5.

In art the aim of informal painting was precisely to suggest more than one single interpretation of a painting, as novels that did not tell only one event or one plot. That was informal painting's purpose Ricci also explored to ground and give significance to his research: the informal in painting dealt with a communicative project to be embodied in one single form to be efficient and which had to be characterized by the most important feature: opening. This was the main feature of a proper work of art. There could be a plenty of forms realizing a value, but they could not be aesthetically understood, explained, and judged without referring to the initial value. This was the second grade of opening the contemporary art aimed at, it meant a multiplication of the possible meanings of a message and, by means of this, the implicit increasing of information[114] which featured a possible total work of art made of collective contributions: the city.

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114   Eco, *Opera Aperta*, 157-159, 178-182.

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