

Ca' Romanino. A Dialogue among Architecture, Philosophy and Landscape

Ca' Romanino, tentative architecture, Giancarlo De Carlo, landscape, Urbino

/Abstract

This research approaches an interpretation of Ca' Romanino. Understood as a dialectic and a priori "spur-of-the-moment" *opera*, Ca' Romanino is developed among landscape, architecture and philosophy. It was built in 1968 in Urbino by Giancarlo De Carlo for his friend, the philosopher Livio Sichirollo. It is an architecture that allows communication through the articulation and form of physical space. It is a "round table" based on dialectics where architecture is projected. This timeless project is a dialogue among those who dwell in it, encouraging reflection and reciprocity, and those who visit it, understanding it and interiorizing it only if one lives it.

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Introduction: The inhabited wall of Palazzo Ducale in Urbino.

Urbino is surrounded by a drastic topography which makes the landscape of the Marche and the river Metauro as perimeter protagonists. Location, orography and geography build an organic dialogue of architecture with the landscape. Landscape is the protagonist in the work of the architect of the Italian Renaissance *Quattrocento*, Francesco di Giorgio Martini (1439 - 1502 Siena), who was the career “travelling companion” and inspiration¹ of Giancarlo De Carlo (Genoa 1919 - Milan 2005), according to the Genoese architect who expressed:

“During my long activity in architecture, I have often had to deal with Francesco di Giorgio. Perhaps he is the architect who has had the most influence - I would rather say: he has exerted the most stimulus - on my way of designing²”.

Francesco Di Giorgio Martini (FDGM) designed a city integrated in a “building”, the Palazzo Ducale of Urbino. He articulated and integrated an inhabited wall (figure 1 and 2). This wall is a fundamental reference to understand the section architecture of Giancarlo De Carlo (GDC). Moreover, De Carlo said about Francesco Di Giorgio:

(...) The Treatise, which I read and reread especially when I needed to run in some of my harsh and rigid hypotheses, I find it one of the most interesting books on architecture: the only one that proposes a synergistic goal to the conception of built space and the only one that, through the concatenated search for models that take on meaning when they are deformed to adhere to circumstances, makes it clear what the “concinnitas” of which Alberti mysteriously said is³.

As mentioned before, the inhabited wall is a structural space and a *mirador*⁴. The wall openings do not correspond with the empty or the full ones, there is no purpose correspondence between the exterior and the interior. The window frames are not an isolated element but integrated, they create meeting spaces in different spatial configurations always oriented to the landscape, allowing a continuous connection between spaces, where the wall is no longer a limit but an encounter with the internal atmosphere, the intrinsic of the wall and the external are a space in transition. As De Carlo himself points out:

“(...) and again about the Hanging Garden, its miracle is perhaps not precisely in the configuration of the fronts that end it and in that magical wall - the amazing relationship of voids in the miro - that filter the nature in the Palace and the ‘Palazzo nella natura’?⁵”. [Fig. 1]

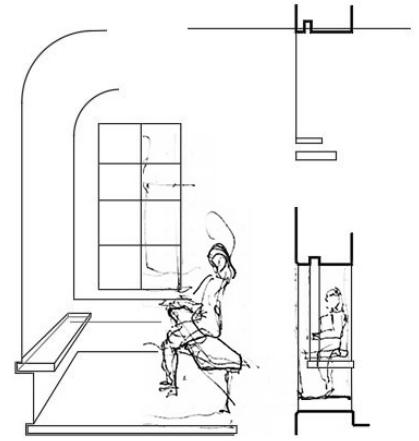
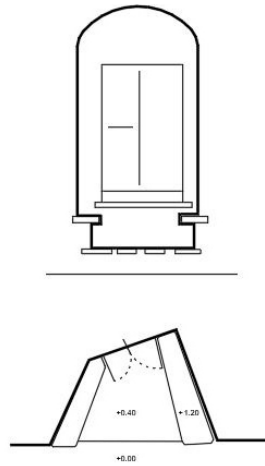
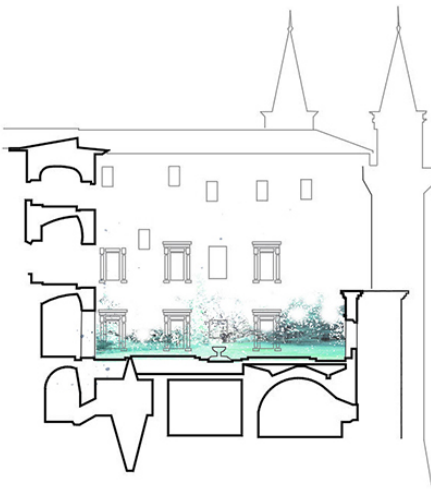
1 GDC, “Gli spiriti del Palazzo Ducale,” in *Gli spiriti dell'architettura*, ed. L. Sichirollo (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1992), 341.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 “Mirador” in Giancarlo De Carlo and Franco Bunčuga, *Conversazioni su architettura e libertà* (Milan: Elèuthera, 2000), 26. According to the RAE the word “mirador” means: 1. That Looks through. 2. Corridor, gallery, pavilion or roof to extend the view. 3. A place well situated for contemplating a landscape or an event.

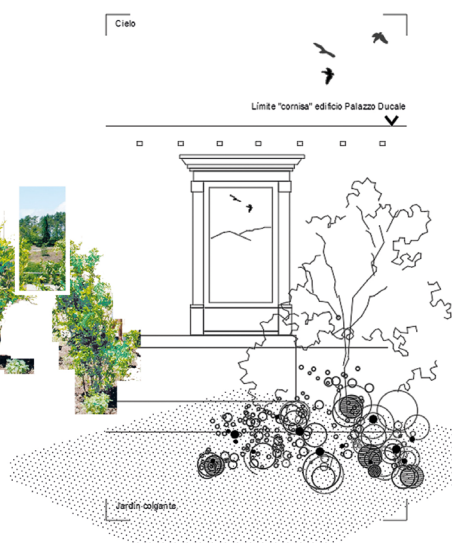
5 Ibid., 348.



1

In the Palazzo Ducale, as in the monastery of Santa Chiara, the hanging gardens and their “tectonic frames” (figure 2) are a metaphysical space, abstract and difficult to understand, thus sublime. From the outside, the ‘windows are hollow’, there are no carpentries. It is the void of what hypothetically simulates a window, so they seem to house a void. From the inside, more than twenty meters above ground level, the garden frames the landscape, being a succession of integrated landscape-architecture scenography in a continuous envelope. The windows here are once again a place, once again a frame to Urbino. The *Urbinate* continuous materiality is based on the use of the brick masonry in all plans of the urban space, from the street to the façade, creating a *continuum*. In the urban fabric, the detail between the two solid stone bands that run along the pavement of the brickwork streets is the key. It is in that same detail that the water of the tectonic topography is collected in a longitudinal line along all the 20 cm wide sloping streets running through and carving the entire public space, creating a perfect artificial topography within the Urbino slope. [Fig. 2]

Between two narrow streets framing the landscape, one finds a constant glance at the vineyards and the exterior of Urbino, or its constellation of hanging gardens, whose gaze will be the object of “spaces in the air” in De Carlo, both in the university city projected in the same city and its urban plan (1958-1994)⁶,



2 |

Fig. 1

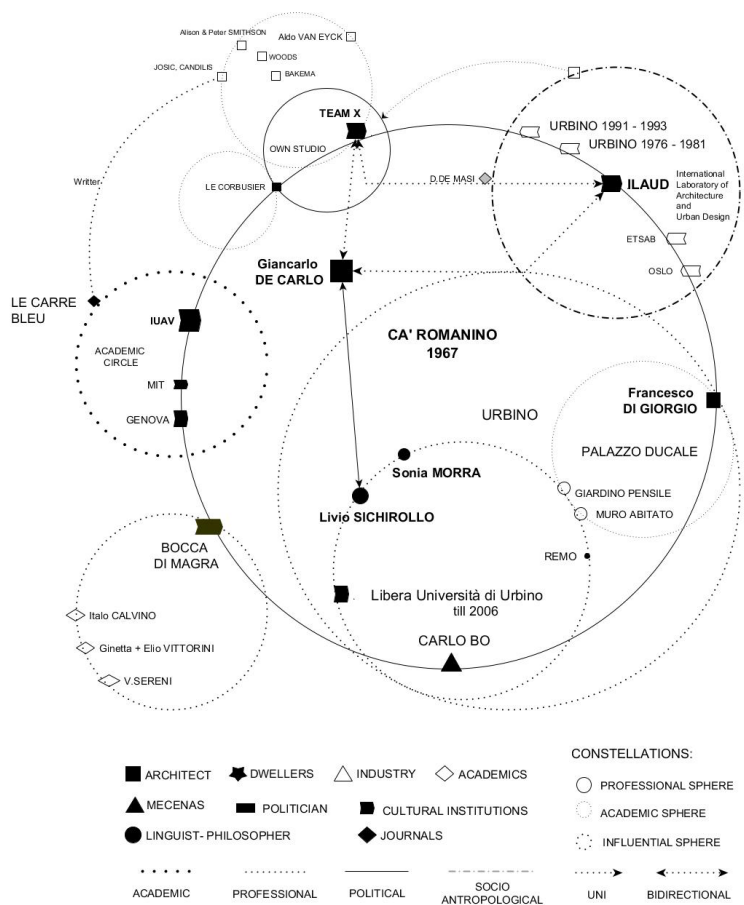
Section through “*Giardino Pensile*” and its empty and full wall in the Palazzo Ducale of Urbino. Source: Drawing by the author from a visit to Urbino.

Fig. 2

Hanging gardens and landscape frames on the “magic wall” of Urbino. Photograph of the “*Giardino Pensile*” trapezoidal of the Palazzo Ducale of Urbino. Source: Collage-drawing by the author.

⁶ Giancarlo De Carlo, *Urbino: la storia di una città e il piano della sua evoluzione urbanistica* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1966).

as in Ca' Romanino (1967-1968) or the Nuovo Villaggio Matteotti in Terni (1969-1974). These three contemporary works carried out in a similar period, with different landscapes and scales, use common project strategies without disciplinary division by metric scales. The design laboratory adopted by GDC consists of timeless lessons: from the dialectical and harmonic challenge between the past represented by FDGM and the future of GDC, articulation of streets in the air, continuous realistic tectonics, frames to the landscape, hanging gardens, challenges between mass and void, "Raumplan", light manipulation or geometric distribution in a changing "system" studied as a tentative approach. De Carlo masters the use of light in a great variety of dispositives (see figure 9), from windows oriented to different skylights till dynamic lights distributed in the whole raumplan space. In Urbino's laboratory, GDC displays the entire repertoire of architectural devices with no limit of imaginaries.



3

Ca' Romanino and its tectonics.

Ca' Romanino⁷ (from "Romanin la cima"⁸ or Casa Sichirollo), is located between Castello di Cavallino and Urbino itself (figure 4 and 5). It was designed by the architect Giancarlo De Carlo for his friends Livio Sichirollo⁹ and Sonia Morra. The house, an ode to the landscape of the vineyards of Urbino, was completed in the time frame of 1967-1968 when the Nuovo Villaggio Matteotti in Terni¹⁰ was in the process of construction under an innovative and pioneering participatory process. [Fig. 3]

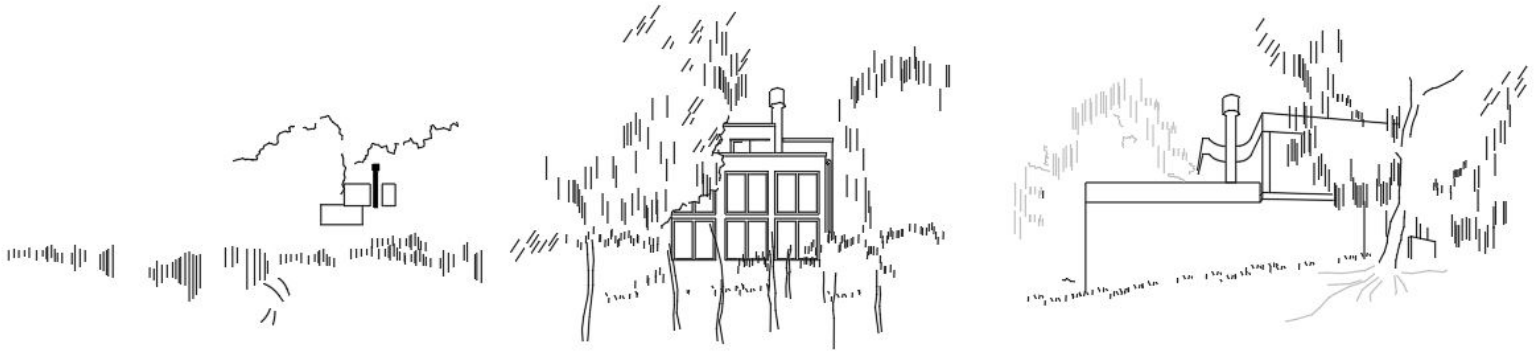
7 A work in which the "clients" (in this case friends) decide to give absolute freedom to design. In this case the participation is transferred in its entirety to the architect, with the only final requirement of a kitchen at the request of Mrs. Morra. This request will allow a greater final expression of the eyes to the landscape.

8 Associazione Culturale Ca' Romanino, *Ca' Romanino una casa di Giancarlo De Carlo a Urbino* (Urbino: Argalia, 2010), 17.

9 Professor of History of Philosophy at the University of Urbino and Professor of Philosophy at Urbino. Livio Sichirollo, philosopher and politician enrolled in the Italian Communist Party, was also part of the department of Urbanism of Urbino. Correspondence consulted in the Archivio IUAV (Università Luav di Venezia, Archivio Progetti, fondo Giancarlo De Carlo). 05.11.2018.

10 Virginia De Jorge Huertas, "Mat-hybrid housing: Two case studies in Terni and London," *Frontiers of Architectural Research*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (2018): 276-291. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foar.2018.05.002>

Fig. 3 Constellation showing different spheres in relation to Ca' Romanino and Giancarlo De Carlo. Source: Own elaboration from the reading of references and field work in Urbino.



“Verde que te quiero verde”¹¹.

Ca' Romanino is a masterpiece hidden and immersed in the landscape of Urbino, it dialogues with the landscape melting with it or framing it according to the adopted strategy. The Malaparte House by Adalberto Libera and Curzio Erich Suckert (Malaparte) dialogues in the landscape of Capri. However, the first hides submerged and integrated like a labyrinth and opens from the inside and the second, hides in a hermetic symmetrical box, in its linear distribution to the Tyrrhenian Sea like a cataclysm from the outside. However, both of them are situated high up in the topographic landscape, like a water island or a land island, are brilliant examples and alliances of reciprocity with the landscape and the architecture of the first and second part of the 20th century respectively.

The house in Urbino is a perfectly articulated tectonic piece inserted into the landscape as if it were coming out from it, where technique and lyric find their ultimate rendezvous point. The house is not an interior nor an exterior. It is a continuous space, it is landscape. It is a wall inhabited by reinforced concrete and brick masonry, with forceful geometric features and at the same time subtle, integrated into the topography and the vineyards [Fig. 4].

Among the countless elements or devices (figure 7 and 9) are the chimney¹², the debate space, the garden terrace, the street in the sky, the boat stairs, the circular “democratic studiolo”¹³ with round table¹⁴, the skylights of dreams¹⁵, the hiding places behind him, the house in the tree inside the house, the landscape

11 Federico Garcia Lorca, “Romance sonámbulo” (Poem to Gloria Giner and Fernando de los Ríos) in *Romancero Gitano*. Giancarlo De Carlo exposes: “I will tell you that my curiosity for Spain has passed not only through the events of the civil war but also through poetry: Federico García Lorca, Antonio Machado, Pedro Salinas, Rafael Alberti”, in De Carlo, *Conversazioni su architettura e libertà*, 27.

12 A space treated not as an isolated element but as a “place”, as also happens in the house-workshop for Giuseppe Zigaina in Cervignano del Friuli in Udine in 1958, project realized in collaboration with the architect Matilde Baffa and the light outside reflection vs refraction with the inside, from Frank Lloyd Wright as indirect reference.

13 The “studiolo democratico” designed by De Carlo, in contrast with the Studiolo of Montefeltro, shows signs of intentional physical space distribution in a way that everyone is equal at the table. In fact, the “studiolo” in Ca Romanino is both designed with a circle table and the whole structure circle. The circular bench and the physical space itself are configured around a cylinder. Thus, this space does not create boundaries but rather dilutes the limits of physical space built through two “windows of contemplation” into the landscape, from floor to floor. The “studiolo democratico”, not only blurs the limits around the dualism interior-exterior, but also supports the dissolution of the limits that would have been around the dialectic.

14 He also projected in Collegio del Colle di Urbino (1966) with practically circular or anti-hierarchical spaces, always with freedom of choice.

15 The sleeping rooms, or the relaxation space have beds and on top of them are small inverted bell-shaped skylights from which it is possible to appreciate the sky, the passing of seasons, night and day. They are dream skylights.

Fig. 4
Ca' Romanino, Ode to the landscape. The first sketch shows the unavoidable interpretation of the landscape with the vineyards. The second sketch represents the introspection into the landscape of architecture. The third sketch represents the two volumes rotated 90° with respect to themselves and integrated with the pre-existing trees. Source: Line drawings by the author.

inside¹⁶, around and outside Ca' Romanino. Figure 7 represents the hypothesis of a kinetical idea behind Ca Romanino. The interest of De Carlo towards cinema is clear from its collaboration in the short films realized for the X Triennale di Milano in 1954.

The elements are analyzed almost like platonic geometric figures inserted in a spontaneous matrix, the square and the circle, which will be repeated throughout the length and depth of Ca' Romanino. The physical environment can thus be spontaneously reorganized according to the Genoese architect himself ¹⁷.

“Platonic state”: The square and the circle.

The research of a method and not of a form is the rigour with which, as Manfredo Tafuri¹⁸ manifests, one could restore credibility in the discipline together with the tectonic elegance of the *Facoltà di Legge* of Urbino or the residence of students. In that method, the square plan as a spontaneous matrix is based on a constant module of 90x90cm¹⁹. Ca' Romanino is a sum of a previous structure and a new input respecting the existing nature, trees and landscape (figure 5). It is an interconnected and articulated labyrinth always focused on the landscape of Urbino. Its multiplicity of levels in the manner of “Raumplan loosiano” is isolated and integrated into the topography. There are more than six levels in the space, not built by plants through connections and visuals. Ca' Romanino has a multiplicity of accesses and voices. It allows a wide range of tentative scenarios. The user has freedom of choice and many possibilities²⁰ to get access to the house. One of them, oriented towards the Northeast (figure 5), is a Roman entrance in a sublime straight line 90 cm wide and around 8 meters long. An entrance to the hyogenous world. [Fig. 5]

The choice is free²¹. You can enter from the sky or from the “hell”, both are an excellent cinematographic *scenario*. You can choose between going through the transition and the threshold²², through the air, or, crossing the earth almost “endless” in Kiesler’s way²³. The second is a direct perforation, while the first sits as a dragonfly on the territory.

16 “Dentro / fuera” in Roland Barthes, *El imperio de los signos* (Ensayo. Seix Barral. Los tres mundos, 2006), 75.

17 Giancarlo De Carlo, *La piramide rovesciata* (Macerata: Quodlibet Habitat, 2018), 123.

18 Manfredo Tafuri, *Storia dell'architettura italiana 1944-1985* (Torino: Einaudi, 1986)

19 This module is only appreciated when one observes the planimetry. The fluidity and dynamism of the space in volume is abstracted, envelops, creating a labyrinth where the module becomes the constructive regulation of the space, helping its structural development, but without orienting rigidly or hierarchically space, but the opposite. It is a fun space, where the variability of sections allows you to lose yourself, maintain your individual identity and create collective debate at double height.

20 See point “A-B-C” in Figure 7 and Figure 10.

21 Sara Marini, “Scegliere la parte,” in *L'architettura della partecipazione* (Macerata: Quodlibet Habitat, 2015), 9-36.

22 Threshold understood as “interstice” in Barthes, *El imperio de los signos*, 32.

23 In reference to “the endless house” by Frederick Kiesler.



The house understood as a geometry²⁴ is a volumetric space providing well-being and joy, meditation and recollection, with two articulated bodies turned on themselves with respect to the short perimeter. The *decarliano* space is always three-dimensional²⁵, being understood as a physical and spiritual encounter with growth in vertical section. A perimeter of 14 by 14 meters, totally kaleidoscopic. A priori the geometry is based on a module of 1x1 meter (almost a 90x90 matrix cm constructed), then the space is fragmented, diluted, hidden, connected, isolated and folded as an integrated device. The mesh superimposed on the territory is connected to the existing volume as shown in figure 5.

The house allows its limits to be blurred once the terrain is crossed, going from being bidimensional to three-dimensional with the fauna and flora of the place. Architecture is integrated into the topography²⁶ allowing the dissolution of disciplinary boundaries and dualities, broadening the perception of space as shown in the previous figures 5 and 6. In an analogy with a chessboard²⁷, the circles of Ca' Romanino would be placed in the movement of the horse, placed in an "L" from the rooms that we could classify as "intimate", the space to be with

24 See also "Tracciati regolatori geometrici" in the essay of Francesco Samassa *Cà Romanino nei documenti di archivio*. Appunti. in *Cà Romanino una casa di Giancarlo De Carlo a Urbino*, Urbino: Argalia, 2010, p. 104-105. "Giancarlo De Carlo. Inventario Analitico dell'archivio, 2004. A cura di Francesco Samassa.

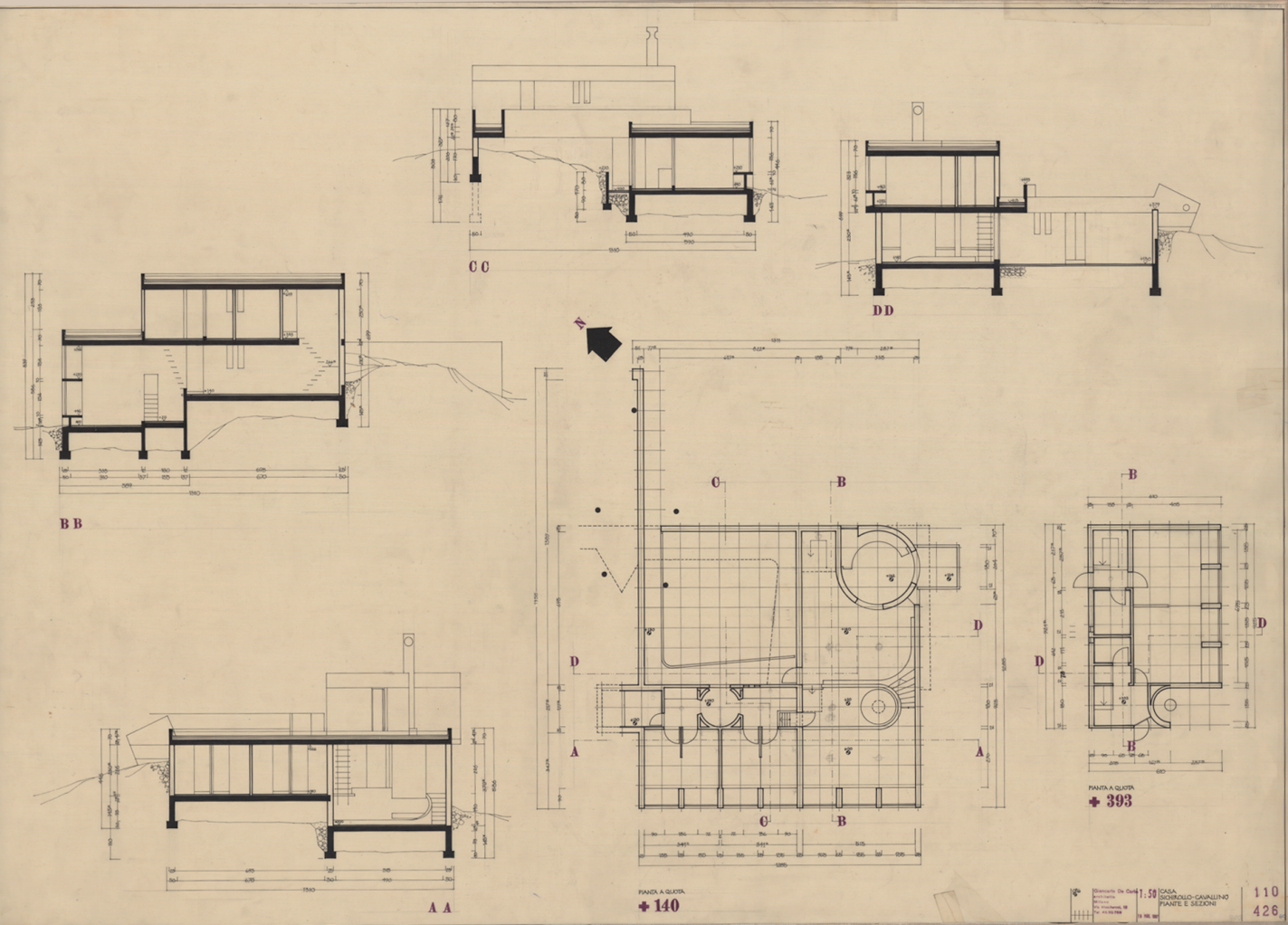
25 Architecture in section. *Collegio del Colle*, Villaggio Matteotti, among other projects.

26 In a certain way and by analogy is an understanding of what later Carme Pinós and Enric Miralles would perform on a territorial scale in *Olympic Archery in Barcelona* (1991).

27 Figure 7 it is an evolution from the drawings by the Author. "Esferas, umbrales e infraestructuras". Director: Fernando Quesada López. [Ph.D. dissertation with international mention]. University of Alcalá, Architecture Department, Madrid, 2019. See point "A" in figure 7 and figure 10.

Fig. 5

Ca' Romanino. Ode to the landscape. Ca' Romanino is developed on a pre-existing rural house, located to the left of the matrix that configures Ca' Romanino. Source: Università Iuav di Venezia, Archivio Progetti, fondo Giancarlo De Carlo.



the “mouth of fire” in the same axis. An L-axis²⁸ of circles and cylinders which Di Giorgio would have previously been based on the staircase and tower of the *Mercatale*, in the Palazzo Ducale with the towers of the main façade and the one belonging to the diagonal corner of the *giardini pensili*²⁹. In the architecture of Ca’ Romanino this point offers the hinge focused towards the circular *studiolo democratico* formed by four modules of 90° and with 360° views to the house, to the intermediate space and to the landscape of the vineyards. Once again, an ode to his predecessor in Urbino, who would situate the *studiolo*³⁰, simulating a plane lowered through an optical effect folded and carved in the tectonics of the wood, in the first cylinder of the Palazzo Ducale. [Fig. 6]

Logic and dialectics.

Ca’ Romanino houses dual windows, they are sheets of glass and intersecting sheets of paper, one reflected on the other. Understanding the latter as belonging to the trees that envelop and circumscribe the landscape, and those belonging to books and lyrics among those who inhabited or stop within it. If in the Sarabhai villa in Ahmedabad a similar rhythm is found in the façade, it is through the load-bearing walls of a foot of brick. Though this remains open to the outdoors by the climatology proper of the place, in the Casa Sichirollo it is vitrified and

28 See point “H” in figure 7 and figure 10.
 29 See Figure 1, figure 2 and point “D” in figure 7.
 30 Iconographic *studiolo* of Federico da Montefeltro.

Fig. 6
 Plans and section of Casa Sichirollo.
 Source: Università Iuav di Venezia, Archivio Progetti, fondo Giancarlo De Carlo.

participates of the vineyards³¹. Both also allow a continuous dialogue between the landscape and the interior inhabited space. Giancarlo De Carlo explains specifically how:

These who are excluded from the use of power - and therefore from what is officially recognized as culture, art, architecture - are not larvae waiting for a metamorphosis which will permit them to benefit from the legitimate values of the power structure. (...) these are the manifestations of "disorder", which always leak out into the neighbourhood, into the buildings, mixing with the pathological dregs of "order" with which they are usually confused. But while the pathological dregs of "order" are the result of the exasperation of an authoritarian and repressive condition which outruns its own rules, spreading in a state of amorphous violence, the "disorder" which is opposed to "order" has a complex branching structure of its own which, since it is not institutionalized at every moment images of a reality in transformation³².

Sichirolo³³ exposes in his academic work an almost metamorphic mutant journey. A journey based on the variation of the concept of dialectics in a time frame between so-called rhetoric and politics in sophists, the condition of method in the philosopher Plato, the logic of an appearance in Kant, the laws of thought and reality in Hegel or Marx. The philosopher thus has a suggestive dialectical imaginary to understand in a certain way the mental-spatial distribution and the innate capacity of multiplicity of languages in the work of Giancarlo De Carlo. The architect, in his personal enrichment, fused interdisciplinarity allowing it to be transferred to the profession, without differentiating the first from the second. Ca' Romanino is therefore a masterpiece where the tectonic dialectic, the geometric logic or the condition of the landscape will be fervent ingredients for a sublime house. A dialectic house immerse in the landscape, a dialogue between architecture and philosophy. *"An architectural work makes no sense if it is detached from its use and from the way in which it is used, or can be used, because it is one of the fundamental factors contributing to the definition of its quality"*³⁴. The existing constellation in Ca' Romanino³⁵ goes beyond the established limits of a linear trajectory. A place has been re-founded through the new construction, but it has also been a meeting point for families, friends and cultural events where they can participate in the dialogue, favoring the free choice of location-actions. Thus, with continuity and processes, a graphic understood as *"a variable graph, with vertices and edges that change position without ever compromising the coherence of the whole"*³⁶

31 Sonia Morra in Ca' Romanino una casa di Giancarlo De Carlo a Urbino, 11.

32 De Carlo Giancarlo, "Il pubblico dell'architettura," Parametro, 5 (1970): 10.

33 Livio Sichirolo, *Dialéctica* (Barcelona: Labor, 1976).

34 De Carlo, *Il pubblico dell'architettura*, 4-13.

35 See figure 3, an evolution from figure 2 in Author, Mat-hybrid housing: Two case studies in Terni and London, *Frontiers of Architectural Research*, 2018, 279. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foar.2018.05.002>

36 De Carlo in *Gli spiriti dell'architettura*, 19.

“Promenade architecturale” and constellations

The route of the dialectic house could be interpreted as a condensation of the thought of Giancarlo De Carlo. It is a magical black box where he exhibits his inspiring intellectual project thinking. The “promenade architecturale” (see figure 6) of the French-Swiss raven of La Chaux-de-Fonds is intrinsic to this work and cannot be understood without it. The house is a sequence of actions interconnected by visuals in the manner of dream-eye sequences of “Spellbound”³⁷ by the people who inhabit or transit it.

It is a house that allows and encourages appropriation, dialogue and encounter. The hinge point is the cabin staircase³⁸. It could be read as a static boat like the central staircase in Eileen Gray’s villa E-1027. This cabin connects the living space with the more private space of the guest rooms. This staircase lies buried in the concrete boat submerged in the hillside. At this point two promenades follow one another³⁹. One in the three continuous heights, to sleep, to be and to participate, to dialogue. Another one to the outside, in the cardinal point of North, the Roman access is crossed with the street in the air.

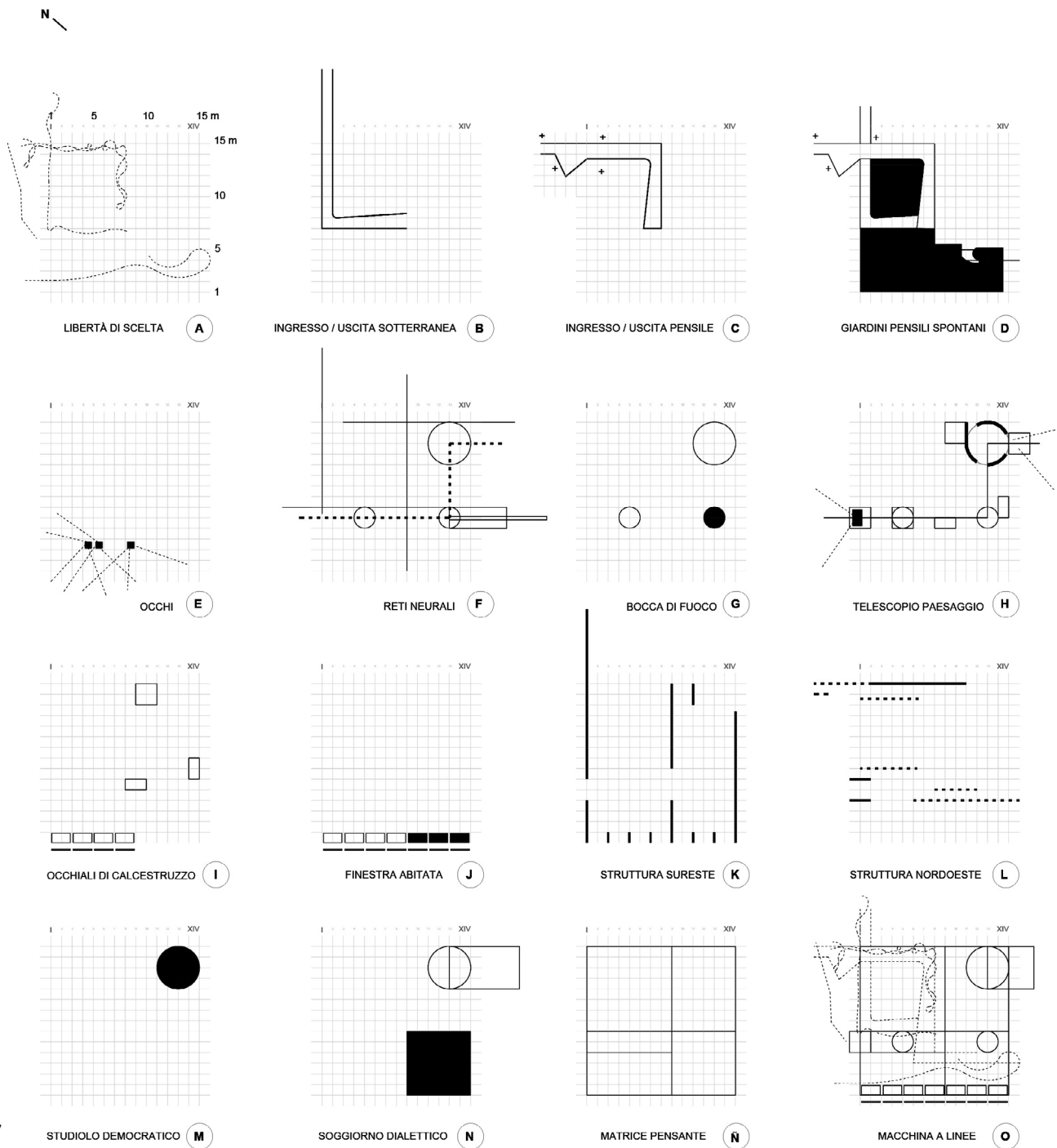
In this interconnected vision and search for constellation of equilibrium and diversity, De Carlo states: *“I have no doubt that a more global and complex way of seeing has become urgent. In the harmonious mixing of everything, as in the large mosaic that pave the cathedral of Otranto, everything regains true meaning and no longer exists submissiveness, oppression, violence. Roles change, according to circumstances and priorities change over time.”*⁴⁰ [Fig. 7]

37 These are “eye” sequences from the “dream sequence” in the film “Spellbound” of Hitchcock in 1945, in which the Spanish painter Salvador Dalí and the film director Alfred Hitchcock collaborated closely.

38 See point “H” in figure 7 and figure 10.

39 See point “C-D” in figure 7 and figure 10.

40 Giancarlo De Carlo, “Il coraggio della tabula rasa,” in Di Biagi P. (eds.), *La carta di Atene. Manifesto e frammento dell’urbanistica moderna* (Roma: Officina, 1998), 358.



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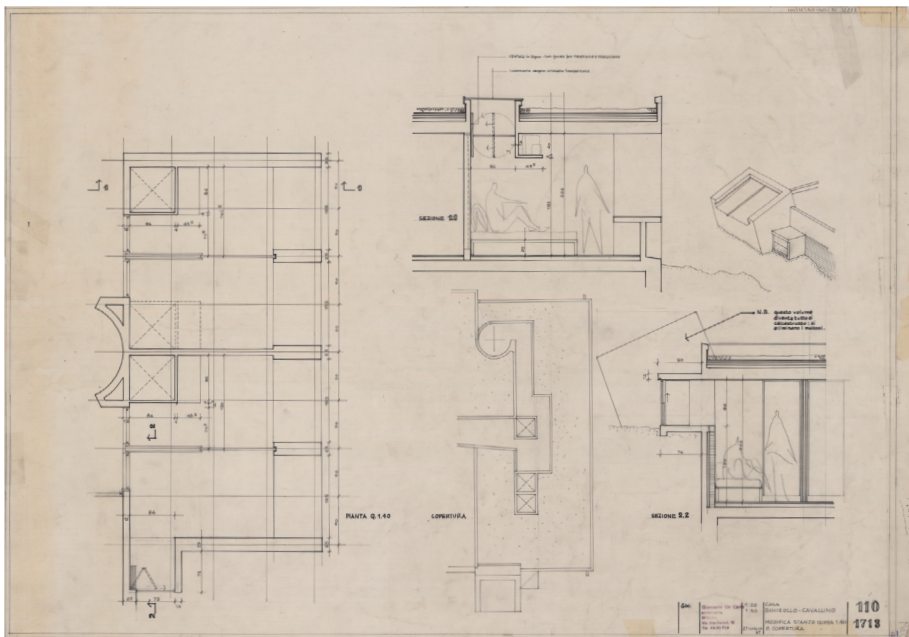
Lucania and Santa Lucia

The nautical muses, Lucania speaking with Legér and Santa Lucia, have accompanied De Carlo ever since. The link with the ships was direct in the life of the Genoese architect, through the naval engineer Cesare Zaccaria: *"From Zaccaria I have come to two appassoning works: I have collaborated with him in the setting up of two ships"*⁴¹. At this stage, De Carlo explains the consonances and dissonances between artistic creation and architectural creation, in which the structure of the ships plays a fundamental role. In Urbino's small nave, the nakedness of the structure creates the space without any ornament other than the concrete itself, undaunted and welcoming. [Fig. 8]

41 De Carlo, *Conversazioni su architettura e libertà*, 80.

Fig. 7

Process and elements in Ca' Romanino. Source: Diagrams of the author PhD, from a two day *in situ* 24h visit to the interior of Ca' Romanino in August 2019 and a day-visit in November 2018.



8 |

Constellations of eyes and skylights.

The “eyes⁴² speak” are also present in the wrought to be able to see the white moon⁴³. The tectonic is fragmented in De Carlo, transferring the slabs between the apparently private or the building itself and the public street⁴⁴. Architecture dematerializes in dialogue with the anthropized, not the isolated object closed in on itself, but the spatial interrelation creating architecture and city. Both in the *Facoltà di Legge*, in the centre of Urbino, and in *Ca’ Romanino*, the eyes⁴⁵ are integrated in a constant dialogue within the place. In both projects, the eyes are opened like skylights in the solid stone sea of the ground⁴⁶. These crystalline orifices allow the spaces to be visually connected, creating a city through a single simple element, a glass eye (figure 8).

In the kitchen, a glass eye illuminates the austere interior, connecting both planes. The living room however is made of three floors with two levels facing the landscape, an appropriate place between the load-bearing walls. De Carlo adds “the positive” of the “negative” excavated if the wall were perimetral⁴⁷. It is a contemporary and reinterpreted analogy of concepts and not of language, with the rooms excavated in the Palazzo Ducale.

The most private spheres of the domestic space, or the rooms of the “guest” house, have telescopic skylights with reinforced concrete eyes, like the one shown in figure 8, to appreciate the passage of time, dusk and dawn. They are

42 The eyes, as well as playing cards or curtains are recurrent elements in the theory of psychoanalysis.

43 For the Spanish poet García Lorca the “moon” has different symbolisms in the work depending on where it is located. The color white means in part the life, the light. In fact, De Carlo meditates and projects light in all his projects.

44 See point “E” in figure 7 and figure 10.

45 With the trio Elisa, Alvar, Aino Aalto in the Helsinki bookstore or at the university of the external campus of Raiili and Reima Pietila, with whom De Carlo will exchange letters.

46 This project strategy, dialogue with the context, will be repeated throughout his work.

47 See point “J” and “K” in figure 7 and the corresponding “J” in Figure 10.

Fig. 8
Detail of the skylight. Source:
Università Iuav di Venezia,
Archivio Progetti, fondo
Giancarlo De Carlo.



luminous and environmental devices. These artifacts allow to expand the spatial sensation and to see the spatial constellations. On the terrace, they function as elements of a boat, while inside they are miradors or spatial glasses. [Fig. 9]

The three circular spaces in the house (chimney, skylights - from the kitchen and bedrooms - and the study table) are actions associated to the collective refuge, warming up and thinking, the spiritual retreat and the collective debate around the fire, while the skylights in the form of parallelepipeds are for the individual shelter, for intimacy itself. Both the chimney, the first circular element, and the second circular element, the democratic “studiolo”, are connected by means of geometrically orthogonal visuals, an “L” to the landscape and an invisible direct line between the two elements. Giancarlo De Carlo defines even the smallest details of Ca’ Romanino. He designs the living room tables to the revolving lamps with nods to Calder, the “carrerelo” up to the encounter between the plate of the micro dome with the reinforced concrete configuring the passable roof

Fig. 9
 Photographic sequence of scenes and elements of Ca’ Romanino. Source: Photographs by the author, August 2019.

of the “giardino pensile”. These elements, as a holistic design, are thought with the maximum rigour and precision, understanding architecture as a hyper-connected constellation of elements, “playing” with the spaces without forcing a limited and compartmentalized scale.

Two geometries and two dispositions are key to understanding the house.

The square and the circle. The square plan and the “L” again, as in Villaggio Matteotti. Giancarlo De Carlo “plays” with an articulated tentative disorder to stimulate the “fantasy of participation”. A constructed nod to the spontaneous architecture he had studied for the section “Architettura spontanea” in the IX Triennale di Milano? [Fig. 10]

Tentative conclusions.

In the Urbino of Giancarlo De Carlo, Ca Romanino allows the dialogue among landscape, architecture and philosophy. Starting from the same principle, all of them are understood and conceptualized reciprocally, without the division of some without the others. All of them participate. The perishable dichotomy then connects to raise complex programs and three-dimensional spaces with multiplicity of voices. Going through and revisiting his work allows the temporal condition of the static to be altered, making it to be a timeless design, with

perennial lessons where rigour and lyric find their greatest stage in Urbino’s laboratory. Ca’ Romanino turns narrative into travel and dialectics into architecture, and vice versa. As De Carlo emphasized, this process will always be bidirectional through active participation and “progettazione tentativa”. Its architectures are dialectic, they are not passive since they carried out a continuous related theoretical-practical translation. In them, communication is allowed through the configuration and form of the physical space. In Ca’ Romanino this

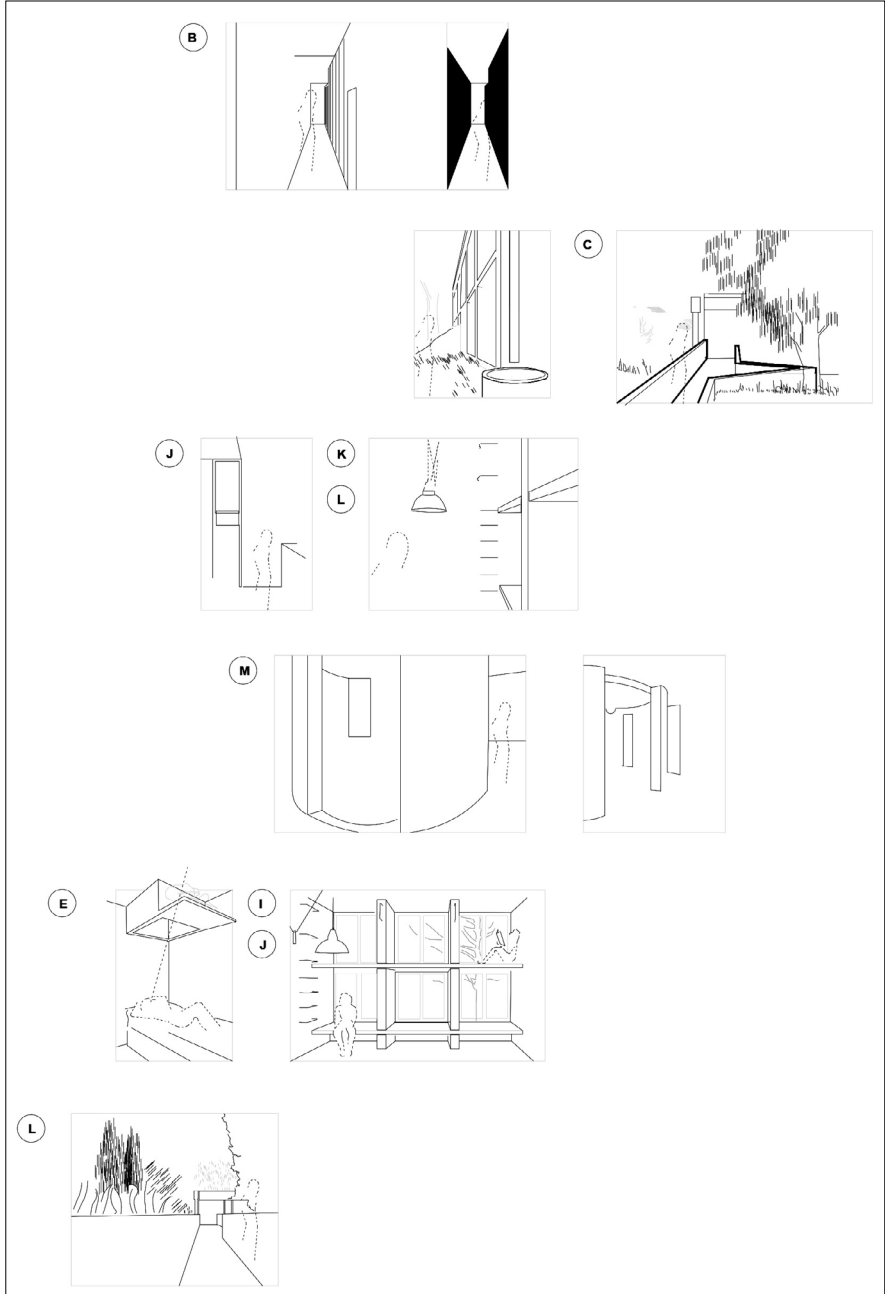


Fig. 10
Cinematographic sequence of scenes and elements of Ca’ Romanino. The letters indicate the situation in the previous figure (Fig.7). Source: Diagrams of the author based on visits to the interior of the house in November 2018 and August 2019

articulation is between landscape and architecture, fusing one into the other with strong and harmonious “architectural gestures”. The expressionist snakes, the sonorous “*stelle*”, the “*Giardino pensile*” or the multiple spatial and immaterial constellations are master lines. The work is a dialogue between those who inhabit it, encouraging reflection and exchange between peers, and for those who visit it, understanding its architecture as it travels. The articulation between the solid tectonic and the soft plastic is created. De Carlo’s work is positioned in an unstable balance among ethics, aesthetics and technical coherence. He articulates and experiments “between sections” with the “*genius loci*”. It allows for free discussion and open debate, not with a rhetorical mono-emitter, but with a participating kaleidoscope. Beyond dualities and hierarchical typologies, it allows a debate to be generated through an umbrella of architectural devices. Finally, a round table based on dialectics is constructed and architecture is projected with it, as an abstract but participative entity, enabling the transformation of “space” into a “place” by those who experience it, modify it and appropriate it.