



HPA

Histories of Postwar Architecture

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**Leonardo Ricci (1918-1994)
Archives I**

edited by
Ilaria Cattabriga

**Micaela Antonucci
Alice Fantoni
Beatrice Conforti
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Matteo Cassani Simonetti
Lorenzo Mingardi
Vittorio Pizzigoni**



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Cover picture:

Leonardo Ricci at work during the setting of the "Costume Section" for the Italian Pavilion of the Montréal Exhibition of 1967, Casa Studio Ricci.

In credit page:

Leonardo Ricci, Montréal, 1967, Casa Studio Ricci.



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Loreno Arboritanza, Ilaria Cattabriga, Beatrice Conforti

New Research on Leonardo Ricci's Archives

The issue wants to illustrate the state of the archival sources, and of some new research based on them, regarding Leonardo Ricci's taking into consideration both the existing open funds collecting Leonardo Ricci's drawings and documents where the research began: Casa Studio Ricci in Monterinaldi (CSR), and Ricci's fund kept in the Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione - Università di Parma (CSAC). It is important to specify that, in addition to these funds, there is one further non-institutional fund: Ricci's house in Venice, where he lived, from 1973 until his death in 1994 with his second wife and collaborator, the recently deceased architect Maria Grazia Dallerba. This last fund was never accessed and catalogued.

The research considered different kinds of sources: documents, drawings, photographs and paintings. Histories of Postwar Architecture Open Lab of the University of Bologna contributed to the celebrations for Leonardo Ricci's centenary in 2018 by participating in studies and contributing to the digitization and cataloguing of the materials kept at Casa Studio Ricci thanks to the gracious

Fig. 1

The places of the research. Casa Studio Ricci, hall, dining room and staircase where drawings, documents and books belonging to Leonardo Ricci are kept.



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permission of Clementina Ricci, Ricci's granddaughter and President of the Ricci100 Committee, with the support of Fondazione Michelucci. In agreement with the mentioned partners, to which the CSAC must be added, the issue includes a selection of archival materials gathered for the RICCI100 initiatives. All the documents as letters, typescripts of lectures and conferences, articles, notes, academic documents and manuscripts are kept in CSR, whereas CSAC keeps only drawings and graphic materials. In the first archive the family kept the materials found in Leonardo Ricci's study after his death in 1994, when he had already donated to CSAC a large part of his archive (1983). In Casa Studio Ricci 2013 drawings and 3660 documents covering the time span 1941-1993 are kept, whereas Leonardo Ricci's fund of CSAC, never completely listed, consists of 923 drawings realized between 1959 and 1990: mostly drawings on transparency and large format heliographic copies.

The research work in Ricci's fund at CSAC was done following the institution cataloguing methods and software named Samira. Hence it began with a general vision of the entire fund and a subsequent reorganization and recognition of the projects not yet identified. At present it is organized in "project folders", distinguished by unique numerical codes, which contain the drawings related to each project. After this first selective and cataloguing phase it was also necessary to indicate the presence of severely damaged drawings (those difficult to consult) to be restored. Subsequently, for each project (each identified with its own code), the most significant drawings in terms of quality of representation and state of conservation were selected, identified with a unique code, and marked in pencil on the back. The final operation was to catalog each design with two different types of filing: a form for each project (form OA-P, "project sheets" or "P-sheets containing the general data and the consistency of each project) and a form for each individual drawing (form OA-S, "single files" or "S-sheets", each identifying and describing a single drawing individually). Part of these forms were further filled in the CSAC-Samira digital archive - allowing a public view of the documents corpus. In addition, for each individual card, a photographic attached reproduction is also visible and downloadable online. It is in this last phase that the need to re-elaborate the general sheet of Samira has emerged, making it more compliant with an architectural project, through the addition of useful information for a search, such as the specific identification of the graphic elaborate (eg. ground floor plan, elevation, section ...) or the insertion of the representation scale used in the technical data.

For what concerns the CSR fund, a first cataloguing of the remaining drawings at Monterinaldi was carried out by Professor Corinna Vasić Vatovec¹, daughter

1 Among Corinna Vasić Vatovec's writings, about Leonardo Ricci: Corinna Vasić Vatovec, "Villa Balmain. Isola d'Elba: Leonardo Ricci/Villa Pleydell-Bouverie", *Area*, no.52 (October 2000): 4-19; Corinna Vasić Vatovec, "Il progetto dell'incompiuta "Ecclesia".", *Area*, no.53 (December 2000): 90-91; Corinna Vasić Vatovec, "Leonardo Ricci e Giovanni Michelucci: confronti preliminari", *La Nuova Città*, no.2-3 (December 2001): 100-127; Corinna Vasić Vatovec, "Un'opera dimenticata di Leonardo Ricci: 'villaggio Montepiano'", *Quasar*, no. 24-25 (December 2001): 187-99; Ezio Godoli and Corinna Vasić Vatovec, eds., *Architettura Del Novecento. La Toscana. Leonardo Ricci: "Oltre" Firenze* (Firenze: Polistampa, 2001); Corinna Vasić Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci: architetto 'esistenzialista'* (Firenze: Edifir, 2005).

of the artist Dusan Vasić, architect, artist, Ricci's friend and collaborator, but it was not completed since other scrolls were later found in the study after Ricci's death. As for the numbering of the Monterinaldi rolls, one part is found, from number 1 to number 82, catalogued by Vasić, while Ilaria Cattabriga, during her PhD research, has assigned to the others a numbering that goes from the number 11 to 421. The documents include the so-called – as Ricci called them – “Giornali di bordo”, a sort of diaries, logbooks, completely ordered and composed by Angela Poggi. They are of two main types: a systematic chronologically ordered collection of all the newspaper articles, Italian and foreign specialized journals, invitations to Ricci's exhibitions and photographs of the models, from 1938 to 1963, and a portfolio of Ricci's teaching and professional activities including the architect's curriculum vitae, collections of letters and institutional documents from the eminent Italian and foreign universities where Ricci worked, typescripts of lectures and conferences.

Ilaria Cattabriga also digitalized, with the help of Loreno Arboritanza and Beatrice Conforti, the plenty of materials at CSR, as CSAC proceeded with his own digital tools and equipment. Since it was not possible to digitize Ricci's graphic drawings directly in Monterinaldi, the Fondazione Giovanni Michelucci in Fiesole kindly made its own equipment available to complete the work. The cataloguing and the complete digitalizing of the graphic material and documents constituted the two main phases of the archival research, which helped to highlight that there is still a lot of material to be investigated, which has not yet been examined, useful to the study of the figure of Leonardo Ricci. Therefore, having all the materials digitalized, the research was enriched by the further intention to create a unique digital archive collecting the whole corpus of documents and drawings kept in the existing funds. The same aim guided the elaboration of the following archival records, that also include some drawings kept in the Fondo Gori for the Flowers Market in Pescia. The acquisition at CSAC of the fund kept in CSR would be fundamental to foster research activities on the architect, but, so far, this physical movement of the entire archive of Monterinaldi to Parma was not possible.

A series of drawings kept in CSAC or CSR archives had neither date nor site references, but the research helped organize them all in the correct chronological order, and, in some cases, to attribute the untitled or unreferenced drawings to the correct title. The whole body of materials is going to merge in an online geo-referenced archive prototype elaborated by means of the software ArcGis Online by the HPA Lab of the Department of Architecture of the University of Bologna. The online archive was built to provide a digital research tool to allow the scholars to undertake further research on the architect. Indeed it is provided with a geo-referenced map of the projects, sorted in chronological order. For each project, an archive table provided with the images of all the drawings was elaborated. They include the project data: title, type, code, date, place, number of pieces in total, the authors of the project (Ricci's collaborators), and all the bibliographic references concerning each project.

This issue of HPA detects Leonardo Ricci's work and aims at presenting a selection projects, both realized and not realized, covering the architect's whole career from the Forties to the Eighties, thus temporarily forgetting a more thematic approach to suggest one possible reading of his archive. This is done through essays concerning seven main projects: the Flowers Market in Pescia (1948-1951), the Hon. Pleydell Bouverie House (1958-1960), the Goti Factory (1959), the model for the Macrostructure of an Integrated Town, (1965) The Costume Sector in the Italian Pavilion of Expo 67 (1966-1967), the Directional Center of Florence (1977) and the Savone Courthouse (1981-1987).

Micaela Antonucci and Alice Fantoni purpose an analysis of the structural and compositional aspects of the Flowers Market in Pescia by focusing on the reinforced-brick structure application, as a proof of the prolific constructional experimentation in post-war Italy and purposing a reconstruction of the three dimensional structural models of the building. By following the useful possibilities offered by the threedimensional modelling, Beatrice Conforti describes in detail one of Ricci's projects for the Hon. Pleydell Bouverie House, a less known work coeval to more widely published projects with the same architectural program as Balmain and Mann Borgese Houses and comparing it to Cardon House in Castiglioncello and to the building "La Nave" in the Sorgane district in Florence. Ilaria Cattabriga presents two of the projects that best portray Ricci's highly experimental attitude towards the spatial research: the Goti Factory as a perfect example of the translation of the concept of existence as an experience, relational and phenomenological architecture in which a different rigor and spatial balance is pursued through volumetrical juxtaposition, structural experimentation and integration of the human and the machine spaces. The Macrostructure for an Integrated town is presented instead as the perfect result of Ricci's research on the "synopia" for the future town, which reflects one further important feature of the architects work: his strong belief in the intertwining between the theoretical and applied research. Matteo Cassani Simonetti analyses the Costume Sector of the Italian Pavilion at Expo 67 in Montréal with the intention to detect the morphological genealogies of Ricci's project, which was part of a choral work of architects and intellectuals of the time actually, rooted not only in the architect's design method but also in the Florentine cultural context of the Sixties. Another interesting jumble of actors, was involved in the design of the Directional Center in Florence, introduced by Lorenzo Mingardi within its political context as fundamental instance that led the complex design process of the building that saw a suffered dialogue between Leonardo Ricci and Giovanni Michelucci as well. Vittorio Pizzigoni instead highlights Ricci's design ambitions for the Savona Courthouse, built when the architect had already abandoned Florence and was working with Mariagrazia Dallerba in Venice, and tries to understand both the building and the building site decay reasons.

These essays are accompanied by archival records, all curated by Ilaria Cattabriga, showing the most representative drawings for each selected project: they constitute a graphic rendering of the digitalized results and are provided

with the project synthetical data: date, place, collaborators, customer, reference sources and bibliography. The essays are also accompanied by excerpts of original typescripts, two of them never published, properly chosen to support, with Ricci's own words, the reading of the projects: the Ecumenical Village of Agàpe is presented through the archival record and a letter by Ricci to Tullio Vinay that expresses both the architect's design intentions, experience and feeling about the project; a text concerning the 1968 socio-cultural revolution Ricci lived both in Italy and in the United States follows one of his most important, even quite unknown, urban design projects carried out with Paul Nelson and Mirko Basaldella in the USA: The F. D. Roosevelt Memorial of 1959; the set up of the exhibition "Espressionismo. Pittura scultura architettura" is analyzed through the archival record and the letter from Ricci to Nello Ponente, in which Ricci defends his exhibition set up design choices; and finally, Ricci's "Architecture in Relation to the other Arts" wants to anticipate the intentions and artistic influences that guided the "formativity" instances of the Macrostructure for an Integrated Town.

The projects were selected on the base of three main parameters: firstly the significance of the drawings kept in the archives, to testify the architect's design method. Indeed, although they belong to different decades, they all play a fundamental role in explaining Ricci's "forma-atto", which succeeded in finding its definition across different times, places, and programs, realization techniques. Secondly, the selection wants to show the importance of unifying the materials kept in both funds through unknown drawings, and, finally, unveil to what extent, being the selection only a reduced one for publication reasons, Ricci's work is still unknown, even it shows novelty, originality and an extreme actualization potential to contemporary life.

In this text we also wanted to deal with the reasons that led our interest towards the figure of Leonardo Ricci, with our research projects that concerned the important figure of the architect in the national and international scene and with the important role the archive work played in our different investigations in design and history of architecture. Our interest in Leonardo Ricci's work was centered on his strong personality and, especially in his determined will to investigate and realize the ideal of anonymous architecture, thus to embody the figure of the anonymous architect for the twentieth century, as his title book *Anonymous (XX century)* quotes². Secondly, Ricci's dichotomous and controversial research as architect and man, always concentrated in solving a tension between opposites, which affected his activity of painter, architect and teacher increased our interest to investigate on his professional experience in those fields which helped him solve that tension, which drove him towards the highest design solutions. Moreover, the architect's artistic skills due to his constant interdisciplinary work and the strong experimental character of his works have enhanced our intention to retrace a common line of spatial research, never positioned on pre-established canons, free to change form and language throughout

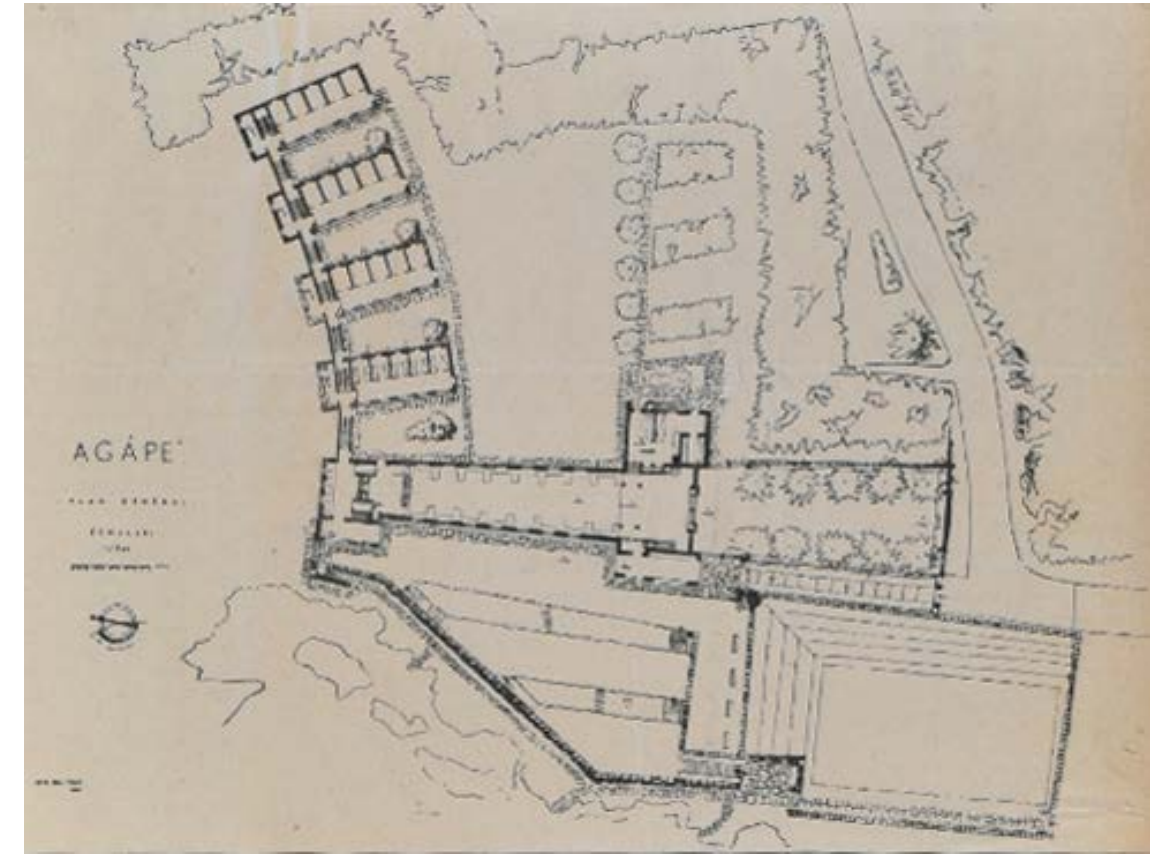
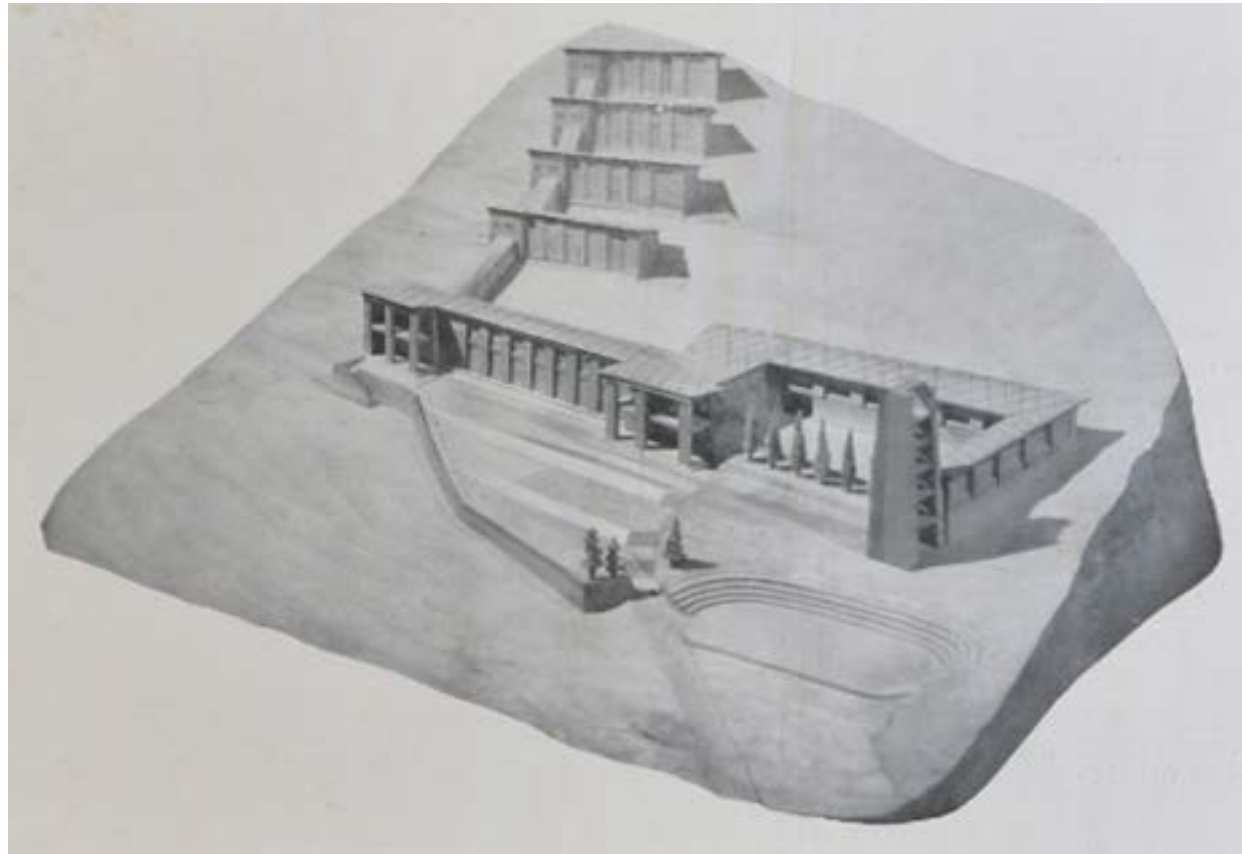
2 Leonardo Ricci, *Anonymous (XX century)* (New York: George Braziller, 1962).

his professional and academic career.

As a matter of fact, the archival work was useful not only to carry on research projects in history of architecture and design but also to arrange the two exhibitions on Leonardo Ricci, organized on the occasion of the celebrations of the centenary of Leonardo Ricci's birth (June 8, 1918) by the Ricci 100 Committee, which gave us the possibility to take part in the group work of both exhibitions: "Leonardo Ricci Architetto. I linguaggi della rappresentazione" curated by Loreno Arboritanza and Ilaria Cattabriga (Parma, CSAC, from December 1, 2018-to April 7, 2019) and "Leonardo Ricci 100. Scrittura, pittura e architettura. 100 Note a margine dell'Anonimo del XX secolo" curated by Ugo Dattilo, Maria Clara Ghia and Clementina Ricci (Florence, Ex Refettorio Santa Maria Novella from April 12, 2019 to May 18, 2019).

We would like to thank the Ricci family, and in particular Clementina Ricci, the Ricci 100 Committee she set up and guided, the heads of the CSAC and the Fondazione Giovanni Michelucci for all their efforts and the opportunity they have offered to enter so deeply into Leonardo Ricci's archive, still largely unknown, to deepen his work and contribute to what we hope will be a new season of studies dedicated to his figure³.

3 Among the last publications the archival research enhanced: Maria Ghia, Clementina Ricci, and Ugo Dattilo, eds., *Leonardo Ricci 100. Scrittura, Pittura e Architettura. 100 Note a Margine Dell'Anonimo Del XX Secolo*, catalogue of the exhibition, Firenze: Didapress. Dipartimento di Architettura, Università degli Studi di Firenze, 2019; Maria Clara Ghia, *La nostra città è tutta la Terra. Leonardo Ricci architetto (1918-1994)* (Wuppertal: Steinhauser Verlag, 2021); Maria Clara Ghia, *Architecture as a Living Act* (Novato-CA: Oro Editions, 2022); close to publication: Ilaria Cattabriga, *Leonardo Ricci in the United States (1952-1972). A Twenty-year American Transfer as a turning experience in Teaching and Design* (Siracusa: LetteraVentidue, 2023).



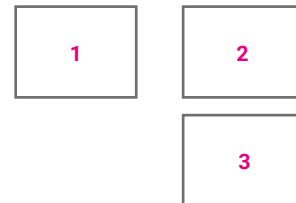
Ecumenical Center *Agàpe*

ARCHIVAL DATA

DATE	1946-1948 (design) 1947-1951 realization)
PLACE-ADDRESS	Borgata Agàpe, 1, Prali (TO)
COLLABORATORS	Giovanni Klaus Koenig, Claudio Messina
CUSTOMER	Pastor Tullio Vinay
SOURCES	CSAC, CSR

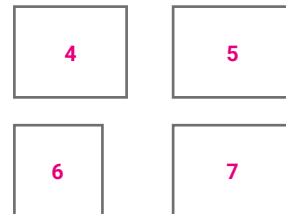
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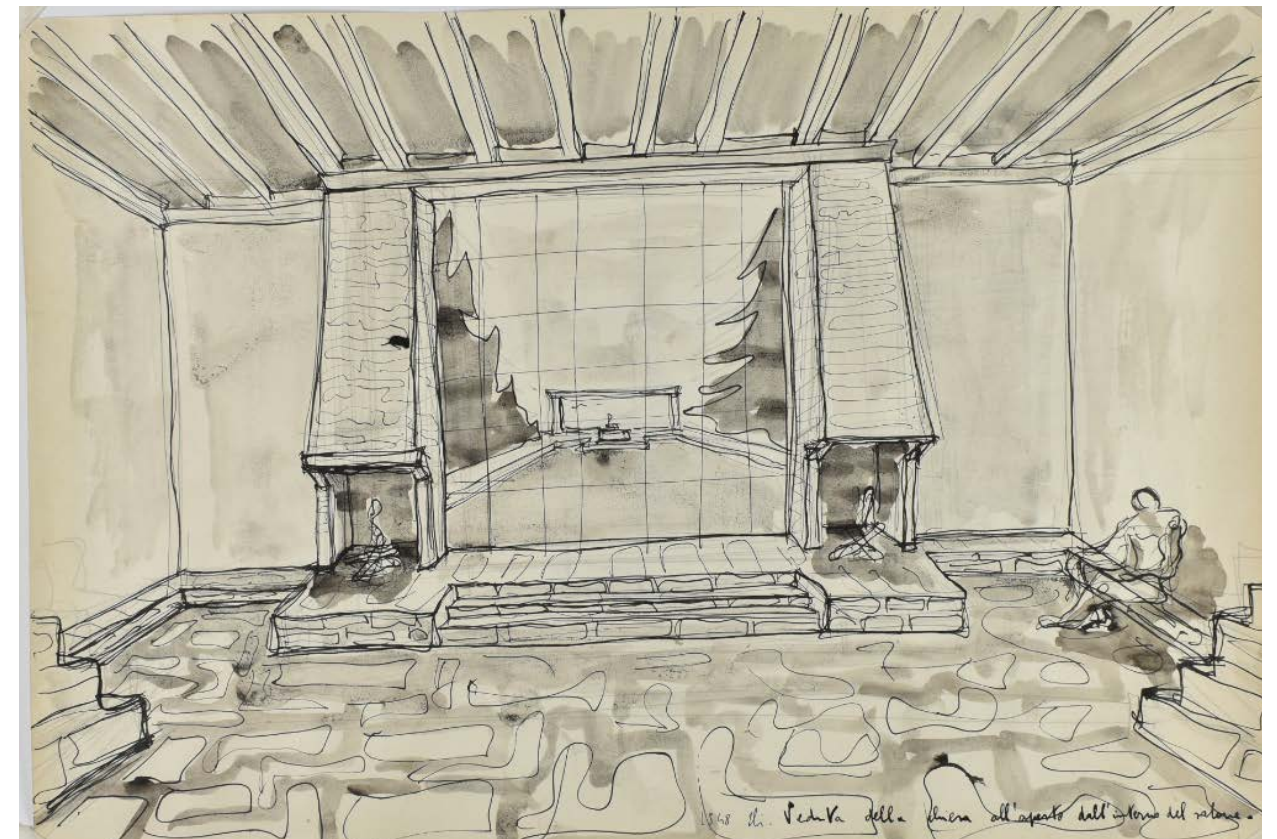


IMG.1: Centro Ecumenico Agàpe, picture of model of the project, CSR, logbook n.1; IMG.2: general plan, CSR, logbook n. 1; IMG.3: general view of Agàpe, sketch, CSR.





IMG.4: internal view of the "cells", sketch, CSR; IMG.5: internal view of the hall, sketch, CSR; IMG.6: view of the entrance, sketch, CSR; IMG. 7: detail of the hall, sketch, CSR.





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IMG.8-9-10-11: pictures of the logbook n. 1, pages collecting miscellaneous materials about Agape, CSR.



Leonardo Ricci

“My life as an architect is but an episode of my inner life, an ordinary act like so many acts make up our day”: a Letter to Tullio Vinay

This letter written by Leonardo Ricci to Tullio Vinay was published in Italian in the monthly journal Gioventù Evangelica on November 15, 1947. The journal was established in 1946 by the Congress of the Federazione Gioventù Evangelica's efforts. Later on, the text was embedded in the chapter four of the book L'amore è più grande: la storia di Agàpe e la nostra (translated in English: Love is Greater: Agàpe's Story and Ours) edited in 1995 by the Waldensian pastor, theologian, and Italian politician, Tullio Vinay.

For Pastor Tullio Vinay, guide of the Waldesian community in Florence since 1946 and later commissioner of Ricci's "Monte degli Ulivi" Village in Riesi (1962-1968), the Ecumenical Village of Agàpe had to represent an Ecumenical centre and be the place of religious and cultural (and holiday) meeting point of the following Evangelical communities, it had to be an architectural monument dedicated to the brotherly and Christian love, built by the young Waldesians. To Ricci Agàpe represented "a realized utopia" that followed an original existential formula, that community ideal that he constantly pursued. In Ricci's mind Agàpe had to be a community for the local population. Indeed, the link with the local dimension was evident in the use of local materials, in the reference to the vernacular, in the participatory project because it was carried out with the collaboration of more than a thousand volunteers and in the search for a relationship with nature.

Vinay firstly commissioned the project to the engineer Claudio Messina, but then both agreed on entrusting the project to an architect. The choice fell on Leonardo Ricci, who already knew Vinay since he taught catechism to his brothers Alberto and Arnaldo because Ricci's mother, Giuditta De Giorgi, was Waldesian, and had an intense correspondence with the Pastor since 1946, when Vinay was impressed by Ricci's project "Firenze sul Fiume" exhibited in Palazzo Vecchio (1946). Ricci had been writing and talking for a long time with Vinay about the Pastor's dream to build an ecumenical village where the reconciliation ideal (agàpe) had to be realized. Therefore, Ricci got involved in the project some years before effectively designing it.

The realization of the project was possible thanks to the work of Giovanni Klaus Koenig, architecture student at the end of the Forties, and his brother, Gianni Koenig, an engineering student, who elaborated all the executive drawings from the 1:200 scale starting from Ricci's sketches (see the archival record in this issue dedicated to the project). In the archives only a few letters by Ricci to Vinay tell the concern of the architect about the correct ongoing of the building process.

Claudio Messina, who worked with Giovanni Klaus Koenig on the executive project and in the building site coordination, reported the story of the Agàpe project in an interview with Corinna Vasič Vatovec and stated that the particular fan-shaped plan of the complex had to allow a convergence of the spaces. On one side, a fireplace as a meeting place and, on the other, the large window that looked at the external community space and captured the light. After a visit to most of the Unions of the Valleys and in Turin, Vinay declared that the village had already arose before its construction, from the love of its builders, because it was born from the participatory union of the workers who would have built it and from the volunteers' work, almost all young and belonging to the generation that wanted a new life. In this laid the existential matrix of Agàpe project for a new reality to be reformed and rebuilt. At the same time, it presented both the characteristics of the mountain village and those of the community reality, without falling back into the imitation of the models of the past.



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To build on this earth is to build in the Kingdom of Heaven. The walls we erect of stone and lime, laboured and loving conquest, will be destroyed, but we will find them, together, beyond earthly death. Dear Vinay, the article you asked me for turns into a direct letter to you, my beloved friend, who are so much a part of my life, because with you, as with very few others, I feel objectivised and realised that human brotherhood that we try in vain, through our weakness, to achieve with all the men around us, be they perhaps murderers or prostitutes. You invite me to speak of the Agàpe project. All I will do is repeat to you what I told you in the hours of waiting, when to begin seemed to take a leap in the dark and to end a dream of visionaries who do not want to or cannot adhere to the reality of everyday life. Now Agàpe is rising and it is not an adventure at all, it is really everyday reality because day by day we dig a pit, we wall up a stone and day by day we overcome a difficulty. Difficulties that others do not know about, but which you above all know and which also made you cry like a child not long ago in the Prali tent. And at that moment I did not know whether I was like a mother who had to console you or one who needed the consolation of your weeping. But it is now easier to talk about Agàpe's project. You know very well that I am an architect who struggles against the terrible contrasts presented by today's society, a society in crisis that only selfishly asks for a bit of glitz that hides material and spiritual misery, just as one seeks a frivolous dress or a bow to flatter oneself, without understanding the real values of architecture. Architecture that could instead create a loving city where men live joyfully in prayer in both work and rest. And here the discourse would become too long, and it is best to leave it at that. Architecture needs a defined civilisation for it to assume universal value. Otherwise, we arrive at most at a few isolated 'episodes' after an effort disproportionate to the result. And for this reason, my dear Vinay, and you know it well, that I can honestly and deeply love what I design but then remain completely detached from it. The realisations are but a very small part, flaky and flaky, of what I have loved. Things that no longer have any value for me. So, my life as an architect is but an episode of my inner life, an ordinary act like so many acts make up our day. And I am only interested in what is within me, which is on the contrary complete unity tending continually towards the great and loving arms of God. This is building for the world. To sow a seed without caring where it will fall and how it will be born. And that is all we can do. But building for Agàpe is different. To build for Agàpe is to know that the ground on which you sow the seed is fertile, that it is continually ploughed and leavened by men like you, that the reapers are young people who wait and need the fruit that springs from the earth. That is wonderful and joyful. For Agàpe everything else is worthless. The pride of the architect no longer exists. It is a complete reliance. I have no means at my disposal, I lack the materials that I would perhaps like, I have no specialised workers, I do not, in short, have in my hands, that exact machine that I can control in all its organs so that the work turns out as it was born in my mind. And yet, it is the first time that I feel that I am building for a real, real thing. And that is why I feel that we will build in pieces and with mistakes, perhaps, but we do all we can, and the result will be beautiful because it is the

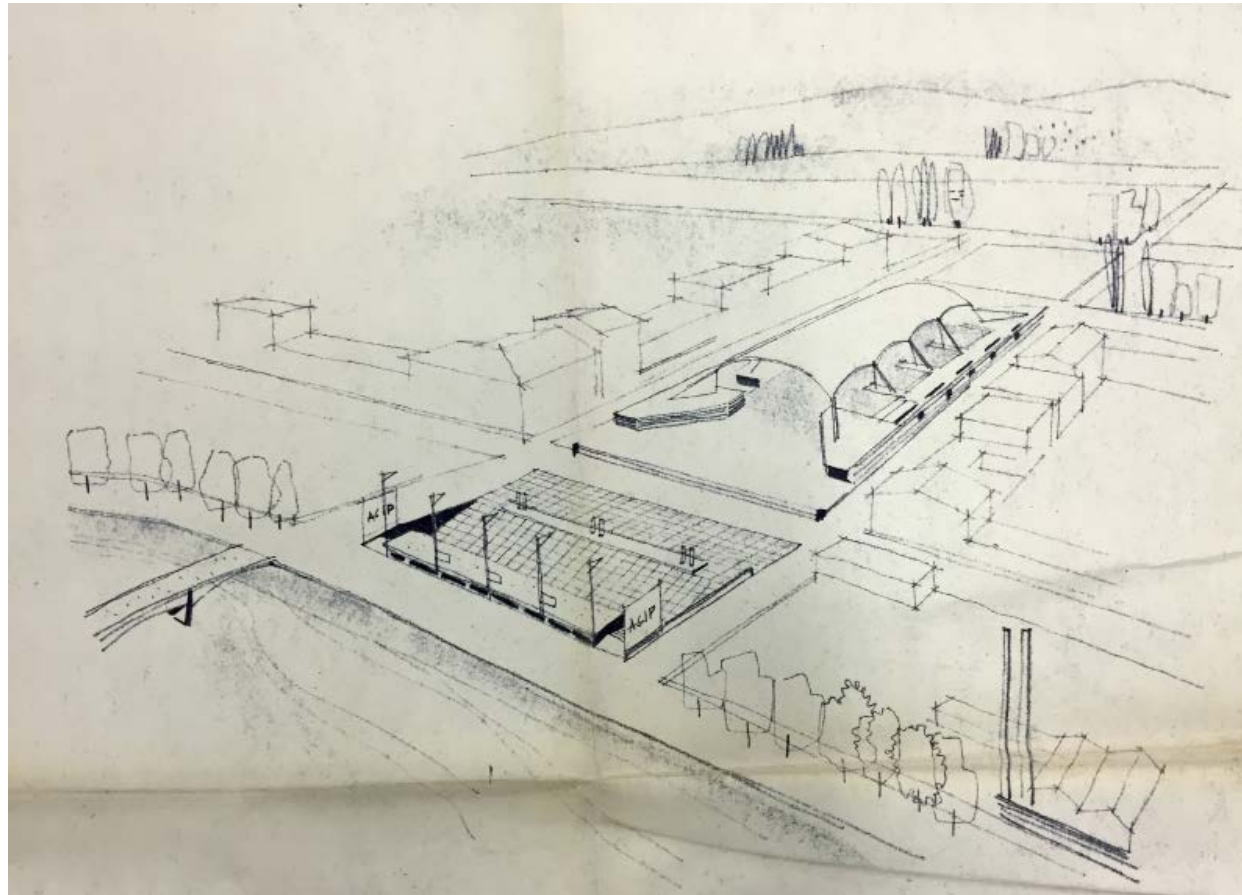
result of a thing loved by all. Agàpe is the place where men meet and stay for a short time. They seek brotherly love. Then they return to their homes. They are generally young men. They form a momentary community that lives religiously detached from the routines of daily life. In every community, there must be a twofold relationship of the individual: one to God, the other to God's creatures, first among them mankind. Consequently, the individual needs a state of absolute solitude, suitable for meditation and contemplation, in addition to the normal condition of contact with other men. The lack of either of these relationships atrophies the complete and harmonious life of the community. But these relationships vary in quantity depending on the act that man performs at a given moment; and architecture is affected by this variation in function and therefore quantity. In Agàpe, given the character of voluntary meeting of men and souls and the temporary permanence, the balance weighs more heavily on the collective value, all the more so because for solitude there are mountains, streams, meadows. But my aim was never to nullify this possibility. We want a Christian and not just a bourgeois community. Hence the architectural vision of Agàpe. Neither the nice little hotel, nor the comfortable, graceful barracks. Agàpe is an organism. A complete organism and not an addition of parts for individual functions. It must represent for the host community what an ancient monastery represented for the monks. The example is not unorthodox. As an organism, it begins its life by adhering to the nature that surrounds it. Agàpe is born on a mountainside that opens up to the sun, at a point where the slope softens and then becomes steeper again to the valley floor. It grafts itself with nature not violently and brutally in a neo-classical manner, nor does it submerge and hide in a casual and falsely romantic manner. It remains a closed unit while having maximum freedom of articulation. On two sides, the same buildings with their walls and retaining walls of terracing delimit it from the surrounding meadows. The other two are enclosed by a strip of woodland that follows the contours of the land. Whoever arrives there finds neither closed gates nor just any meadow where there are any constructions. Agàpe is open to all and opens its arms to all; to go there, one must climb ramps and feel 'agapini'¹, even those who do not even know what it is. Outside and inside Agàpe is an outflow and a return to and from the community. There is a place for the lone individual, for the small group of individuals, for the family, for the complete community. Outside the forest and the terraces, the small squares, the natural amphitheatre for meetings, the terracing for sports games, the church for the whole community. Inside, the cells, the classrooms, the hall for meetings, lunch, theatre, study, and worship for the entire community. These are the general concepts that it is impossible for me now, for reasons of space, to detail. Agàpe is built with the poorest materials. The stones found on site, the wood from the forests, the lime that the rocks gave and that the young people tore with their hands. Traditional materials but which are called upon to express a new concept and a new architectural form. Agàpe is built by the young people themselves

1 "Agapini" was the name of the inhabitants of the Agàpe community.

with an effort beyond their means out of love. They are young people who come from various cities, various habits, almost all of them not from the trade. Yet, I have never loved workers as much as I love these young people, and I cannot forget, for example, one of them [Gianni Cassetti, editor's note] who for months, ten hours a day, with a sack stuffed with straw, made into a hood, until it almost covered his face, with his head bowed, tirelessly, with an equal, shuffling step, carried stones and rocks of an incredible weight. I have never spoken to this young man, I have only shaken his hand two or three times, and I have seen him smile with a child's good mouth, I too love him with a brotherly love. I cannot name all these young people, I may not even know the name of some, but I want to thank you all the same for all the good you have done me with your work given out of love. And I want to remember my direct collaborators. First of all, engineer Nino Messina, who helps me with the technical part with a lot of expertise and at the sacrifice of his personal work. And Gianni König and Claudio Messina, the inseparable and unsurpassable 'macchiette'², this time still together and seriously committed to the direction and continuous supervision of the work. And then what about you, dear Vinay, you who were the real builder of Agàpe? Nothing, because everyone loves you and everyone knows. I embrace you fraternally, your 'Archileo'³.

2 Person who has something bizarre and singular, who arouses laughter and sympathy.

3 Nickname encompassing the contracted forms "arch" for "architect" and "Leo" for "Leonardo".



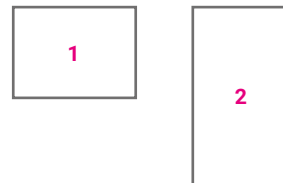
Flowers Market of Pescia

ARCHIVAL DATA

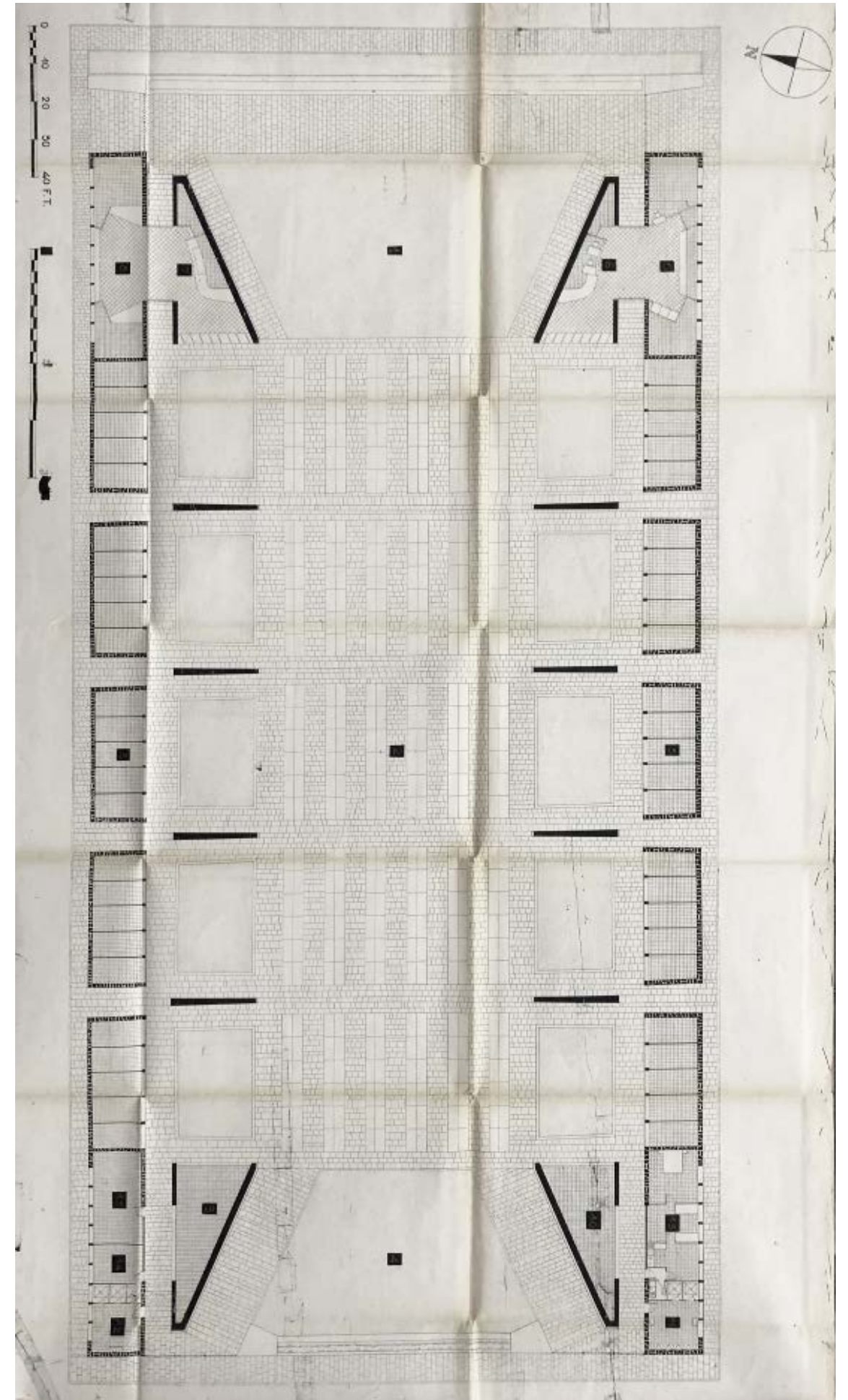
DATE	1948-1951 (design and realization)
ADDRESS	Giovanni Amendola, Pescia (FI)
COLLABORATORS	Emilio Brizzi Giuseppe Giorgio Gori Enzo Gori Leonardo Savioli
CUSTOMER	Municipality of Pescia Fiorentina
SOURCES	Fondo Gori

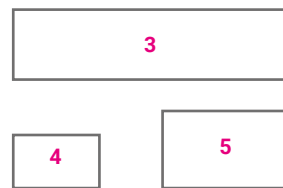
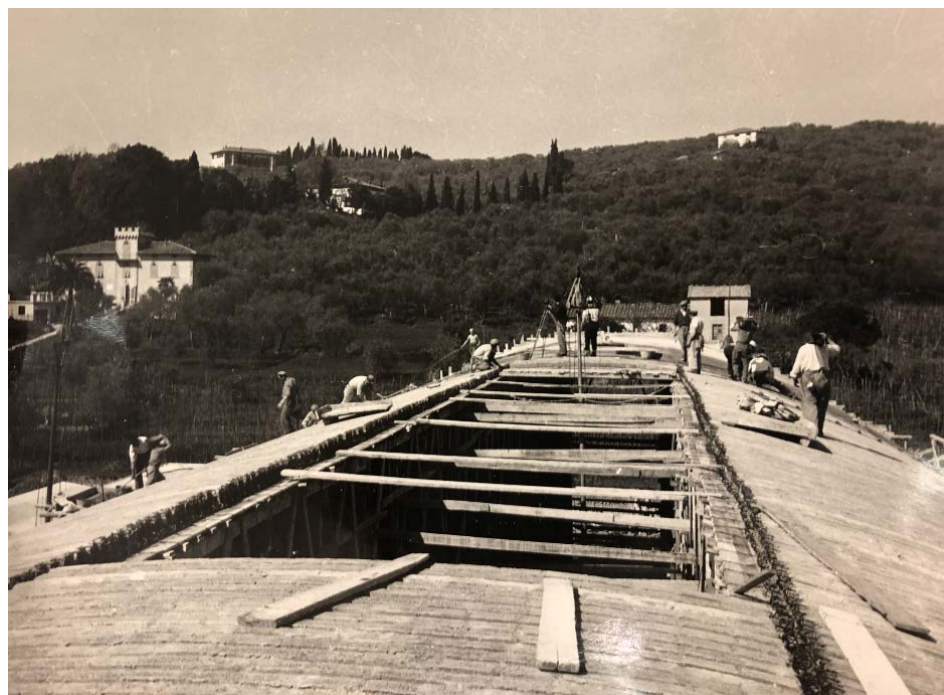
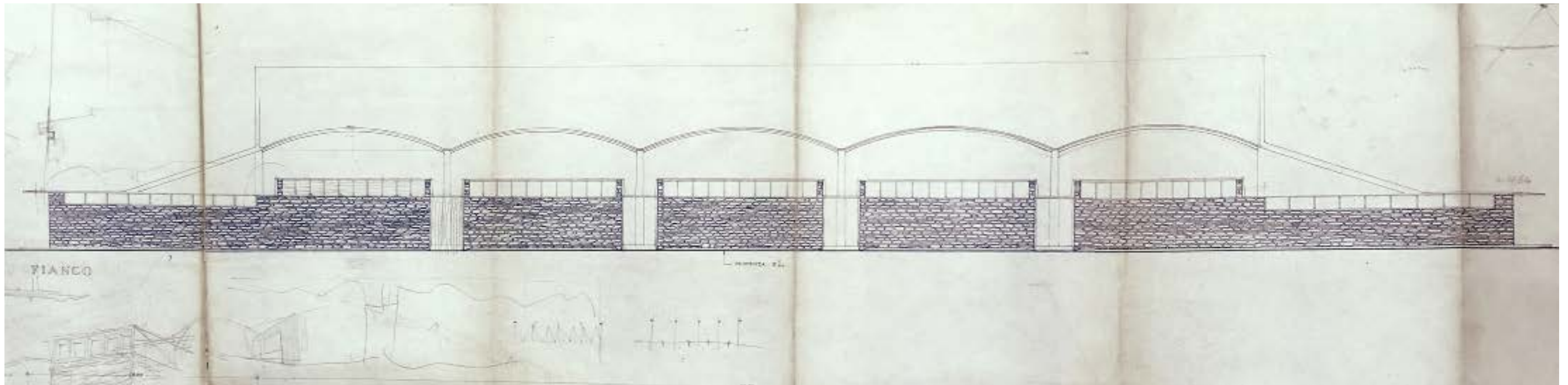
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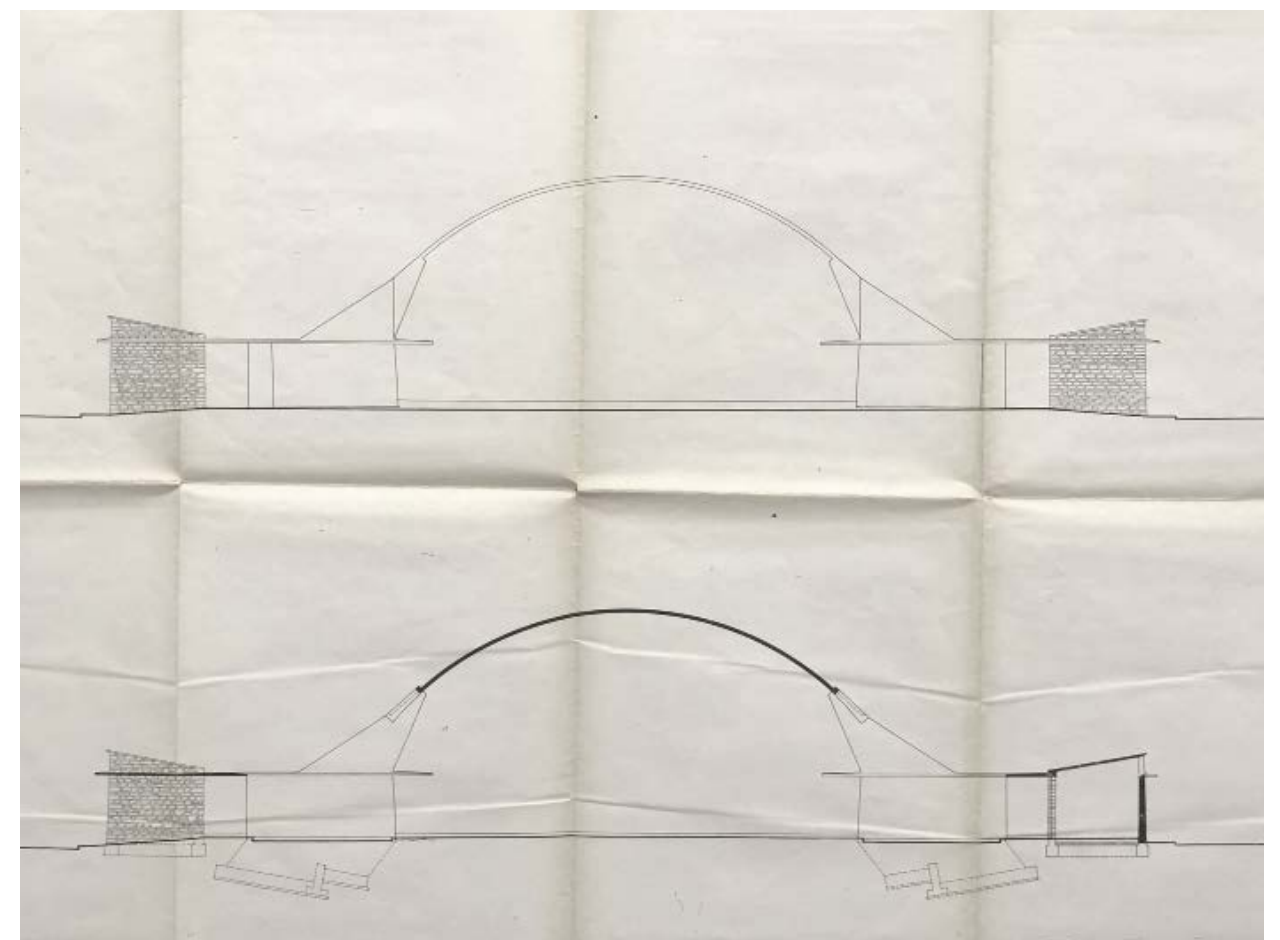


IMG.1: Flowers Market of Pescia, view, ink on paper, Fondo Gori; IMG.2: general plan, ink on paper.





IMG.3: elevation, ink on paper, Fondo Gori; IMG.4: picture of the building site, Fondo Gori; IMG.5: section and structural section, ink on paper, Fondo Gori.



***Mercato dei Fiori* in Pescia (1948-1951): Design Inventiveness and Constructional Experimentation in Italy after the Second World War**

Leonardo Ricci, *Mercato dei Fiori in Pescia, Reinforced Brick, SAP-Self-Supporting Vaults, Architecture and Constructive Experimentation in Italy*

/Abstract

After the Second World War, Italy shifted within a few years from post-war reconstruction to the economic “boom”, attracting international attention with a series of highly original works and extraordinary examples of structural and constructional experimentation despite a strong technological delay compared to other industrialised countries.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, projects in which formal invention was closely linked to innovation in materials and structures developed all over Italy, creating a “built catalogue” of experimental techniques. Brick was among the materials that were widely available and deeply rooted in the traditional building. Indeed, the development of the so-called “reinforced brick” in the interwar period had paved the way to the construction of thin, light structures that could be built saving time and costs.

One of the first and most significant Italian experiments with this material was the *Mercato dei Fiori* (Flowers Market) in Pescia, Tuscany. It was the work of a team composed of architects Giuseppe Giorgio Gori, Leonardo Ricci, Leonardo Savioli, and Enzo Gori, along with the engineer Emilio Brizzi. The presence of four architects and one engineer in the group meant that the two aspects of the project – design and construction – were both thoroughly studied and intimately connected. This was the key to the successful combination of structural boldness and formal originality that made this building a case study in post-war Italian architecture and also earned it international fame. This structure still remains an important testimony to a formidable period of constructional experimentation in post-war Italy; the analyses of its material and structural aspects, which have not been considered so far by scholarly studies on either the building or its authors, represent fundamental investigative tools for fully understanding its value and innovation.

The paper proposes an analysis of the Market’s space and compositional principles relying upon a deep understanding of its structural conception, since the simplicity and lightness of the final result were only possible thanks to the innovative adoption of technological solutions that were widely known but still used infrequently or in different settings.

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Micaela Antonucci is Associate Professor of History of Architecture at the University of Bologna. Her scholarly studies focus on Italian Renaissance architecture, with special concern for Rome and the work of Antonio da Sangallo the Younger; and on topics and protagonists of contemporary architecture, particularly Otto Wagner and Pier Luigi Nervi and she contributed many essays and books on these topics, the most recent of which are: “Il Palazzo Stati di Giulio Romano: ipotesi sulla fabbrica cinquecentesca alla luce di nuovi documenti”, *Quaderni degli Atti dell’Accademia di San Luca: 2021*; *Pier Luigi Nervi in Africa. Evoluzione e dissoluzione dello Studio Nervi 1964-1980* (with G. Neri, 2021). She has been curator of several international exhibitions and congresses and In 2020 she was appointed David and Julie Tobey Fellow at I Tatti - The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies.

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Born in Bologna, Alice Fantoni graduated in Building Engineering - Architecture at Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna. Her research investigated the constructive experimentation and technique of reinforced brick in Italy focusing in particular on the *Mercato dei Fiori* in Pescia, collecting the results of these studies in the master’s thesis “Architecture and constructive experimentation in Italy after World War II: *the Mercato dei Fiori* in Pescia,” supervisor Prof. Micaela Antonucci, co-supervisors Prof. Tomaso Trombetti, Ing. Francesco Lensi.



A perfect combination of architecture and engineering

After the Second World War, Italy shifted within a few years from post-war reconstruction to the economic “boom”, attracting international attention with a series of highly original works and extraordinary examples of structural and constructional experimentation despite a strong technological delay compared to other industrialised countries.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, projects in which formal invention was closely linked to innovation in materials and structures developed all over Italy, creating a “built catalogue” of experimental techniques.

This paradox cannot be explained only by the talent of some brilliant professionals such as Pier Luigi Nervi (1891-1979), who first enjoyed celebrity status as a structural engineer in Italy at the end of 1930s and then worldwide following the architectural success of his buildings for the Rome Olympics in 1960¹.

Taking a step back, the post-war “Made in Italy” blend of architecture and engineering was the culmination of a long process of constructional experimentation, which began with the advent of reinforced concrete at the beginning of the century and continued during the so-called “autarchy” period (the “self-sufficiency” policy encouraged by the fascist regime from 1936, following sanctions levied by the League of Nations after the invasion of Ethiopia), until the 1940s and 1950s.² Under these autarchic policies, Italian builders had little access to steel. While the country had almost no iron or coal resources of its own and under the embargoes it could import only limited amounts of these materials.

These policies caused shortages of some raw materials. Therefore, top priority was given to making the most of the materials available and minimising complexities. Furthermore, the organisation of construction sites in Italy was still “artisanal” and strongly related to traditional methods and techniques. This confluence of construction economics, material scarcity, inspired design and politics was among the key factors that led to: a larger use of materials easily available in Italy, alone or combined together; the development of high-efficiency structural forms such as shells, vaults, membranes and surfaces; the improvement of construction systems targeted at minimising the use of scaffolding and centerings and at promoting the use of prefabrication processes, even in complex structures.

Brick was among the materials that were widely available and deeply rooted

1 The most recent monographies on Pier Luigi Nervi's work are: Micaela Antonucci, Annalisa Trentin, and Tomaso Trombetti (eds.), *Pier Luigi Nervi. Architetture per lo sport / Pier Luigi Nervi's Sports Facilities, exhibition catalogue MAXXI – Museo delle Arti del XXI secolo di Roma, February 5-October 23, 2016* (Rome: MAXXI, 2016); Roberto Gargiani and Alberto Bologna, *The Rethoric of Pier Luigi Nervi. Concrete and Ferrocement Forms* (Lausanne: EPFL Press, 2016); Thomas Leslie, *Beauty's Rigor. Patterns of Production in the Work of Pier Luigi Nervi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017); Micaela Antonucci and Gabriele Neri, *Pier Luigi Nervi in Africa. Evoluzione e dissoluzione dello Studio Nervi (1964-1980)* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2021).

2 For more on these complex issues, simply mentioned here, see: Sergio Poretti, *Modernismi italiani. Architettura e costruzione nel Novecento* (Rome: Gangemi, 2008); Sergio Poretti, Pier Giovanni Bardelli, Antonio Cottone, Franco Nuti, Antonello Sanna (eds.), *La costruzione dell'architettura. Temi e opere del dopoguerra italiano* (Gangemi: Rome 2009); Paolo Desideri, Alessandro De Magistris, Carlo Olmo, Marco Pogacnik, Stefano Sorace (eds.), *La concezione strutturale. Ingegneria e architettura in Italia negli anni Cinquanta e Sessanta* (Turin: Umberto Allemandi & C., 2013).



1 |

in the traditional building. Indeed, the development of the so-called “reinforced brick” in the interwar period had paved the way to the construction of thin, light structures that could be built saving time and costs. Since the 1930s, the “autarchy” policies promoted by the fascist regime had pushed the use of brick blocks in floor slabs and vaulted structures, in order to cover large spaces free from intermediate supports, thus reducing costs for reinforcement and scaffolding. This research produced exceptional results both in Italy and abroad in the post-war years – among the notable experiences are those of Eladio Dieste in Uruguay, Ildelfonso Sánchez del Río in Spain and Guillermo González Zuleta in Colombia.³

One of the first and most significant Italian experiments with this material was the *Mercato dei Fiori* (Flower Market) in Pescia, Tuscany. It is the work of a team composed of architects Giuseppe Giorgio Gori, Leonardo Ricci, Leonardo Savioli, and Enzo Gori, along with the engineer Emilio Brizzi. It was the winner of a competition announced in 1948 by the municipal administration with the project having the motto “Quadrifoglio” (four-leaf clover).⁴

The project focused on the idea of a large free space, open on the sides to

3 For more recent references to these topics see: “Architettura Latino Americana,” *Costruire in Laterizio*, 95 (2003); David López López, Théo Van Mele and Philippe Block, “Dieste, González Zuleta and Sánchez del Río: Three approaches to reinforced-brick shell structures,” in Koel Van Balen and Els Verstryngne (eds), *Structural Analysis of Historical Constructions – Anamnesis, diagnosis, therapy, controls* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2016): 571-578; Adolfo F. L. Baratta, Antonio Magarò, “Volte funiculari sottili in laterizio: storia e sperimentazioni contemporanee,” *Costruire in Laterizio*, 173 (2017): 72-79.

4 Among the most recent writings on this topic, see: Amedeo Belluzzi, Claudia Conforti, *Architettura italiana 1944-1985* (Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1985), 121-130; Caterina Cardamone, “Il Mercato dei fiori a Pescia,” *La Nuova Città*, 5-6, (1999): 85-91; Corinna Vasić Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci: architetto «esistenzialista»* (Florence: Edifir, 2005): 24-25; Claudia Massi (ed.), *Mercati dei Fiori di Pescia, exhibition catalogue* (Pescia, 1-31 June 2017) (Pisa: ETS, 2017); Alice Fantoni, “Architettura e sperimentazione costruttiva in Italia nel secondo dopoguerra: il Mercato dei Fiori di Pescia” (Single-cycle master’s thesis in Building Engineering-Architecture, University of Bologna, academic year 2018-2019, lecturer Professor M. Antonucci); Mauro Cozzi and Ulisse Tramonti (eds), *Gli architetti del Mercato dei fiori di Pescia negli anni della ricostruzione postbellica* (Florence: ETS, 2020); Maria Clara Ghia, *La nostra città è tutta la terra. Leonardo Ricci architetto (1918-1994)* (Steinhauser Verlag: Wuppertal, 2021): 57-59.

Fig. 1

G. G. Gori, E. Gori, L. Ricci, L. Savioli, E. Brizzi, *Mercato dei Fiori*, Pescia, 1951 (Photo Barsotti, Florence. Fondo Gori, Biblioteca di Scienze Tecnologiche – Architettura, University of Florence).



allow a close physical and visual relationship with the surrounding landscape, and covered by a large reinforced brick vault resting on sloping reinforced concrete walls [Fig. 1]. The members of the team had been working together since the mid-1940s: G. Gori, Ricci and Savioli, all three students and collaborators of the “maestro” Giovanni Michelucci, had already won various architectural tenders in Florence and in Tuscany in the immediate post-war period, in collaboration with both E. Gori and Brizzi and with other professionals.⁵ The *Mercato dei Fiori* represented both the top result and the end of the collaboration between the five young Tuscan professionals, who from this moment on would take different paths.

The presence of four architects and one engineer in the group meant that the two aspects of the project – design and construction – were both thoroughly studied and intimately connected. This was the key to the successful combination of structural boldness and formal originality that made this building a case study in post-war Italian architecture and also earned it international fame after its huge success at the 1954 Biennale of Architecture of São Paulo in Brazil. This “multi-authorship” is the reason why still today scholars do not agree on the roles of each team member in the design concept and in the construction.

In her 2005 monograph on Leonardo Ricci, Corinna Vasić Vatovec wrote that Flora Wiechmann, wife of Leonardo Savioli, “attributed to Ricci the invention of the key theme of the vault, conceived as a large tent”.⁶ Several clues support this hypothesis: the fact that Savioli participated in the competition but did not sign the project documents, nor the construction drawings⁷; the similarities between

5 Corinna Vasić Vatovec, “Leonardo Ricci nella stagione dell’esordio: dai concorsi fiorentini per la Ricostruzione al Mercato dei Fiori di Pescia,” in Cozzi and Tramonti, *Gli architetti del Mercato dei fiori di Pescia negli anni della ricostruzione postbellica*, 126-151.

6 Vasić Vatovec, “Leonardo Ricci: architetto ‘esistenzialista’,” 25, footnote n. 41.

7 Claudia Massi, “Giuseppe Giorgio Gori architetto a Pescia: opere pubbliche, private, collaborazioni,” in Cozzi and Tramonti, *Gli architetti del Mercato dei fiori di Pescia negli anni della ricostruzione postbellica*, 52-72: 60.

Fig. 2

Left: L. Ricci, Waldesian Village, Agape (1947-51); right: Mercato dei Fiori, Pescia: storages (1948-51).

the project for the market and the works of Ricci in the late 1940s and the early 1950s (the theme of “flying” architecture, as in Casa Balmain; the use of local stone and of the “scarp wall”, as in the village of Agape and in Monterinaldi houses) [Fig. 2].

If the project idea was therefore probably attributable to Ricci with the contribution of Savioli, the construction of the work is undoubtedly attributable to the two Gori together with Emilio Brizzi, authors of the detailed design and working drawings. The two Gori architects – who shared a surname but were not relatives – played a decisive role in the modification and refinement of the original project, following the comments and requests of the competition committee. The engineer Brizzi proved key in defining the structural form, yet his contribution was generally ignored by critics.⁸

Mercato dei Fiori: forms, structures, materials

The Mercato dei Fiori is the result of the perfect combination of different contributions and of a precise match between formal will and constructional needs: each part and every detail have a both functional and aesthetic roles.

The result is a structure in which the space is shaped through a close interrelation between design and structural experimentation, responding to the logistical needs of a flower market but at the same time generating a neutral and extremely flexible space.⁹

An analysis of the Market’s space and compositional principles must rely upon a deep understanding of its structural conception, since the simplicity and lightness of the final result were only possible thanks to the innovative adoption of technological solutions that were widely known but still used infrequently or in different settings.

The architectural complex is divided into four main parts: a large vault, two “squares” at the opposite ends on the shorter sides, and storage areas on the longer sides [Fig. 3].

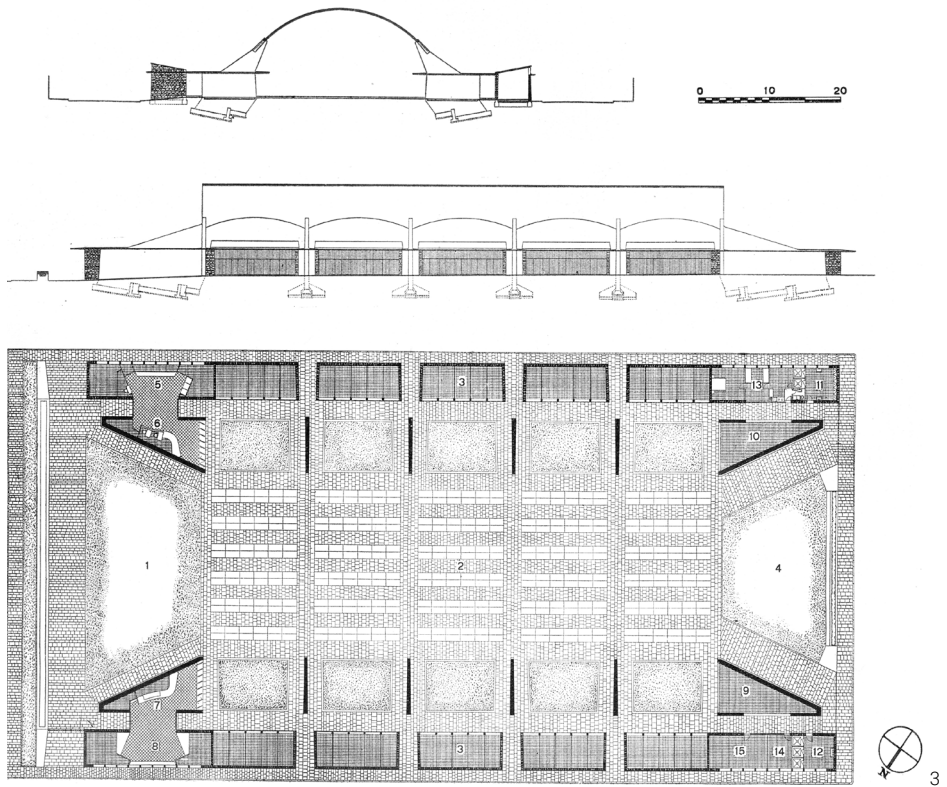
The key element of the structure is the thin (only 15 cm thick), self-supporting, reinforced-brick vault that covers the central space, almost 24 m wide and 73 m long. The vault is supported by reinforced-concrete lateral buttresses, regularly spaced 14.40 m from each other, connected to the vault’s springing point by reinforced-concrete, variable-section arches and triangular reinforced-concrete elements.

At the end of the 1940s in Italy the use of reinforced-brick vaults was not yet as widespread as it would become in subsequent decades (see the following

8 Francesco Lensi, Fabio Turcheschi, “Gli ingegneri di Giuseppe Giorgio Gori,” in Cozzi and Tramonti, *Gli architetti del Mercato dei fiori di Pescia negli anni della ricostruzione postbellica*, 114-124.

9 As the designers wrote in the 1949 General Report, “It was a question of designing a particular architectural complex that had to “work” perfectly like a machine, in all aspects (distributive, constructional, economic, etc.) and at the same time correspond in an equally perfect way to those artistic-environmental needs that the theme imposed” (*Mercati dei fiori a Pescia*: 141).

chapter). The choice of this technique for the construction of the *Mercato dei Fiori's* vault therefore underscores the designers' ability to approach the technical and structural concept with an innovative, experimental attitude. The originality and the boldness of this project are also evident in the particular solutions adopted, which are clearly different from the ones currently used for "SAP"



self-supporting, reinforced-brick vaults. For example, the thrust of the vault is opposed not by horizontal metallic chains but by inclined lateral buttresses, in order to leave the space under the intrados completely free.

The buttresses are elegant, thin reinforced-concrete walls, shaped according to the loads and thrusts of the vault. They assume a dual function, both static and architectural; not only do they take the dead weight of the roof, but they create two "squares" – the main entrance on the eastern side and the rear service entry on the western one – on the shorter sides and a sequence of "courtyards" that lead to storage areas on the longer sides.

The two "squares" have a dynamic trapezoidal shape, defined by the service buildings and by the diagonally inclined corner buttresses; they create a fluid continuity – both architectural and visual – between the inner and outer space.

The storage areas, structurally autonomous from the other parts of the complex, are along the longer sides of the central space and are organised into ten smaller rectangular boxes. In front of each box there were supposed to be small green areas with flowerbeds – but these were never built – which would have created a filter between the inner space under the vault and the lateral paths towards the storages.

Fig. 3

Mercato dei Fiori, Pescia: plan, side façade, section (source: *Casabella-continuità*, no. 209, 1956).

In addition to these design and constructional innovations, one of the peculiar elements of this structure is the choice and the use of building materials, which – while having to comply with the limits imposed by the 1948 competition – give a precise identity to the various parts and define the structural elements. The brick vault is painted white, in order to create a sharp contrast with the blue of the sky visible from the inside. The exposed concrete buttresses and canopies are shaped with planed and oiled formwork. The storages walls are made of limestone from the quarries of Maona, near Montecatini Terme [Fig. 4]. The metallic elements, such as gates and windows, are painted light green. The flooring is made of local grey stone slabs, with the exception of the space under the vault, which consists of asphalt tiles.



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The use of these materials and the structural concept were considered a reference to Tuscan building tradition by scholars, starting with Ernesto Nathan Rogers who identified the market as “a whole that makes us think of Filippo Brunelleschi’s succession of arches and vaults, statically logical and consistent yet materially light” (1956).¹⁰ The idea of a “Tuscan heritage” was later repeated by other scholars, most recently by Corinna Vasić Vatovec, who linked the Mercato’s vault to the Florentine Renaissance’s groined vaults like those of Palazzo Gerini, well known to both Gori and Ricci (2020).¹¹ This supposed reference to the local building tradition was re-evaluated by Claudia Conforti and Amedeo Belluzzi, according to whom the Mercato has instead an “Apollonian structuralism, drained of all emphatic details” (1985).¹²

As for the construction processes employed, thanks to Giuseppe Giorgio Gori we have valuable testimony about the organisation of the construction site. In fact the Florentine architect made a scientific documentary for educational purposes that recorded the most important phases of the construction of the

10 Ernesto Nathan Rogers, “Il mercato dei fiori di Pescia degli architetti E. Brizzi, E. e G. Gori, L. Ricci, L. Savioli”, *Casabella-continuità*, no. 209 (January-February 1956): 28-33.

11 Vasić Vatovec, “Leonardo Ricci nella stagione dell’esordio,” 151.

12 Belluzzi and Conforti, *Architettura italiana 1944-1985*, 121.

Fig. 4

Mercato dei Fiori, Pescia.
Top: detail of the vault intrados; center: detail of the reinforced-concrete lateral buttresses supporting the vault; bottom: detail of the walls of the storages, made of limestone from the Maona quarries.

Mercato dei Fiori. This is a fundamental document, since it allows us to know the construction methods and phases as well as providing an important aid in understanding the design of all the project details, since not all the construction drawings are available. The documentary shows the various building phases, from the foundation to the construction of the vault (which will be described in more detail in the following chapter), and the load tests performed on a celluloid model at Milan Polytechnic. The shots alternate with “educational” interludes where the project is illustrated by drawings and structural diagrams, including a presentation of the vault construction system and of support structures.¹³

Despite the positive reviews and the international fame it had gained, the original structure of the *Mercato dei Fiori* was soon modified and in some parts it was completely changed.

Just a few years after the building was completed, the exponential increase in the floriculture trade in Pescia and Valdinievole and the extension of the seasonality from the summer to the entire year due to increased use of greenhouses, soon made the spaces inadequate. In order to increase space, the lateral areas between the buttresses were covered with wattles and curtains and the arches at the base of the vault were closed, interrupting the spatial continuity between the inside and outside.

Brizzi and Giuseppe Giorgio Gori developed various proposals to expand the market by closing the rear trapezoidal square with a system of overhangs made of folded thin reinforced concrete slabs, supported by trestles consisting of diamonds staggered in the adjacent rows. It is interesting to note that once again, as with the original building, research related to technological and constructional innovation was at the centre of the project: the thickness of the overhangs (3 cm), which complemented the lightness of the central vault, was made possible by using a diffuse metallic reinforcement consisting of overlapping steel meshes, inspired by the ferrocement technique patented by Pier Luigi Nervi (a lightweight combination of metal mesh and aggregate-free cement that he had perfected in experimental constructions in 1940s) – as Brizzi himself explicitly stated in the report for the market expansion project.¹⁴

Despite the efforts made to adapt the original structure the added space still was not enough and therefore in 1970 a competition was announced to design a new flower market, to be built in a larger area near the station and the entrance of the motorway; the winner was the group led by Leonardo Savioli (one of the old market’s designers) and Danilo Santi.¹⁵ Emptied of its original functions, the old market slowly suffered an inexorable decline. The arches on the sides were closed, the courtyards were

13 “Il Mercato dei Fiori a Pescia” Cinedocumentario didattico 16 m/m, (Fondo Gori, serie 3. Biblioteca di Scienze Tecnologiche – Architettura, University of Florence). Filming began on 1 July 1950 and ended on 26 February 1951.

14 Emilio Brizzi, “Progetto di ampliamento del mercato dei fiori a Pescia (Impiego di elementi costruttivi prefabbricati),” in *Bollettino degli Ingegneri*, 7, 1966: 3.

15 Belluzzi and Conforti, *Architettura italiana 1944-1985*, 124-130.

obscured by sheet metal canopies supported by reticulated metal structures, and the materials deteriorated.¹⁶

Yet, this structure still remains an important testimony to a formidable period of constructional experimentation in post-war Italy; the analyses of its material and structural aspects, which have not been considered so far by scholarly studies on either the building or its authors, represent fundamental investigative tools for fully understanding its value and innovation.

Reinforced-brick structures in twentieth-century Italy

The great availability of raw materials in Italy for brick production has always made it an extremely cost-effective material, and thanks to both the wide assortment of solutions and combinations with other materials more and more new products were developed. In the early decades of the 20th century a variety of bricks shaped in different forms for the construction of single/double-frame ribbed floors were patented.

The combination of brick and steel enabled the construction of extremely light and thin structures, making the most of the physical properties of both materials. Patents for reinforced brick floors multiplied in a continuous effort to optimise both structural forms and construction methods, with options ranging from prefabrication to on-site construction.¹⁷ Brick manufacturers offered a multitude of different solutions, yet all of them had similar characteristics and basic principles: a surprising variety, especially considering that validations of structural calculations relied only on static intuition and on experimental tests with prototypes and scale models.¹⁸

Despite general scepticism, thanks to the good results of the field-tests – confirming the similarity of the elastic modulus of brick and concrete and the excellent adhesion and the high compressive strength of brick – the Regio Decreto (royal decree) of 16 November 1939 enabled the construction of floors without topping slabs, provided that the bricks were shaped with adequate reinforcement in the upper part, exploiting the collaboration between brick, concrete and steel.

Among the most successful patents was that of the SAP self-supporting cement-block floor slabs and vaults, produced by Fornaci F.lli Rizzi, Donelli, Breviglieri e C. (RDB) in Piacenza, a firm that remained a leader in the Italian brick industry throughout the 20th century thanks to a considerable

16 On the subsequent transformations of the Market, reference is made to the reconstruction by Fantoni, "Architettura e sperimentazione costruttiva in Italia nel secondo dopoguerra," 24-33. On the decay of the architecture, see also Maurizio De Vita, "Considerazioni sul 'Restauro Del Moderno'. Il caso dell'ex Mercato dei Fiori di Pescia," in Riccardo Lentile (ed.), *Architetture in Cemento Armato. Orientamenti per la conservazione* (Milan: Franco Angeli Editore, 2008), 171-177.

17 Giorgia Predari, *I solai latero-cementizi nella costruzione moderna in Italia, 1930-1950* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2015).

18 On the use of models in structural design in Italy after the war, see Gabriele Neri, *Capolavori in miniatura. Pier Luigi Nervi e la modellazione strutturale* (Mendrisio/Cinisello Balsamo: Mendrisio Academy Press/Silvana Editoriale, 2014).

entrepreneurial skill and the ability to collaborate with universities and professionals.¹⁹

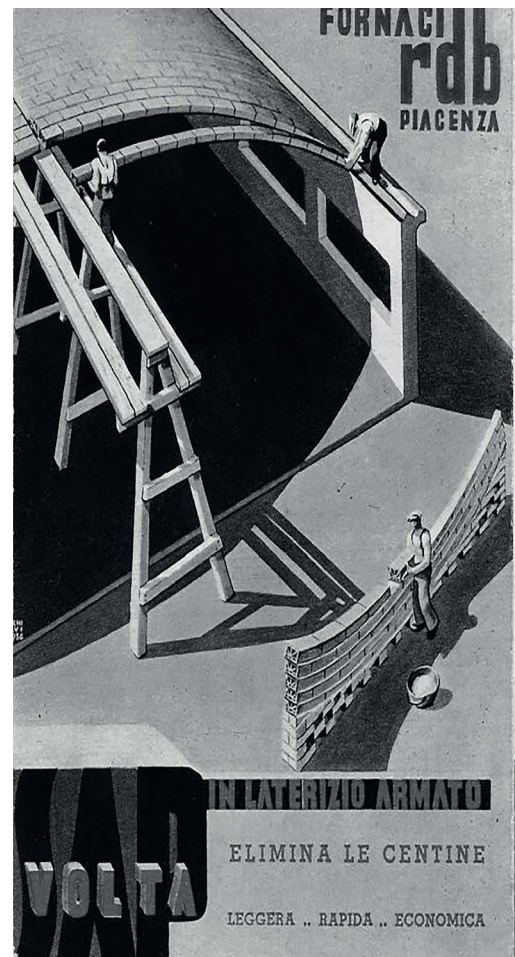
RDB's first experiments dated back to the 1920s, seeking to give bricks a main static role: the Solaio Auto-Portante (SAP) ("self-supporting floor"), inspired by a similar English concrete product,²⁰ was the most significant result of this research [Fig. 5]. It soon was increasingly used in Italy, thanks to its main features: minimal use of steel, impressive lightness, no need for large scaffolding, and simple and quick construction processes. While other kilns produced similar brick blocks, RDB products remained the brand of choice throughout the last century.²¹

The drive for technological innovation was also conditioned by political and economic reasons. As aforementioned above, since the second half of the 1930s the adoption of autarchic policies by the Fascist regime limited the use of imported materials such as iron, coal and wood, harshly limiting the use of reinforced concrete and forcing producers and designers to find alternative construction methods and materials.

The need to cover large spaces without using metal or reinforced concrete structures while also limiting the use of scaffolding as much as possible, produced great efforts to find ways to use brick blocks to build shell and vaulted structures.²²

Vaults could be built with both "regular" blocks used for floor slabs and "special" blocks whose shapes were tuned to be used in prefabricated arches or in other built-on-site structures. Among the blocks produced by RDB, those most used (aside from the self-supporting SAPs) were the Sapals, used in some particular kind of vaults, the ST'AR for double-curved roofs and rotation domes, and Celersaps, used for hyperbolic paraboloid roofs.

Based on these inventions and experiments, in the decades following the Second World War reinforced-brick floors and vaults were used more and more in Italy, due to economic reasons but also because they could be tuned to fit different forms and needs. These structures were used to build industrial buildings, sports facilities, churches, warehouses, markets, canopies, and



19 Paolo Baldini and Gustavo Roccella, *C'era una volta: novant'anni di storia RDB* (Piacenza: Nuova Litoeffe, 1998).

20 The SAP beam system consisted of perforated base elements having a parallelepiped shape available in four heights, i.e. 8, 12, 16 and 20 cm, 20 cm wide and 20-30 cm long, which were assembled at the building site or in specialised workshops, combining them to form beams up to 6 m in length. The beams were placed by resting them at the ends and positioning them next to each other, filling the gaps with cement mortar.

21 Other companies proposed bricks of similar conception, such as the arch vault of the Morelli company of Ancona, the Est vault of the Frazzi kilns in Cremona and the Trirex panels of Fornaci Valdadige, but also having different characteristics, such as the Morelli lamellar vaults composed of parallelepiped perforated brick elements with an elongated shape having lateral grooves for the rebar, mounted to form a rhomboidal frame that could be completely covered or left visible.

22 In 1937 a large prototype of a SAP self-supporting vault was built in the experimental field of Pontenure, home of the RDB Testing Laboratory, with a net span of 40 m and a thickness of only 20 cm, on which symmetrical and dissymmetrical load tests were performed, first with horizontal thrust eliminated by elastic tie rods and then with thrust contained by special buttresses.

Fig. 5

Advertising of the SAP self-supporting cement-block floor slabs and vaults, produced by Fornaci F.lli Rizzi, Donelli, Breviglieri (RDB), 1936.

other situations requiring large, covered spaces. Reinforced-brick vaults were generally built using curvilinear prefabricated reinforced-brick beams measuring about 5 m long, made of the same blocks used for the SAP self-supporting floors. These curvilinear beams were composed of elementary blocks cast together by cement mortar longitudinally and by reinforced-concrete ribs (15 to 25 cm thick) laterally. Generally the vaults' sectional shapes took the forms of depressed arches, but they could also be shaped by mixed or pointed arches. The horizontal thrust loads at the vault's springing was balanced by special metal tie-rods equipped with threaded turnbuckles. Prefabricated blocks forming the vault could be produced on site or in specialised production sites. The curved sections of the vault were shaped using a movable wooden board with an edge shaped according to the required curvature.

To build these structures, trestles bearing narrow trusses were prepared to support the edges of the beams and to put the longitudinal ribs in place. If the length of the beams exceeded 3 m, it was necessary to insert intermediate crossbars. A crane lifted the beams from the ground to put them in place on the supports. Additional reinforcements were then put in place: metal chains, tie brackets between the longitudinal joists to ensure the continuity of the reinforcement and blocks to reinforce the vault's springing. After having generously wet the bricks and the formworks, casting operations began, starting from the springing and the wall beams and then moving to the longitudinal and inter-

6 diate ribs.



The vault of the *Mercato dei Fiori* in Pescia is a SAP reinforced-brick vault, yet here this technology is used in an innovative way to create original forms and bold static concepts. Thanks to the aforementioned documentary on the construction of the market filmed by Giuseppe Giorgio Gori, we can see that all construction methods employed to build the vault were not experimental or new. Rather, they were adapted to

Fig. 6

Frames of the scientific documentary recording the most important phases of the construction of the *Mercato dei Fiori* ("Il Mercato dei Fiori a Pescia" Cinedocumentario didattico 16 m/m. Fondo Gori, serie 3. Biblioteca di Scienze Tecnologiche – Architettura, University of Florence).

build the innovative and bold solution imagined by Leonardo Ricci and the other designers. The result is an architecture where tradition is at the service of innovation [Fig. 6].

Mercato dei Fiori: technical and structural concept

The vault of the Mercato dei Fiori is formed by depressed circular-shaped arches, each of whom is composed of five elements made of curved SAP-self-supporting square beams, measuring 20 cm a side and about 4.50 m long.

These elements are connected longitudinally by six reinforced-concrete wall ribs, measuring 20 cm a side; additionally, tie brackets are inserted between the beams in order to become structurally integral [Fig. 7].

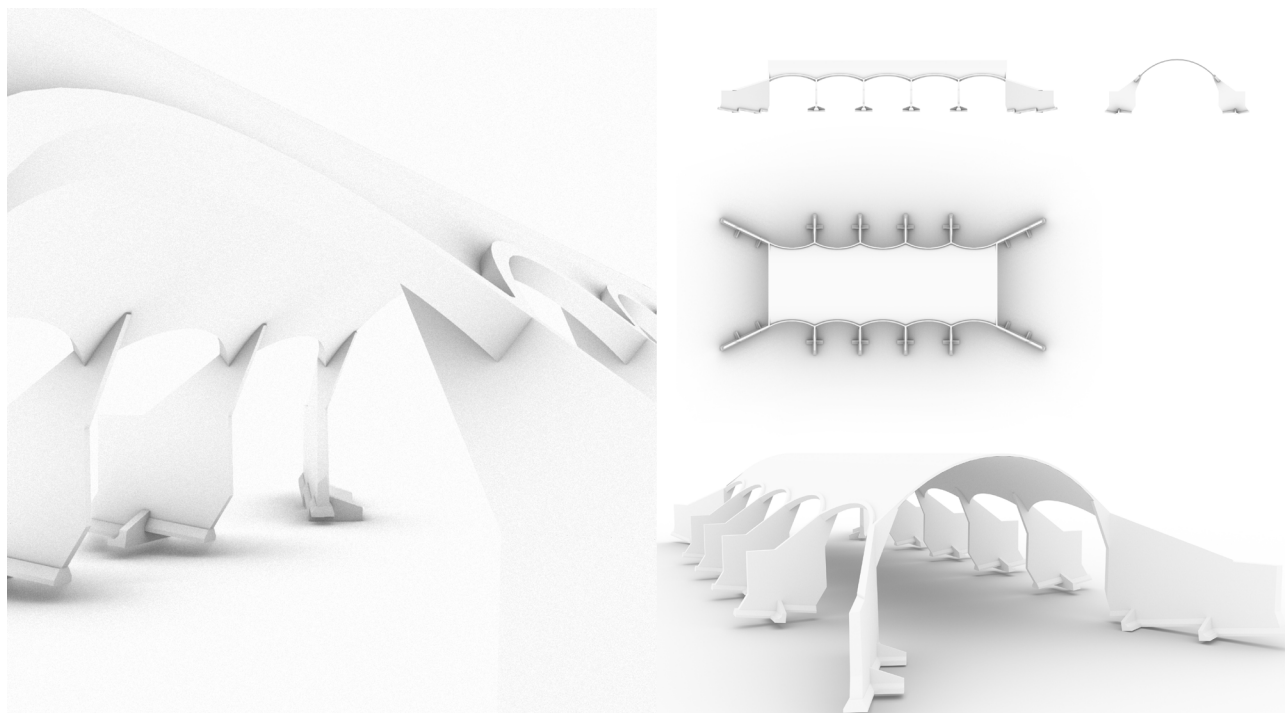
The vaults' spring from reinforced-concrete arches with variable sectional shapes, connected to the lateral buttresses by reinforced-concrete triangular elements, 20 to 35 cm thick and lightened by alternating rows of bricks. The arches, placed on an inclined plane, intersect the vaults' surfaces, helping to convey the thrust loads to the lateral buttresses; their dimensions vary between 50 cm at the keystone to 80 cm on the springing in height, measuring 40 cm in thickness.

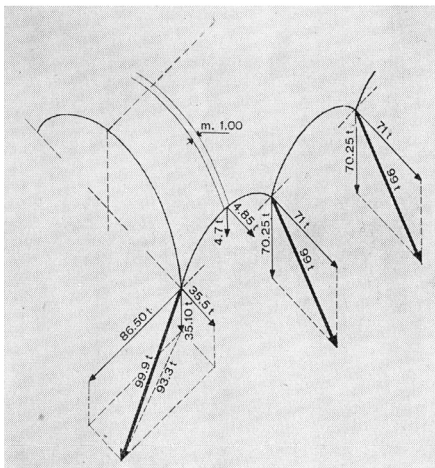
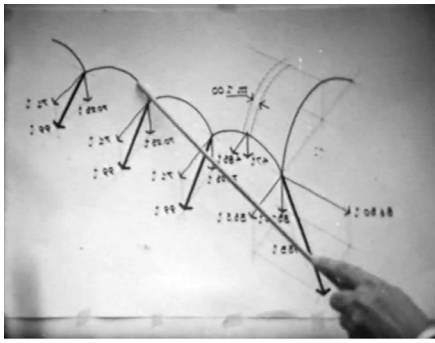
The brick-element sections of the vaults have a span of about 20.30 meters and a rise of 4 m. Considering the vault including the side arches, the span is about 23.50 meters, with a rise of 5.70 m. The total length of the vault is about 73 m.

The vault is supported by two pairs of reinforced-concrete corner buttresses and four pairs of reinforced-concrete lateral buttresses, 40 to 65 cm thick, spaced 14.45 meters apart. Their upper part is tilted following the resulting thrust lines

Fig. 7

Mercato dei Fiori, Pescia:
structural 3D model of the vault
(author: Alice Fantoni).





MERCATO DEI FIORI A PESCIA (1955)
(Tavola fuori testo)

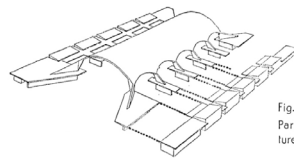


Fig. I
Partitura delle strutture.

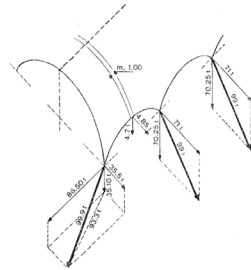


Fig. II
Forze sui piloni retti e obliqui.

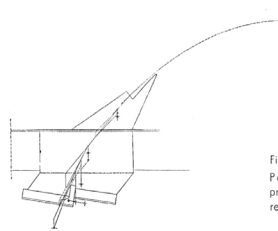


Fig. III
Poligono delle pressioni nei piloni retti.

8 |

of the vault. A thin concrete overhang covers the side spaces between the vaulted space and the storage boxes; it is grafted into the edge buttresses of the vault and structurally joined with the roof of the storage boxes.

There is no clear information about the building's foundation system, which consists of a widening at the base of the buttresses, inclined to better diffuse the loads into the ground and joined with elements perpendicular to the buttresses having a stabilising function.

The brick blocks used in the vault of the *Mercato dei Fiori* have similar characteristics to RDB's SAP bricks, but we have neither specific information on the manufacturer that produced them nor the original calculations or executive drawings. So, we have to carefully analyse every document available, from the drawings published in the article published by Ernesto Nathan Rogers in 1956 to the historical photos, from the documentary made by Gori to the first architectural drawings preserved in the Gori Collection in the Biblioteca di Scienze Tecnologiche – Architettura (Library of Technological Sciences - Architecture) of the University of Florence.²³

One of the elements that can help us to understand what the designers' approach may have been is a diagram visualizing the vector composition of the vault's thrust loads on the side arches and from the latter on the buttresses. This diagram is included in the *General Report* drawn up by Brizzi, E. Gori, G. Gori and

23 The brick blocks used to build the vault of the Mercato dei Fiori measure 20 x 20 x 30 cm. While their dimensions are the same as the RDB's SAP 20, the design of the inner cavities and the arrangement of the reinforcements were different. Indeed, the arched structure of the internal cavities and the lower portion are similar to the ones of Cirex bricks produced by Fornaci Valdadige, which however had a slightly elongated form and a single extrados groove for the housing of a rod.

Fig. 8

Diagram visualizing the vector composition of the vault's thrust loads on the side arches and from the latter on the buttresses (sources, top left: frame of the 1951 documentary about the construction phases of the building; bottom left: image of the article published in *Casabella-continuità*, 209, 1956; right: image in the teaching manual *Statika Grafica e Analitica* published by Emilio Brizzi in 1959).

Ricci in 1949; it is also in the 1951 documentary about the construction phases of the building and was among the images of the article published by Ernesto Nathan Rogers in *Casabella* in 1956 and in the teaching manual *Statica Grafica e Analitica* published by Emilio Brizzi in 1959²⁴ [Fig. 8].

The diagram expresses the static principles within the vault and the buttresses, as a result of the calculations – although none of the aforementioned sources include calculations or comments describing the figure in detail.

Yet, this (apparently) simple illustration proves key to understanding the *Mercato dei Fiori*'s structural concept, providing us with useful information on the structural scheme and the simple calculations used.

When this project was conceived, theories for the design of thin vaults were well known: yet, the lack of practical tools to easily perform the structural calculations was still a major problem. Therefore, it was generally preferred to use simple models that, through specific adjustments, could provide a simulation of the structural behaviour as accurately as possible. In particularly complex or difficult situations, the theory of “limiting hypotheses” was used, adopting a “weighted average” method for calculating and dimensioning the structural elements.

In the case of the *Mercato dei Fiori*, as the analysis of the sources and documents shows, the vault was conceived by its designers as a flat hinged-arch structure with an even width and uniformly distributed loads.

Despite the fact that the triangular reinforced-concrete elements and the arches at the vault's springing have different, not easily quantifiable effects on its structural equilibrium, this scheme enabled the designers to make relatively simple calculations and helped achieve statically-valid forms and dimensions of the structural elements.

The recent structural analysis of the *Mercato dei Fiori*²⁵ was carried out by developing models of increasing complexity and using Finite Elements Analysis (FEA) software, which enabled us to overcome the difficulties involved in evaluating the non-isotropic behaviour of the reinforced brick. This analysis was paramount in investigating the choices made by the designers using the tools at their disposal in 1940s and the methodologies they used.

A model of the vault, including the connecting gables and side arches, was created, at first using beam elements and then plate elements. Finally an overall plate-elements model, including buttresses and foundations, was produced. Throughout this work, we have examined how differently these two schemes behaved in simulating each vault's structural behaviour, to understand the pros and cons that each method offered [Fig. 9].

The comparison of the modelling results enabled us to appreciate the

24 Emilio Brizzi, *Statica Grafica e Analitica, elasticità e resistenza materiali, le quattro sollecitazioni semplici* (Florence: Tip. A. Lumini, 1959).

25 Alice Fantoni, “Architettura e sperimentazione costruttiva in Italia nel secondo dopoguerra,” 157-207.

designers' ability to understand the fundamentals of their structural behaviour despite the limited tools available of the time, using "static sensitivity" in the service of architectural design and modelling every part based on the static needs.

The Mercato dei Fiori is therefore an extraordinary example of the spirit of experimentation of post-war Italian architecture, in which formal and structural design perfectly match, creating a coherent and innovative building.

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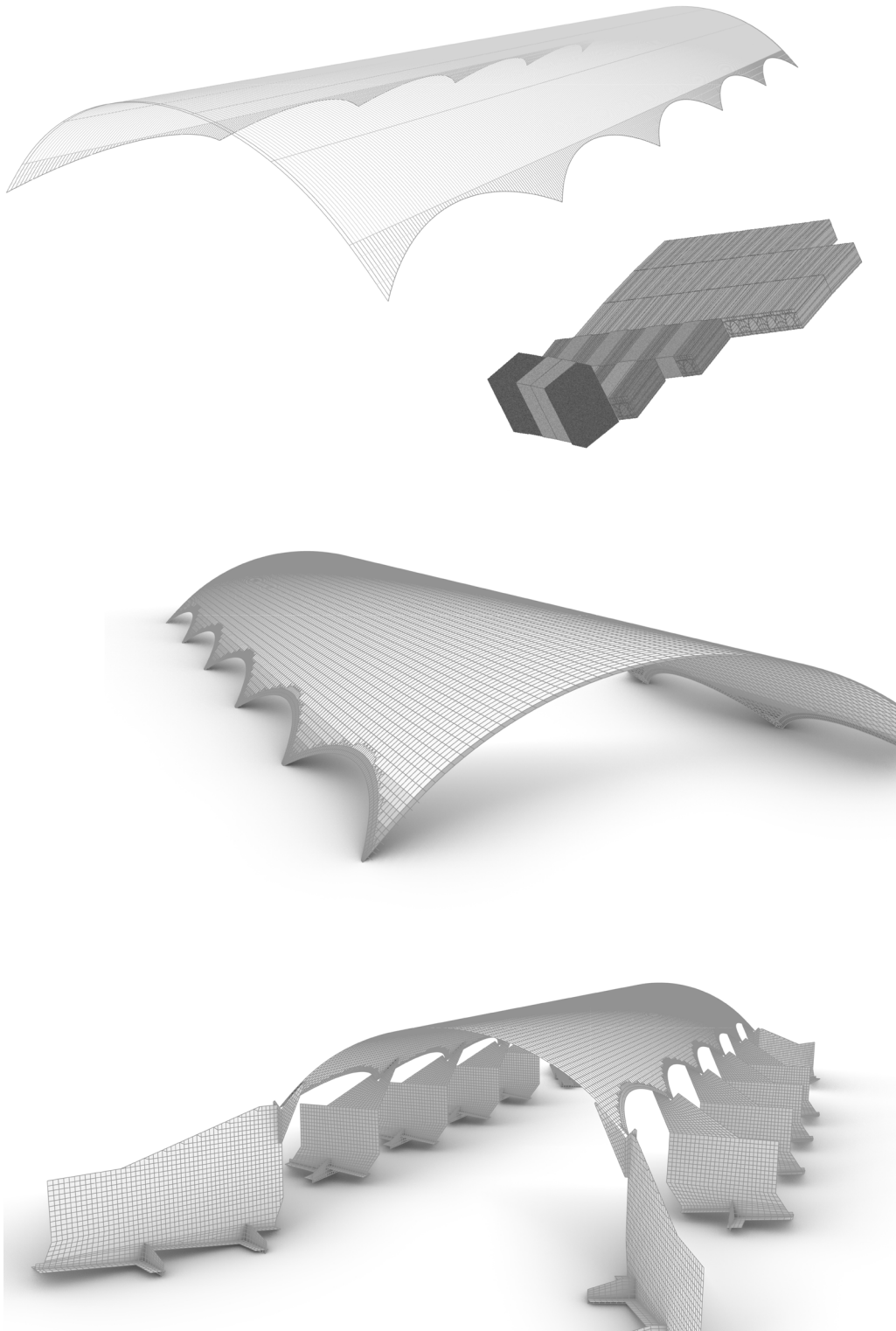


Fig. 9

Top to bottom: 3D models of the vault, including the connecting gables and side arches, created using beam elements and plate elements (author: Alice Fantoni).

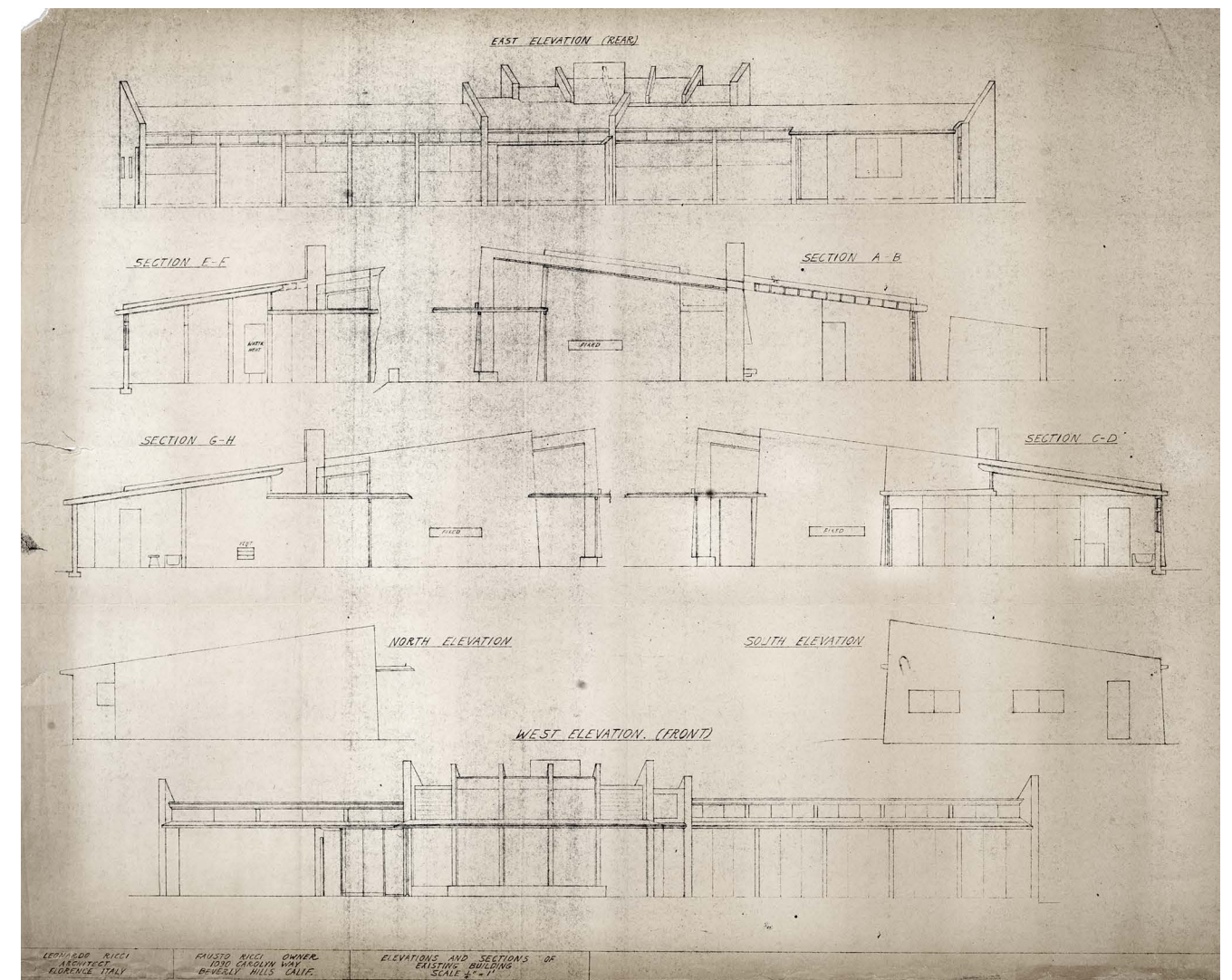
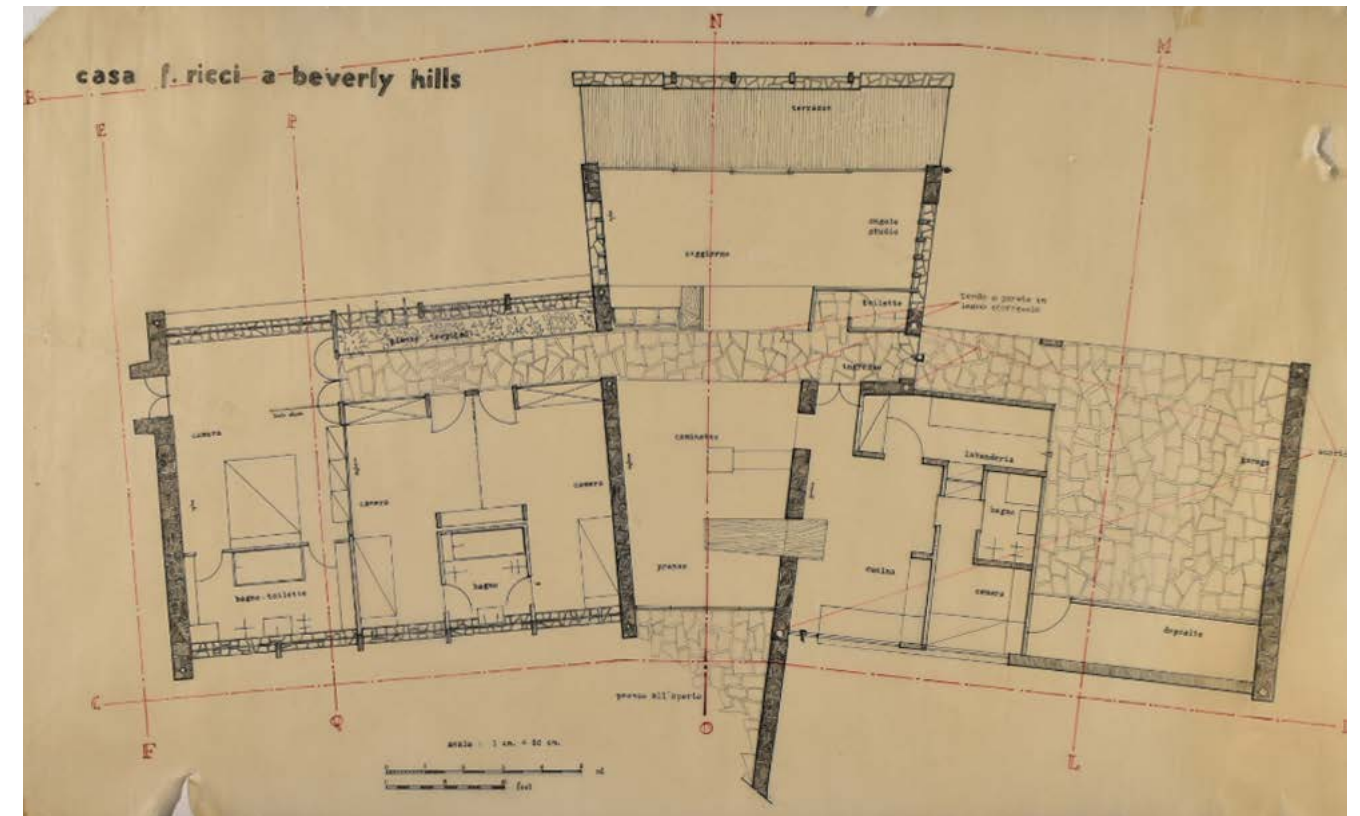
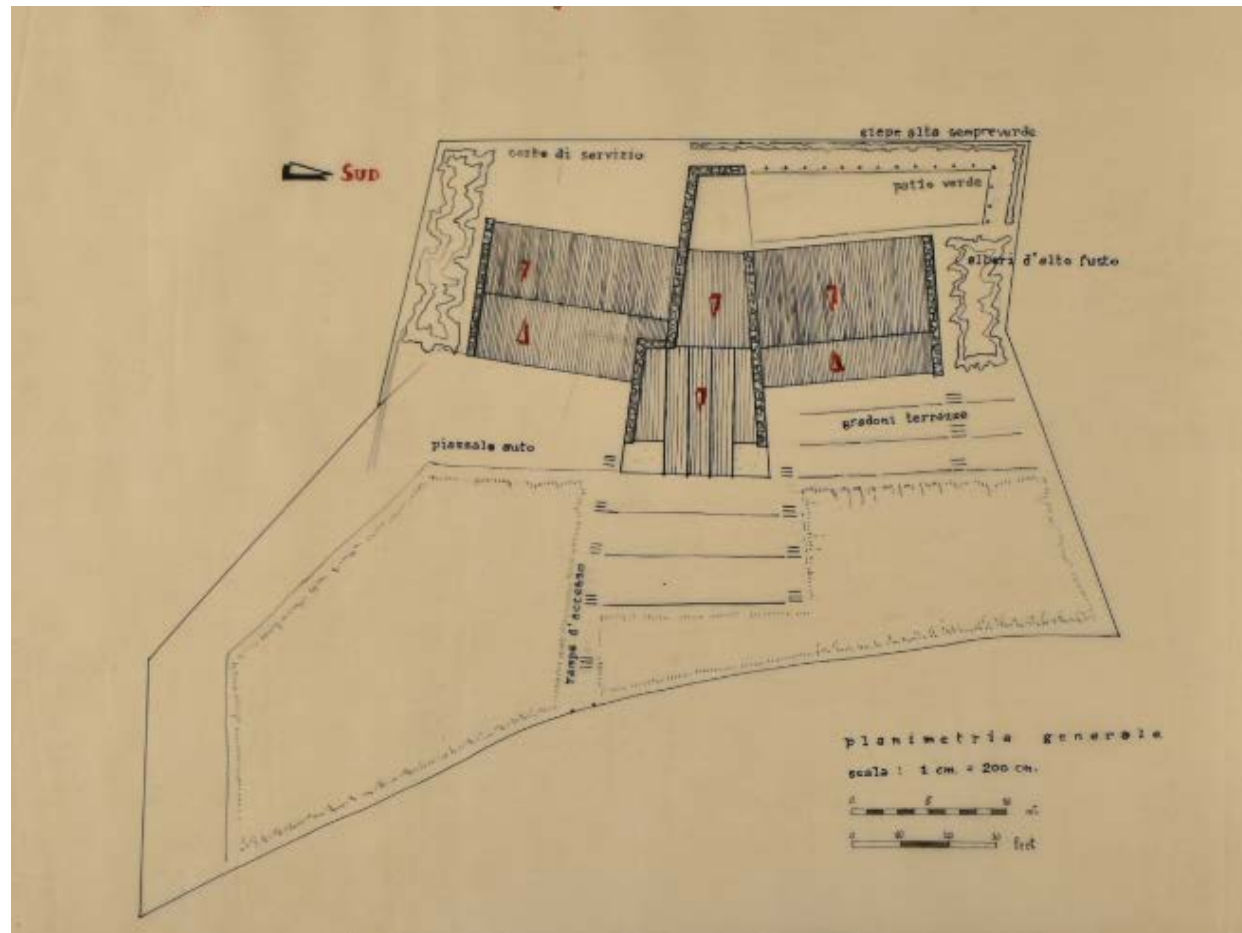
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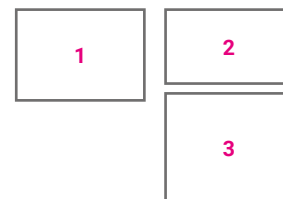
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Fausto Maria Ricci House

ARCHIVAL DATA

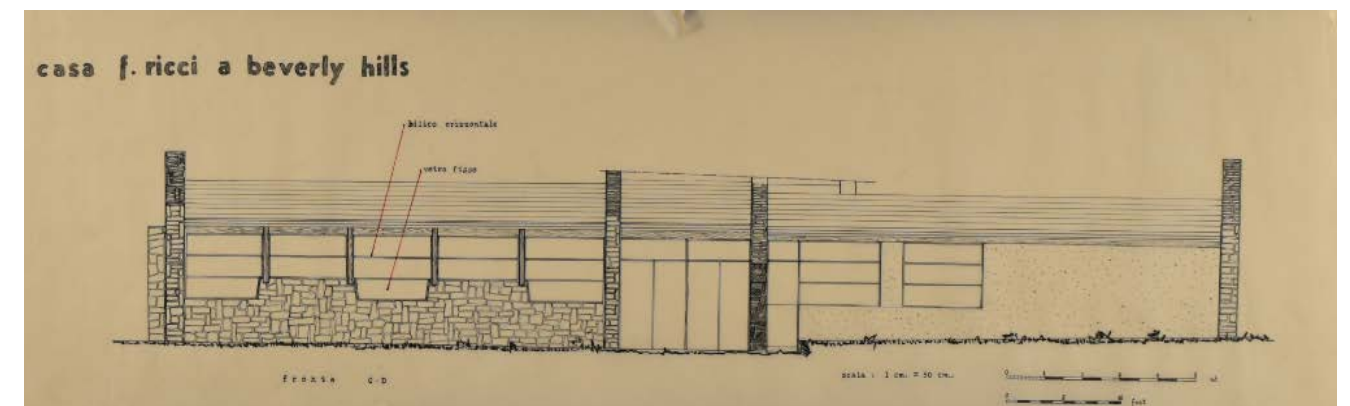
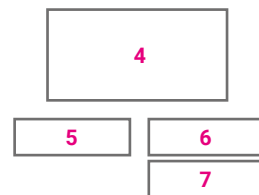
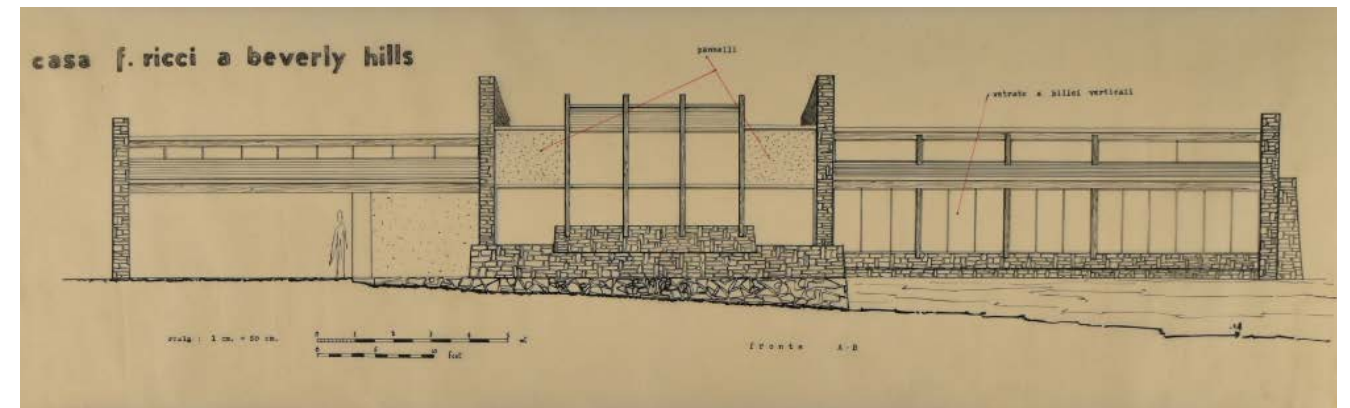
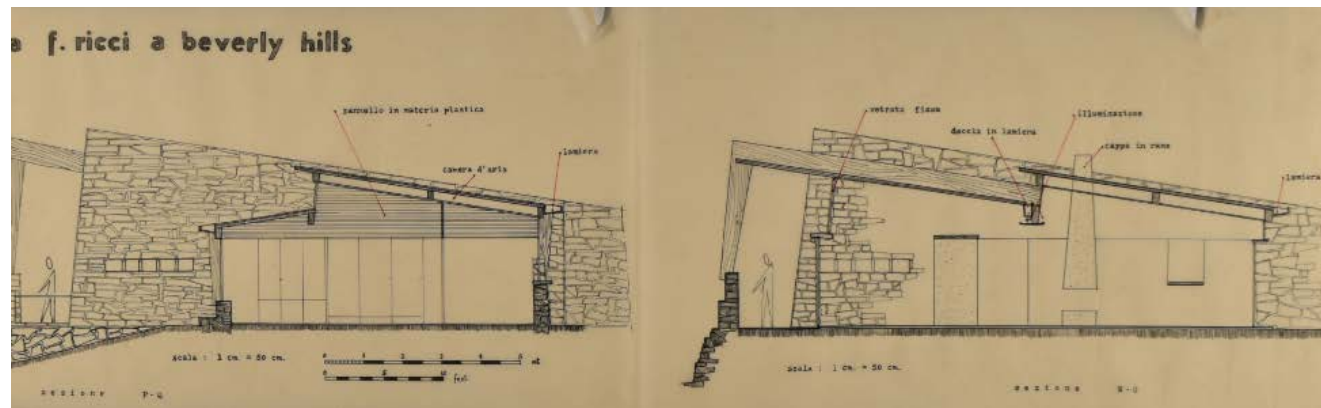
DATE	1952 (design and realization)
PLACE/ADDRESS	Beverly Hills, USA
COLLABORATORS	Giovanni Klaus Koenig, Gianfranco Petrelli
CUSTOMER	Fausto Maria Ricci
SOURCES	CSAC, CSR



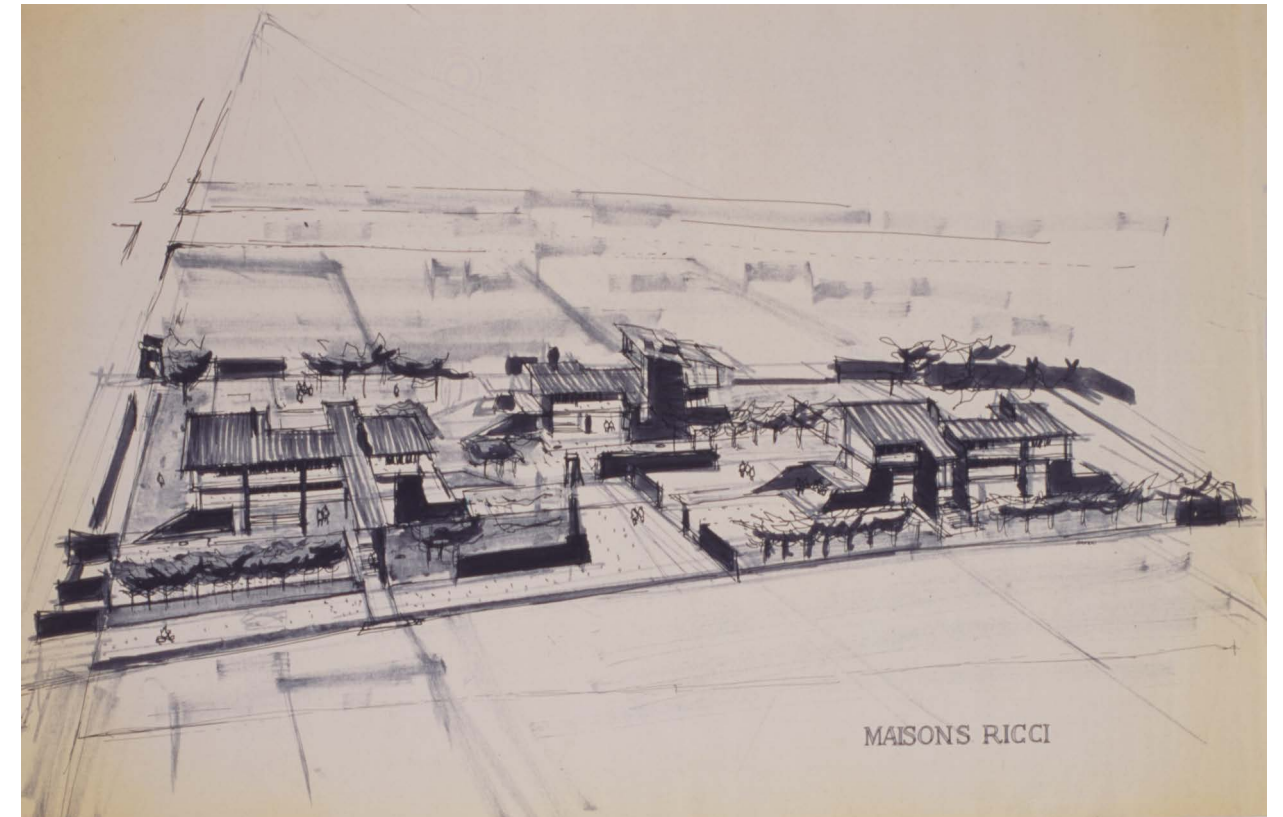
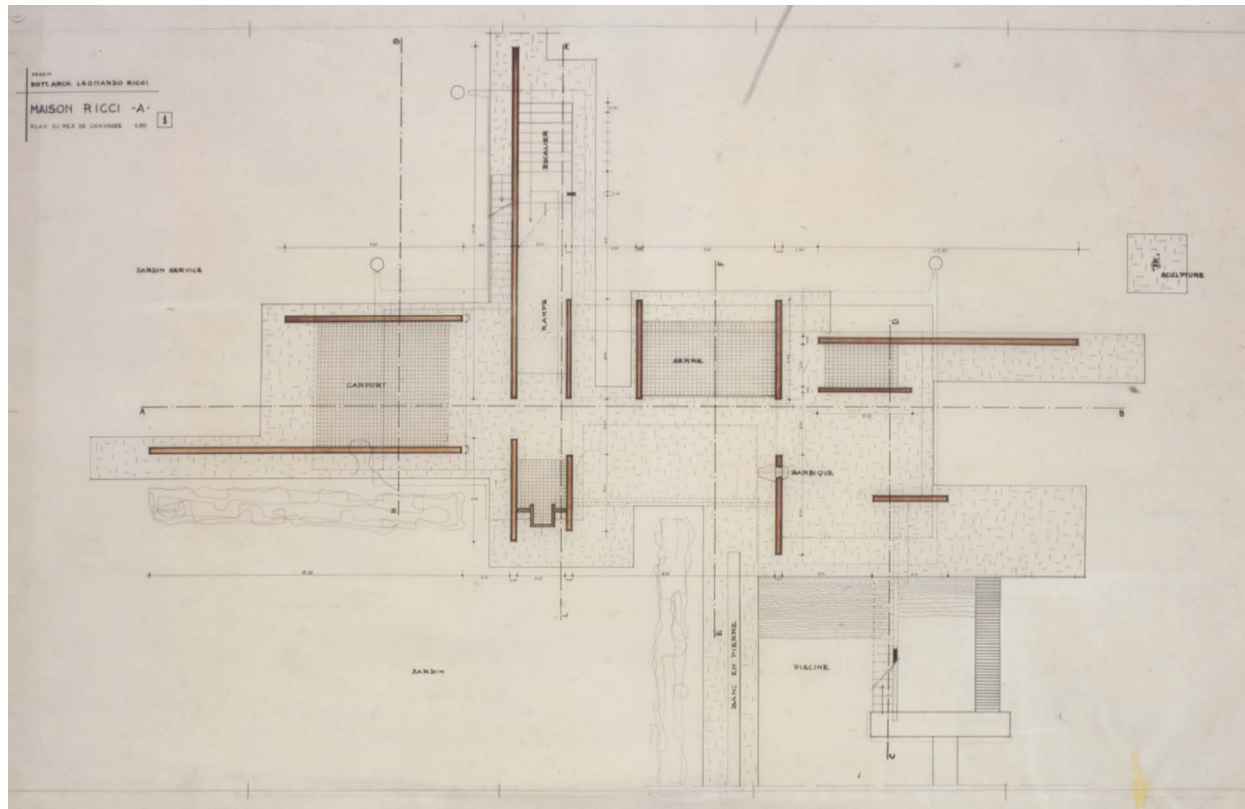
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IMG.1: Fausto Maria Ricci House, general plan, heliographic copy, CSR; IMG.2: plan, heliographic copy, CSR; IMG.3: sections, east and west elevation, heliographic copy, CSAC.



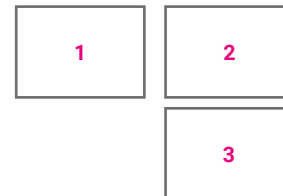
IMG.4: Fausto Maria Ricci House, view, heliographic copy, CSR; IMG.5: sections, heliographic copy, CSR; IMG.6-7: elevations, heliographic copy, CSR.



Arnaldo Ricci House

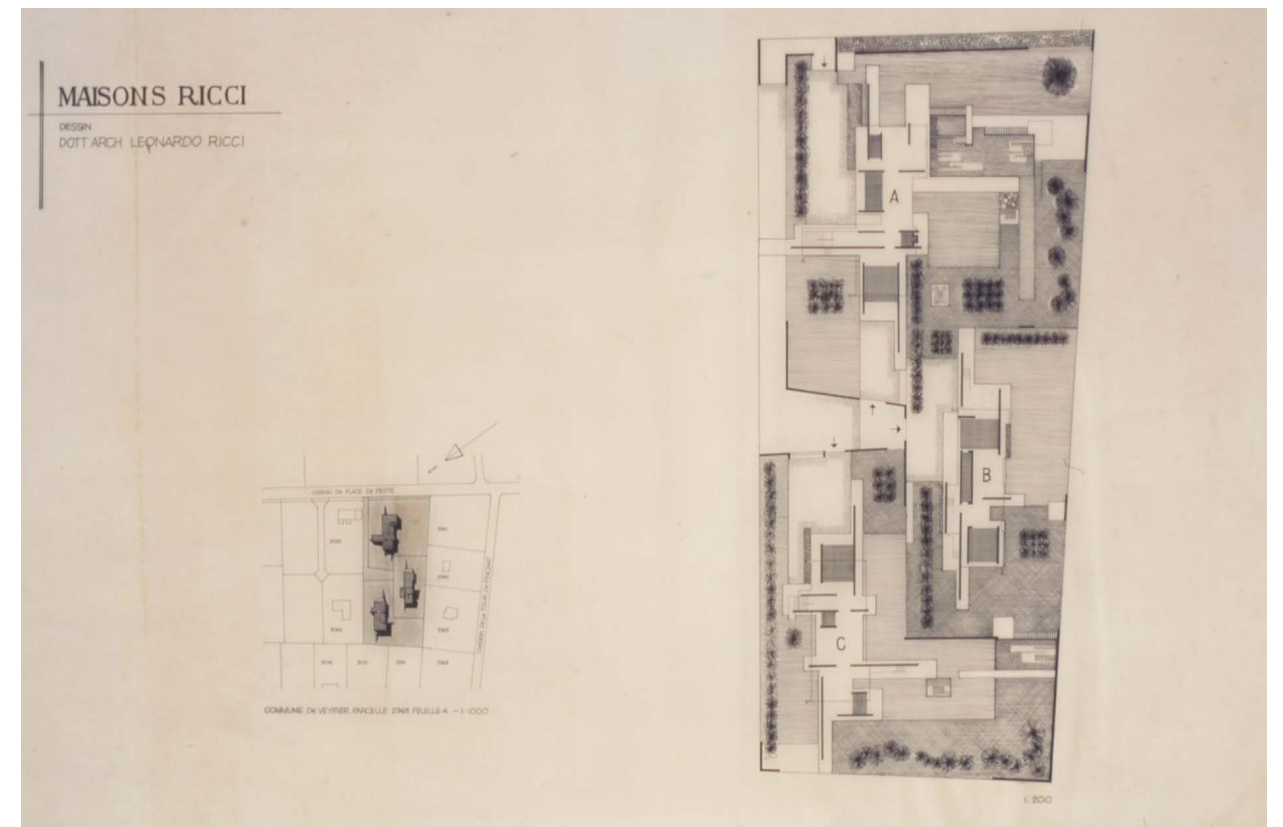
ARCHIVAL DATA

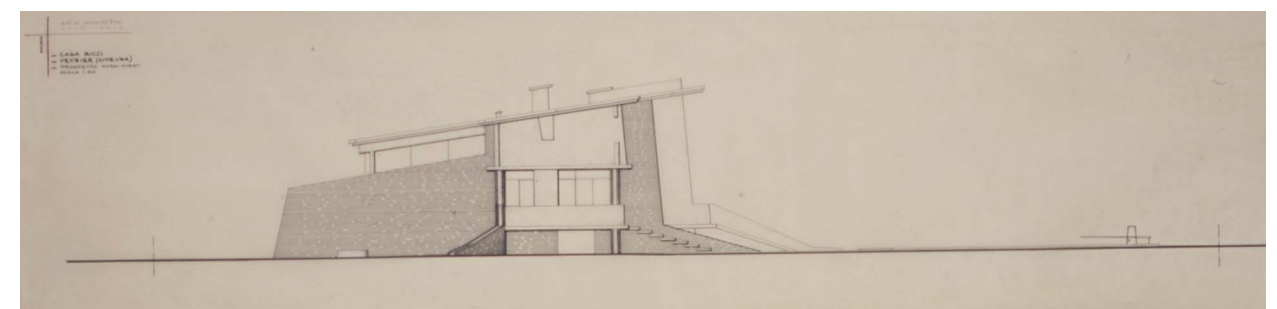
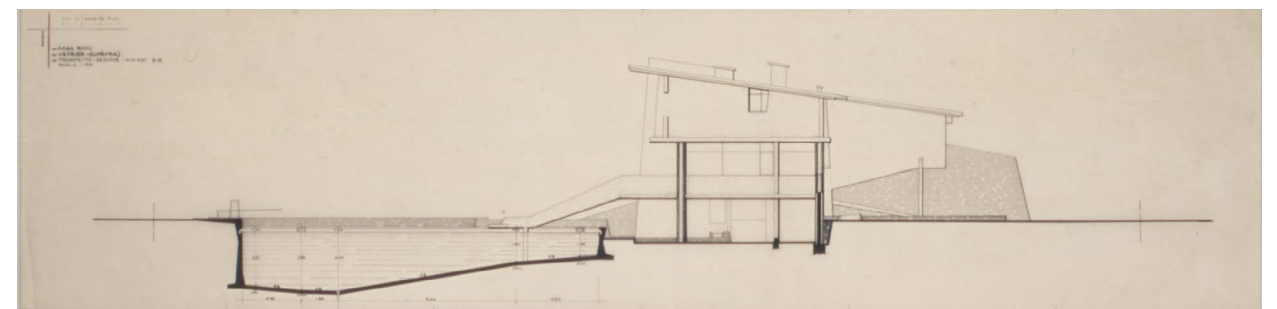
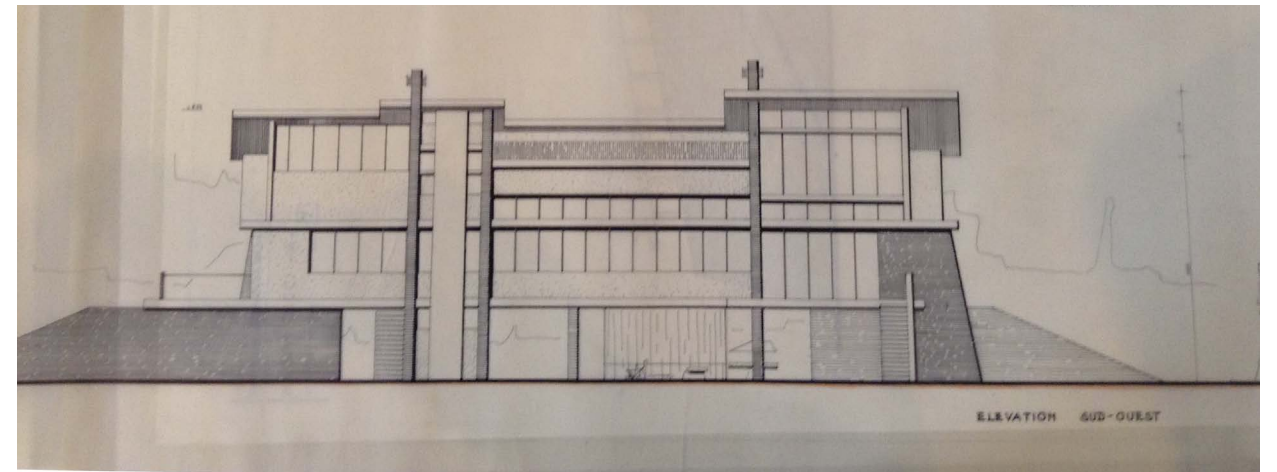
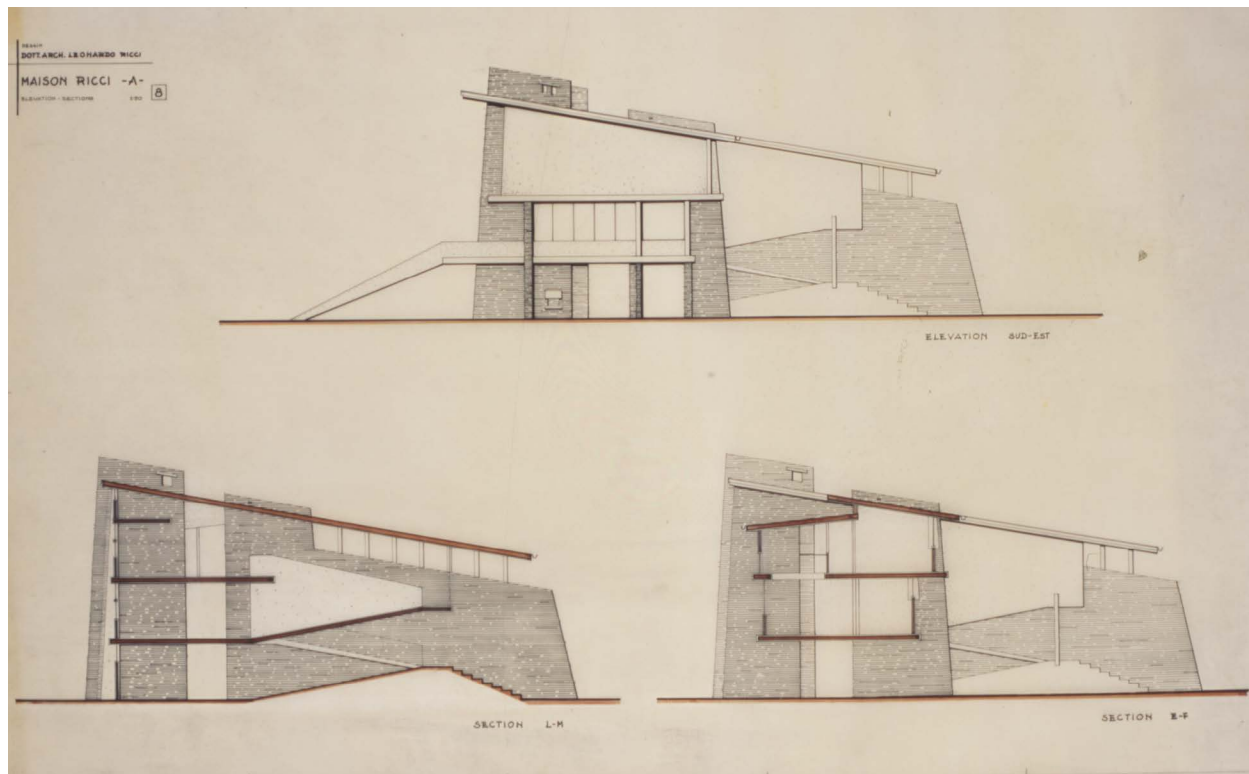
DATE (design and realization)	1953
PLACE/ADDRESS	Chemin de la Place Verte, Veyrier
COLLABORATORS	-
CUSTOMER	Arnaldo Ricci
SOURCES	CSAC, CSR



ESSENTIAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

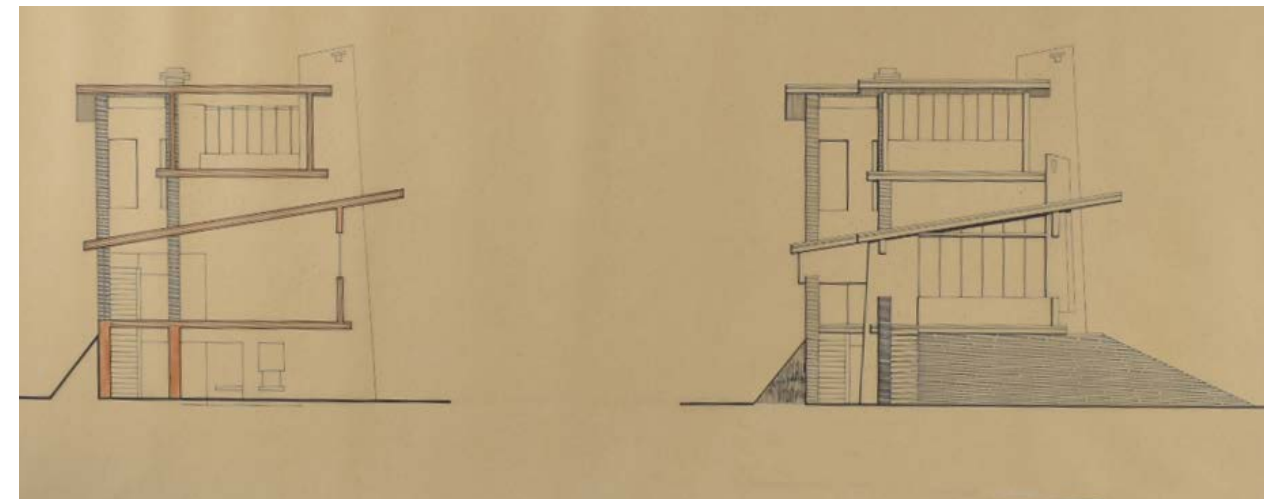
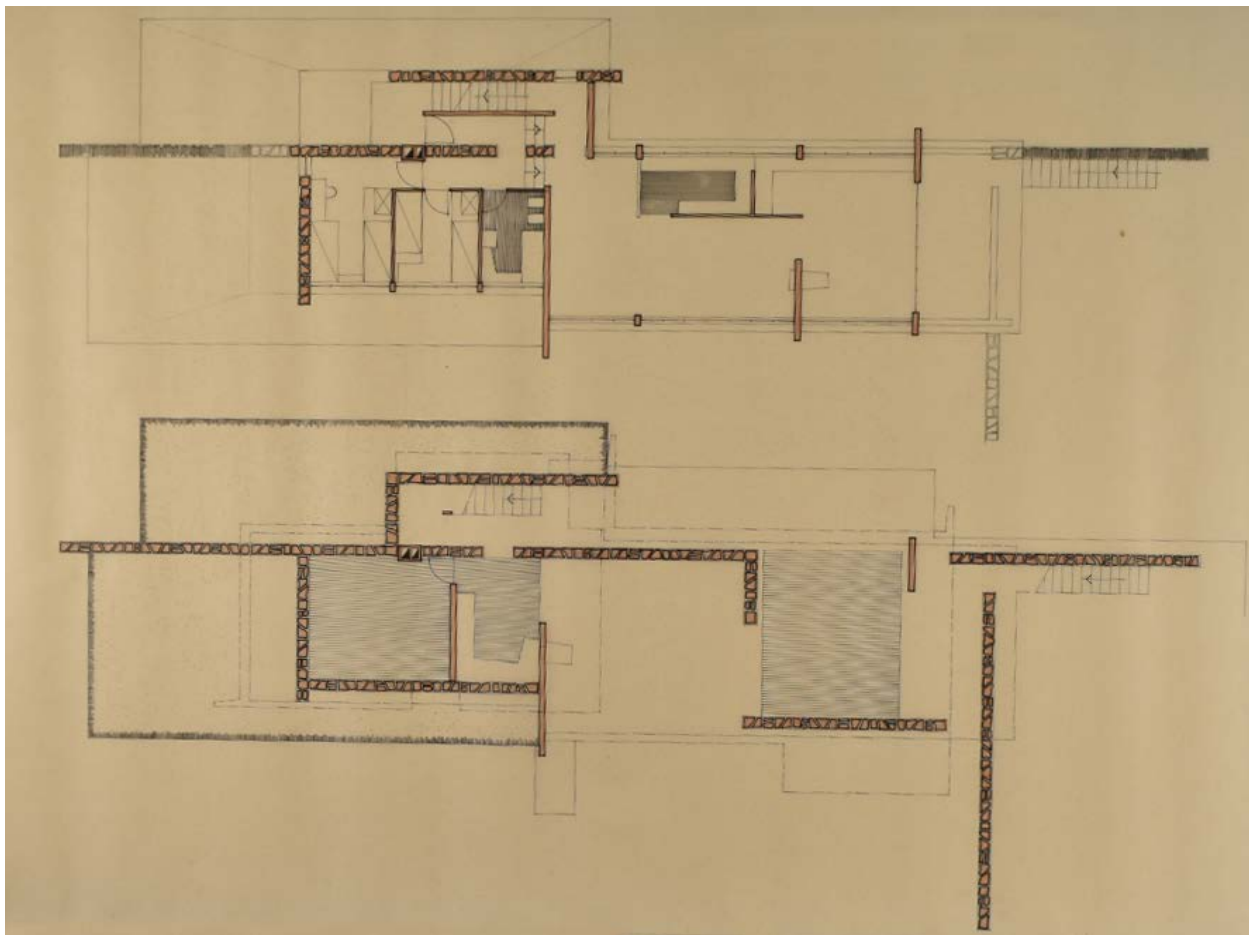
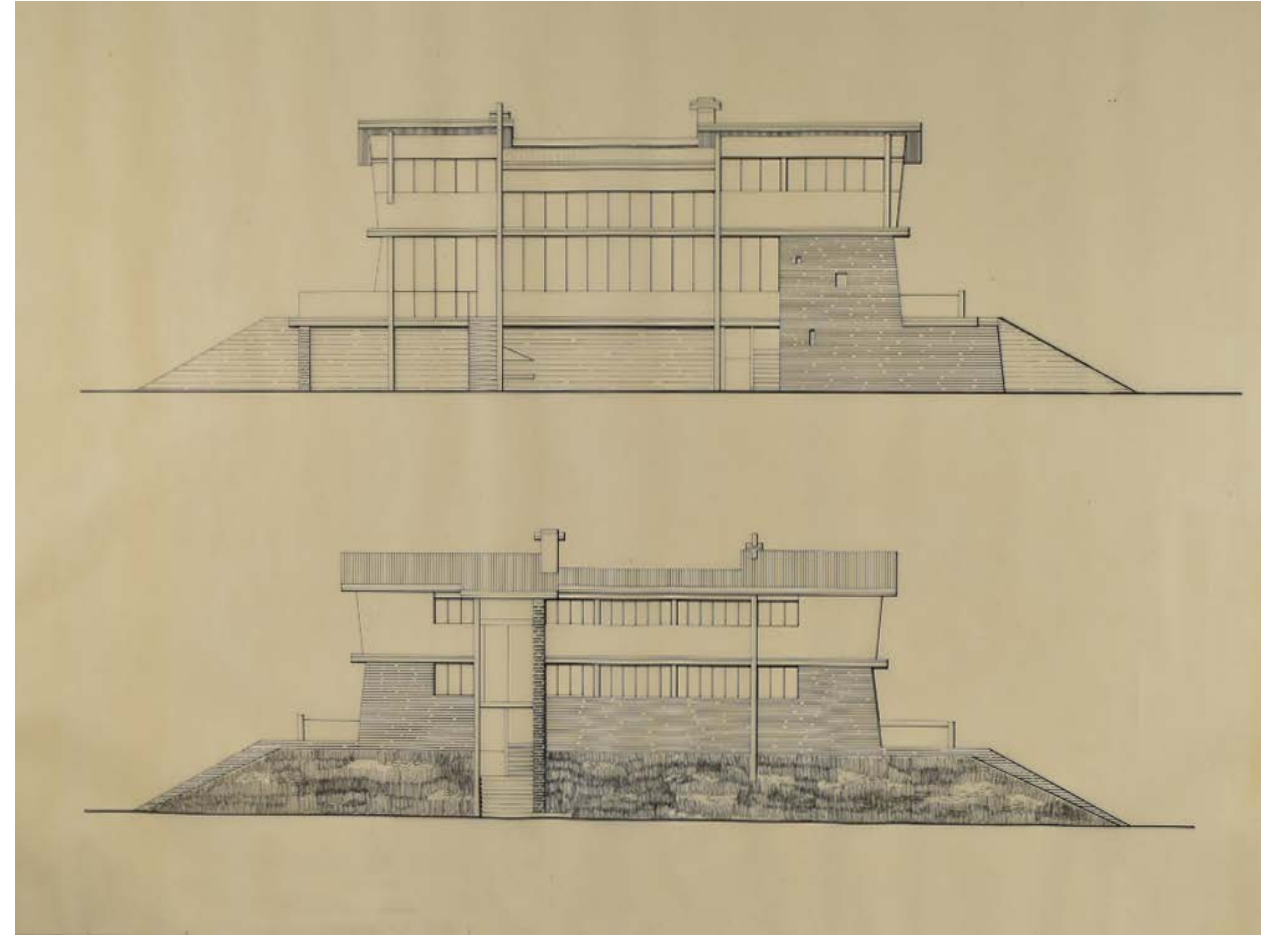
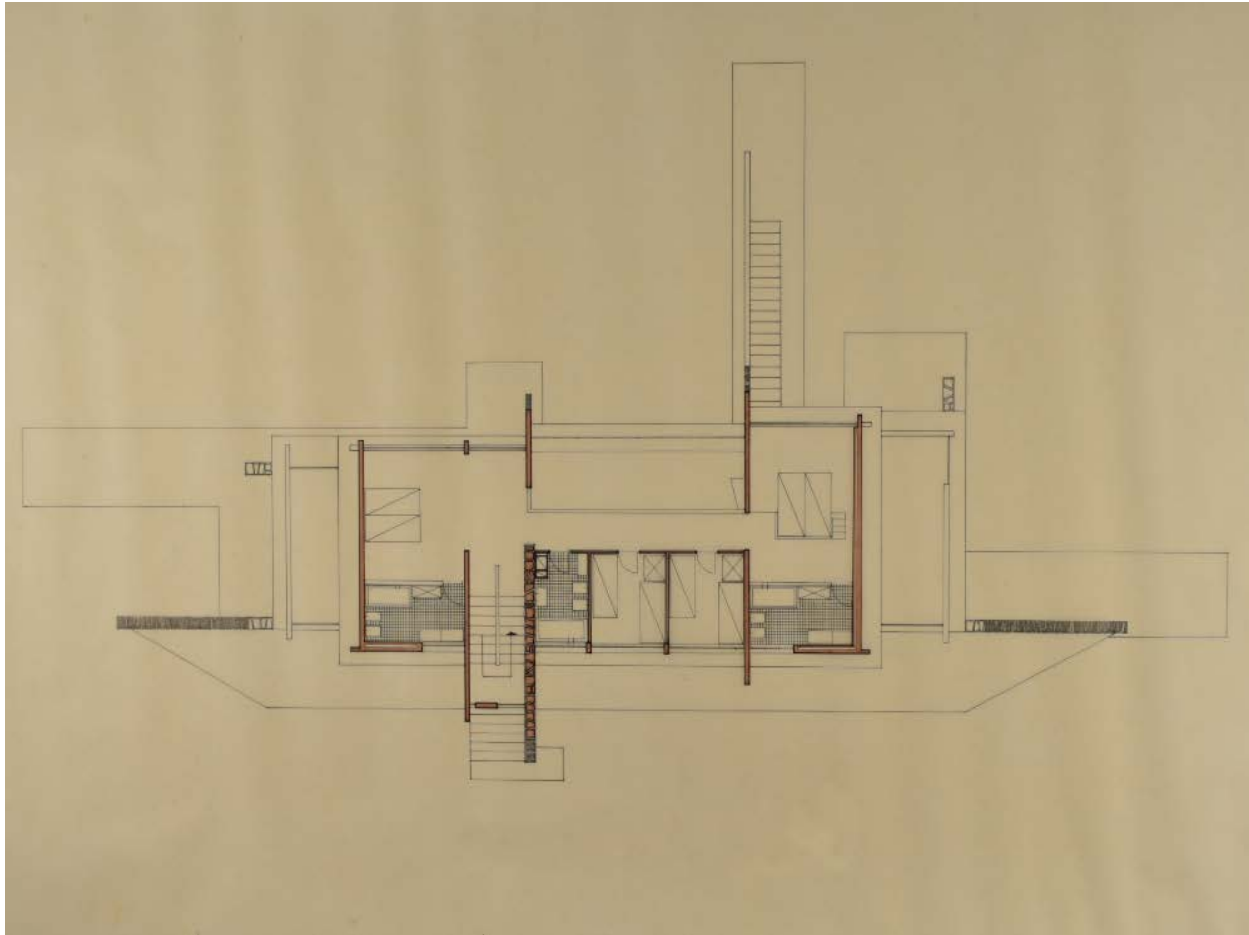
IMG.1: Project for Arnaldo Ricci House, plan, scale 1:50, ink and felt-pen on transparency, CSAC; IMG.2: Project for three "Maisons Ricci", general view, heliographic copy, CSAC; IMG.3: Project for three "Maisons Ricci", general plan, scale 1: 200, ink on transparency, CSAC.





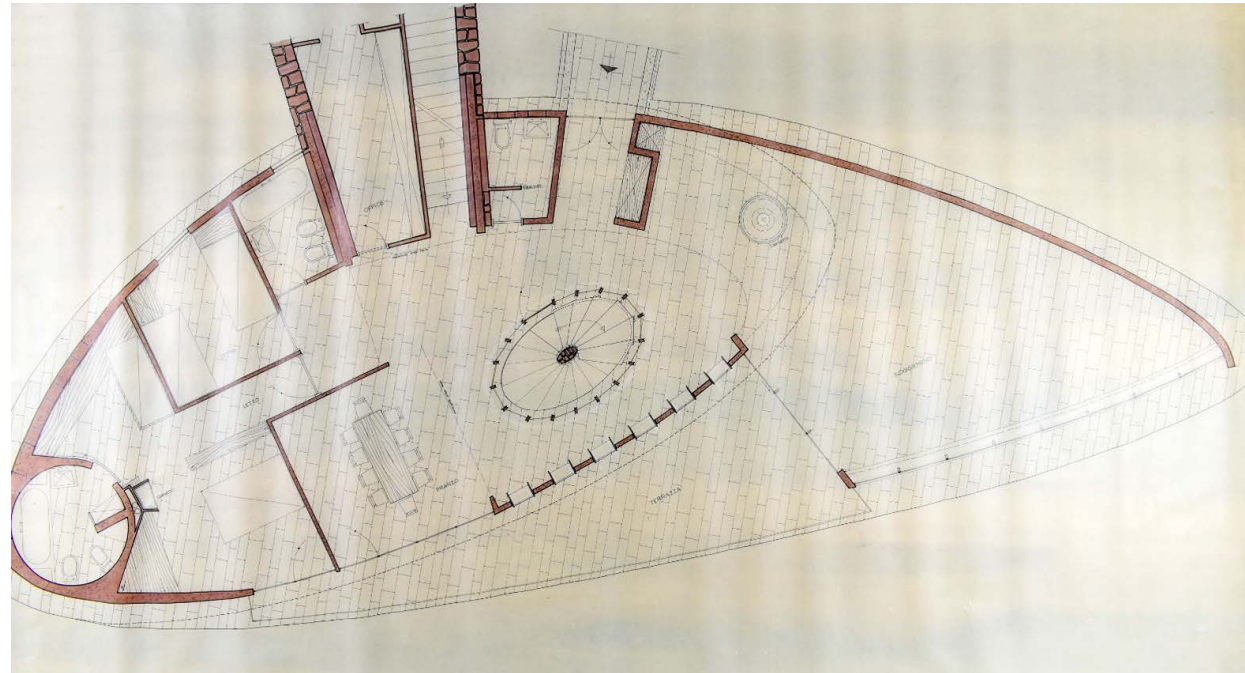
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IMG.4: Project for Arnaldo Ricci House, South-East elevation, section L-H and section E-F, scale 1:50, ink and felt-pen on transparency, CSAC; IMG.5: Project for Arnaldo Ricci House, South-West elevation, scale 1:50, heliographic copy, CSAC; IMG.6: Project for Arnaldo Ricci House, North-West elevation, scale 1:50, ink on transparency, CSAC; IMG. 7: Project for Arnaldo Ricci House, South-East section B-B, scale 1:50, ink on transparency, CSAC.



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9	11

IMG.8: Project for three "Maisons Ricci", plan, scale 1:50, heliographic copy (with interventions), CSR; IMG.9: Project for three "Maisons Ricci", plan scale 1:50, heliographic copy (with interventions), CSR; IMG.10: Project for three "Maisons Ricci", elevation, scale 1:50, heliographic copy (with interventions), CSR; IMG. 11: Project for three "Maisons Ricci", section and elevation, scale 1:50, heliographic copy (with interventions), CSR.



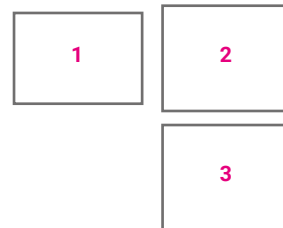
Balmain House

ARCHIVAL DATA

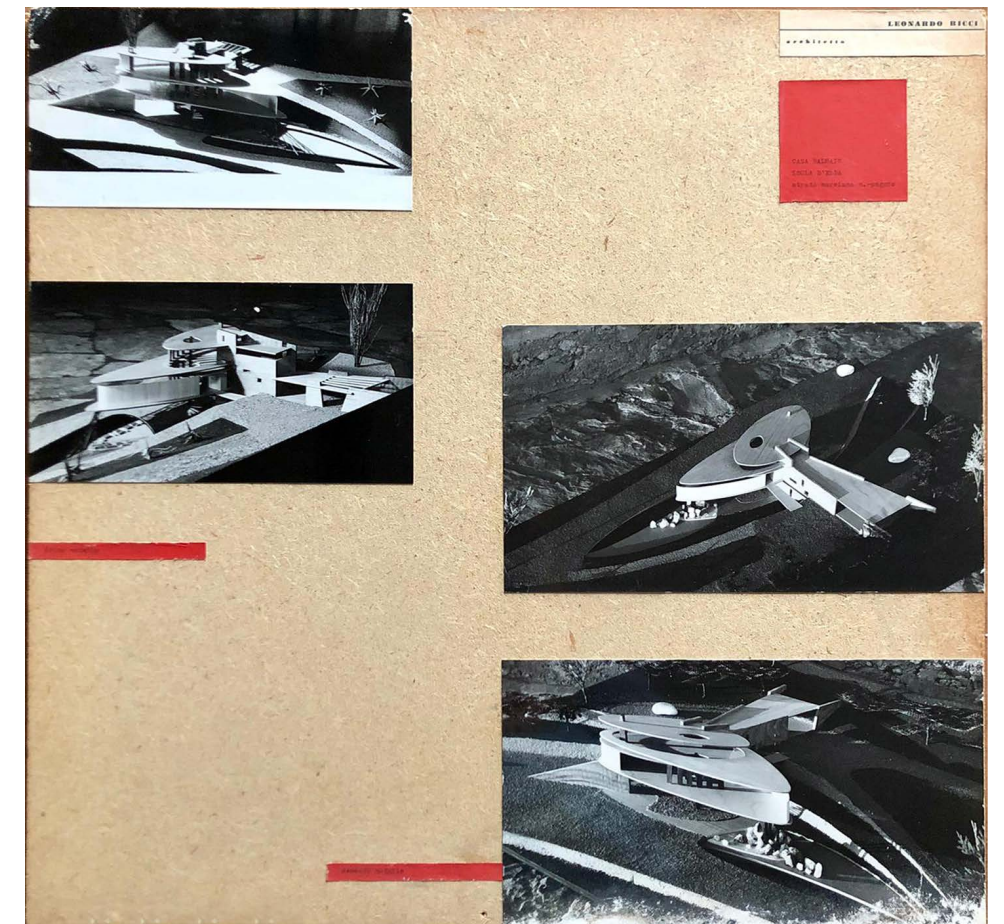
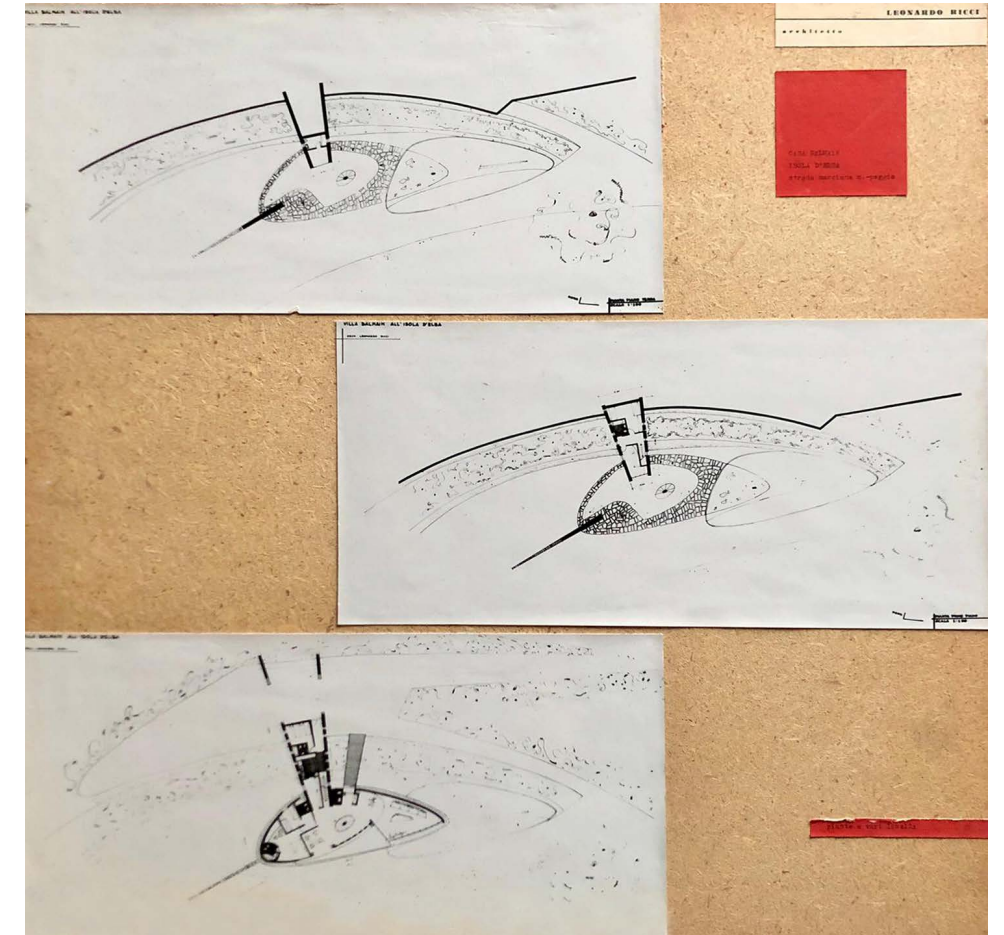
DATE	1956-1958 (design and realization)
ADDRESS	via della Fontanella, Marciana, Isola d'Elba
COLLABORATORS	Ernesto Trapani, Ezio Bienaimé, Giovanni Fabbriotti
CUSTOMER	Pierre Balmain
SOURCES	CSAC, Casa studio Ricci

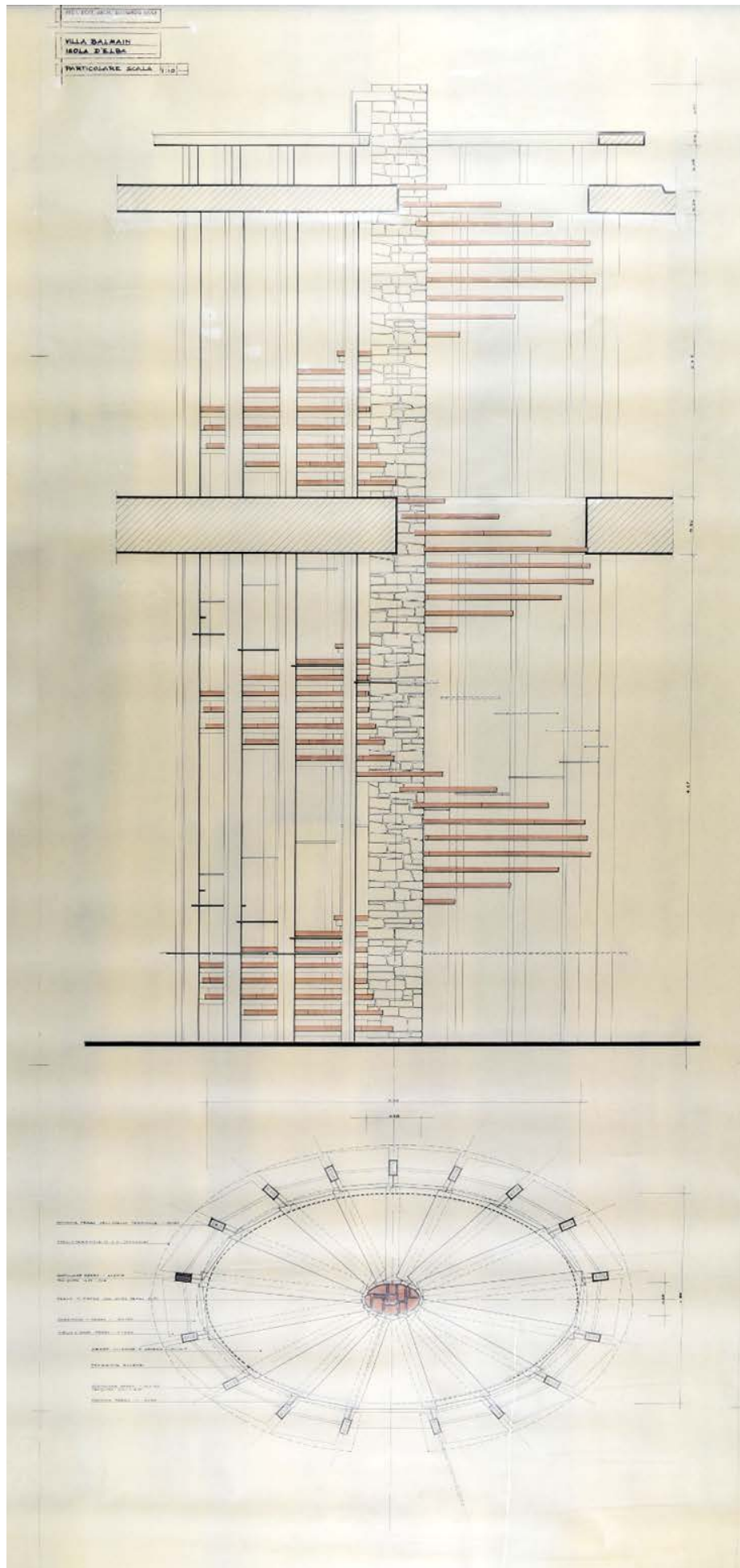
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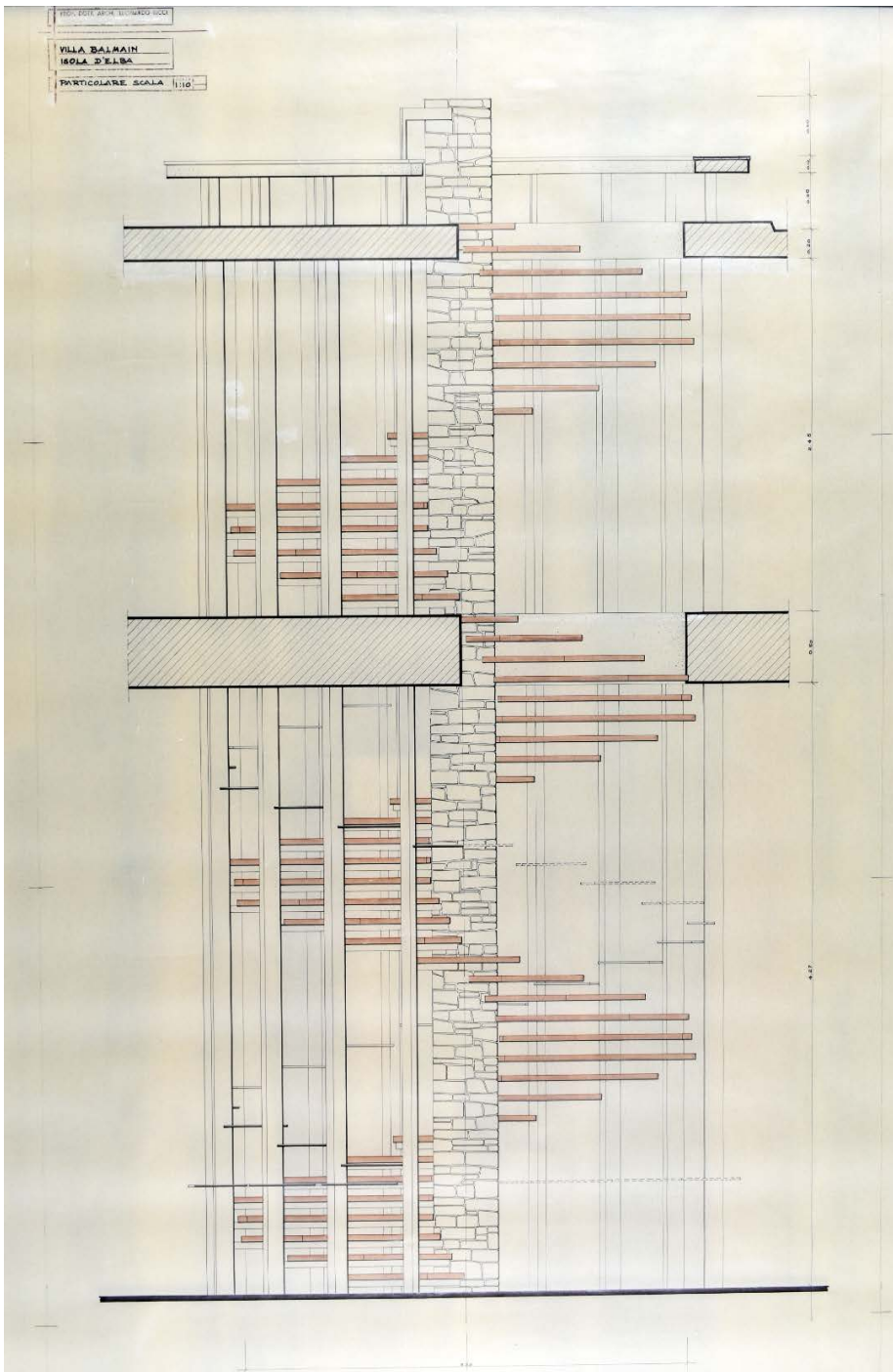
IMG.1: Casa Balmain, plan of the second floor, scale 1:20, ink and felt-pen on transparency, CSR; IMG.2-3: images of the panels Ricci elaborated for the exhibition "Aspetti dell'Arte Contemporanea. Omaggio a Cagli, omaggio a Fontana, omaggio a Quaroni. Architettura, pittura, scultura, grafica" (L'Aquila, Castello Cinquecentesco, luglio-settembre 1963), CSAC.



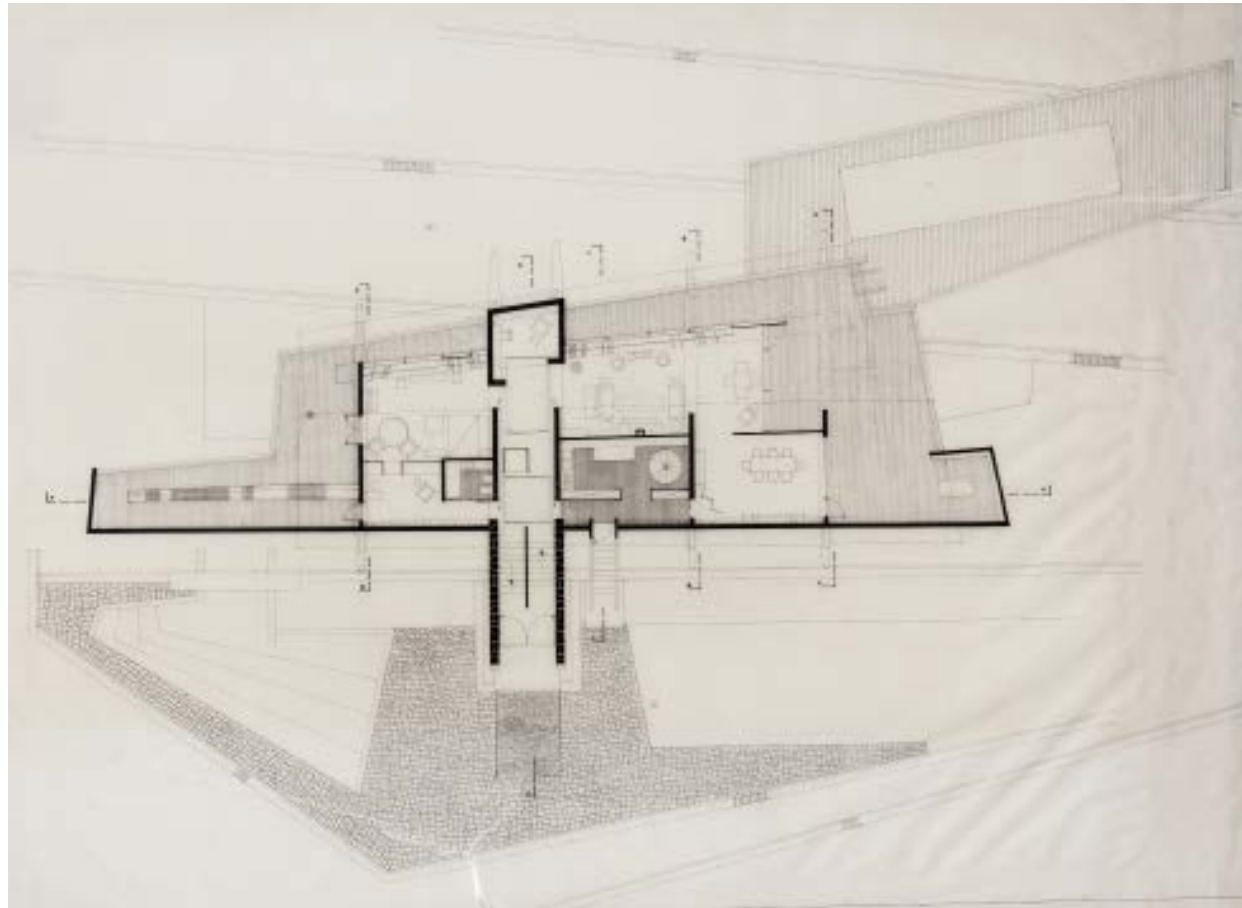


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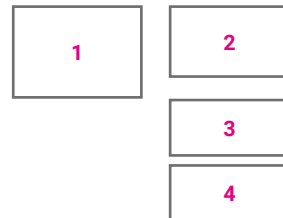
IMG.4: longitudinal and cross section of the staircase, scale 1:10, ink and felt-tip on transparency, CSR; IMG.5: detail of the staircase, scale 1:10, ink and felt-tip on transparency, CSR.



Project for
Hon. Pleydell Bouverie House

ARCHIVAL DATA

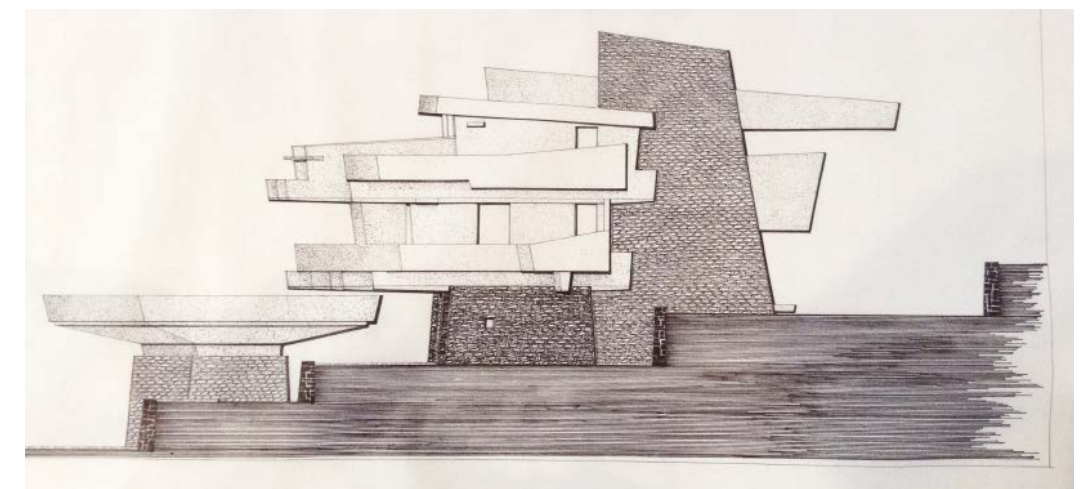
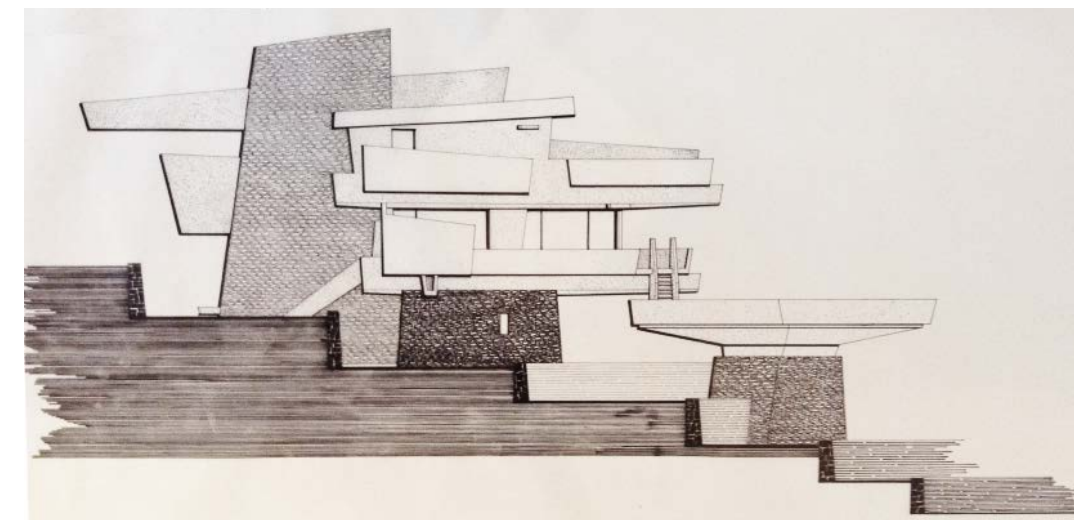
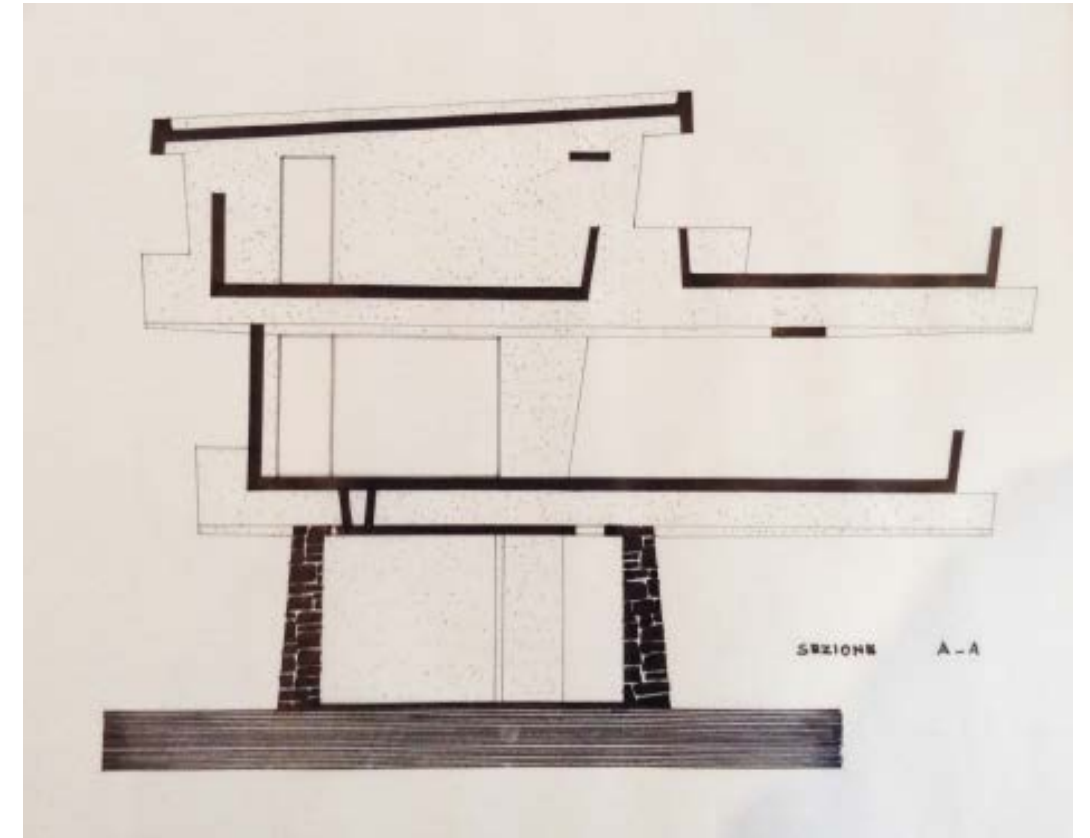
DATE	1958-1960
PLACE-ADDRESS	Marciana, Isola d'Elba (LI)
COLLABORATORS	
CUSTOMER	Mrs. A. E. Pleydell Bouverie
SOURCES	CSAC

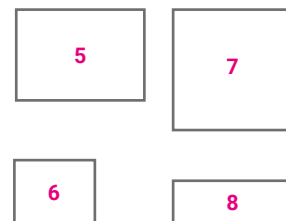
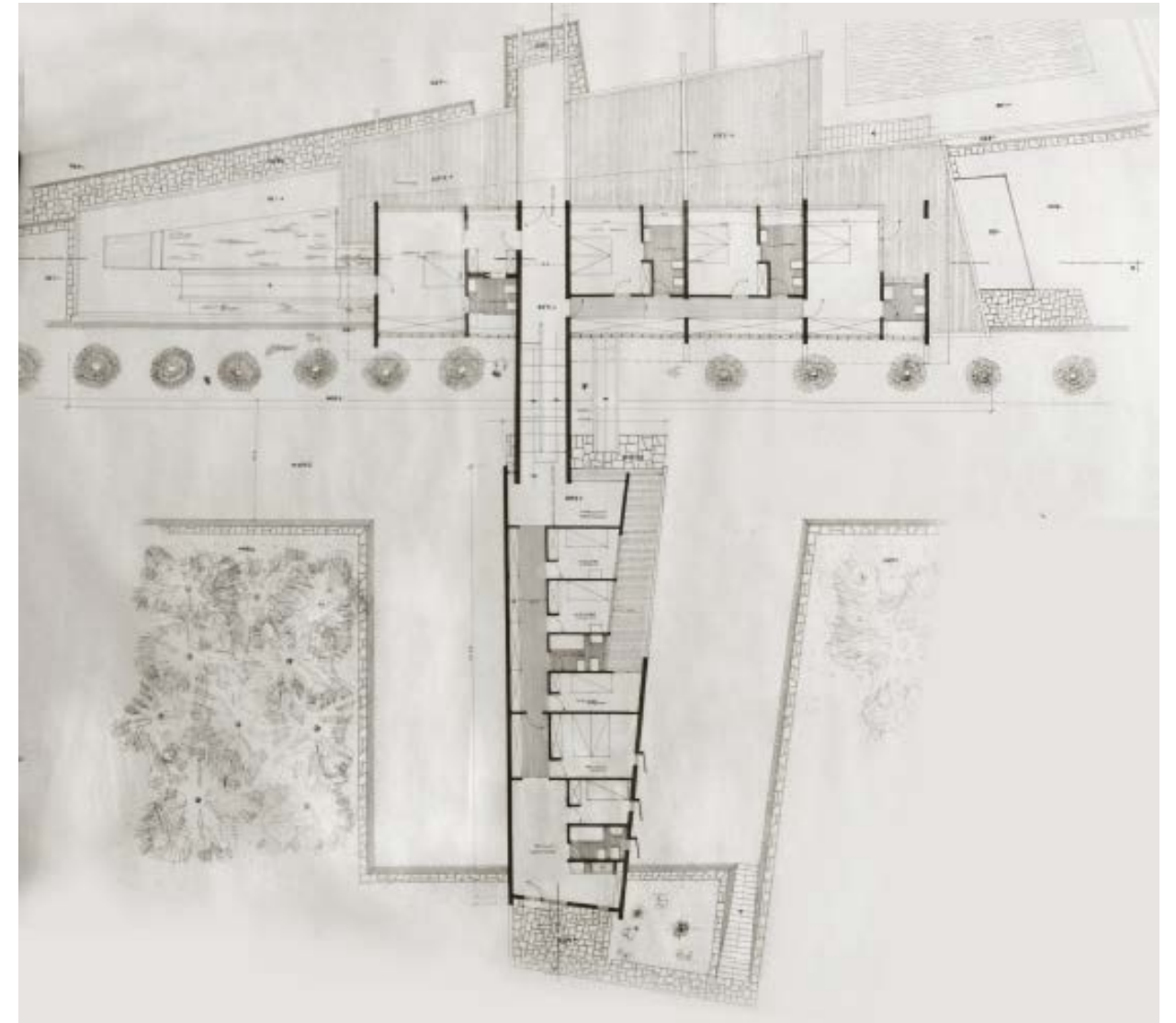
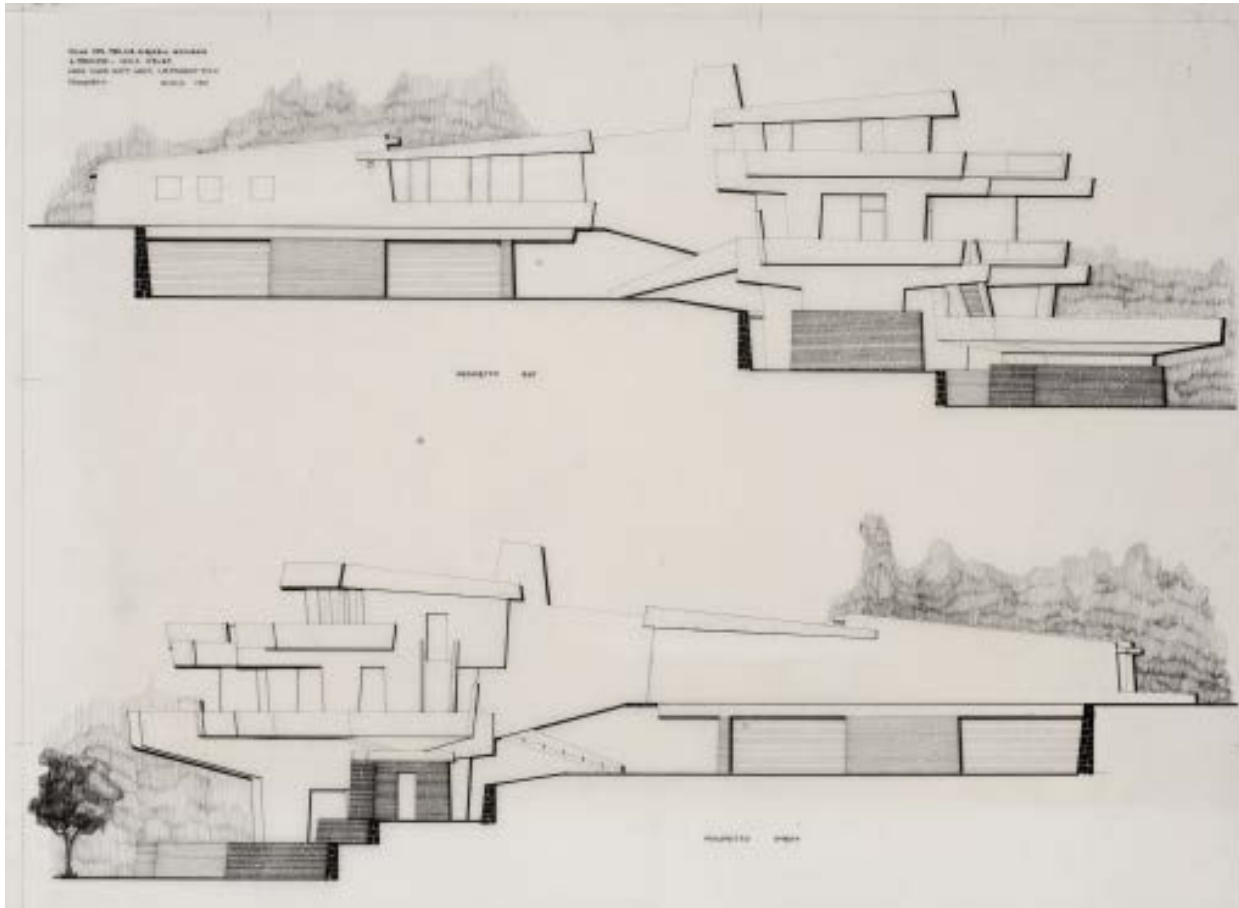


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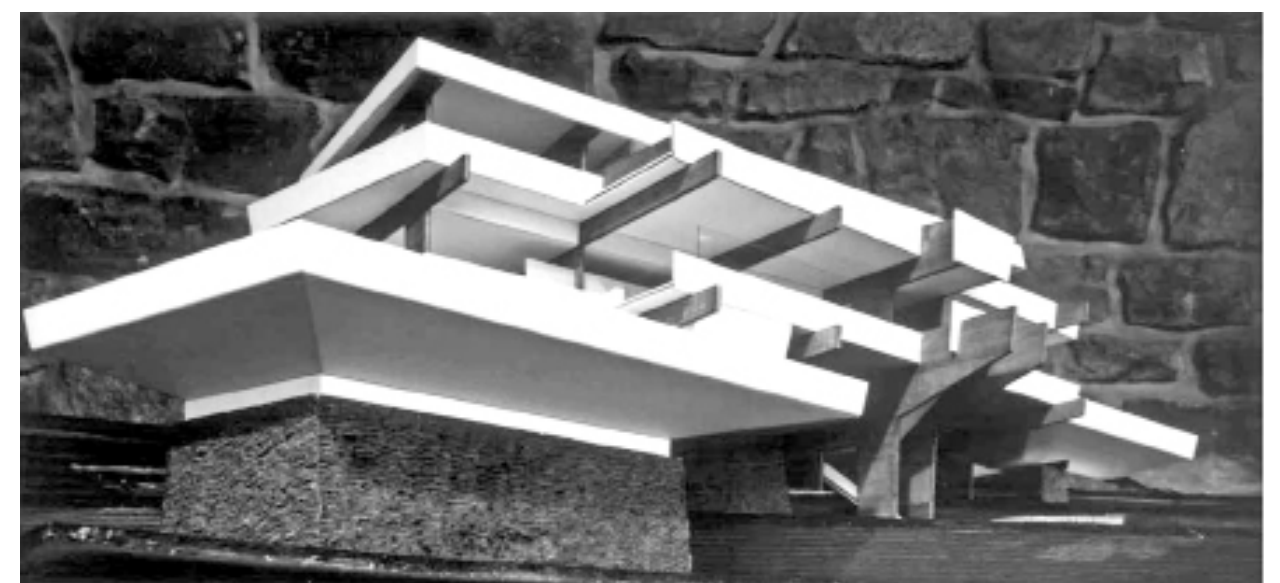
C. Vasič Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto "esistenzialista"* (Firenze: Edifir, 2005), 133-135.

IMG.1: Project for Pleydell Bouverie House, ink on transparency, plan, scale 1:50, CSAC;
 IMG.2: Section A-A, scale 1:50, ink on transparency, CSAC;
 IMG.3: East elevation, scale 1:50, ink on transparency, CSAC;
 IMG.4: West elevation, scale 1:50, ink on transparency, CSAC.





IMG.5: East-west elevation, scale 1:50, ink on transparency, CSAC; IMG.6: general plan, scale 1:500, ink on transparency, CSAC; IMG.7: plan of the bedrooms, scale 1:100, ink on transparency, CSAC; IMG.8: picture of the model, CSR.



Towards the Macrostructure. Leonardo Ricci's Ideas for the Unbuilt *Pleydell Bouverie House* (1958-1960)

Leonardo Ricci, *Pleydell Bouverie House*, Macrostructure, Project, Architecture

/Abstract

The essay tries to make more widely known the project of the *Pleydell Bouverie House*, which was designed by Leonardo Ricci in 1958-60 but never built. In addition, to describe the drawings, many of which have been put in a new light thanks to the Centenary of the architect's death, the text attempts to use the description of two other realized works to highlight certain characteristics. This is also supported by some three-dimensional diagrams produced during the analysis of the project. These diagrams are part of a wider research carried out by the author of the essay within the dissertation *The density of space. Forms of living in the work of Leonardo Ricci* at the Department of Architecture Theories and Design of La Sapienza University of Rome. The assumption is that, through this house in particular, Ricci tested architectural elements and strategies aimed at the realization of the macrostructure. A comparison is made with the *Cardon House* in Castiglioncello and, at the same time, with the building *La Nave* in the Sorgane district, in Florence. We find this approach interesting in order to imagine both the origins of certain ideas and what the results of the realization of *Pleydell Bouverie House* might have been. The present paper, therefore, tries to provide not only a description of a single-family house that Ricci never built, but to contribute with a precise observation of certain aspects, aimed at placing this work in the broader discussion of Leonardo Ricci's approach and vision about architecture.

/Author

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Beatrice Conforti is a freelance architect currently practicing in Tuscany and Lombardy. Since 2010, she has been involved as an assistant in the Design Laboratory of Prof. Capanni at the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Florence, a collaboration that continued until one year after her graduation cum laude in 2016. In October 2017, she started a Ph.D. course at the Department of Architecture Theories and Design of the University of Rome La Sapienza. At the same time, she worked as an architect mainly focused on residential projects in collaboration with Studio GLA, based in Milan and Florence. With the support of her tutor Prof. Orazio Carpenzano and her co-tutor Prof. Maria Clara Ghia, she obtained her Ph.D. last May with top marks, with a thesis titled *The density of space. The forms of living in the work of Leonardo Ricci*.

I believe that there are three phases in architecture: the first one is the model, that is the way of living; the second one is the moment of the structure, that is the physical support that allows the incarnation of the model itself; the third visible and tactile moment is about the architectural form. The form is therefore the result; it is physical and visible, a tangible concretization of the model. I'm very much opposed to those who conceive a form, let us say, in advance, because it can only become a container of a life that has not been yet expressed.¹

Architecture always starts with the design of space. This is why Leonardo Ricci developed several formal languages throughout his career, and he was not afraid of comparing the different forms he designed. His architecture went through many different experiences: from the informal movement to brutalism. The former allowed him to experiment with a "fluid and circulating"² space, while the latter was the direct consequence of breaking free of pre-established patterns and ephemeral aesthetic issues. His brutalism, in short, was the result of a sincere approach towards structure.

Ricci believed that the main structure should not be separated from the secondary one. He argued that it had to be integrated into the design and he also criticized modern architects for creating cage-like buildings: "The structure is something not separated but integrated, and indivisible from the object. What's the meaning of those decorated cages with panels in most modern buildings? Architects turn them into a sort of 'Liberty-style' little arches, perhaps out of boredom."³

His thoughts about architecture and structure took shape in the mid-1960s, but there were some hints of "grammatical nudity", as Koenig defined it⁴, in his earliest projects. In most of his buildings, Ricci constantly used large load-bearing stone walls, reinforced brick floors and flat (or slightly inclined) roofs. His architectural language was quite basic: Ricci rejected unnecessary decorations and tried to create the architectural space in a spontaneous and coherent way.

These premises are essential to understand Leonardo Ricci's approach to the project and to investigate the subtle thread that links some of his designs for

1 Doglio Carlo and Venturi Paola, *La pianificazione organica come piano della vita* (Padova: Cedam, 1979), 380. Original text: "Io ritengo che ci siano tre fasi dell'architettura: una è quella del modello, cioè modo di vivere; una seconda è il momento della struttura, cioè quel supporto fisico che permette l'incarnazione del modello stesso; il terzo momento visibile e tattile, è quello della forma. La forma è quindi il risultato; è fisica e visibile, tangibile concretizzazione del modello. Sono anzi molto contrario a coloro che presuppongono una forma, diciamo, a priori, perché non può che diventare contenitore di una vita che non si è espressa." (All translations, if not specified, are by the author.)

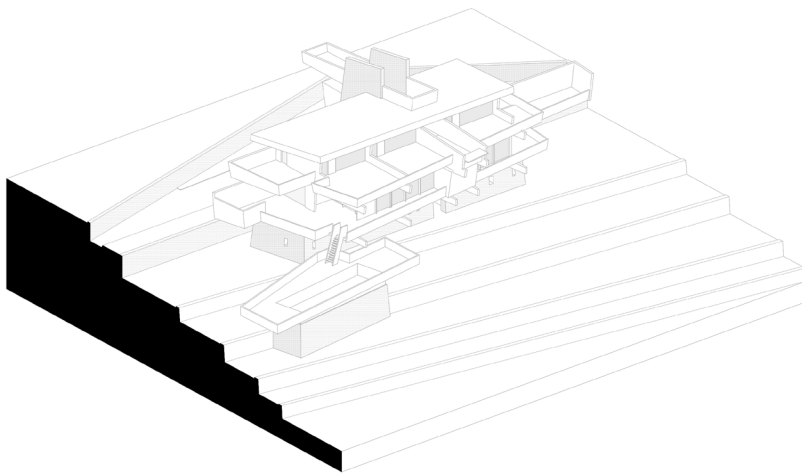
2 This is the case of many Ricci projects like *Spazio vivibile per due persone* (1965), the *Bruno Rossi House* (1963), the *Di Sopra House* (1972), or parts of the community village *Monte degli Ulivi in Sicily* (1962-1968). It is precisely in describing the latter that Ricci used the term "circulating space", specifically in: Leonardo Ricci, "Nascita di un Villaggio per una nuova comunità in Sicilia," *Domus*, no. 409 (1963): 6.

3 Ricci, "Nascita di un Villaggio per una nuova comunità in Sicilia", 8. Original text: "[...]cerco di indentificarmi con la struttura che non deve più dividersi fra portante e portata. La struttura è qualcosa di non separato ma integrata ed indivisibile dall'oggetto. Che senso hanno più quelle gabbie decorate più o meno bene da pannelli più o meno di gusto di quasi tutte le architetture moderne? Che poi per troppa noia vengono trasformati dagli stessi architetti in archetti e similari di sapore liberty? Una struttura nasce dalla terra ed assume la sua forma precisa in funzione della vita che noi vogliamo svolgere, dello spazio che permette questa vita, della materia che adoperiamo."

4 See Giovanni Klaus Koenig, "Leonardo Ricci e la "casa teorica" (alla ricerca di un nuovo spazio architettonico)," *Bollettino tecnico degli architetti e ingegneri della Toscana*, no. 7-8 (July/August 1958).

private villas to his 'macrostructure'. He only partially realized it in the district of Sorgane in Florence, but some ideas on the macrostructure spaces had already emerged in 1947, when a young Ricci designed the *Villaggio comunitario di Agàpe* (Agàpe Community Village) in Prali. Indeed, the definition of 'villaggio', which Ricci uses to underline a sense of community⁵, might seem inadequate while observing the buildings. The layout composition, the continuous connections between the volumes, and the system of spaces in which the main theme was the idea of 'living together', were fundamental experiments that he would later use as the first indications for the macrostructure. One can glimpse a coherent and continuous research in similar elements of most of his housing projects: some villas seem to become experimental pieces for a wider design opportunity because they seem to contain, in a small scale, the requirements to make a further development, a leap to the larger scale.⁶

This is the case of the house designed by Ricci between 1958 and 1960 for Mrs. A.E. Pleydell Bouverie.⁷ The project remained unbuilt despite the large number of drawings still preserved in archives.⁸ The house was designed to occupy a site not far from the villa of the couturier Balmain⁹ but, after all, Ricci only built a small caretaker's house on the property because the client considered the construction of the entire project too expensive¹⁰ [Fig. 1].



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5 The idea of 'villaggio' usually implies the presence of independent volumes connected by streets. In the project for the Villaggio di Agàpe though, all buildings are physically connected by corridors or porticoes.

6 This intuition is well expressed by Professor Corinna Vasić Vatovec in the documentary produced by Becattini Massimo and Nocentini Luciano, titled *Anonimo del XX secolo: Leonardo Ricci* (Film Documentari d'Arte, 2019).

7 The original drawings show the name "Villa Hon. Mrs. A.E. Pleydell Bouverie". The house has sometimes been referred to as the 'Hon Villa', but we believe the abbreviation refers to Mrs. Pleydell Bouverie's 'Honorable' aristocratic position.

8 At the CSAC Archives in Parma there are several versions of the project that are not clearly distinguished from each other by a precise title. There are, however, two main versions that differ in a substantial extension of the house on the north-west front. The author of this essay has chosen the first project to produce three-dimensional diagrams of the house because it was more complete, and it could be reported more accurately.

9 It refers to the *Casa Balmain*, built by Ricci in 1958.

10 This information is taken from Corinna Vasić Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto esistenzialista* (Firenze: Edifir, 2005), 135.

Fig. 1

Pleydell Bouverie House, three dimensional model, graphic design by the author.

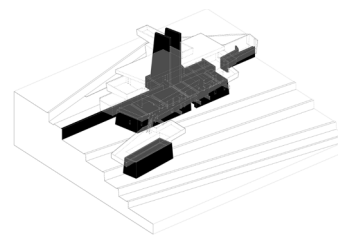
The most complete set of drawings is the one concerning the first project, which underwent a substantial increase in size in a second version. Observing the different phases of the composition, it is easy to understand Ricci's ideas about the *opera aperta*¹¹, a constantly evolving project: a design method that he had already envisioned since his studies of his *Theoretical House*.¹²

For a thorough analysis of *Pleydell Bouverie House*, it is useful to compare it with the *Cardon House* (1961-63), built a few years later in the Province of Livorno, and to deduce the elements taken up as well by the architect for the project *La Nave*¹³ (1964-78), located in the Sorgane district.

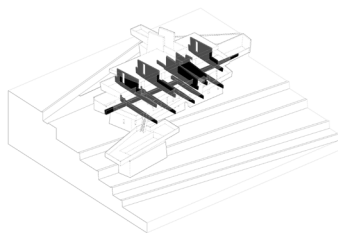
The Pleydell Bouverie project develops on a three floors structure, and it has an apparently longitudinal layout set against the orthogonal stairs that are its clear barycentric pivot: it is the motionless body between two parts of the house that seem to be two balanced wings. Each floor is practically devoid of any sort of corridors. The layout is not mono-directional, but the space is free-flowing and always expanding and dilating, as it's typical of the internal distribution preferred by Ricci: the result is never banal, yet simple and well measured. The size of the house is remarkable, even in the first version, so it is not hard to identify the similarities, even in terms of distribution, with a macrostructure designed for many families and several housing units. The space is marked out almost exclusively by structural partitions which, as we shall see, cross and support the whole structure in a very peculiar way [Fig. 2-3-4-5].

The plan of *Cardon House*¹⁴ is quite different, mainly because of its size, but the design seems coherent with the principles and the language of the project described above. One of the key features of this house is the two massive stone walls supporting the entire building; it gives the plan an extreme sense of purity and simplicity, also perceivable in the drawings. The interiors are, therefore, totally devoid of secondary walls. This could be interpreted as an attempt by the architect to create a free space adaptable to every need, but it is also clear that Ricci adopted this structural system because of his replicability.

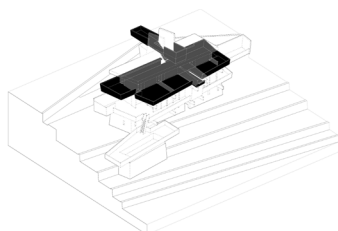
A similar system can be found in the *Pleydell Bouverie House* and, above all, in *La Nave*. In the Sorgane's building, indeed, the internal spaces are bound by the measurements of the structure but, at the same time, they are sufficiently



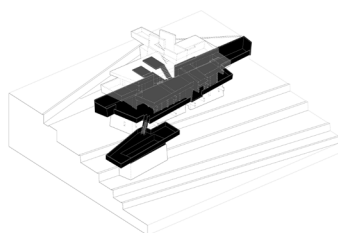
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Fig. 2

Pleydell Bouverie House, three-dimensional model (ground connection and stair structure), graphic design by the author.

Fig. 3

Pleydell Bouverie House, three-dimensional model (the structural beams and 'blades'), graphic design by the author.

Fig. 4

Pleydell Bouverie House, three-dimensional model (the second and third floor 'tray-shaped' planes), graphic design by the author.

Fig. 5

Pleydell Bouverie House, three-dimensional model (the first floor and pool area 'tray-shaped' planes), graphic design by the author.

11 It's not difficult to imagine that the ideas of the possibility of variation in Ricci's works, especially in his *Casa Teorica*, gravitated around the thought of Umberto Eco (in fact, the philosopher taught for some years at the Faculty of Architecture in Florence, and dedicated to Ricci, while collaborating together on a course, the paper *Appunti per una semiologia delle comunicazioni visive*, later included in Umberto Eco, *La struttura assente* (Milano: Bompiani, 1968). In particular, the idea of the "opera aperta" is discussed by Eco into the published essay Umberto Eco, *Opera Aperta: forma e indeterminazione nelle poetiche contemporanee* (Milano: Bompiani 1962), of which Zevi makes an interesting analysis in Bruno Zevi, "La poetica dell'opera aperta in architettura," *L'architettura. Cronache e storia*, no. 84 (1962): 362-4.

12 See Koenig, "Leonardo Ricci e la 'casa teorica'."

13 Thanks to the *La Nave* building in the Sorgane complex in Florence, Leonardo Ricci won the *InArch Prize for Tuscany* in 1968.

14 There are no drawings of this project in any of the archives; they were obtained thanks to their private owner Mr. Giorgio Costagli.

flexible for the demands of their residents.¹⁵ This is confirmed by the fact that, in the architect's original intentions, *La Nave* should have given the inhabitants the opportunity to choose the distribution of the rooms in each flat before it was built. We know in fact that Ricci wished to insert prefabricated dwellings in light elements like some sort of drawers inside the reinforced concrete macrostructure.¹⁶

The extreme simplification of the *Cardon House* plan and its small size create a minimal but flexible space¹⁷, but the core of the design lies in the outstanding overhang of the horizontal structures, that were decidedly extreme for the time (almost seven meters in the house in Castiglioncello). We can find similar attempts in the drawings for the *Pleydell Bouverie House*, in which Ricci composes the transversal structure of the first floor with long, shaped concrete beams left exposed, extending outwards. A long longitudinal beam, perpendicular to this system, overhangs both ends of the building, most boldly towards the west, where it tapers into about nine meters of projection. On the upper floor, the transverse beams are transformed into structural walls to support both the second floor and the roof. These elements are pierced, shaped, and deformed according to the needs of the interior space. Zevi, in 1970, called these same elements "structural blades" when describing the Sorgane's building:

After having developed the 'structural blade' to replace the caged pillars or pilotis, he has exploded it on a gigantic scale, capable of tying together hanging paths, terraces, elevated squares, internal roads, stairways-nodes and not just stairways distributing the apartments. Within this macro-structure, flats of a happy, spacious cut are inserted without dominating, especially in the duplexes; figuratively, they disappear, devoured by the module of the enormous blades.¹⁸

These structures mentioned by Zevi are shaped, reinforced concrete partitions that are repeated throughout the building, dividing the flats and crossed by three beams on each floor. This expedient was also hinted at in the single-family project, where a single longitudinal beam protruded beyond the outermost structural blade. In *La Nave* this is taken to extremes: the last enormous septum,

¹⁵ We suppose that the project and, more generally, the characteristics of the *Cardon House* predate *La Nave* building's design, even though the two projects are almost contemporary. In support of this hypothesis is the drawing of the never-built *Tendi House* in Fiesole which, in 1953, presented a project almost identical to that of the house in Castiglioncello, therefore already present in the designer's ideas.

¹⁶ Difficulties related to bureaucratic and economic issues did not assist the architect, who was forced to rethink some elements and build them using a single construction technique. This, we can guess, has certainly compromised the final linguistic result of the building, of which there is no material differentiation. In addition, the renunciation of that type of system precluded the interaction between user and designer through which, according to Ricci, a variable architecture open to design changes would have occurred.

¹⁷ It is possible that the client's request for the *Cardon House* casually coincided with requirements that were also suitable for the units of the macrostructure, but it's perhaps more probable that Ricci wanted to test, for the first time, these substantial limits of width. He wanted to verify the quality and possibilities of a space like the one he would later create in the social flats. As a further support for this hypothesis, there is also the fact that the house site was able to contain a larger floor plan. Instead, the distance between the two walls is only 3.75 meters.

¹⁸ Bruno Zevi, "Il quartiere di Sorgane a Firenze. L'edificio città di Leonardo Ricci," in *Cronache di architettura* (Bari: Laterza, 1970), v. 12 (638/692), 300. Original text: "Dopo aver elaborato la 'lama strutturale' in sostituzione dei pilastri a gabbia o pilotis, l'ha esplosa a scala gigantesca, atta a legare insieme percorsi pensili, terrazze, piazze elevate, strade interne, scale-nodi e non solo scale distributrici degli alloggi. Entro questa macrostruttura si inseriscono senza dominare appartamenti di taglio felice e spazioso specie nei duplex; figurativamente scompaiono divorati dal modulo delle enormi lame."

which closes the north end of the building, is crossed by beams which makes evident its structural design, as well as alluding to a possible continuation of the macrostructure [Fig. 6].

As for the terraces, in the *Cardon House* Ricci creates staggered levels of a few steps, which extend and fold into balconies to create an alternation of broken profiles in section. These structures give rise to an interesting asymmetri-



cal elevation on the short side, increasing the strength of the longitudinal ones: an overlapping of fleeting lines towards a perspective horizon that appears infinitely distant [Fig. 7].

These elements had already achieved exceptional relevance for Ricci. In the *Pleydell Bouverie House*, they were not just objects inserted in the volumetry of the building, but themselves represented the formal synthesis of a space that was both internal and external, and always free-flowing. The area dedicated to the swimming pool and the other terraced connections, for example, achieved a propensity towards the outside by building a continuous dialogue between the indoor and outdoor spaces. This structure imagined by Ricci has become not only an expressive architectural language but a practical way of elongating into a set of related 'tray-shaped' planes. One can observe these elements in the section drawings, where they seem to be sliding downwards. The last one, at the bottom, should have contained a pool of water, balanced on the stone pillar

Fig. 6

La Nave, Florence, picture by the author.

below [Fig. 8-9-10]. The structure stretches and retracts, pushing the limits of a technique now capable of pursuing an idea of space that is more than intuitable, and which will become sharper in the social consequences of Sorgane's macro-structure. As described above, these are the foundations for the birth of a space that is liable to macro-development, suitable for a large house as in this case, but which ideally aspires to social use, common to several housing units and to the integration of numerous inhabitants.

The balconies in *La Nave* are conceived as the deck of a large boat or, in Ricci's words, as streets where children can skate and run freely and safely from cars.¹⁹



Another relevant feature of both the single-family houses is the provision of different entrances to the habitation; in the *Pleydell Bouverie House*, in particular, by means of external access ramps. This feature was revived in Sorgane and transformed into a public space where everyone can stand or walk. The ramps and stairs of the macrostructure become fundamental passages to reach the suspended walkways connecting the floors to the street.

Some drawings show that Ricci made some preliminary studies on the type of 'duplex apartment' in the *Pleydell Bouverie House*. He tried to include, in a middle phase of the project, some spiral stairs to connect certain areas of the

19 See the video documentary by Rabiger Michael titled *One Pair of Eyes: Starting from Zero* (BBC, 1971).

Fig. 7

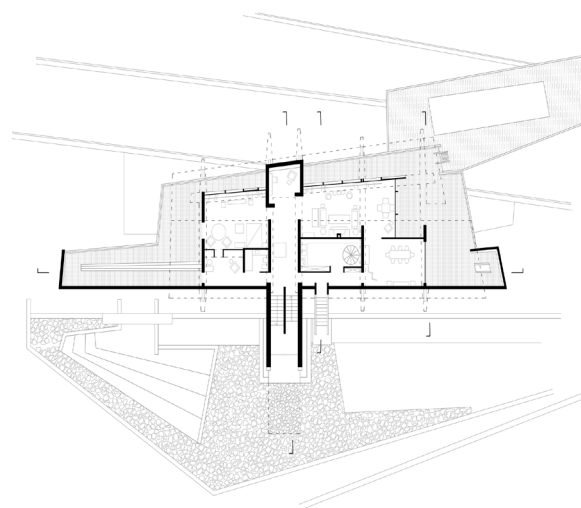
Cardon House, Castiglioncello, Livorno, picture by the author.

house which, between two structural walls, are reminiscent of a two-story flat. This type of accommodation is placed among the residential units in the southernmost part of *La Nave*: these are the largest flats, and this allows the architect to 'ennoble' the living area with a double-height space.

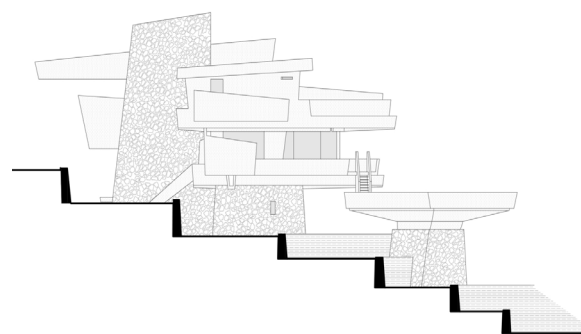
The study of the ground connection which 'raises' the house by means of structural partitions is a frequent feature of Ricci's projects and, in the *Pleydell Bouverie House*, it makes it possible to create different living spaces in the garden, more sheltered and more usable in the shade of the big terraces. In Sorgane these ground floor areas become for Ricci not only an outdoor living room but, finally, a space for everyone, where the elderly can sit in the summer shade and children can play hide-and-seek.²⁰

Lastly, the staircase of the *Pleydell Bouverie House*, described at the beginning of this text, was already a key element in the first layout of the house. In a second and larger version of the project²¹, the stairs become the pivot which acts both as a vertical connection and as a graft for new rooms. They represent the junction node of a system that is transversal to the primary one, and thus capable of further growth of the structure. Once again, Ricci doesn't apply to the layout a standard scheme of repetition in a single direction but, instead, he exploits the capacities of the structure and the ground to follow and pursue, with an organic propensity, possible spaces, different views, and new directions for the house expansion.

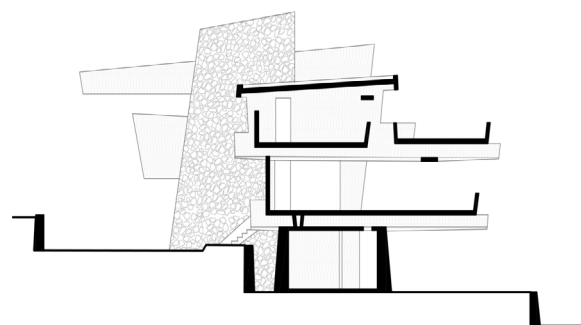
The stairwell proves to be an exceptionally interesting space, even in the macrostructure in Sorgane: it is crossed by the inhabitants, giving "different sensations on different levels".²² In *La Nave*, the southern staircase is articulated from one side of the building to the other in an admirable extension of overhangs which create public spaces in the open air at different heights in a dynamic way, creating places for communal living. A second staircase further north, also recognizable by its protruding volumes on each floor, has a 'fan-shaped' plan as in other junctions of Ricci's projects. [Fig. 11] The form of this element works like a hinge and allows the direction of the building to change slightly.



8



9



10

Fig. 8
Pleydell Bouverie House, first floor plan, graphic design by the author.

Fig. 9
Pleydell Bouverie House, east elevation, graphic design by the author.

Fig. 10
Pleydell Bouverie House, transversal section, graphic design by the author.

20 See the video documentary by Rabiger Michael titled *One Pair of Eyes: Starting from Zero* (BBC, 1971).

21 We can observe this dynamic clearly in the plan of the larger project, as visible in Fig.7.

22 These are the words that Leonardo Ricci uses to describe them in the video documentary by Rabiger Michael *One Pair of Eyes*, at the min. 32.

However, the construction of the “macrostructure for an integrated city”²³, as Ricci intended it, did not take place in full, and the neighborhood was considered by himself and many others to be a mutilated experiment that was only half successful. In spite of this, we cannot fail to identify traces of incessant research that certainly did not end with it, and which originated, as we have seen, in previous projects. This is particularly true for the Pleydell Bouverie House, a preparatory project which remains suspended, like its terraces over the landscape, towards a potential future development; a house that is certainly representative of Leonardo Ricci’s way of conceiving architecture.

The current era is an age of transformation. Everything that happens in the field of urbanism and architecture is merely an inevitable consequence. No architect can foresee man’s future reality, which implies a new motivation for existence and, consequently, new associative relationships between men. [...] As far as my personal work is concerned, I think that I have made some contribution in the field of space and the consequences of a new way of life possible in this space, in a new way of considering the structures and materials that identify with this space, and above all in a new way of considering certain problems regarding form, that I no longer consider in terms of style but, on the contrary, in terms of “open formativeness”, an inevitable and necessary consequence of the different components that form the basis of the project.²⁴



11

23 See Maria Clara Ghia, *La nostra città è tutta la terra. Leonardo Ricci architetto (1918-1994)* (Wuppertal: Steinhäuser Verlag, 2021), 227-9.

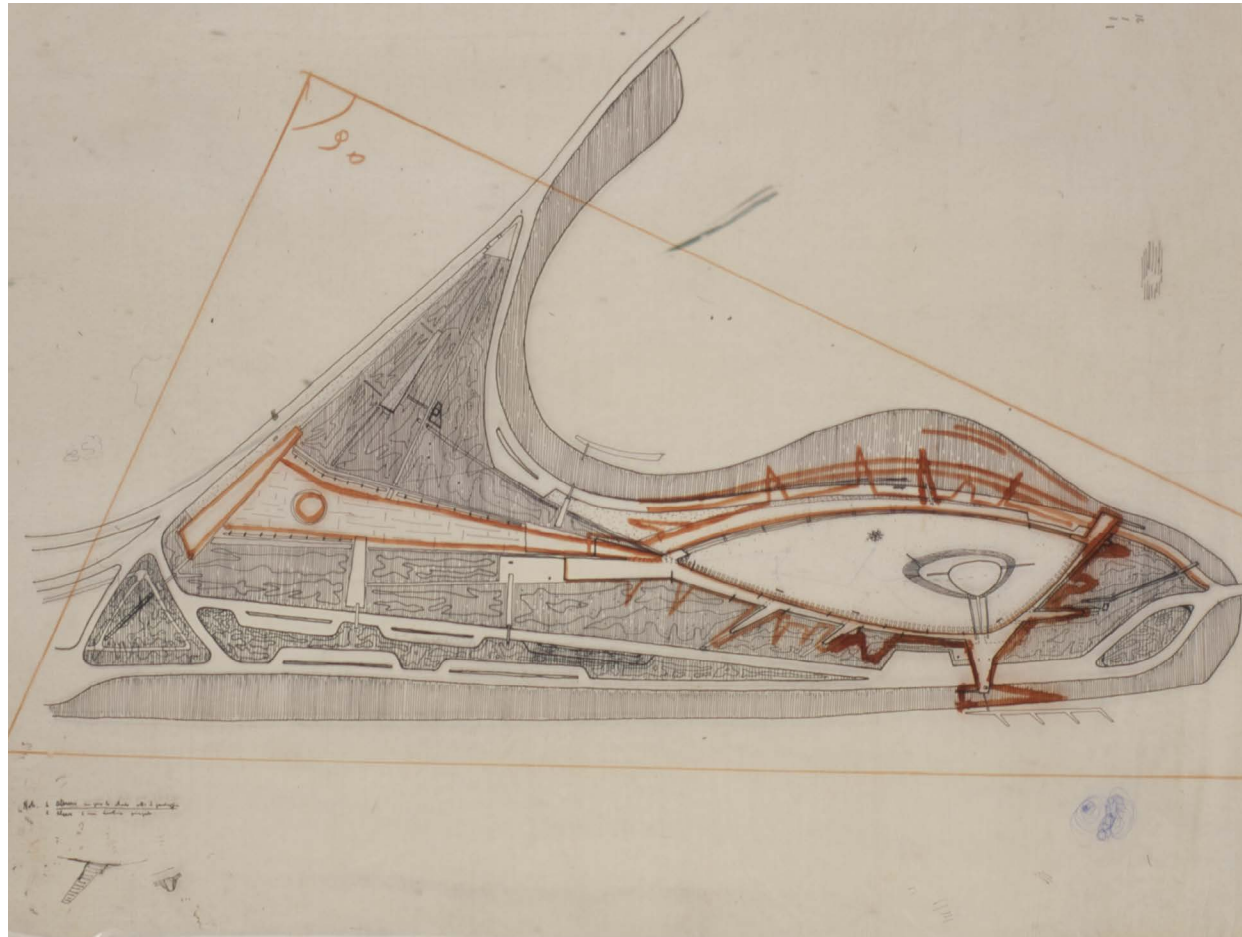
24 Leonardo Ricci, “Leonardo Ricci Italie,” *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui*, no.119 (1965): 59. Original text: “L’Époque actuelle est une époque de transformations. Tout ce qui se passe dans le domaine de l’urbanisme et de l’architecture n’en est qu’une inévitable conséquence. Aucun architecte ne peut préjuger de la réalité future de l’homme, qui implique une nouvelle justification de l’existence et, par conséquent, de nouveaux rapports associatifs entre les hommes.[...] En ce qui concerne mon oeuvre personnelle, j’estime avoir apporté quelque contribution dans le domaine de l’espace et des conséquences d’un nouveau mode de vie possible dans cet espace, dans une nouvelle manière d’envisager les structures et les matériaux qui s’identifient avec cet espace et surtout dans une nouvelle manière d’envisager certains problèmes concernant la forme que je ne considère certes plus en termes de style mais, au contraire, de ‘formativité ouverte’, conséquence inévitable et nécessaire des différences composantes qui sont à la base d’un projet.”

Fig. 11

La Nave, Florence, picture by the author.

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Project for F. D. Roosevelt Memorial

ARCHIVAL DATA

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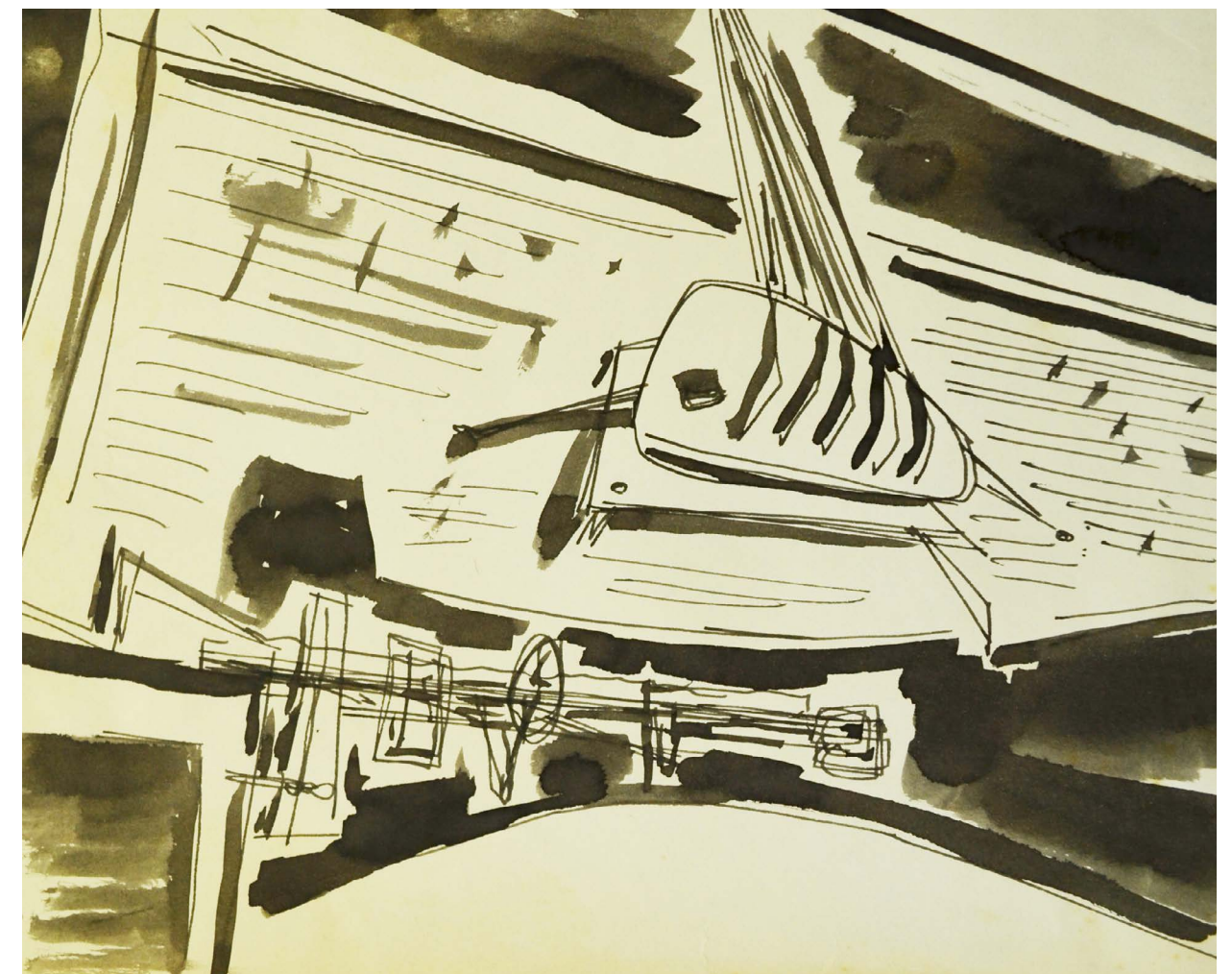
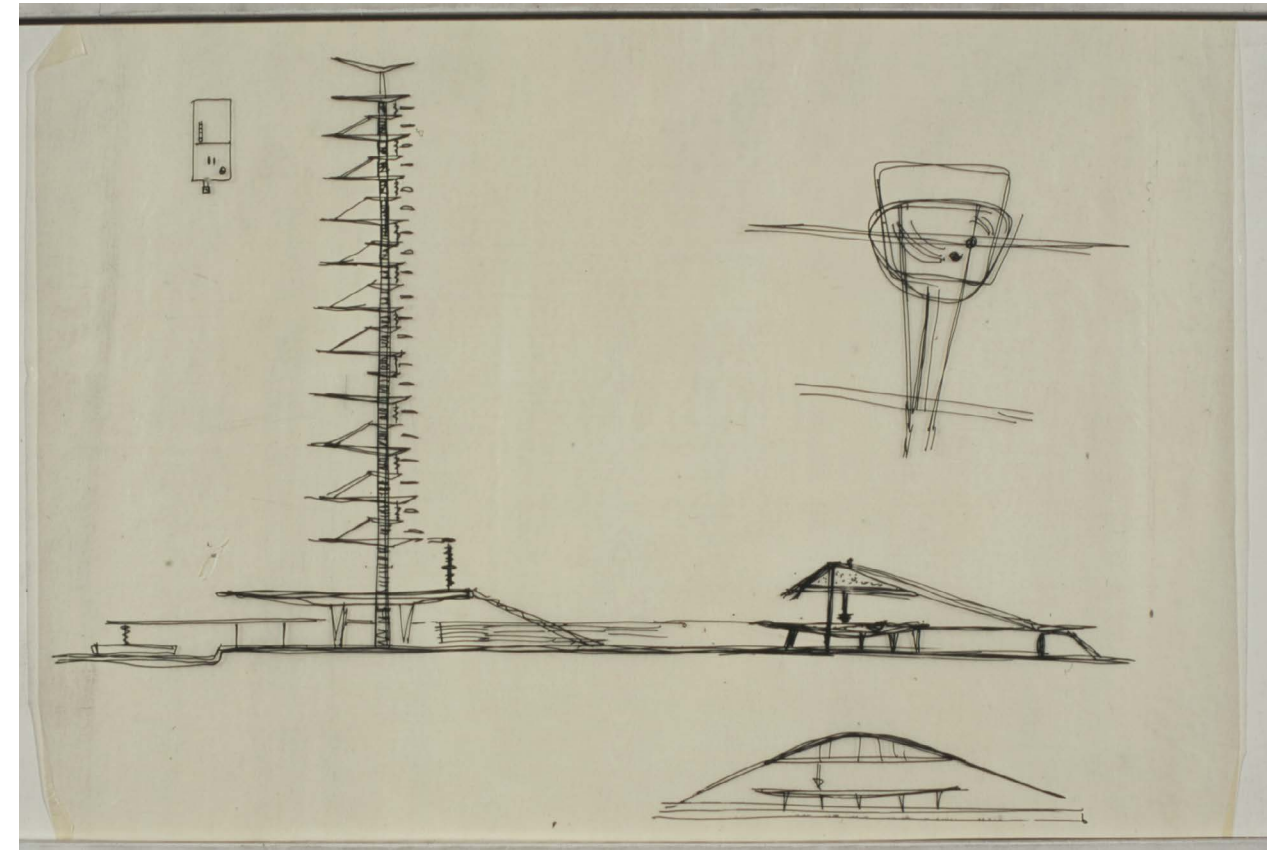
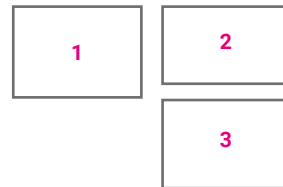
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COLLABORATORS **Paul Nelson, Mirko Basaldella**

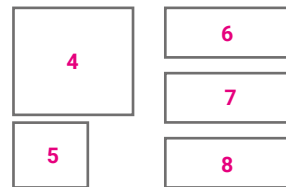
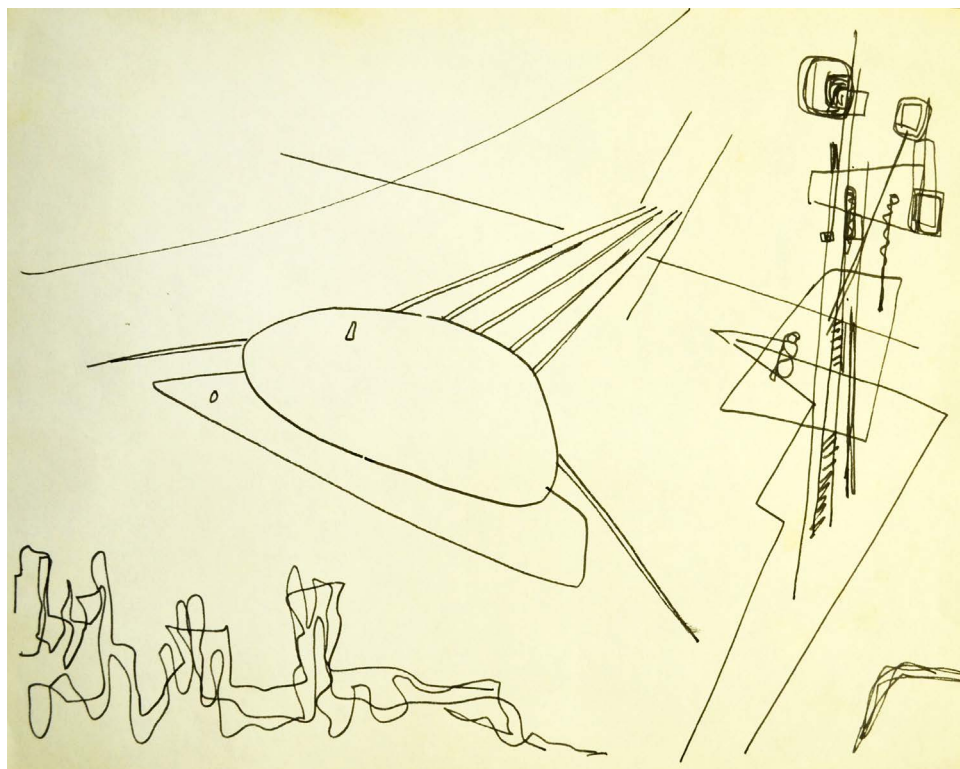
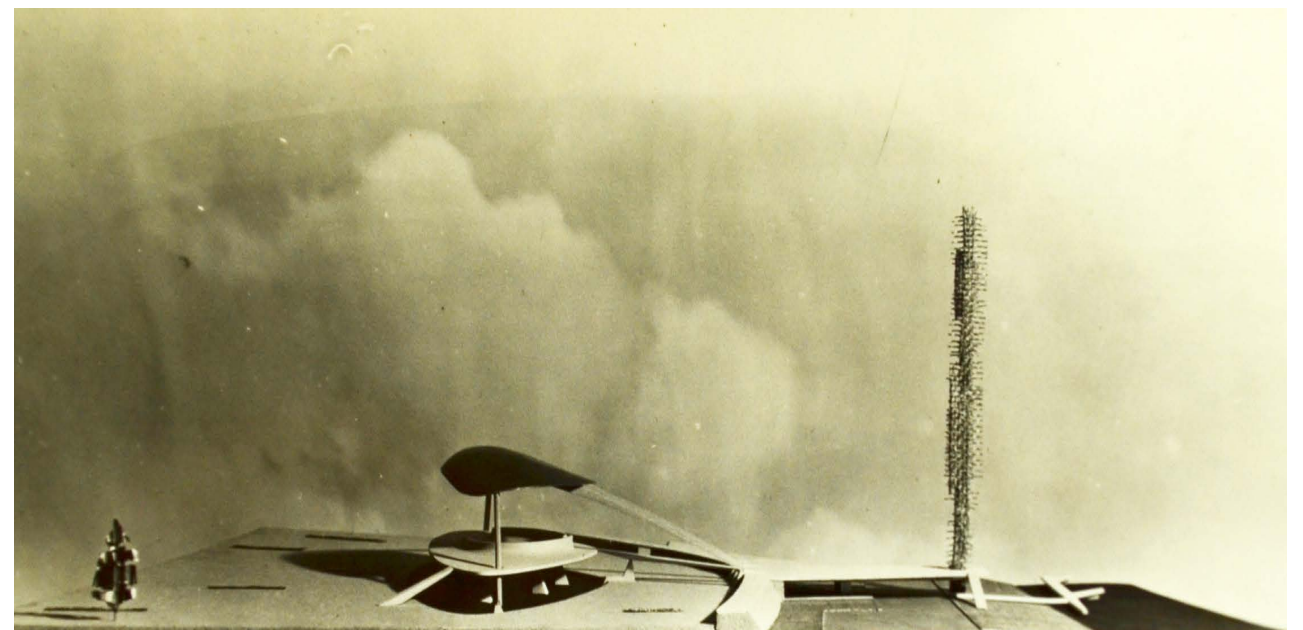
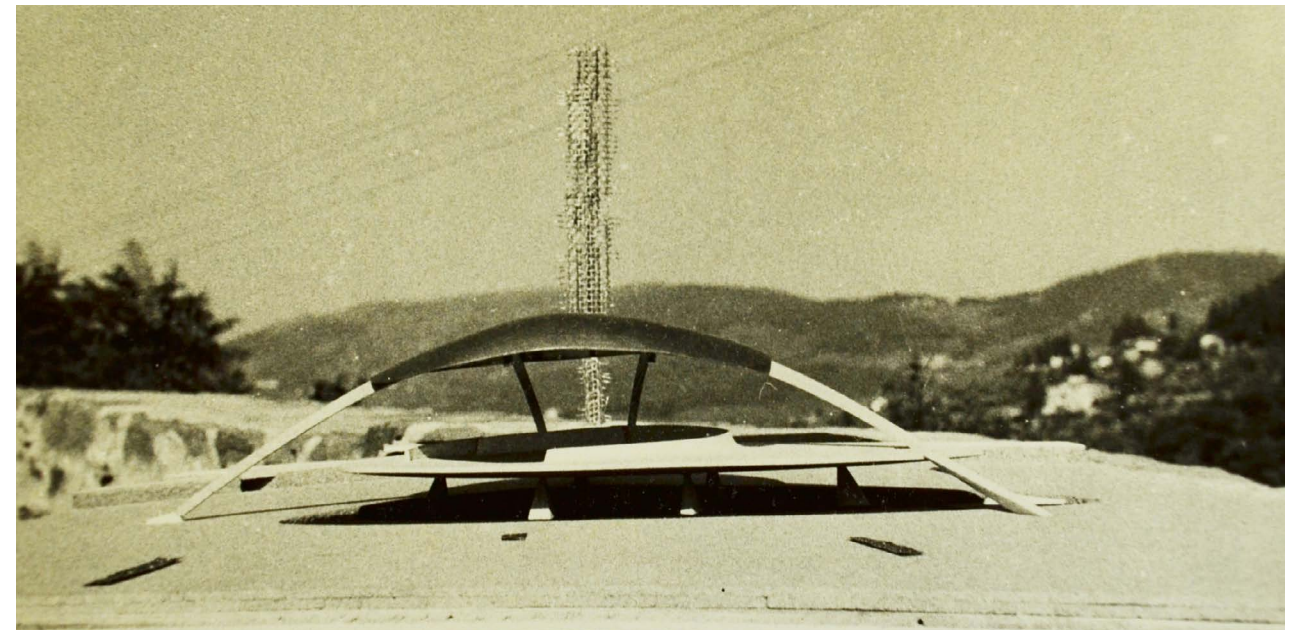
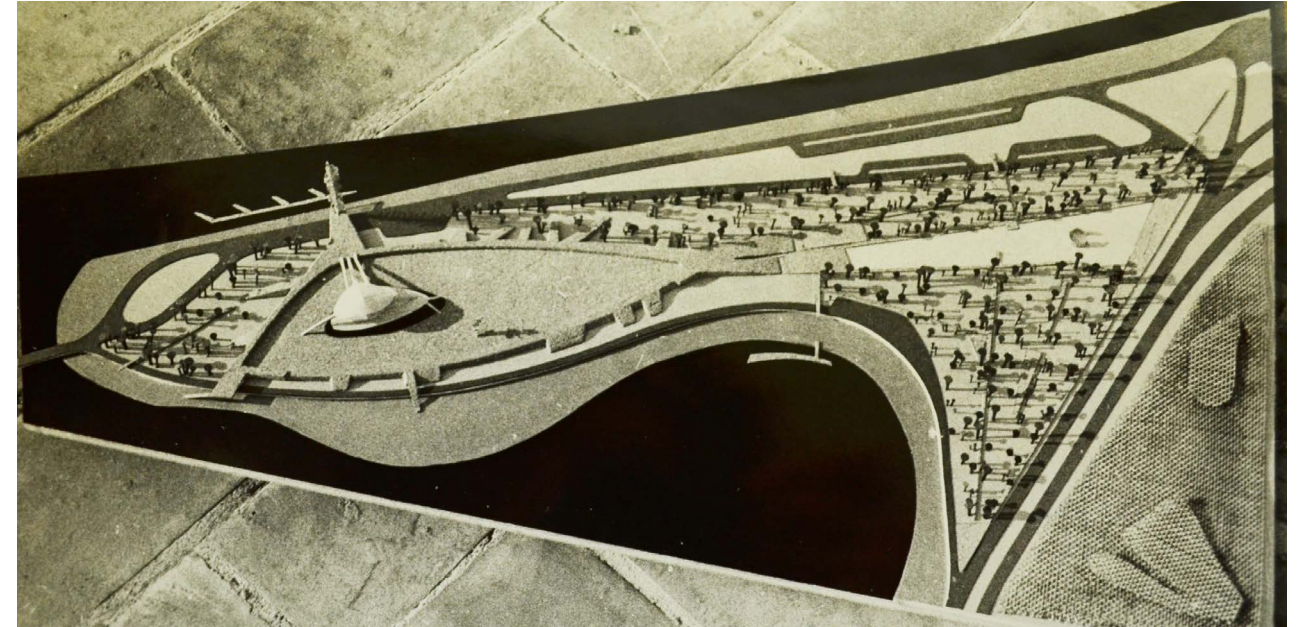
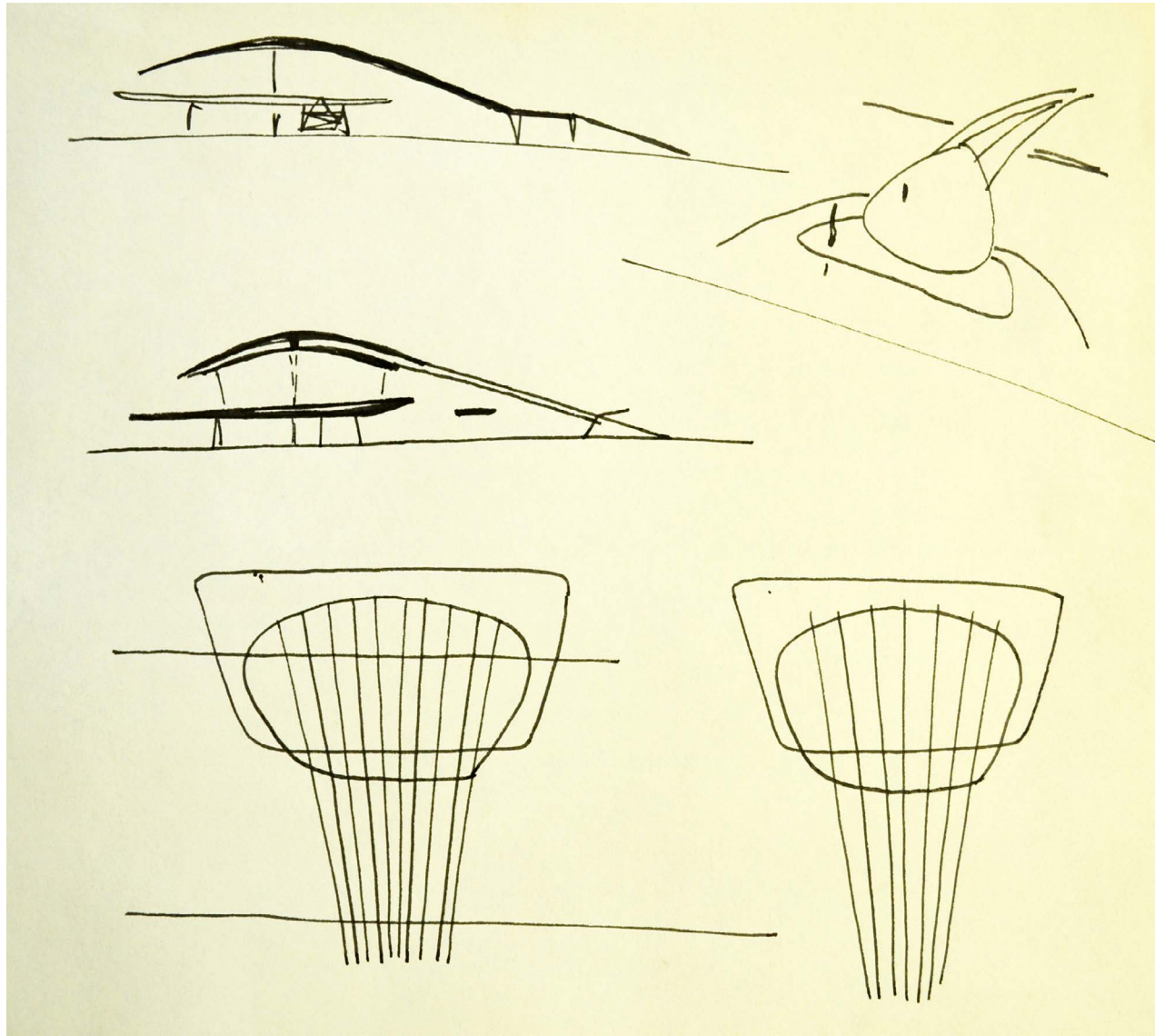
CUSTOMER **Municipality of Washington**

SOURCES **CSAC, CSR**

ESSENTIAL BIBLIOGRAPHY



IMG.1: Project for the competition for the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, sketch of the general plan, heliographic copy with felt-pen interventions, CSAC; IMG.2: sketches in plan and section, CSAC; IMG.3: sketches, heliographic copy, CSR.



IMG.4-5: sketches, lapis on paper, CSR; IMG.6-7-8: pictures of the model realized by Fabrizio Milanese, CSR.

Leonardo Ricci

The Bourgeois in Revolt against Themselves. Cultural Revolution in the U. S.

Unpublished typescript retrieved into the collection kept in Casa Studio Ricci. The text was written by Ricci in English, presumably in 1968, when he was living the revolts in the United States.

Revolutions are happening in the world. Many revolutions.

With war weapons or without. In the jungles, in the rice fields, as well as in the alcoves of bedrooms. Carried on at theoretical level by some vanguard intellectuals or at the level of "praxis"¹ by men who show a different behavior. Political revolutions, social revolutions, cultural revolutions, ethical revolutions. Revolutions of rural masses or of negroes and student revolutions.

In this boiling pot it is difficult to recognize the ingredients – what is known is that the pot is boiling and the lid is about to blow. The progressives claim revolution – of whatever kind – it is enough if the explosion happens. The party of the fearful retreats more and more over the old frontiers attempting to save the so-called values and their own privileges.

¹ The word was comprised between quotation marks annotated by handwritten signs.



I am within this pot which is boiling since quite a while – since thirty years ago during the second world war. Diving in meaninglessly spilled blood. Dewed in the postwar by the ingenious hope that once defeated the fascism, a new society ought to be born. Economical miracles and booms next, while a new generation was growing along with a forgotten war, forgotten gas chambers, forgotten children slaughters, forgotten genocides in favor of any easy life, where the black war bread kneaded with God knows what scraps, was replaced by American cigarettes and chocolate, car at the door, refrigerator full of unsavory food. The choice was muffled life, narcoticised, sold out integrated, a life without possibility of choice. It was the moment of despair, of the impotence, of the dismissal of you because of your being intellectual by the corrupt, demagogic² liar political class which keeps selling as social progress, unreal and anyway alienating income improvements to glut the infection of induced needs, to keep the system from changing, oiling the industrial machine to preserve its grip of power.

Till a new generation is born, the one which accedes to the universities, dissatisfied in their father's life style, which has unmasked the whole of false values, since it is a generation which roots in another war. The war of the boiling pot which is about to blow—and the students revolt is born – in every spot of the world, within historic, cultural, political, social, economic conditions which are not alike.

So that they are differentiated revolts, but all have a minimum common denominator: the bourgeois sons revolt against themselves – and the bourgeois now fear their sons. They arm the policemen against their own sons.

So when they speak about the sons of the other bourgeois, they can say that “they” don't know what they want, haven't got clear minds, since you shouldn't “go to revolt” driving father's car. They must be false revolutionaries, sterile, romantic anarchists.

As if throughout history the revolutions had been alike, out of the same cliché. And what if their force would be just that of a collective subconscious which revolts against a life recognized as stupid, alienated neurotic, lacking reality, untrue, from which a future cannot be drawn anymore?

And if to have your revolution financed by those whom you fight wouldn't be anything else than a less crude revolutionary trait, a more sophisticated technique than those of the past? Paying first the tribute to compromise instead of compromising afterwards?

What if this gust of anarchy and blast of values would happen to be just what is needed to kill the germs of a corrupt, lacking in oxygen, unbreathable air?

Might we answer? I believe so.

Even if we should not hypnotize the future, the modern communications can provide the information over which can be lucidly read the present historical

2 Mistype: to be replaced with “demagogic”.

phenomena without mystification. The youth revolts everywhere in France, in Germany, in Italy, in Mexico, in Spain, in the U. S., in Czechoslovakia.

What is the cause, which is the inner drive, of what kind is that collective unconscious of theirs?

It is at this point when I speak of the double character of each of these attempts of revolt, the one of the hungry and powerless men who crave for a better life, and the one of those who have everything but know that his model of life is meaningless.

The bourgeois³ class revolting against itself.

I have to give some explanations at the historical political and philosophical level.

If we look at the students slogans we see a good amount of them handed down by past revolutions – it would be of interest to make a semiology study.

From their language I should conclude that their cultural platform extends from the marxist - leninist substratum to the anarchist one, even if with differentiated shades. Nothing new then at the historic level.

But if I look at their behavior I can see in them as a new eagerness, the urgency for a life not only economically different, the research for a new man, for a new existential justification of life, the tension to depart from the philosophic establishment of idealism and of the age of reason, to turn the philosophy of essence into a philosophy of existence, attempting new associative rapports.

Attempting to depart from the schemes of the bourgeois culture, from the logical structures of a consumed thought, into which even the most liberal and progressive and enlightened intellectuals are yet rooted. To reach out to the masses in a new relation with reality.

That new kind of relation that some among us were beginning to foresee and hypothesize - even if as individuals yet – thirty years ago.

That new relation some among us were feeling to rise or were aware of at the perceptive level and not yet at the cognitive level.

That new relation with the reality which made us live within the drama, the internal tragedy, in a real true catharsis. From which who knows if any of my generation will be able to rise.

At least I do not know whether I will emerge or not.

Because even today, after thirty years of exercising with this new way of perceiving reality, as soon as I have to get into the world of words I get a handful⁴ of exhausted consumed vocables⁵, derived as they are from old conceptions

3 The word "bourgeois" replaced "middle" that was on the typescript.

4 Mistype: to be replaced with "handful".

5 In English this noun does not exist, but it is expected that the author would have liked to employ "terms/ words".

which have nothing to do with this new reality in action. Not only at the theoretical level, but even at the most direct one of the praxis. How many of the words that all politicians on earth use, like freedom, justice, democracy, slip out of your mouth as stones to spit off because they do not, anymore, fit to what you are experiencing at the perceptive level.

Even the word intellectual is a sickening one. And you feel yourself as a new man within an old skin. A skin about to shed and let's hope at least this youth will be spared so great a stress, as that we are exerting to form this new skin. Because they too are still in the old skin.

These students, offspring of bourgeois, want to change skin, want the contact with the masses.

But which one is the mass? What is it? How is it? The mass are the workers. The exploited ones. All right. But are today's workers the same as thirty years ago? Are the workers in the developed countries still an independent life force or are they already tertiarized? And even where they are not tertiarized yet, is there a true possibility of contact with the students?

Then let's look at the rural class. But here also not all is that easy. Might the farmers be less conservative than the workers? Are they not instead the most attached to the rights of property, in the narrowest, most archaic ancient meaning of it? "This is my land".

So we look at "the damned of earth" to the most oppressed in the most underdeveloped countries, the discriminated because of birth, education, the color of the skin.

But even here, where the group is, where the contact?

If we look at the crude facts, this grasp isn't there, and it is perhaps rightly so. In France the workers are those who practically block the almost successful revolt of the students. In Germany the police practically aren't needed. The citizens protect themselves from the students. In the U. S. the workers oppose the students, and the most extreme negro movements refuse any contact with the whites, even the most enlightened. In Czechoslovakia the international communist party destroys from the top the grass roots instincts.

Is there a reason for all this? Is it mere distrust among classes or is there a deeper cause? Might it all mean that two types of revolution are active, even though gathered under the same flags?

I believe that in different parts of the world from one side the class struggle continues; it is the lower exploited powerless class against the one that holds the power, the controls, the wealthy, exploiting one. A classical struggle started in the modern meaning by the French revolution, passed through the various forms of socialist and communist revolutions.

A struggle which will fatally continue until another revolution, a deeper, more radical, decisive one, that of society all which consciously would find another

existencial⁶ justification, a new organization of life outside the subdivisions of work as need to exchange, therefore out of repression as condition for civilization.

A civilization then of men freed from the prehistoric condition of Adam and Eve thrown away from the earthly paradise, who by the sweat of their brows earn their bread with the toil from the soil, give birth with labor pains, starting a progeny of Abels and Cains more and more alienated among themselves until the reach of total incommunication⁷, the present one.

When instead the communication should have become per force effortless, and not needing anymore to go through aprioristic codes, with messages based upon symbols, myths, ideologies. So the students, as collective subconscious, in spite of the need to use some of the ideologic language, are finally free, even if not yet clear from ideologies, but it is this beginning⁸ freedom which weakens the contact with the masses still ruled by ideologies.

This disenfranchisement from ideologies was the hope I held in my heart in the postwar period. A hope that was frustrated. Hope and trust today at collective level I place in these students.

But all this might be an arbitrary and subjective interpretation if it were not endorsed by historic verifications⁹ or better say historic possibilities.

Is this new revolution possible? This revolution which might be capable to absorb all the others? And where might it find a possible place? Or, which one could be a fecund field for this revolution that we might call cultural but maybe better to call it existential one?

Let's see the problem under the technical aspect.

The present alienated conditions of life of men is to be ascribed to different reasons, and synthesized in the incapacity to survive in the nature without an organization based upon division of work and upon ethics established a priori, over which activities of exchange, even at the communicative level, are started. Conditions of alienations not superated¹⁰ even in the socialist or communist societies.

In fact the relationship man-machine is the same, the "anxiety of the unfinished" has not been eliminated, the participation to work is not realized.

But fortunately today this conditions of alienations, should at least at the theoretical level disappear. We have approached the threshold of a man who has the chances to engage a new rapport with nature. No more enslaved by nature, but with nature, within nature, because he no longer fears it. This mastered nature

6 Mistype: to be replaced with "existential".

7 In English the compact opposite form of "communication" does not exist. Mistype: to be replaced with "no communication".

8 Mistype: to be replaced with "beginning".

9 Mistype: to be replaced with "verifications".

10 In English this verb does not exist, but it is expected that the author would have liked to employ "surpassed" or "overcome".

can be "eaten" and become blood of man. Therefore the divided man, the alienated man, the man "homo homini lupus", the man who crushed the others to survive the man broken into the various fabers, ludens, sapiens categories¹¹ as separate entities, is not any more a condition of necessity. Men subdivision of activities into primary, secondary, tertiary, which keep men separated as three classes, rural, working, bourgeois, with the advent of automation isn't any longer a must. New activities that we can call the quaternary activities, only intellectual and creative, will engage all men. The present primary secondary and tertiary ones can be taken over by automated machines. There are at least existing the conditions for a new civilization, a new reality, a new whole society, no longer alienated. It is evident that this is possible at the theoretical level, yet it is difficult to be applied at the praxis level. Because it is quite evident too that in order to participate of the activities above defined quaternary men ought to be raised at such a cognitive level to become able to perform such those activities. Otherwise a monstrous civilization is bound to happen, more alienating than the present one.

A terribly grave separation might take place, much more aberrant between the "very few" the skilled, able at the cognitive level, to use the means of the automatic civilization, and the enormous mass of the unskilled of course fed by the skilled, but absolutely deprived of any possibility of choice in a much worse situation than the one of the present sub-proletarians¹² of the slaves, since any possibility or capability of revolt would be taken from them, because the powerful automatic machine controlled by the few could appear absolutely objective, could become a modern form of the ineluctable fate. If this would become true, who knows what kind of intestine revolution could still explode. Absolutely unpredictable, such a cataclysm which might bring the earth to a sort of modern Atlantis lost if not in waters, in space, where the survivors will be wandering for another planet.

But this is at the level of legend and we must stay with our feet on this poor dear earth of ours. Even if today we go out to the space.

And there is then a race between the knowledge of men leading to automation, and the cognizance of men that of such automation must discern the possibilities of relation.

A race which will take many forms. As an example, the race between the problem of education of man, of all men, and the complete reach of automation; between the problem of placing all men in the same condition of possibility of choice and the choiced¹³ determined by the computers; between the problem of giving everyone the power of decisions of his own existence and that of an existence without power because absorbed by a unique central control which decides the "others" existence.

11 Mistype: to be replaced with "categories".

12 The word was underlined by handwritten signs.

13 Mistype: to be replaced with "choice".

It is due then, the forerunning of times¹⁴. A real, true, cultural revolution is due, capable to precede the times, instead of suffering them, which would permit men to choose “before,” before to become obliged to live according to the “state of necessity.” A cultural revolution, a real and true existential revolution, which when criticized in the future, will look like the greatest one, a “revolution without revolutionaries” as the title of the book I am writing says, and it will certainly be the greatest revolution in history, comparable only to that one which allowed as animal to pass from the brute level to the one of man.

From prehistory to history or better still, from the conditioned man to the conditioning man.

From man versus nature to the man with nature.

From man who investigates a reality outside himself, to man within reality, collaborating with it.

And where this revolution might more reasonably take place? It is not possible to say if what I am about to state will really happen.

But rationally speaking, if it should happen the most apt country for it could really be the U. S. of America. Many are the reasons. But fundamentally two are enough.

The U. S. are the country where the contradictions¹⁵ are more stressed, almost at a climax. The most powerful country on earth, the one which body contains the man who goes to the space and at same time the man just freed from the most recent slavery, who has not acquired yet the rights to his own complete existence as man. A crucible of men, the most distinct, welcomed to this country by the statues of “liberty”. Distinte¹⁶ by culture, tradition, collective and personal history, even because of different skin. But the contradictions¹⁷ are precisely what brings to the fatal fork, to the fall or the overcoming.

The U. S. are the country the most technologically advanced in the world. And the revolution I hope for, cannot take place anymore without the intervention of the automatic machines.

The U. S. happen to be then the country which not only rationally could better than other allow this cultural existential revolution but they should even feel bound to it, and not consider it as a mere possibility. Because such a revolution could spare the other terrible bloody revolutions, the still archaic revolutions, which look still necessary until this urgency for a new justification of existence will not be granted.

Analogically and only analogically, since I do not absolutely believe to the historical recurrences, due to the irreversibility of the processes, the U. S. are living a moment similar to that of the Romans when they received the Christianity

14 The word was underlined by handwritten signs.

15 Mistype: to be replaced with “contradictions”.

16 Mistype: to be replaced with “Distinct”.

17 Mistype: to be replaced with “contradictions”.

at those times the existential –cultural revolution toward the world now called western, and that was capable to radically transform the roman culture, even if the roman culture was the trunk¹⁸ over which the graft was mad¹⁹ possible.

Will happen or not in the U. S. this revolution without revolutionaries? Are the positive forces of cognizance and conscience of man to prevail or will the reactionary conservative ones be able to make impossible an event otherwise possible in this country? Many the answers pessimistac-optimistica²⁰. I myself as intellectual who is about to change his own skin, I cannot be anywhere else than in the latter position. After all this position shouldn't even be considered optimistic since the intellectual should not behave any longer as a kind of judge who judges the reality as outside events pipe in his mouth. He is dans la melee²¹ he is within the boilingpot²², immersed in the dough of the world, within society, he should not feel a bit different from other men.

No intellectual can anymore allow himself to stay outside of history, even if it were possible to be ahistorical. Anyway, he cannot step out from the process of human life. When the pot will blow, he will have been inside, he too. He must have the courage to force up the lid of the pot. He must help to discern the drives which are stirring within society, so that this "matter of world" could become what its vocation is pushing to, this destiny of evolving toward another "species."

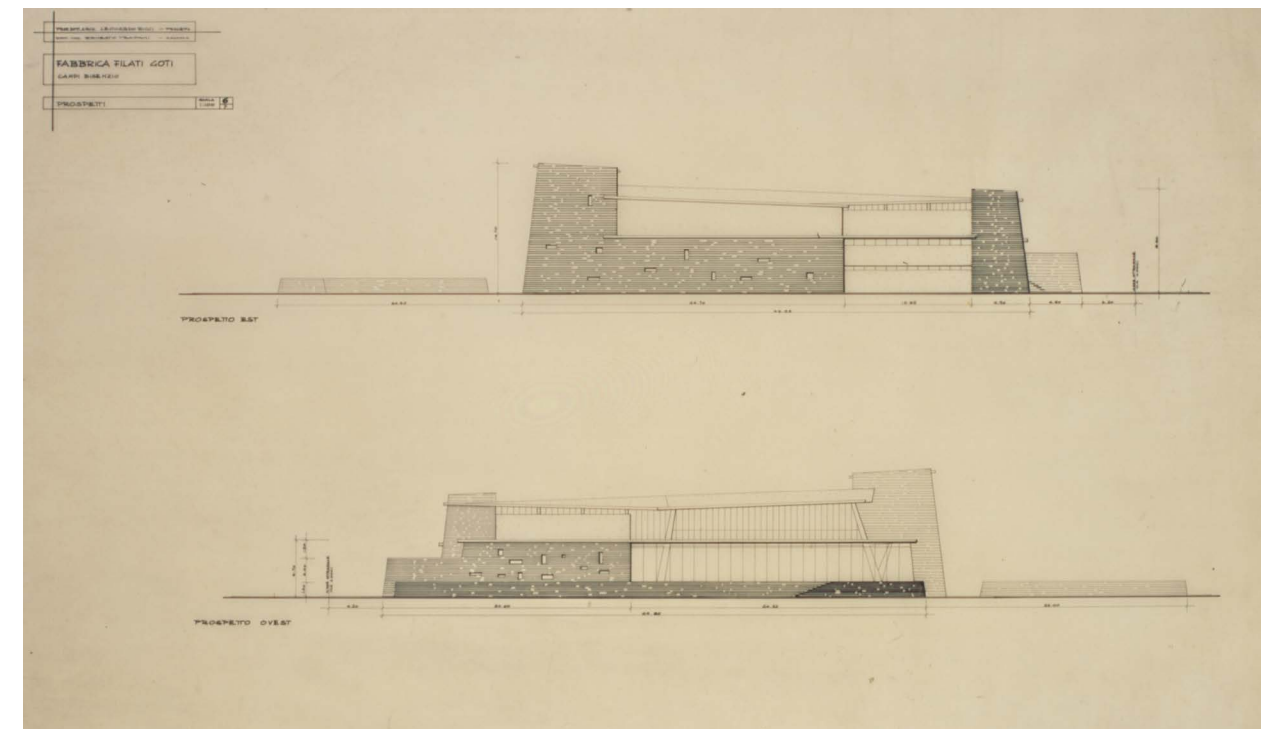
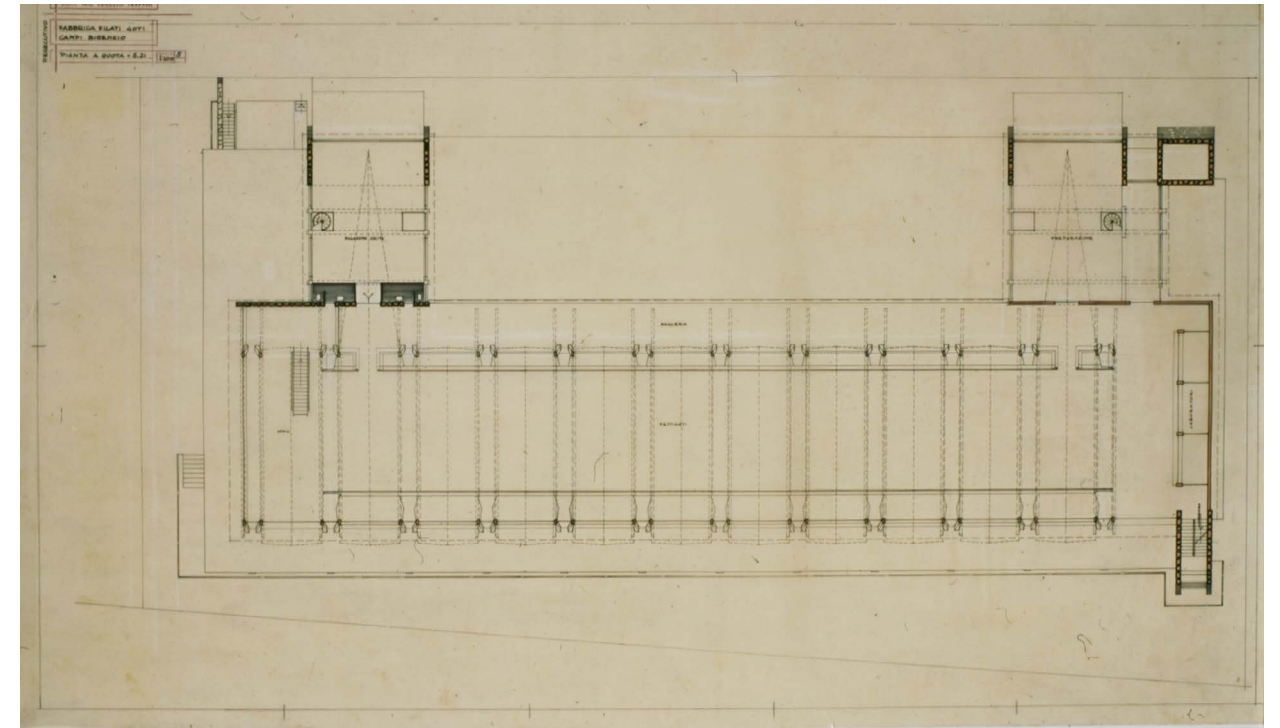
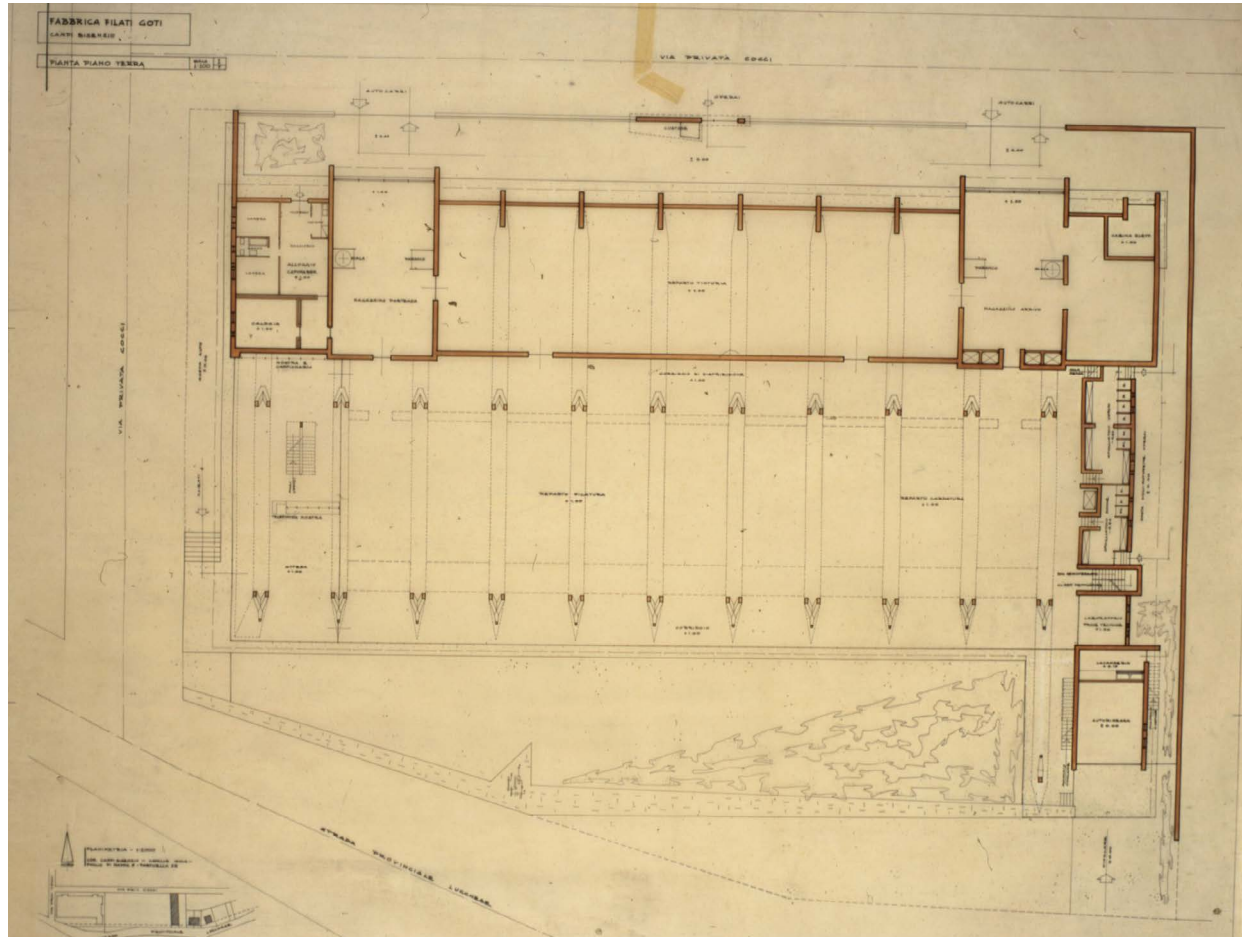
18 Mistype: to be replaced with "trunk".

19 Mistype: to be replaced with "made".

20 Mistype: to be replaced with "pessimistic-optimistic".

21 Mistype: to be replaced with "dans la mêlée".

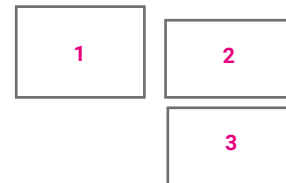
22 Misotype: to be replaced with "boiling pot".



Goti Factory

ARCHIVAL DATA

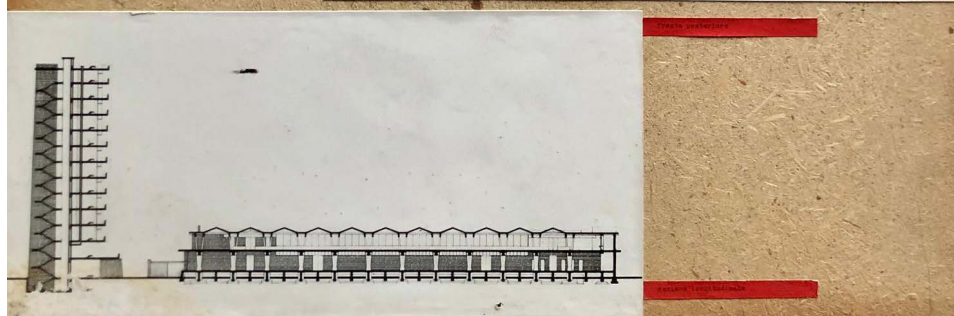
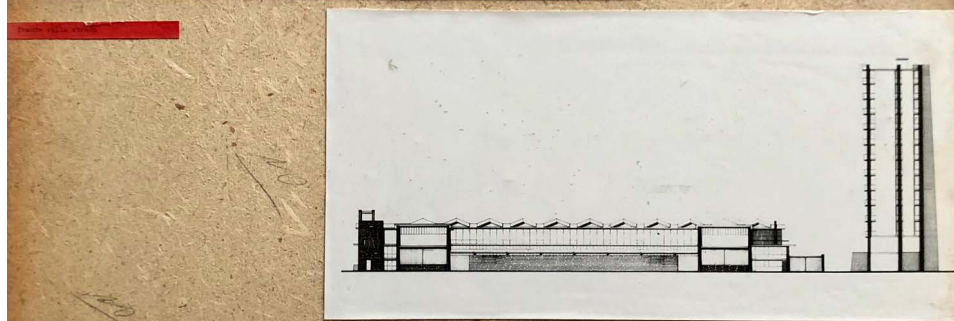
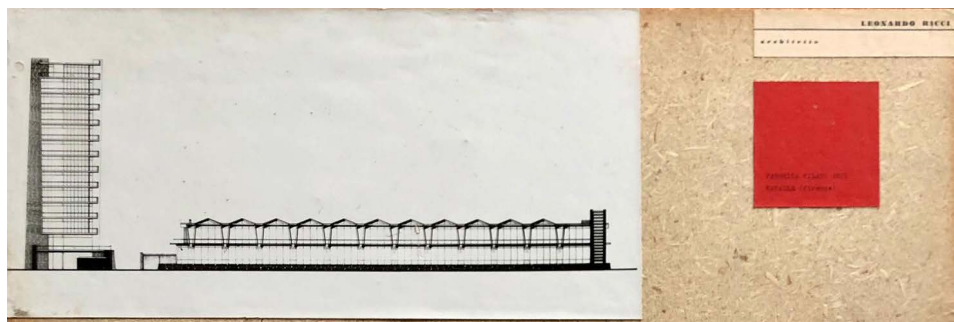
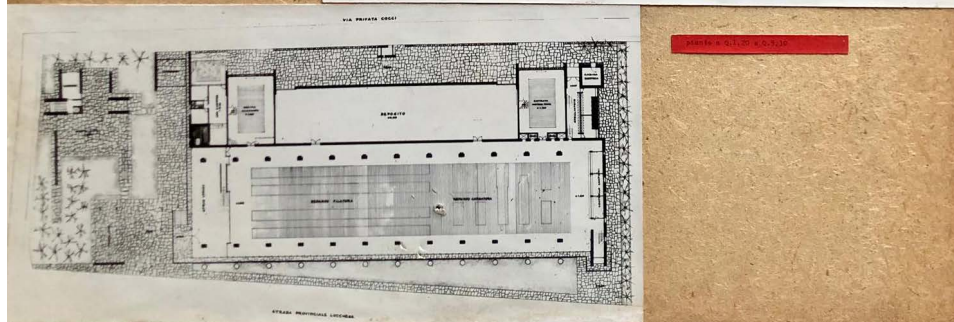
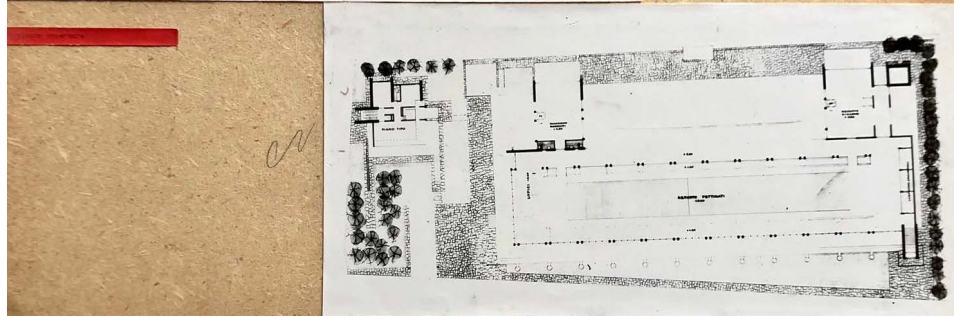
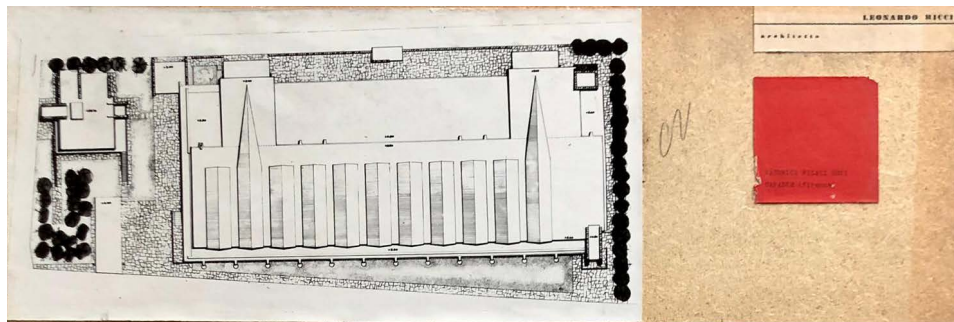
DATE	1959 (design and realization)
ADDRESS	Via dei Confini, 236 Campi Bisenzio, Firenze
COLLABORATORS	Enzo Trapani, Fabrizio Milanese
CUSTOMER	Nazareno Goti
SOURCES	CSAC, CSR



ESSENTIAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

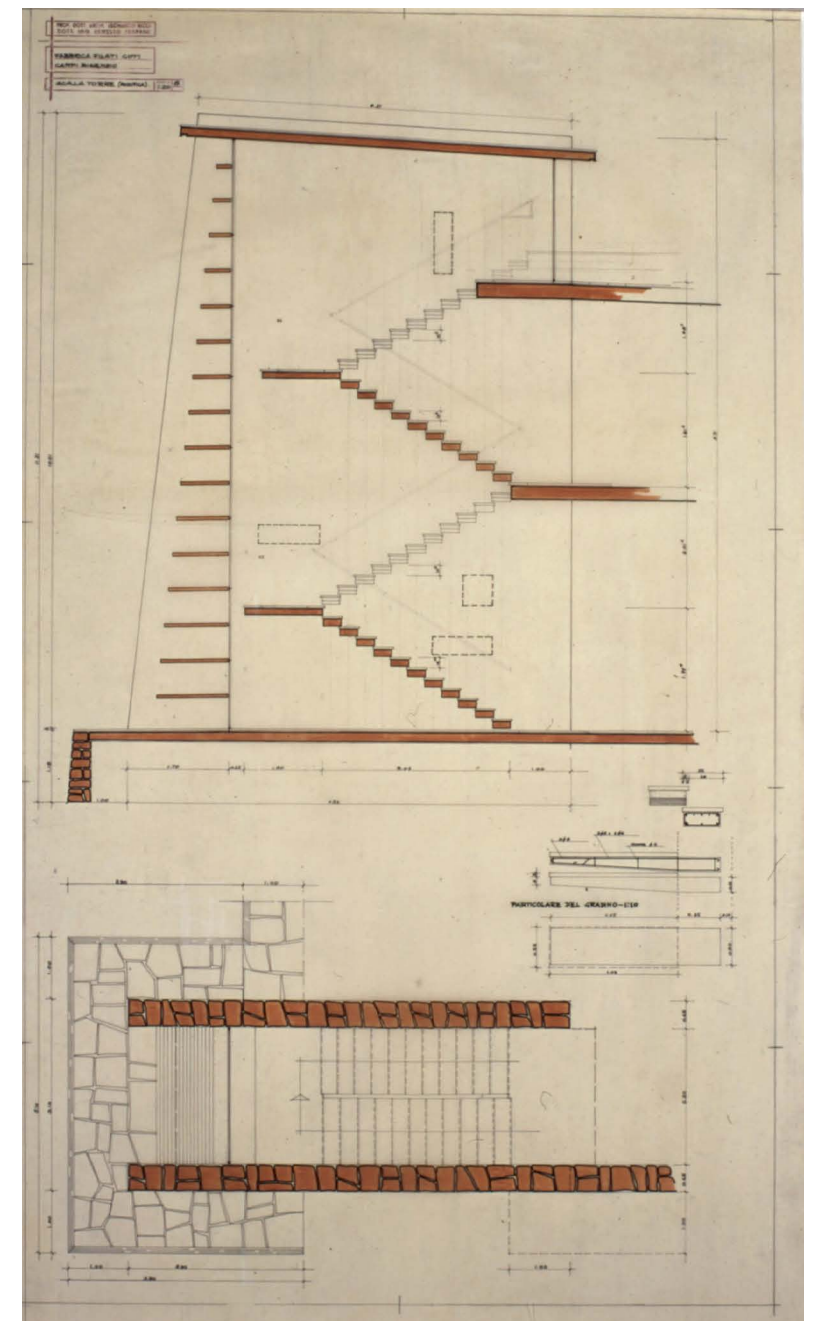
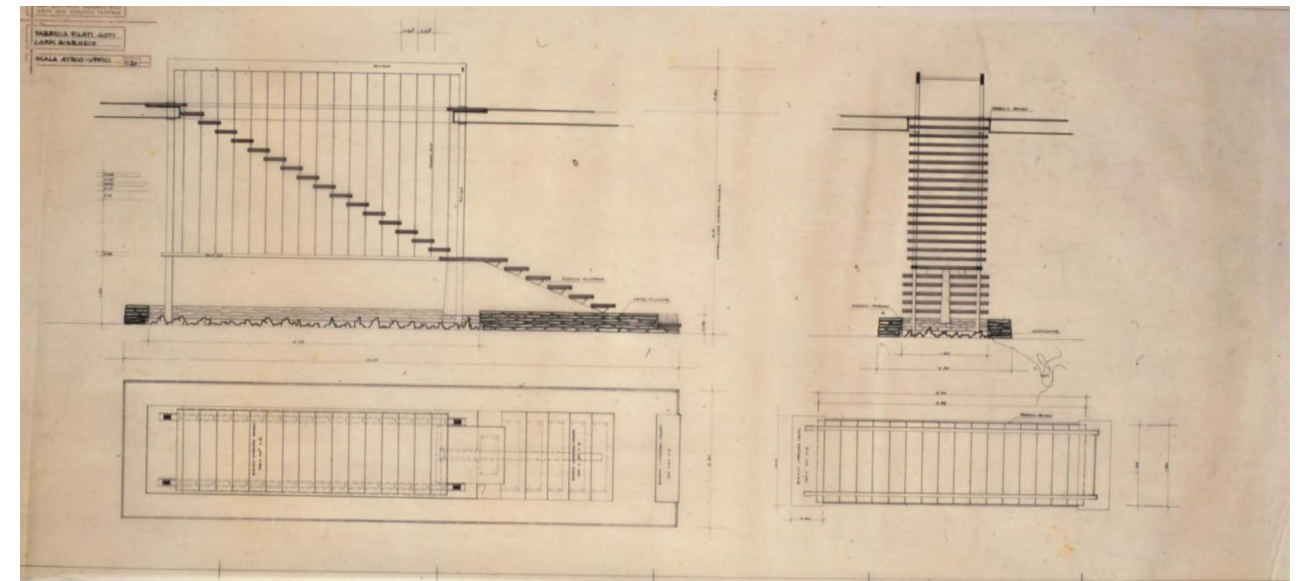
W. Lattes, "Perché è nata la fabbrica 'bella'", *Il Giornale del Mattino*, July 30, 1961; C. Vasič Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto "esistenzialista"* (Firenze: Edifir, 2005), 35, 38; A. Nardi, ed., *Leonardo Ricci: testi, opere, sette progetti recenti di Leonardo Ricci* (Pistoia: Edizioni del Comune di Pistoia, Italia Grafiche, 1984), 42, 43.

IMG.1: Goti Factory, plan of the ground floor, scale 1:100, lapis and felt-pen on paper, CSAC; IMG.2: plan at 8.20 m, scale 1:100, lapis and felt-pen on paper, CSAC; IMG.3: elevations, scale 1:100, lapis and felt-pen on paper, CSAC.



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IMG.4-5: images of the panels Ricci elaborated for the exhibition "Aspetti dell'Arte Contemporanea. Omaggio a Cagli, omaggio a Fontana, omaggio a Quaroni. Architettura, pittura, scultura, grafica" (L'Aquila, Castello Cinquecentesco, luglio-settembre 1963), CSAC; IMG.6: plan and section of the staircase hall-offices, scale 1:20, CSAC; IMG.7: plan and section of the tower staircase, scale 1:20, CSAC.





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IMG.8-9-10: pictures of the logbook n.4, pages collecting miscellaneous materials about the Goti Factory, CSR.

Leonardo Ricci and the Project for the “Man-Machine Space”: the Goti Factory (1959)

Goti Factory, Man-machine space, Relational Architecture, Structure, Mezzanine floor

/Abstract

The Goti factory was built between 1959 and 1960, when Ricci was managing to translate into reality some fundamental principles of his spatial research: the design method of the “form-act”, the community ideal and the anonymous, relational and existential architecture. This text aims to frame the project in Ricci’s work and clarify these design ideals and how they are found in the analyzed project, exploiting the reading of archival sources and contemporary projects or with a similar program. Furthermore, the Goti Factory is placed in the years in which Ricci begins an intense exchange with the United States, which will allow him to approach the founding theories of Urban Design, therefore to resolve, thanks to them, that tension between opposites that animated his research, finally reaching the definitive evolution of his design method.

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Ilaria Cattabriga is a PhD in Architecture and Design Cultures. She studied at the School of Architecture and Engineering of the University of Bologna, where she graduated with a thesis work in History of Architecture in 2016.

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 shortly with the title *Leonardo Ricci in the United States (1952-1972). A Twenty-year American Transfer as a Turning Experience in Teaching and Design* 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 and in national and international conferences, then free researcher at MIT in 2019.

She is adjunct professor of Construction History (Architecture-Building Engineering in Bologna), History and Theory of Architecture and Landscape (Creative Practices in Cities and Landscape) tutor and assistant professor of History of Architecture both at Architecture and Design degree courses (Bologna and Cesena campuses).

"Is work a curse or a blessing?"

In October 1959 Leonardo Ricci was commissioned by the industrialist Nazareno Goti to build his large yarn factory on the state road between Prato and Campi Bisenzio, one of the largest industrial districts in Italy and one of the most important for the production of woolen products. Goti left the architect complete freedom in designing, he only required to return to the usual costs of an industrial warehouse, and set two main objectives to the project: to create a beautiful work space that enhanced the conditions of the workers, and to integrate production, commercial and residential functions. In the relationship with the client, that equal partnership which allowed the achievement of anonymity in architecture for Ricci come true: Ricci responded to Goti with a simple and effective project, created thanks to the collaboration of the engineer Enzo Trapani, who carried out the structural calculations, and by the architect Fabrizio Milanese, who took care of the interior design. In 1960 the factory was finished, it was then abandoned from the 1980s to 1996, when, after being purchased by the Goti Manufacture, it underwent a heavy renovation carried out in 1997 by the engineer Alessandro Moscardi.

Leonardo Ricci was commissioned to design the Goti Factory during the Spring semester in which he was a visiting professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). In conversation with Antonio Nardi, recalling the emotion of being summoned to MIT, Ricci said:

In the meantime, I was commissioned to design a yarn factory near Prato. Who would have guessed! Not because I didn't love designing factories. It was one of my favorite themes. But I never imagined that one day a customer would look for me to do something practical, functional, rational. As long as craftsmanship existed, the human space and the machine space had their chance to coexist. In the factory, on the other hand, the machine had occupied the space of man to the point of turning the man into a machine. Instead, machines and humans could coexist. It was a small experiment, a yarn factory, but I understood that a new space for man and machine would also be possible in a company like Fiat¹.

The Goti factory was designed and built in a short time, between 1959 and 1960, when Ricci was managing to translate into reality some fundamental principles of his spatial research: the "form-act" design method, the community ideal as well as anonymous, relational and existential architecture. This text aims to frame the project in Ricci's work and clarify how it differentiates from other projects and to what extent it employs the design ideals common to his work, how they are found in the analyzed project, exploiting the reading of archival sources and contemporary projects or with a similar program. Furthermore, the Goti Factory is placed in the years in which Ricci begins an intense exchange with the United States, which will allow him to approach the founding theories of

¹ Antonio Nardi, *Leonardo Ricci. Testi, opere, sette progetti recenti di Leonardo Ricci* (Pistoia: Edizioni del Comune di Pistoia, 1982), 33. All the translations from Italian into English in this text are by the author.

Urban Design, therefore to resolve, thanks to them, that tension between opposites that animated his research, finally reaching the definitive evolution of his design method.

After his first appointment as visiting professor at MIT, Ricci published his book *Anonymous (XX century)* (1962), in which he also reflected on the factory architectural program starting from the workers' acts and from the melted space for the man and for the machine:

I said: let us examine the actions of our day. Those others, instead, used to examine those actions as institutions. Let's see the difference. Let us take some of these acts. The workingmen get up in the morning and go to work. For the others, the problem presented itself in these terms: they had to circumscribe a working zone in the city, the industrial zone, for example; locate it in such a way that the wind-borne fumes and smoke should not infest the residential zones; they had to build streets wide enough to contain the traffic of public and private means of transportation, and so on. My problem is different. It arises from the root. My problem is: is work a curse or a blessing? It is a necessity. If it is a necessity, must this work be done with joy and participation, or painfully and in a detached manner? If it is to be done joyfully and with participation, what must the factory be, and what must be its position in the city? What should be the relation between work and rest, between factory and home? From such an analysis, perhaps, something new will be born. Almost certainly there will no longer be industrial zones and residential zones, separate and hostile, but an osmosis will be attempted between factory and home, and a relationship created somewhat like the old one between workshop and home in the ancient city, when the workman was a craftsman rather than an industrial worker².

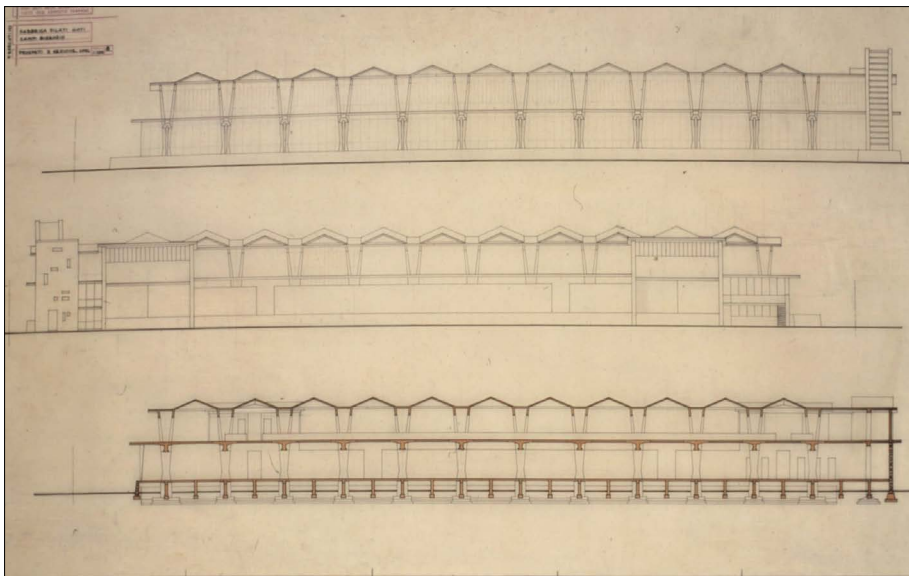
After graduating with Michelucci in 1941, Ricci maintained the master's teachings as the foundation of his work and, precisely in the Goti Factory project, the most important of them is recognizable: the art of detachment, which the master delicately outlined in a letter addressed to Ricci:

Dear Leo, (in your interview) since I am not a "teacher", I have tried to "teach" my alleged disciples more the art of "detachment" than the chain of "submission". I tried to identify in everyone, and in you in particular, what were those elements of diversity, with respect to my points of view, capable of favoring the development of a new identity³.

For the first time in the project of the Goti factory, tricuspid pillars appear, whose Y-shaped ramifications anticipate some of Michelucci's solutions of the following years and, as Giovanni Klaus Koenig claimed, «the step forward in structural freedom, marked by Michelucci in the church of the Autostrada, perhaps would have not happened if the pupil had not, at that moment, influenced

2 Leonardo Ricci, *Anonymous (XX century)* (New York: George Braziller, 1962), 188.

3 Letter from Giovanni Michelucci to Leonardo Ricci, published in Nardi, *Leonardo Ricci*, 8.



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the teacher. That is, Ricci's personality, so impetuous and experimentalist, must have contributed to giving rise, after the Bolognese period of rigorous research, to the new spatial plasticism that characterizes the last Michelucci⁴.

Michelucci's reflection on the branched pillars is contemporary of some of his projects: the sketches for the Gambero Rosso tavern are from 1958-60, the church of the Immacolato Cuore di Maria in the Belvedere village of Pistoia, is contemporary with the Goti Factory, the Autostrada church was built in 1960. Ricci, seeing the bronze model, wrote: «a structure of a new type, self-supporting like a "shell" of an automobile, a sort of organism made up of thin straight and upside down vaults, integrating and balancing between them» and he adds «it will be created using steel ropes suspended on branched pillars». [Fig. 1]

The coeval project for "Casa Teorica" (1956-1958), clearly shows the application of the "form-act" design method, which is opposed to the practice of overlapping functional models and is based on the rejection of *a priori* forms, in order to design and create spaces that make the acts of men desirable. It consists in designing starting from human acts and activities excluding any pre-defined morphological conception⁵.

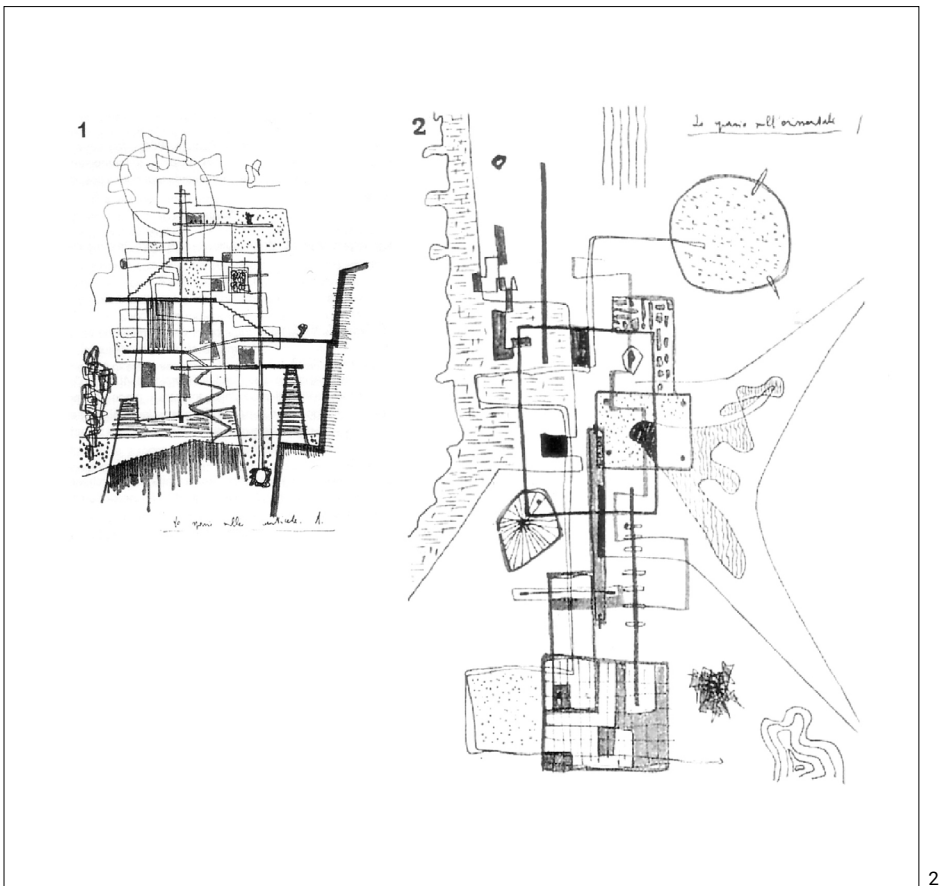
Casa Teorica is an experimental project for a house. Client of himself, Ricci could design without constraints and find spatial solutions adaptable to the multifiform and fickle needs of the family. By reading the drawings, an asymmetrical and dynamic space emerges which flows according to all possible movements, which contracts and expands on staggered levels, where there is no hierarchy of routes. In the sketches entitled "vertical space" and "horizontal space" published

4 As the paragraph was translated by the author, it is worth quoting here also Koenig's original Italian words: "Il passo in avanti nella libertà strutturale, segnato da Michelucci nella chiesa dell'autostrada, non sarebbe forse avvenuto se l'allievo non avesse, in quel momento, influenzato a sua volta il maestro. Cioè la personalità di Ricci, così irruenta e sperimentalista, deve aver contribuito a far sorgere, dopo il periodo bolognese della ricerca rigorosa, il nuovo plasticismo spaziale che caratterizza l'ultimo Michelucci". Giovanni Klaus Koenig, *Architettura in Toscana 1931-1968* (Torino: ERI, 1968), 148. Marzia Marandola, "Libertà e logica: forme e tecniche del costruire", in Claudia Conforti, Roberto Dulio, and Marzia Marandola, *Giovanni Michelucci (1891-1990)* (Milano: Electa, 2006), 72.

5 Leonardo Ricci, "Ricerche per una città non alienata", *Linea-Struttura, Rassegna Trimestrale di Architettura Arti Visive Design*, no. 1-2 (1967): 7-11.

Fig. 1

Goti Factory, elevations and section, scale 1:100, CSAC, B038571S.



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in an article by Giovanni Klaus Koenig in 1958⁶, the spatial interpenetration dominates and each space is not concluded in itself, but is integrated into the entire composition, it cannot be isolated or replaced.

This project has marked Ricci's research with a different spatial quality, which respected the concept of existence as an experience. In this sense, according to Koenig, the building respects the Mumfordian equation "city-sign of integrated social relations", which can «be transcribed, by removing the summation sign, in "house-sign of family relations"⁷. The sketches in the vertical and horizontal dimensions are therefore conceptual schemes of existence. [Fig. 2]

At the end of the Fifties, Ricci is known on the international scene thanks to some projects of greater resonance such as the Ecumenical Waldensian village of Agàpe in Praly (1946-1951), and the village of Monterinaldi (1949-1963), which allow us to address a design theme very dear to Ricci and traceable in the project under analysis: the project for the community space, one of the key themes of the post-war period aimed at the physical and social reconstruction of Italy, widespread and declined in several contexts, involved in the process of rehabilitation of the Italian social disease caused by the devastating effects of the war and the eclectic figure of the architect⁸.

Fig. 2

Leonardo Ricci, "Theoretical House", sketch on the vertical and on the horizontal dimensions, images published in Giovanni Klaus Koenig, "Leonardo Ricci e la 'casa teorica' (alla ricerca di un nuovo spazio architettonico)", *Bollettino Tecnico - Rassegna Bimestrale Fondata nell'Anno 1936*, no.7-8 (1958): 3-12.

⁶ Giovanni Klaus Koenig, "Leonardo Ricci e la 'casa teorica' (alla ricerca di un nuovo spazio architettonico)", *Bollettino Tecnico - Rassegna Bimestrale Fondata nell'Anno 1936*, no.7-8, 24-27.

⁷ Koenig, "Leonardo Ricci e la 'casa teorica'".

⁸ Marco Biraghi, and Alberto Ferlenga, eds., *Comunità Italia* (Milano: Silvana Editoriale, 2015), 16-21.

The social dimension of architecture is a guiding principle for the Agàpe project and the subsequent Village “Monte degli Ulivi” in Riesi (1962-1968). In both, different authors recognized the kibbutz as the model Ricci referred to as a religious, social and political model for the community⁹, which, since the 1930s, embodied the values of Zionism, self-employment, equality, democracy, and mutual responsibility. The kibbutz model easily matched the experiences and reflections in the sociological and urban planning fields that led figures such as Danilo Dolci, Adriano Olivetti and Carlo Doglio¹⁰ with the aim of achieving, through “bottom-up” planning, that ideal of “nameless” architecture which in Agàpe and in the Fabbrica Goti took the form of a “fulfilled utopia” of common life and work¹¹. Ricci also succeeds, in both projects, in the attempt to annihilate the usual relationship between architect and client, eliminating any hierarchy of power or intervention on the project of the figures involved in the design and executive process. In his *Anonymous (XX century)*¹² he declares his intention to free himself from any hierarchy or conception of style and the will to make the architectural form correspond to an act of existence, announcing the existential, anonymous and relational phenomenological dimension of architecture:

[...] And there is no need of justifications, a priori. God has made all this, so it will be there tomorrow: Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven. Or else all this is born out of chaos, and tomorrow there will be nothing. But what need is there of all this? Why detach ourselves from experience? Basically it is all so simple. It is enough to exist. It is enough to find the relationships among the things that exist. It is enough to create new relationships among things. It is enough to create living things with living things¹³.

In many writings¹⁴ Ricci explained his conception of democratic architecture, shared with Bruno Zevi¹⁵, descending from the repulsion of the tragedy of the war and from the conviction that organic architecture should be understood as an invention of the temporalized space for human life. It is connected to Michelucci's concept of “anonymous architecture”: the architect's duty is to disappear in front of the architecture to transform the rationalized function into a natural functionality. The relational value of architecture becomes the object of analysis for Ricci, who clearly refers to the studies of Enzo Paci in an unpublished

9 Bruno Zevi, “Il kibbutz nei feudi della mafia”, L'Espresso, July 14, 1963; Bruno Zevi, foreword to Aryeh Sharon, *Kibbutz + Bauhaus: An Architect's Way in a New Land* (Berlin: Kramer Verlag, 1976); Antonietta Jolanda Lima, “Leonardo Ricci: Riesi, un villaggio come un kibbutz = Riesi like a kibbutz”, *L'Architettura: cronache e storia*, no. 41 (1995): 409.

10 Carlo Doglio, and Paola Venturi, eds., *La Pianificazione organica come piano della vita?* (Padova: Cedam, 1979), 9-18, 349-86.

11 Emanuele Piccardo, ed., *Leonardo Ricci. Fare Comunità* (Busalla: Plug_in, 2019).

12 Ricci, *Anonymous*, 1962.

13 Ricci, *Anonymous*, 1962, 19.

14 Among others, Ricci, “Ricerche per una città non alienata”, 39–51; Leonardo Ricci, “New Towns' a scala territoriale”, *Spazio e Società*, no. 3, (1976): pp. 73–81.

15 Bruno Zevi, “Tra i due Leonardini fiorentini”, in *Leonardo Savioli: il segno generatore di forma-spazio, catalogo della mostra (Firenze, Archivio di Stato, 23 September-25 November 1995)* (Città di Castello: Edimond, 1995), 42; 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), 66-80.

text preserved in his Casa Studio entitled “Prolusione al corso di Urbanistica”¹⁶. Ricci’s space is phenomenological, an “*umwelt*” in which the concepts of distance and proximity of things cannot be controlled with geometric measures, but belong to the realm of experienced sensations.

The Goti Factory is a relational space that is part of a series of unrealized projects by Ricci for the work space¹⁷, which belong to the second half of the 1950s and 1960s in which it is possible to trace some interesting compositional and volumetric solutions that are comparable and similar to principles of urban design, which allow Ricci to apply the “*form-act*” to the city¹⁸. These civil architecture projects and work spaces for commercial, residential and administrative purposes allowed Ricci to design public spaces intended as the connective tissue of parts of the city capable of hosting the flow of life of citizens, recalling the projects of bridges to be rebuilt in Florence immediately after the war.

When Ricci was designing the Goti Factory, the needs of the working class were central for the political and architectural debate of the time. Adriano Olivetti’s commitment to the channeling aspirations of the community and working life into high architectural achievements is the central example¹⁹: in the Olivetti factory in Pozzuoli (1955) Luigi Cosenza studied the production process with the idea of overcoming the assembly line through an organization of work based on the individual work phases to build a high-tech model factory. As in Capalle, the design of the paths and connections constitutes the project core and the building offers the possibility of expansion and equidistant paths between the workplaces and the obligatory passages for control and sorting.

Ricci approaches the factory typology with his characteristic experimentalism: he is not interested in replicating a model, but in “*building*” a new idea of space capable of hosting new ways of living and working. Ricci once again “*rebels*” against tradition: he observes previous architectures of factories but considers them unsuitable for today’s man because they were made by different men, with different needs and habits. Therefore, he invented a new space, and reworked the typology. He abandoned the model of the factories in the Florentine and

16 “Prolusione al corso di Urbanistica”, typescript kept in Casa Studio Ricci, 1-9. Enzo Paci’s interest in contemporary architecture had given rise to original reflections contained in numerous essays in which he defines his relational thinking, assuming the connotation of what was called his “*relational phenomenology*”. Among others: “*Il cuore della città*”, *Casabella-continuità*, no. 202 (1954): vii-x, “*Problematica dell’architettura contemporanea*”, *Casabella-continuità*, no. 209 (1956), “*La crisi della cultura e la fenomenologia dell’architettura contemporanea*”, *La Casa*, no. 6 (1960), Paci, *Relazioni e significati*, Vol. III (Milano: Lampugnani Nigri, 1966). See also the entire issue of the journal *Aut aut* dedicated to Enzo Paci: “*Enzo Paci: Architettura e filosofia*”, *Aut aut*, no. 333 (January-March 2007).

17 The Skyscraper in Genova Brignole (1955), the Commerce Chamber of Carrara (1956), The Flowers Market in Sanremo (1958-1959), and the Office Building in Milan (1960-1970).

18 Urban Design considered the city as the largest plural entity and practice and uses all those elements and forces interacting in the urban space that escape the direct control of the designers but which become part of the project itself. Brent D. Ryan, *The Largest Art. A Measured Manifesto for a Plural Urbanism* (Cambridge-MA: MIT Press, 2017).

19 About the work and intellectual activity of Adriano Olivetti see: Mario Labò, *Adriano Olivetti: l’aspetto estetico dell’opera sociale di Adriano Olivetti* (Milano: Görlich, 1955); Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti, “*Adriano Olivetti*”, *Zodiac*, no. 6 (1960): 3-13; Bruno Caizzi, *Camillo e Adriano Olivetti* (Torino: Unione Tipografica, 1962); Carlo Olmo, *Costruire la Città dell’uomo: Adriano Olivetti e l’urbanistica* (Milano: Edizioni di Comunità, 2001); Davide Caleddu, ed., *Adriano Olivetti Stato federale delle comunità. La riforma politica e sociale negli scritti inediti (1942-1945)* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2004); Scrivano, *Olivetti Builds* (Milan: Skira, 2011); Alberto Saibene, *L’Italia di Adriano Olivetti* (Milano: Edizioni di Comunità, 2017).

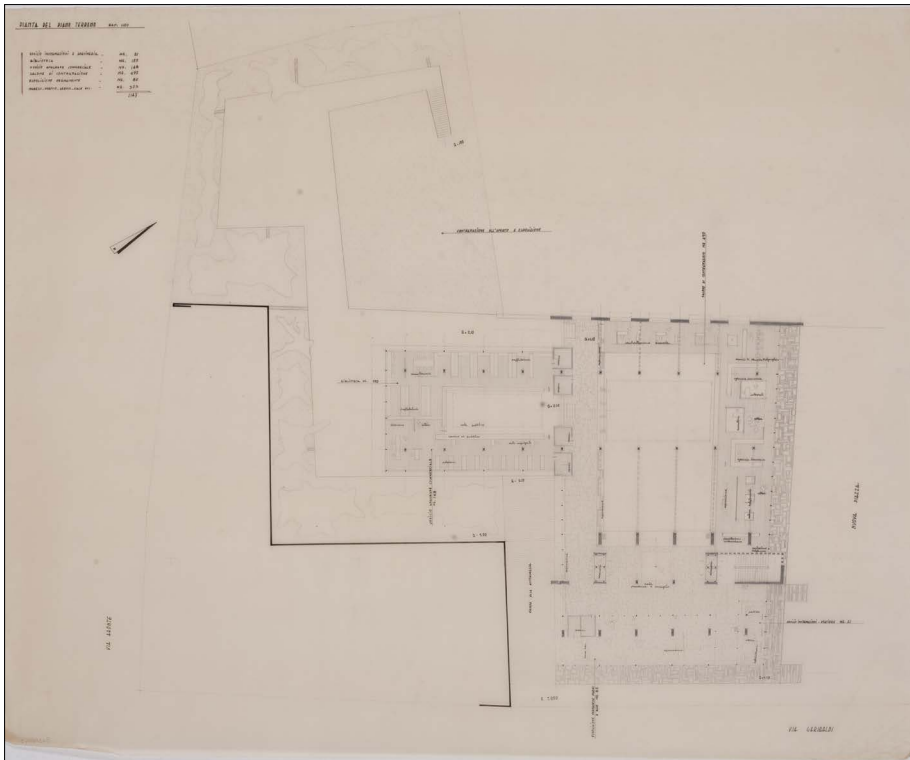
Prato plains (the classic vaulted brick shed), revolutionizing the space from its inside. It is an important step in the functional and typological research on the production space.

The integration of the human and machine spaces

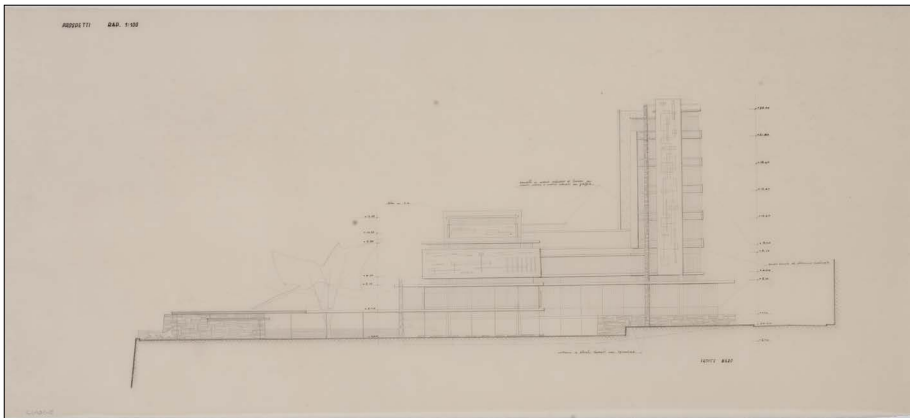
The strength of the Fabbrica Goti project lies in the fact that the house and the factory, central themes of Ricci's research, are addressed and integrated simultaneously. In the first version of the project, Ricci blends residential, manufacturing and commercial functions, finding a surprising solution to the tension between rigor and dynamism in the combination of pure geometric shapes to design a "factory-home" where the acts of working, producing, selling, and living could result integrated and part of a unique system. The objective is the improvement of the work environment: the human being is always at the center of Ricci's architecture and architecture is the space that develops around the man.

The Goti factory is made up of recognizable parts, juxtaposed in finite and elementary forms that are combined according to the internal paths. The volumes, both in plan and in elevation, are legible and can be compared with other Riccian architectures for the work space. By juxtaposing volumetrically different bodies, Ricci designed dynamic parts of the urban fabric, as clearly emerged in other competition projects we are going to analyze such as the Genova Brignole Skyscraper (1955), the Carrara Chamber of Commerce (1956) and the Flowers Center in Sanremo (1958-1959).

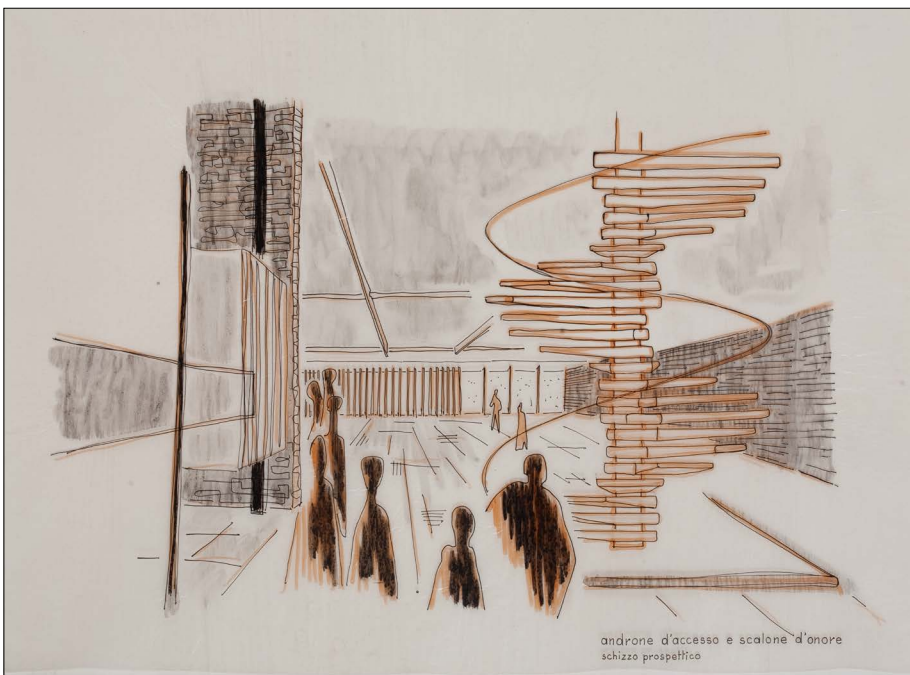
In the 1950s, Ricci worked in Carrara and in Liguria. In 1956 he took part in the national competition for the headquarters of the Chamber of Commerce of the municipality of Carrara, whose project consisted of a horizontal body of a raised square-plate and two vertical turriform bodies that housed the stairs. These generated a volumetric composition typical of Ricci's macrostructural projects, in which the different buildings were balanced by vigorous horizontal bodies or by those characteristic vertical elements present in numerous other projects such as the project for the Teatro dei Leggieri in San Gimignano (1962-65), the competition project for the Fortezza da Basso (1967), the project for Dog Island (1968-70), or precisely in the massive walls of the Goti factory, which anchor the building to the ground and balance the composition of volumes. In the Carrara Commerce Chamber, the walls merged their monumental and solid character with a band of narrow windows, triggering a vibrant game with the large horizontal windows of the adjacent volumes and creating an alternation of solids and voids. Ricci honored the nature of the place, using Carrara marble panels as fixed elements of a flexible wall for an office and sculpting an imposing spiral staircase with marble steps in the entrance hall that recalled the spatial sharpness of Michelucci's projects. **[Fig. 3-4-5]** The plan was asymmetrical and provided for a space for collective exchange in the light of a common



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Fig. 3

Project for the Commerce Chamber of Carrara, plan of the ground floor, scale 1:100, CSAC, B038604S.

Fig. 4

Project for the Commerce Chamber of Carrara, elevation, scale 1:100; CSAC, B038605S.

Fig. 5

Project for the Commerce Chamber of Carrara, sketch of the entrance hall; CSAC, B038607S.

idea of working life²⁰. The idea of improving the human work environment is a challenge that Ricci welcomed and won. The factory overlooked the Lucca provincial road towards Prato, and therefore enjoyed a wide visibility in the urban district in which it is located. Ricci saw the factory building as a new piece of the 'new city', just as its construction constituted a transformative event that involved its surroundings and the life that took place in it.

As Maria Clara Ghia suggests, in Capalle Ricci reinterprets the model of the new industrial building from the turn of the century, Peter Behrens' AEG turbine factory from 1909, because it frees up the side elevations, characterized by the scansion of the pillars, and recalls the Steinberg hat factory in Luckenwalde by Erich Mendelsohn (1921) for the succession of gables in the lower part of the façade²¹.

In the project, Ricci heralds the large-scale ambitions of the imposing exposed reinforced concrete structures of the brutalist neighborhood of Sorgane, begun in 1957. The strength of the structures left exposed is especially evident in the interiors²², to which Ricci mostly works to reconnect the lives of those who live there.

In Casa Studio Ricci only one magazine article is preserved about the factory (see images n. 8-9-10 of the relevant archival record), which is described by Wanda Lattes as an industrial building "very different from the one hundred and fifty spinning and weaving mills already scattered throughout the territory of the Municipality of Prato"²³.

The importance of Leonardo Ricci's project is reflected in the beauty of the factory, in its soft tones in the gray of the concrete and in the black of the frames of the large luminous windows, placed in a high spatial quality, in which the emerging production capacity of the Prato textile industry was enriched and constituted an important factor in the realization of the work.

The building has a longitudinal layout, parallel to the two road axes within which it is positioned and is divided into two main contiguous parts which correspond to a physical and conceptual subdivision of the factory: on the avenue the single production hall, on the back the service spaces. This functional division is then reflected in the exterior, clearly legible also in the treatment of the facades. One huge space contains the whole factory: spinning and carding on the ground floor, first floor hairdressing salon.

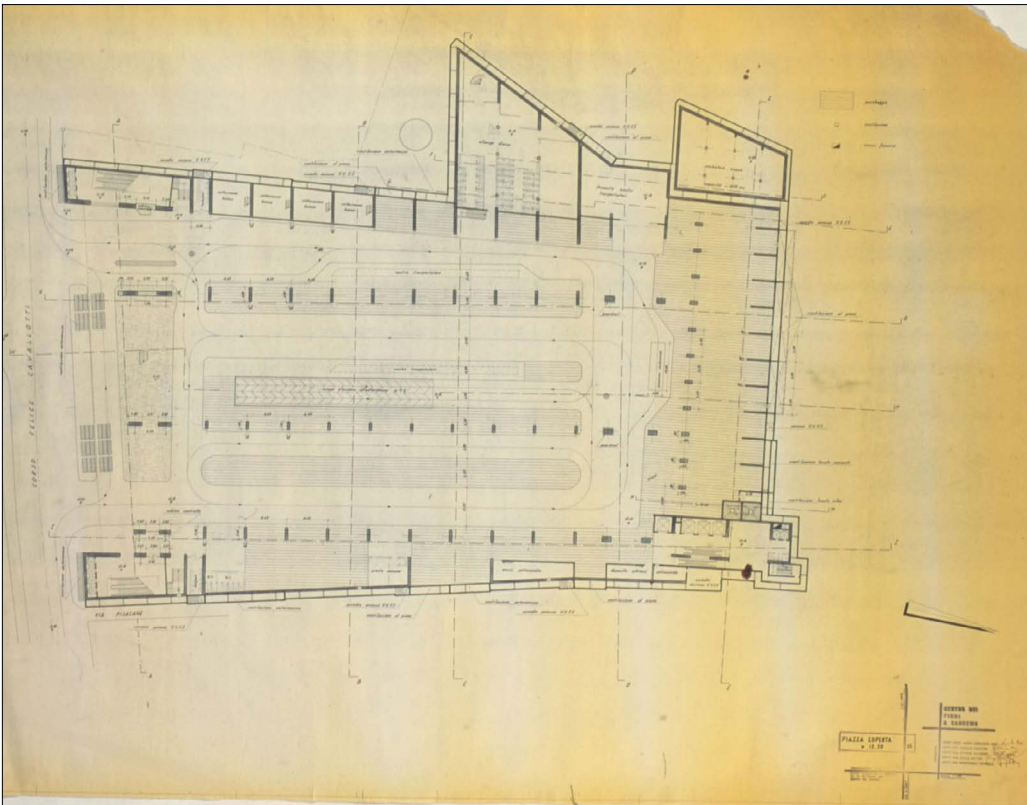
Around it, the place of production, there is a whole series of environments organized in bodies of variable depth and external treatment attached to a comb central hall on two levels, connected to each other by differences in height: there are two avant-corps of lateral bodies of the warehouses for the arrival and

20 Vasič Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci architetto "esistenzialista"*, 31; Maria Clara Ghia, *La nostra città è tutta la Terra. Leonardo Ricci architetto (1918-1994)* (Wuppertal: Steinhauser Verlag, 2021), 200.

21 Ghia, *La nostra città è tutta la Terra*, 215.

22 Vasič Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci architetto "esistenzialista"*, 38.

23 Vasič Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci architetto "esistenzialista"*, 38.



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departure of the trucks, closed on the long sides and illuminated by the free road front; to the north there is an accommodation with kitchen, bathroom and bedrooms and to the south there are the changing rooms, the toilets and the electric tower, like a detached body, a massive stone fortification.

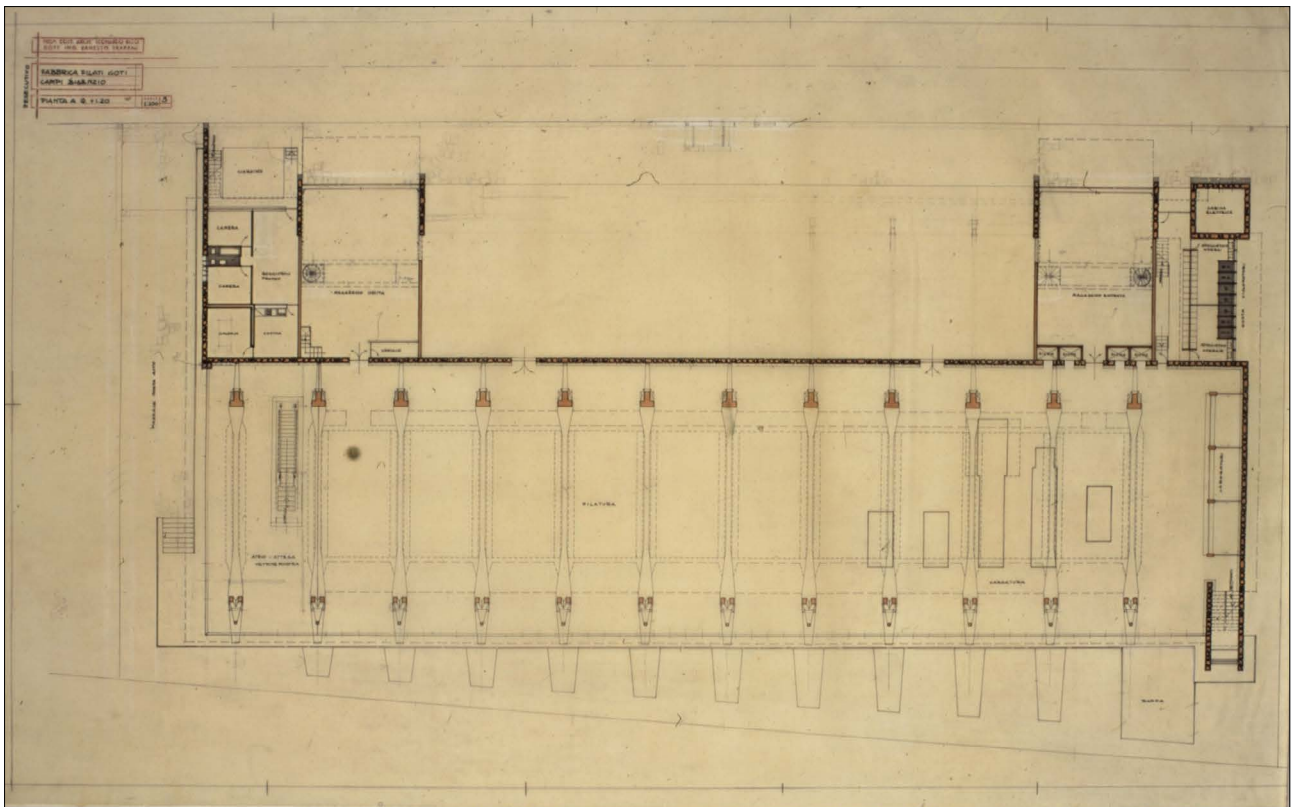
Two different design variants of the project exist but some invariants are recognizable: the living room, rear warehouses, the entrance. The greatest variations occur on the south side, with a notable downsizing in the design of the services: the toilets set back from the edge of the facade and the electric tower stands as an element in its own right and the turreted body of the stairs appears. The central part between the two buildings of the warehouses is also the subject of numerous elaborations ranging from the raised terrace, to the single-storey block, up to the current construction by Moscardi.

The entrance is from the north side elevation, while the spinning premises were attached to the south of the tower at the end of the 1960s.

The factory program integrates different functions such as management rooms, rest rooms for workers, storage and loading points, the production hall and the staff dressing room. The building occupies 2600 square meters and a volume of 28,600 cubic meters. It includes a single main hall, a very large room that houses all the factory activities, equipped with a bridge placed halfway up the total height to accommodate machinery and men. The primary space of the factory is the main hall, which defines it entirely, both in its dimensional and spatial and linguistic characteristics, it consists in one single basilica space divided into twelve rhythmic bays created thanks to the use of transversal organic frames in reinforced concrete. The theme of the hall as important common public space

Fig. 6

Leonardo Ricci, Enzo Bienaimé, Gianfranco Petrelli, Project for the Flowers Center in Sanremo, plan at the first floor, CSAC, B020677S.



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is fundamental also in the Flowers Center of Sanremo: Ricci designed it in the same year of the Goti Factory with Enzo Bienaimé, Gianfranco Petrelli and others. It will not be built due to administrative problems after being approved. For the Center a parking lot, a hall, a tower and shipping boxes were planned. The heart of the project is the sorting square with an imposing roof for a span of fifty metres, supported by a structure made up of corrugated steel frames with pyramidal support points in a first version and a trestle in the second. The joints between the tower, the regular shapes of the boxes and the parking lot, and the large square, are studied in the two versions to seek the best balance between orthogonal elements and fan-shaped openings, between material masonry elements and light windows, between vertical and horizontal. [Fig. 6]

In the Goti Factory the structure generates a fluid space, without barriers or hierarchies, that also expands in height, on staggered floors, without physical or visual barriers among spaces. Everything flows, the space is capable of accommodating different ways of working and living, and is characterized by an expressionist and brutalist load-bearing structure that allows natural light to enter and permeate the single-room space. It is a system, characterized by a large single hall with a roof with broken lines and tricuspid support pillars in reinforced concrete, and is aimed at favoring the continuity of the spaces and the movement of the factory workers in the different work activities at all levels.

The architect's intent is to oppose the man-machine combination, widespread in industrialized society, trying to overcome the model of the shed covered by a brick vault. Using local stone, reinforced concrete and glass, Ricci built a large central atrium intended for the industrial work to which a stairwell with a glass

Fig. 7
Goti Factory, plan at 1,2 m,
scale 1:100, CSAC, B020677S.

tower with brise soleil and two lateral bodies inserted in the main rectangular room with warehouses and service rooms was added. [Fig. 7]

I wanted to transform the classic pillar in order to make it a free thing, [...] it was the first time I had a factory problem and I wanted to interpret the man-machine relationship, which I have seen so far expressed in a symbolic way. I looked for the terms of the natural man-machine relationship, a relationship that was as natural as that of an individual in front of his piece of furniture, his home, and I tried to re-establish a balance. Man is no longer lost in front of the machine, but contained like it in a single living space²⁴.

Two arms block the beam of the first floor, and then spread out into smaller sections to support the roof. A third arm supports the shelf that supports the window on the second floor so that the light penetrates the horizontal partitions and invests the large single hall. What is more, the gallery is almost suspended and recalls the structure of a bridge: it is contained within the single hall, to support men and machinery. It does not touch the external longitudinal walls, allowing the light to penetrate even from the highest windows. The strip adjacent to the facade is therefore a full-height space, an uninterrupted unicum from the ground to the roof.

Here a parallelism with Michelucci's Cassa di Risparmio is also traceable: there the band adjacent to the façade is full, a balcony overlooking the hall, here there is a reversal, it is a void that links the two floors. This mezzanine floor allows an increase in the surface, doubling the exploitation of the volume, so as to amortize the construction cost of the reinforced concrete structures which cost more than normal beams or standard sheds. Since the cost of the "Y" pillars, inspired by the "tree" reinforced concrete pillars, was higher than that of normal pillars, the architect decided to use them for a room twice as high as a normal shed and built the bridge for increase the available work surface (11 meters wide and 67 meters long). These pillars make it possible to resolve distribution, structural and lighting issues in the large hall: the sequence of twelve bays is strengthened by the triangular tympanums, on which the inclined window rests (see image n. 3 of the archival record).

Leonardo Ricci's project "is a single space that changes function through various alternatives²⁵" which solves spatial problems by facilitating both the production process and social dynamics.

The industrial process is simplified by a correct combination of vertical and horizontal paths, designed by superimposing plans and sections starting from the movements of men and machines, with the aim of minimizing the time spent by workers during the production cycle²⁶. As Koenig observed, the Goti factory is a "[...] rare, if not unique, example of a Prato factory that departs from

24 Quotation published in Wanda Lattes, "Perchè è nata la fabbrica "bella", *Il Giornale del Mattino*, July 31, 1960.

25 Lattes, "Perchè è nata la fabbrica "bella".

26 Vasič Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci architetto "esistenzialista"*, 42-43.

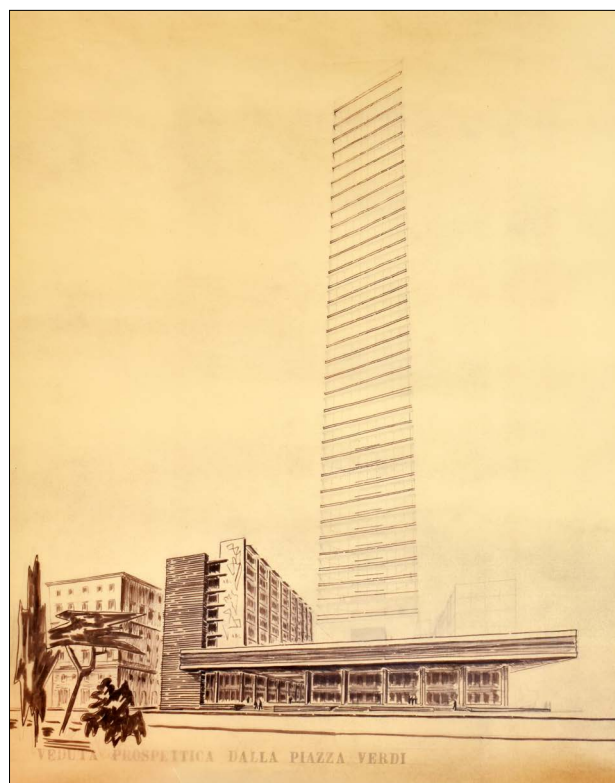


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the typology of the brick vaulted shed. The tricuspid reinforced concrete pillars (in the production hall), the broken roofs and the continuity of the internal space between the various levels are all inventions by Ricci for a new form of textile establishments and, for once, they are also perfectly functional”²⁷.

The project was completed without the residential tower foreseen by Ricci’s project, a distinctive element that appears in many projects, among which the most exemplary is the Brignole Skyscraper, for commercial, hotel, residential and administrative use. The tower would perhaps have gone to compose the counterpoint of the vertical tower on the horizontal plate, a typical composition of Ricci projects with a mega-structural theme as well (see the panel kept in CSAC: images n. 4-5 of the archival record). [Fig. 8-9]

Also in the project for an office building in Milan, whose designs were approximately developed in the decade 1960-1970, the theme is the aggregation between an anchor plate on which a tower-shaped body

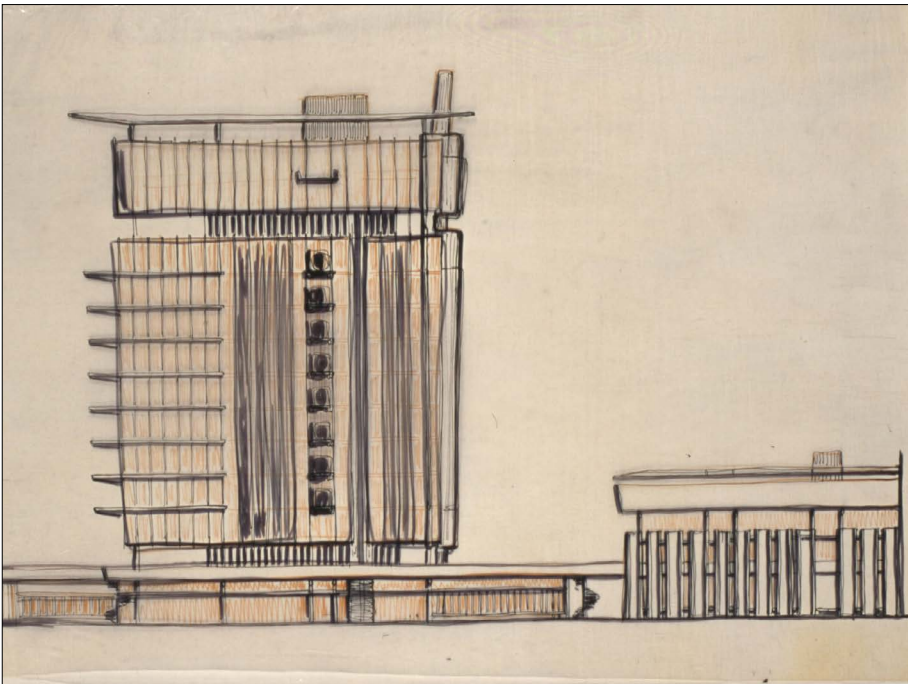


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Fig. 8-9

Leonardo Ricci, Enzo Bienaimé, Gianfranco Petrelli, Project for the Skyscraper in Genova Brignole, perspective views, CSR.

27 Koenig, *Architettura in Toscana 1931-1968*, 148.



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is grafted, crowned this time by a projecting slab that recalls themes of Le Corbusier derivation, also dear to Leonardo Savioli. At CSAC many freehand sketches, made with Indian ink on tissue paper are kept: in them the light and nervous stroke suggests the attention to the investigation of the paths that serve to put the workers in contact, the investigation of the relationships between solids and voids, between horizontal elements and vertical bodies that contain the stairs, between the rhythmic scansion of the small windows and glazed cuts. Also interesting is the study of the attack on the ground, imagined through large partitions and pillars. [Fig. 10]

In the Goti Factory the principle of compositional order is entrusted to the structure, which is often the only element in Ricci's architecture that survived the disjointed complexity of his works. Here, on the contrary, it is the only element that emerges from an almost abstract backdrop. The materials and shapes are chosen for their corporeality, for their ability to create atmospheres and signals. The rough surface of the reinforced concrete contrasts with the abstract white plaster scores and the dematerialized glass surfaces, the gray concrete and the black fixtures are the background to the colorful material of the different wool balls. The materials are those of Ricci's poetics: local stone, glass, reinforced concrete frames as sculptural elements, slabs and finally plaster scores, composed with careful calibration.

The main elevation of the building denounces the internal space of the single hall facing the street and is an expression of the organization of the internal space: it is organized in continuous overlapping horizontal bands, which describe the levels of the building: a stone base corresponds to the basement and solves the building's connection to the ground, detaching the building from the ground as if it were on an "ancient" base, while the two windowed bands, entirely glazed, illuminate the continuous internal space. The upper band is a

Fig. 10

Leonardo Ricci, Project for the Office Building in Milan, sketch of the elevation, B038584S, CSAC.

sloping wall that leans against the ramifications of the pillar. Like many other works by Ricci, the building arises from a precise dialectic: on the one hand, rising tectonic elements from the ground, like the remains of ancient buildings, like a primary structure; on the other, the construction made of reinforced concrete floors, pillars and glass boxes which is grafted onto the first. The disconnection in height is entrusted precisely to the tree-like pillars and to the glass that frees the mass.

To re-propose the subdivision of the internal floors, a projecting reinforced concrete slab performs an evident stringcourse, a sort of strongly projecting balcony that suspends the upper inclined wall, set back from the ground floor level. The strong horizontal development finds its counterpoint in the stony tower that ends the glazed bands to the south and contains the stairs that connect the two levels, glazed on the front and shaded by a brise soleil in horizontal strips: a recurring lexical element in Ricci, it is also found in his house, in the Fattiroli House, in the project for Agàpe.

The north elevation allows to read the transversal system of frames that structure the space and keep the building standing. A glazed volume resting on the base concludes with the compact housing block, a stone wall punctured by a few irregular openings allows for a glimpse of the rear composition, made up of independent parts.

The southern elevation is the one that undergoes the most changes: there Ricci works on the juxtaposition of material portions in stone - massive in their thickness revealed by the setbacks and openings - and abstract planes in white plaster. It is delimited on both sides by the tower of the stairs and that of the electrical substation, the wall is massive and with it the architect marks the link with the regional tradition and with the place, however interpreted with plastic dynamism.

The front on the back has undergone several revisions and the archival documents do not help establish whether what we see today belongs to a modification by Ricci in the years immediately following the construction or if it is the result of posthumous rearrangements. The central part is in fact "filled" by a tall body that contains the warehouses interrupted by two projecting glazed stairwells that surround a front with three horizontal plastered and glazed bands with projecting balconies. This configuration prevents the autonomous reading of the parts of the building.

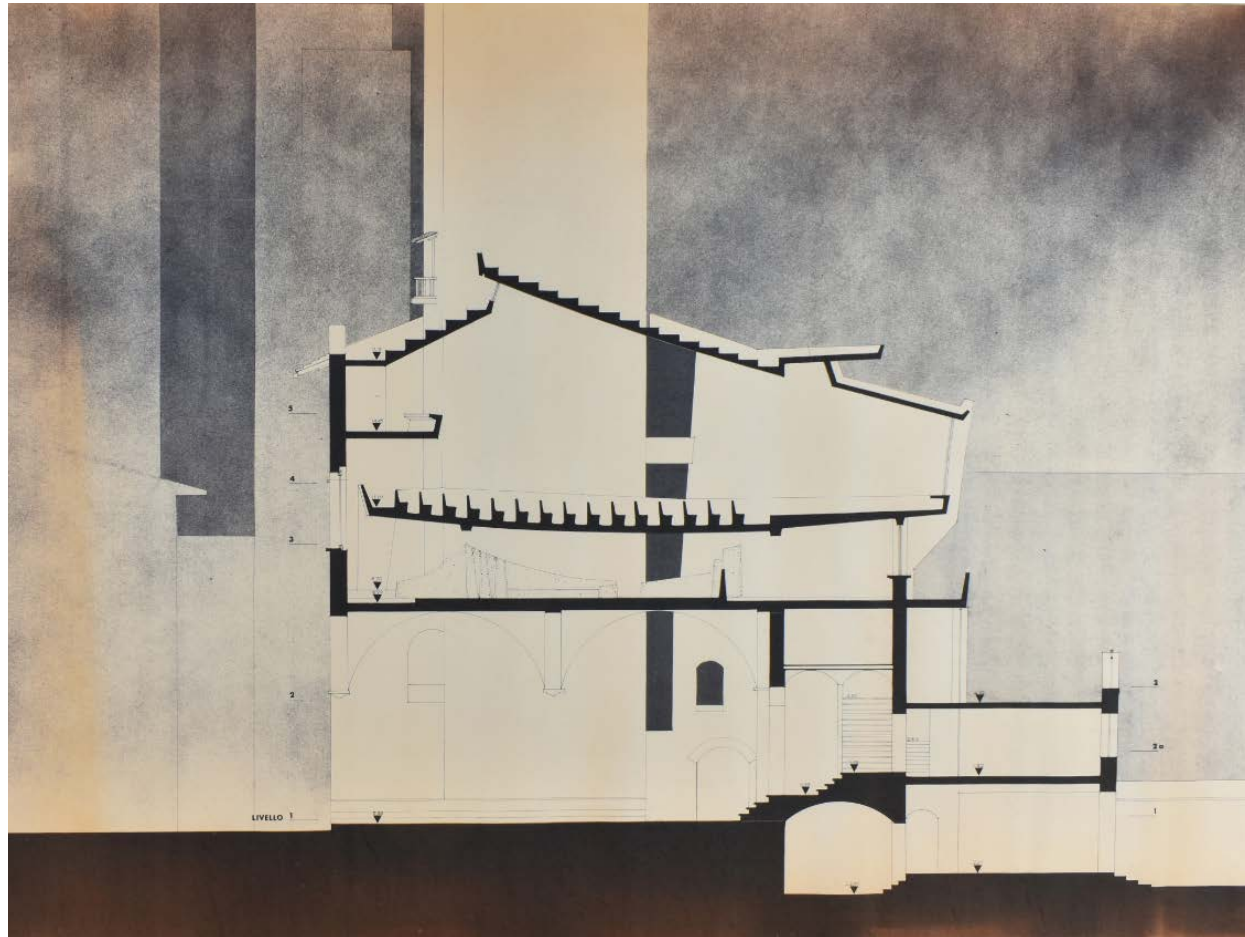
To conclude, in the Goti Factory Ricci achieved a strong material effect and compositional experimentation by exploiting contrasts of materials and volumes. To do this, a new structural system allowed him both to anchor the building to the ground and lighten it in height at the same time. However, while the compositional figures and elementary forms often fail in Ricci's work, here there is order and compositional clarity. Ricci's compositions are often more open, broken, incomplete, the result of interrupted, stratified lines, terrains that flex, forms that fit together, eluding typological references, while in the Goti Factory

he used rigor and order. Indeed, the overall system, despite providing for a considerable complexity of interpenetration of spaces, is characterized by a great simplicity in the way in which their integration takes place: the compositional rule of the modernist disarticulation of the organisms prevails, so the disassembled unity of the architectural organism is reassembled with architectural objects with regular figures, ordered and legible.

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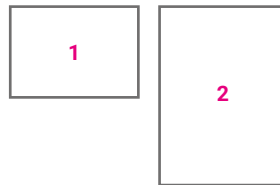
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Project for Dei Leggieri Theatre

ARCHIVAL DATA

DATE	1962-1965
ADDRESS	San Gimignano, Piazza del Duomo
COLLABORATORS	Andrea Ricci, Renzo Barbieri, Rindo Frilli, Angiolo Logi
CUSTOMER	San Gimignano Municipality
SOURCES	CSAC, CSR

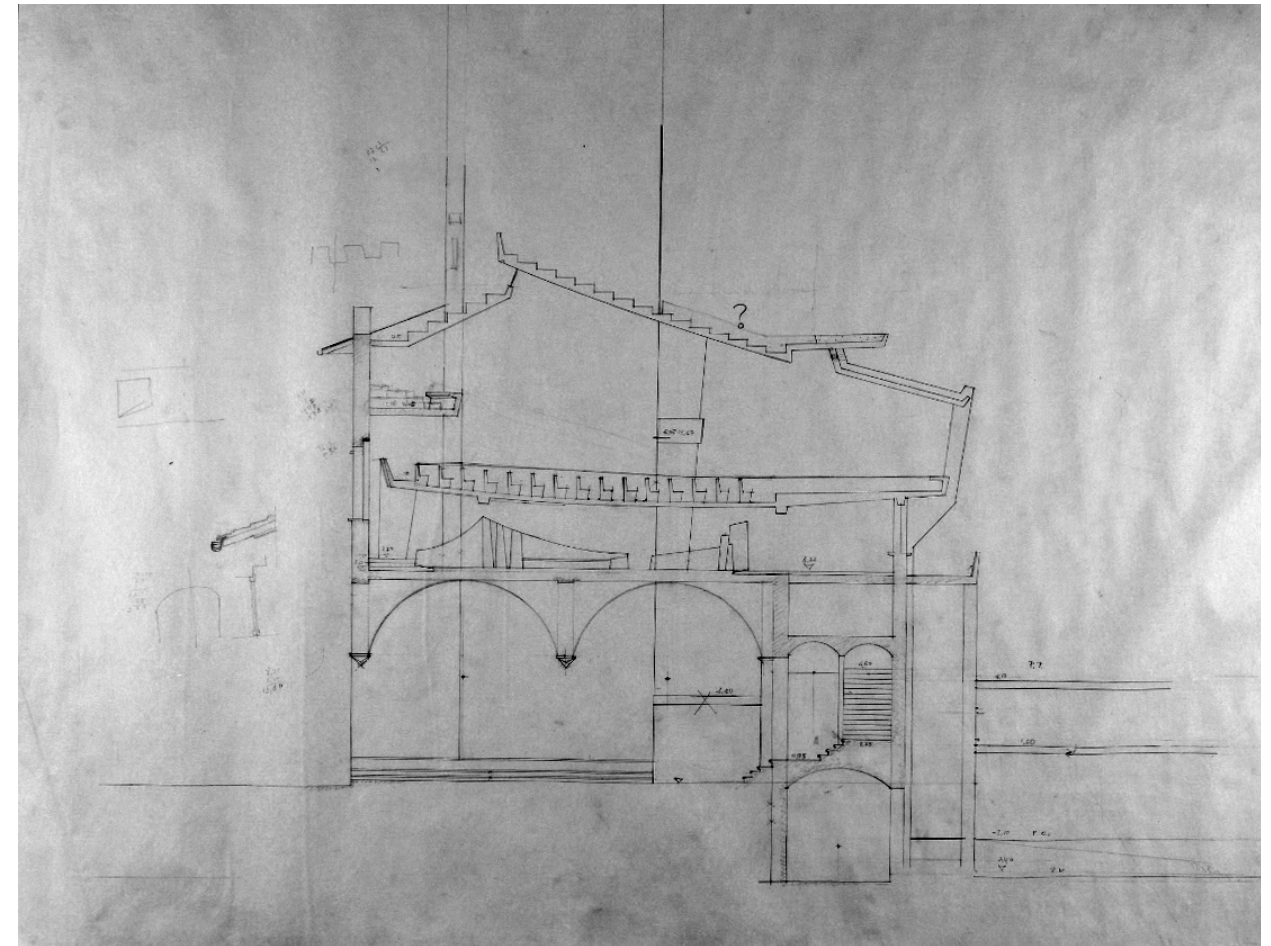
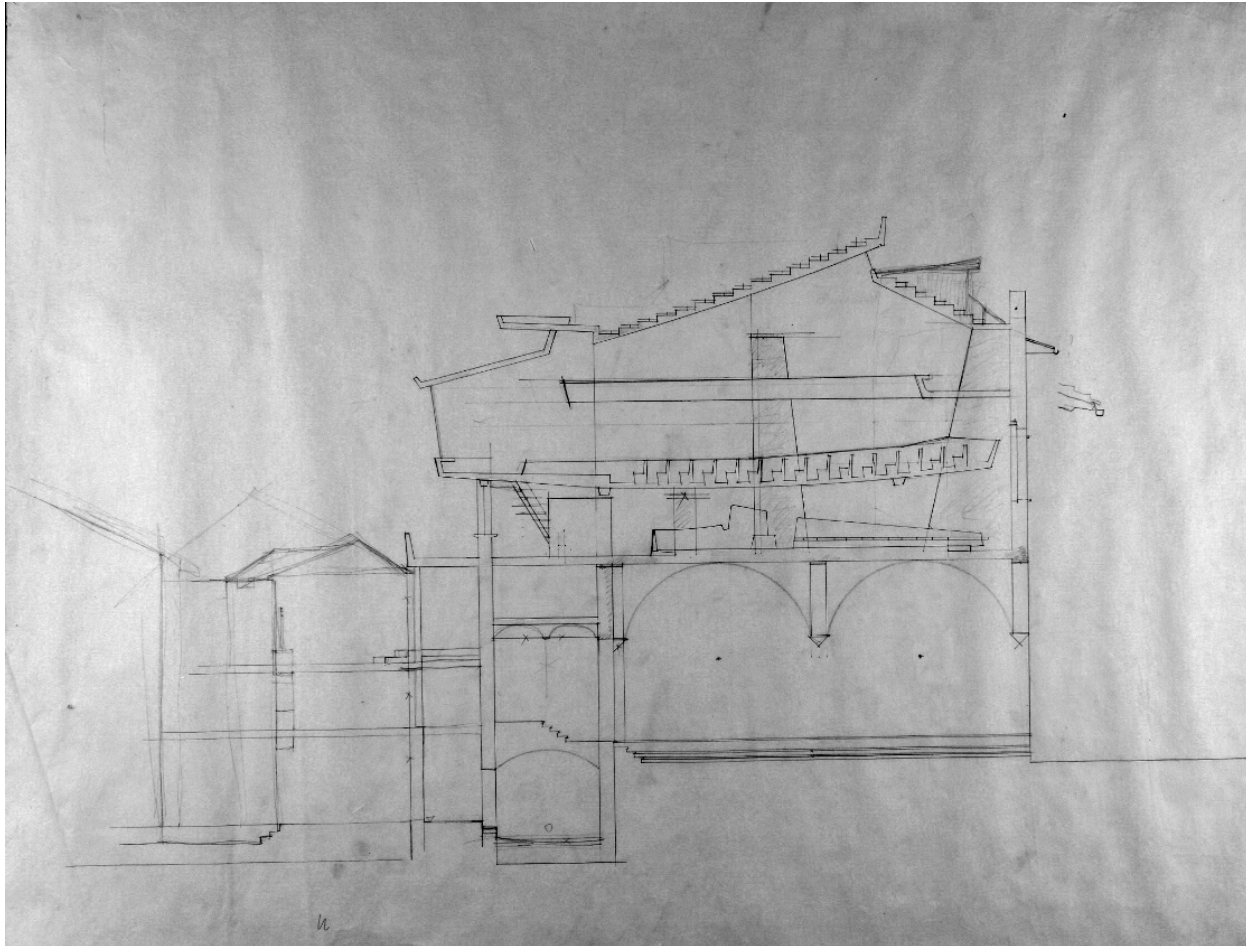


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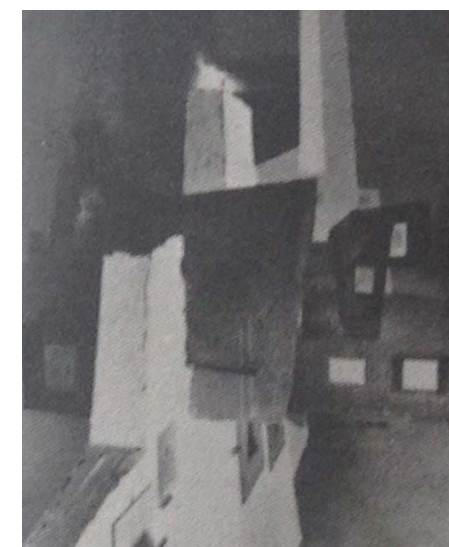
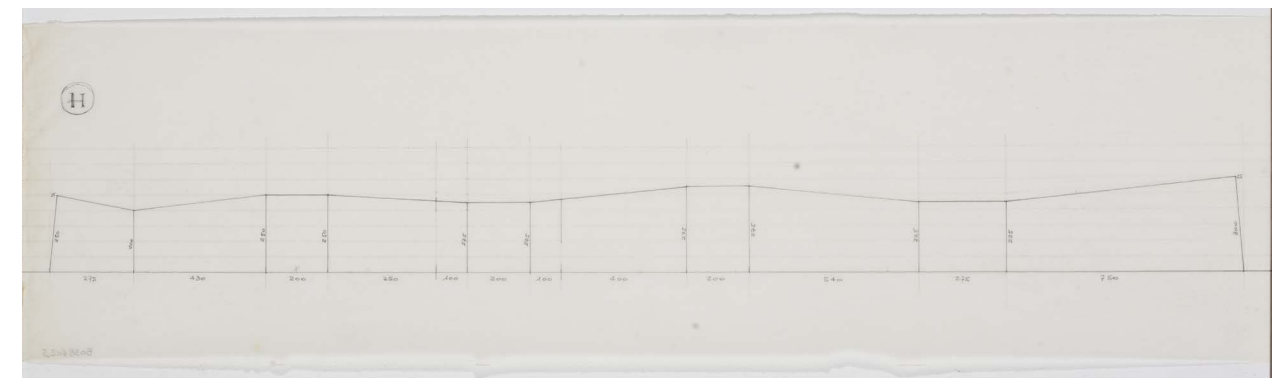
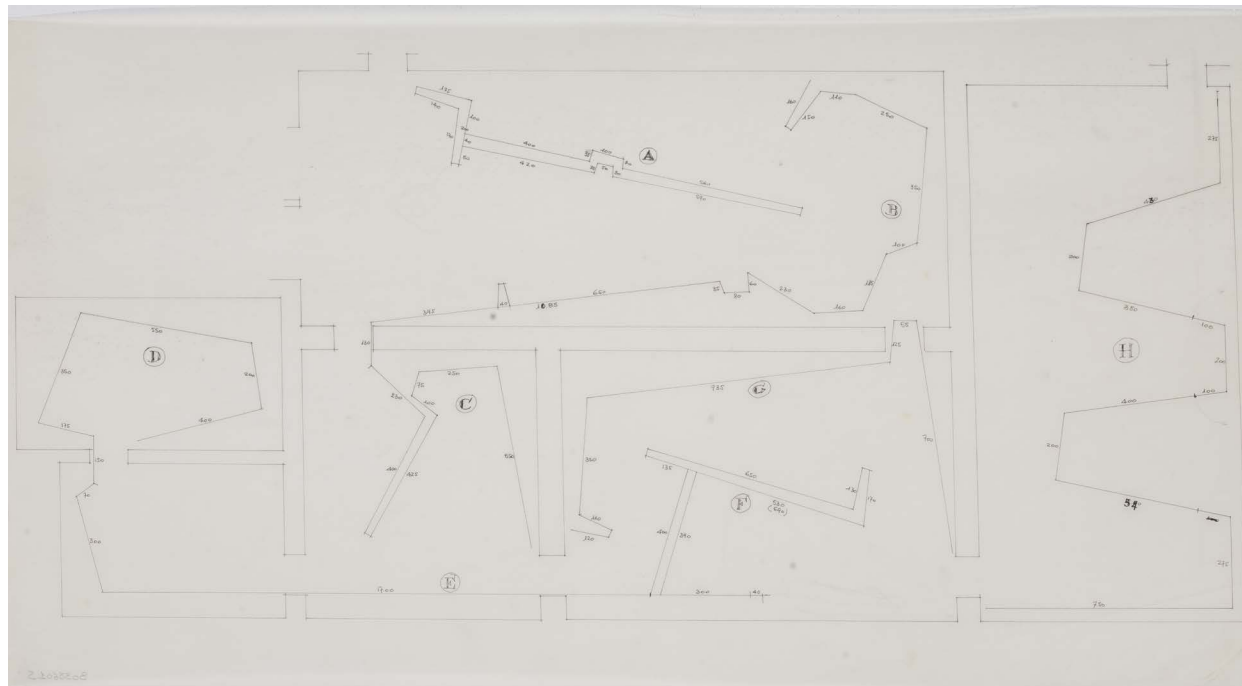
IMG.1: Project for Dei Leggieri Theatre, section, heliographic copy, CSR; IMG.2: section, heliographic copy and halftone screens, CSAC.





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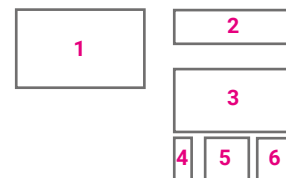
IMG.3: sketch of the section, pencil on paper, CSR; IMG.4: sketch of the section, pencil on paper, CSR; IMG.5: general plan, heliographic copy, CSR.



Staging of “Espressionismo: pittura scultura architettura”

ARCHIVAL DATA

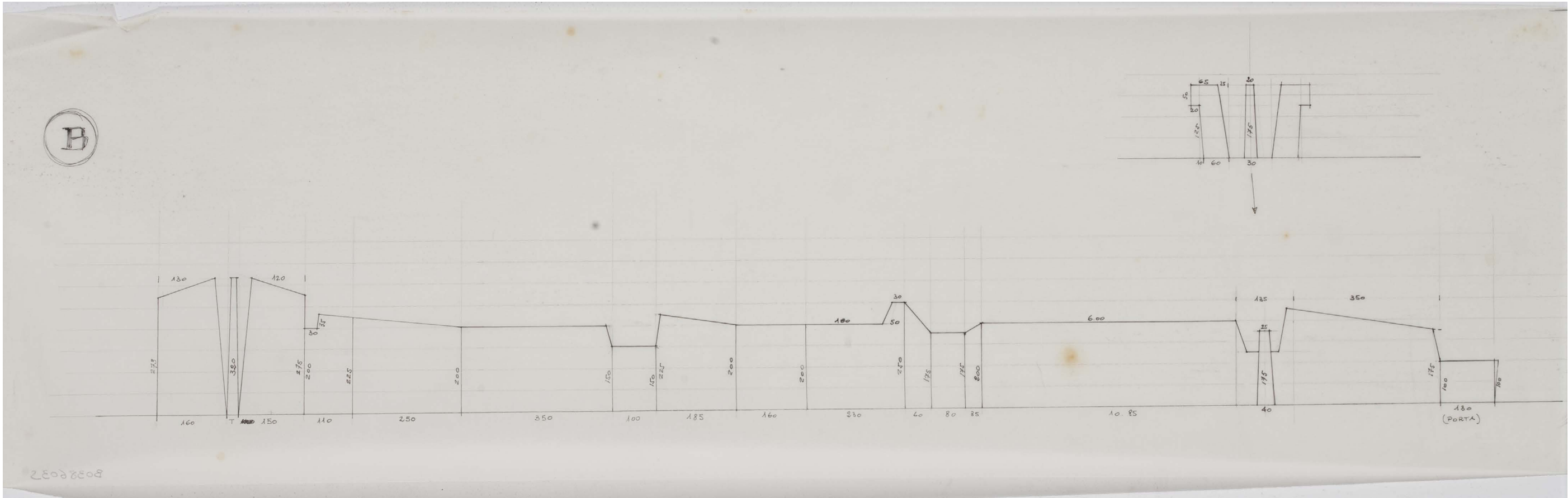
DATE	1964 (design and realization)
ADDRESS	Palazzo Strozzi, Piazza degli Strozzi, FI
COLLABORATORS	Fabrizio Milanese
CUSTOMER	CEP
SOURCES	CSAC



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IMG.1: Set up of the Exhibition “Espressionismo, pittura scultura architettura”, general plan, ink on transparency, CSAC; IMG.2: elevation of a sequence of panels, ink on transparency, CSAC; IMG.3-4-5-6: pictures of the set up, published in Bruno Zevi, “Mostra dell’Espressionismo/temporalità antilessicale e sdegno materico”, in *Cronache di Architettura vol. V* (Bari: Laterza, 1971), 319, 321.



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IMG.7: elevation of a sequence of panels, ink on transparency, CSAC.

Leonardo Ricci

“A Sculpture that Allows a Journey through Expressionism”: a Reply to Nello Ponente

The text was published in Italian in Marcaté. Newsletter of Contemporary Culture, vol. 7, no. 8-9-10, 1964. The transdisciplinary and short-lived review (1963-1970) left the floor to the animated exchange between the art historian Nello Ponente and Leonardo Ricci regarding his setting designed for the exhibition “L'espressionismo. Pittura scultura architettura” (“Expressionism. Painting sculpture architecture”) hosted in Palazzo Strozzi, Florence (May-June 1964). The Editorial Team translated the text into English.

Dear Director,

Thank you for inviting me to reply in your magazine to the letter of my friend Ponente, whom I have known for a long time and whom I esteem for his seriousness and preparation, regarding the setting up of the Expressionism exhibition that I planned and curated. Since each critic has his own freedom of judgement, instead of countering Ponente's opinion (an opinion because other critics in Italy and abroad have spoken of it in an extremely flattering way for me), I prefer to send you the paper that should appear in the catalogue of the exhibition itself, in which my thoughts on the principles behind the exhibition design are expressed.

However, I must challenge some of Ponente's statements as they do not correspond to reality or, in my opinion, are critically unacceptable.

First, I believe that few exhibitions have been as well-curated as mine from the



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point of view of space distribution, 'motifs' and 'perceptive accentuations'. In fact, the entire exhibition was designed after having a precise notion of the paintings on display and their measurements. Each work was not only designed in advance for a specific space but even study models were made for the exact placement of each work. So, the accusation of 'spatial gratuitousness' does not seem fair at all. Ponente may not like it as much as others did.

As for the presentation of the Klee and Kandinsky, my astonishment is heightened because these are precisely the rooms I have curated and love the most. I would have liked to have seen Ponente with twelve tiny Klee drawings and five very small paintings in his hands, compared to the large canvases of the other painters. So much for the dimensional question. On the one hand an introverted, subtly poetic, intimist world; on the other an extroverted, shouting, explosive world.

I remember that when the paintings were taken out of the crates and those tiny Klee works came casually into contact with those of the other artists, poor Klee was really killed. Something like delicate Mozart music played in the Los Angeles 'bowl'. That is why I had to create a different kind of 'reading' for the viewer by cashing in on the works.

When Ponente speaks of a 'cubic perspective dimension of the Renaissance type, as if it were not known to everyone that the perspective Klee put in place is infinitely more complex and varied, and open' my astonishment turns to genuine surprise. First of all, such a mistake, I would not have made if, as Ponente says, I am a 'man of broad culture and great intelligence'; secondly, I challenge anyone to say that that space was of the Renaissance perspective type.

On the desecration then of Kandinsky's watercolours, I want to make a statement even if it is naturally subjective.

I am pleased to have exhibited watercolours like this because they are generally exhibited like oil paintings, whereas watercolours, for good reading, need a more familiar presentation. The watercolour is something that smacks of 'folder', of 'study' and does not want magniloquent presentations. They were not arranged at random but placed horizontally or slanted near the benches to allow for careful, 'seated' reading, as one does when a painter shows a watercolour in his studio. One may not like this arrangement, but it is certainly not unwarranted. If anything, there is one thing in which I would, I think, agree with Ponente and which is evident from his letter. Unfortunately, in Italy, there are no exhibition halls that are architecturally and logically suited to allow architects an easy layout without being forced to alter the spaces of the generally unnecessarily pompous and rhetorical 'halls', which are, in any case, inadequate for the purpose. In other words, there is a lack of flexible organisms that allow the spectator to live in contact with the work, to consult it at length, calmly, to frame it historically through parallel exhibitions of photographs and historical documents.

In other words, we need to create new organisms in Italy, palaces that we could call 'cultural palaces', where it is pleasant to stay, where exhibition halls are flanked by libraries, film libraries, etc. so that the visitor sees the work of art as the work of man and not of demigods. In other words, the museum 'temple of

art must be demythologised and demystified.

The first¹ problem was to make two different worlds coexist from the measure of Renaissance man, the centre of the universe, to expressionist man, who attempts to leave the world of reality, at least as it is configured, to launch himself into a metaphysical adventure, sometimes obsessive, often evasive.

To ensure that the serene vaults of Palazzo Strozzi could contain the screams, in any case, the pain and anguish of these artists. And this without altering or touching the environment with absurd veils that would have completely destroyed the physiognomy of the palazzo itself. Thus, making two different types of space coexist, one courtly, compassed, and measured, the other every day, gestural, and dynamic.

The second problem of a mechanical nature was that of quadrupling the square metres required for such an impressive number of works.

The third problem with expressionism was that of comparing and at the same time isolating artists who, although starting from the same historical and cultural platform, expressed themselves in such different ways, not only that, but who often presented themselves with such different angles and problems from period to period. The last problem is that of not turning into 'museum paintings' a painting that was not born for the museum but which was born as a protest to bear witness to the drama of a certain time and which I personally have always been more willing to see in the collections of private individuals in direct contact, displayed more familiarly, rather than in actual museums, where expressionist paintings often seem to be stuffed.

I thus created, without touching the walls or vaults of the palace at all, thus leaving the Renaissance 'spectator' space indifferent to the drama of the Expressionists, 'empty' and absent sky, a kind of continuous sculpture within the rooms of the palace, with a space of its own and autonomous, that could truly contain the Expressionist world.

A sculpture that allows a journey through expressionism where individual artists can tell their personal 'story' and their collective story.

A story, therefore that starts in the first room of the 'precursors' and unfolds through the various personalities to the last expressionist experiences where the pain already subsides, and the protest becomes almost academic. During this itinerary, the spaces are set to the quality of the artists' works and where the pain is condensed into more contained accents and depicted in a new world as in Klee and Kandinsky, the space becomes more precise, capable of containing these worlds that are so different from each other and so autonomous.

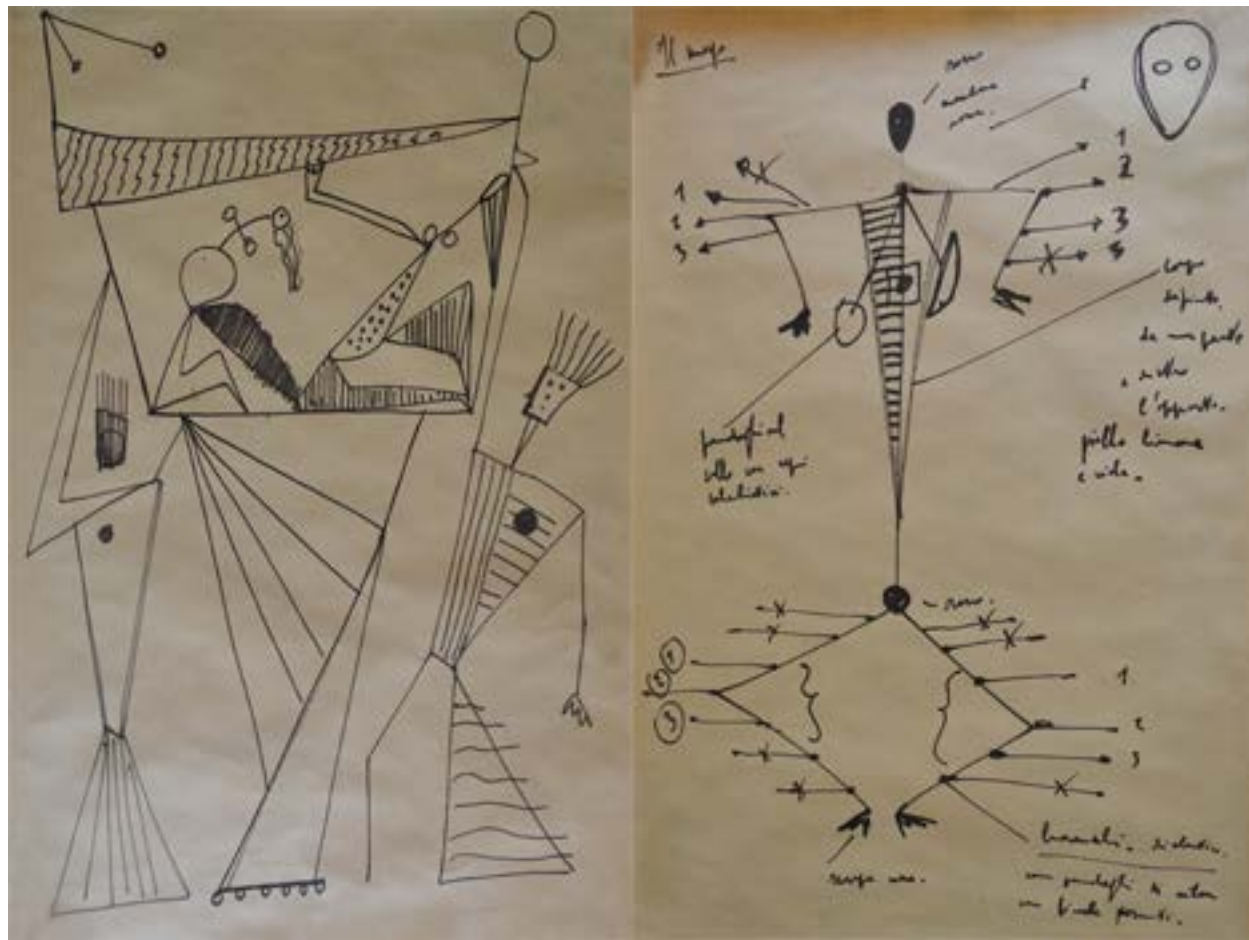
In the middle of the itinerary, a place for sculpture, an attempt to make the various sculptors' 'characters' become a single sculptural group. Then a stop in the rooms for drawings and graphics, almost shop windows to allow the public to relax, so as not to mythologise works that, having a certain 'circulation' were

¹ The text up to this footnote reference consists of the cover letter addressed by Leonardo Ricci to the Director. What was published in *Marcatré* comprised both the cover letter and Ricci's remarks to Nello Ponente's critics. The typescript of the second part of the document – starting from this footnote reference – belongs to the collection of Casa Studio Ricci.

born to circulate in a more everyday world.

Finally, the halls for architecture. The problem is reversed; instead of 'containing' spaces, a three-dimensional 'contained' space. Not exhibitions of photographs that cannot hold a candle to the direct work of painting and sculpture, but the artists' personal drawings that reveal the moment of the work's birth. For the photographs, the irony of modern television is a rotating projector.

In conclusion, I must say that my collaborators and I had 'fun', not in the sense of 'taste', but fun in experiencing this expressionist adventure as if it were our own as if we were the artists who did the works and wanted a space for them. And strangely enough, I got confirmation of this from Mrs Rholfs, the painter's wife, who recalled with emotion an exhibition made by the expressionist painters themselves and told me that it was made of simple brick walls painted white. I had made white walls for them in the Palazzo Strozzi.



“Orfeo” Scenographies and Dressing

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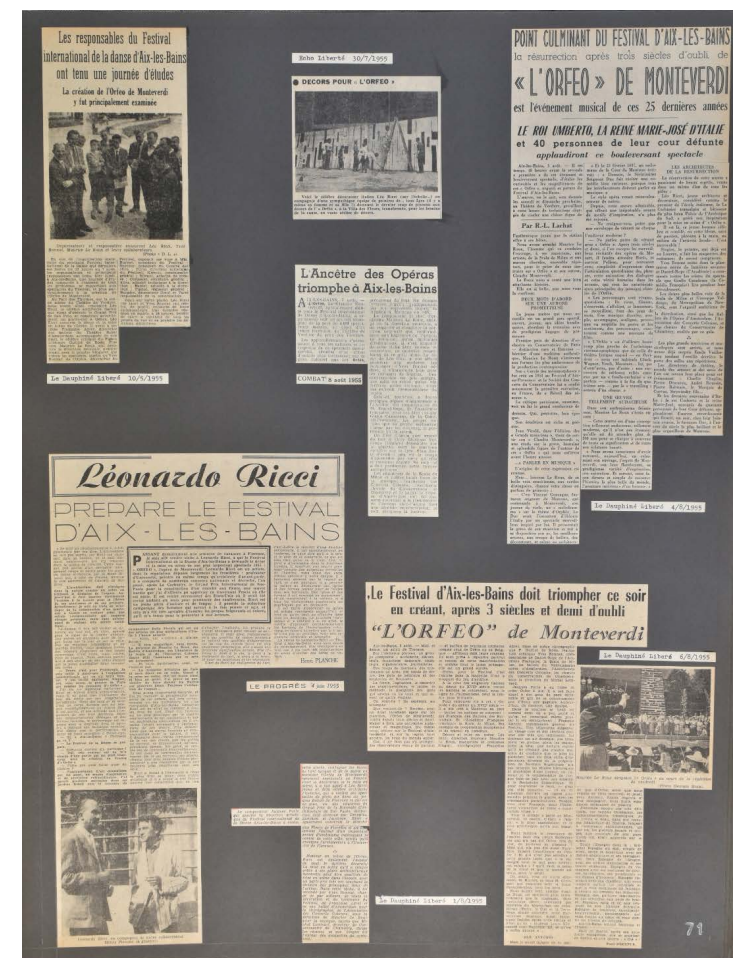
DATE (design and realization)	1955
PLACE/ADDRESS	Aix Les Bains
COLLABORATORS	-
CUSTOMER	-
SOURCES	CSR



ESSENTIAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

G. Bartolozzi, "Allestitimenti come concentrazioni di materia", in *Leonardo Ricci 100. Scrittura, pittura e architettura*, edited by Maria Clara Ghia, Clementina Ricci, and Ugo Dattilo (Firenze: Didapress, 2019), 161-165.

IMG.1: Scenography and dressing design for the "Orpheo", sketches of the stage and of the dressing for the "magician" character, lapis on paper, CSR; IMG.2-3: pictures of the logbook n.2, pages collecting miscellaneous materials about the event, CSR.



Leonardo Ricci

Architecture in Relationship to the Other Arts

Unpublished typescript of a lecture held during his stays in U.S.A. in 1952, precisely addressed to the University of Southern California Department of Philosophy. The document has been retrieved into the collection at Casa Studio Ricci, it was written by Ricci in English.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am probably still I a sentimentalist, but your request to talk once more to you has been so cordial, spontaneous and moving that, notwithstanding my previous engagements in New York I have preferred to postpone them in order to remain longer with you.

Let us come to the subject of our lecture. You have selected it: "Architecture in relationship to the other arts".

I do not deny that for a moment I was uncertain whether to accept or not, owing to the magnitude of the subject, more apt to be thoroughly exhausted during a complete course than during a single lecture. Indeed in order to be consequent I should; first establish some points of theoretical character : what is art and what the several arts are, find the cause of different manifestations, make psychological¹ investigation of language and of its physical expressions, make a rapid review of the various arts in history and their relationship, and then come to modern times and the relationship among the various arts in modern times.

¹ Mistype: to be replaced with "psychological".



Here the field is enormous²: to find which art has determined the first movements of what some call modern revolution, and some modern crisis ; to define the relationship of the various forms of expression (what is for instance modern painting, and what are its influences on architectural esthetics), the reason for cubism and its relationship to modern architecture, the new spacial³ relations in the form, with reference to the research for a fourth dimension All these are subjects by themselves so large that j it would be difficult to exhaust them in a single lesson.

In this situation I shall do my best to clarify some points which I believe fundamental to the explanation of ail phenomena, and then pass to the examination of some points which may be useful to your education as architects.

Some time ago I decided to take the bull by the horns, that is, to go back to the origins, to investigate the causes before the phenomena. Thus I shall start from the beginning.

How was art born?

In a lecture which I am preparing for the! philosophy department of Brooklyn College, on painting, I start this way:

When men first appeared on the earth, whether born from the sudden whirl of God's magic wand, or from a slow and mysterious evolutive process (and for me there is no difference), men found themselves living in the lost Paradise or in an animal state very similar to that of the monkeys (and this also is to me indifferent).

Certainly at that time men obeyed to a rhythm, as now animals obey a rhythm more than men do. Then men were perhaps more happy (if one can speak of happiness among animals). It is certain that their relation to all surrounding things were more spontaneous and simple. It is also certain that at a definite moment men broke this equilibrium to pass to another degree of evolution. The Bible tells that men disobeyed God and for this reason were expelled from Paradise. I do not believe so. I believe that disobeying was an act of obedience, because men, following a plan to them unknown, were to leave this animal paradise to enter another one, to attempt to form another one, the paradise of men, even if the results are so far not too satisfactory.

Allow me now to follow my imagination.

I believe that the rebels to God were the artists. Or if you prefer it, it was art which! pushed men to rebellion. Because of art all were afterwards cursed. For this reason probably, artists suffer so strongly and inexorably in their research. They always bear on them more than the others, the markings of the curse. This may seem a fantasy, but it is not so far from reality. Let us examine why. Although perhaps thousands, or better millions of years have gone by since that

2 Mistype: to be replaced with "enormous".

3 Mistype: to be replaced with "spatial".

first apparition of man on earth, so that the factual memory we had of things is gone, we have remained in our being still so animal that it is not difficult for us to roll back in history to enter the clothes, or better the skins, or if you prefer the skin, of the first man. And if you wish some more help, there are still so many animals that observing them can give us a natural help. Thus let us for a moment imagine that we, just we who I are now one in front of the other, were animals. We don't know how to talk, how to write, how to do all the things that we do today. We know however how to do many nice things, much better than we know today. Indeed we know how to love much more naturally, with less complexes, in a more organic manner, following natural laws instead of those created by customs. We expend effort only I when we have to eat, sleep when we feel like it, follow the changes of the seasons and of the stars, do all in all a series of things that only a few rare men have the material possibility, the will, I the intelligence to try and do. We express our secret feelings that animals also express: love, hatred, jealousy, pain and so on, but we do not know in reality how the other being sees the world, hoy; it appears to him and what he thinks of it.

And then Adam ate the apple of knowledge. I would rather call it the apple of conscience. The taboo of mankind. And God punished him. Certainly God has a nature different from man, so I do not know in reality neither how he thinks nor how he acts; but if I am allowed for a moment to compare him to us, since we are told that we are made to his image and form, I assure you that God did! not punish us for this. Indeed we men are so happy to see an animal which is intelligent, a dog that carries a newspaper and obeys to our call and so on, that God should have been satisfied indeed of such nice and pleasant actions of men, that is to attempt to reach knowledge. When man for instance discovered fire, God must have been dancing with happiness. If he punished us, it is because we believed ourselves so important, owners of the earth and of the sky. But this is a kind of t talk bound to bring me out of the tracks.

Not to know what the other being thinks of the world, if he sees as one does or differently, I and so on, only means to be sick with solitude. Solitude which after all still exists today, with the exception of a few rare moments in life. Thus the first men were only sick of solitude. And all they did, good or bad, beautiful or ugly, they did only so as not to feel alone.

And now I try to imagine. I am walking bare-foot on the sand. A footprint remains. The sun is shining. My shadow falls on the earth. I look at I the water. I see my reflection. Animals do this. But once the moment of astonishment is passed, with philosophical sense, they get over it. Men do not. Men are born stubborn. These casual and simple observations became for them something important. They were intimately moved, and they felt the need to communicate knowingly with another human being. Here were born all the beautiful things, and also all the troubles of mankind.

The process of observing facts of connecting them together and expressing them in concepts means making philosophy. The process of articulating

sounds, grouping them⁴ arranging them in a certain order means making music. The process of looking at the sky and the stars, of judging human actions, of observing birth and death, of attempting to pass before the before and after the after, and making this objective, means to found beliefs or religions, (also if the relationship between religion and philosophy was never very marked among the ancient people).

Thus, since it is absurd to think that God after he made man, made the man-philosopher, the man-painter, the man-musician and so on, you will realize that at the beginning of mankind, making philosophy, painting, sciences and so on were fortunately actions correlated and not separated as is unfortunately today, at times so theoretical and specialised.

I do not raise the question of superiority! among the various human activities. But I really believe, and not in Leonardian sense, that the visual, being the most sensitive and the most evident of the human senses that mankind in order to express itself, used that language first, that we today call painting. Thus man looking at the moon and reproducing it on the wet sand, or stamping his own hand wet with color on a white stone, or trying to imitate the form of an animal when running, and so on, began to talk to the other man. Because it is true that all men looked at the moon at their hands at the running animals: but how to know if it was the same thing for them all? Instead, curse and joy, here a man goes by where another man has designed the moon. He sees the moon designed as he sees it. Do you see the miracle? Man has broken the door of himself and finds himself cosmically in the other being. This and nothing else can be a valid concept of what philosophers call esthetics⁵: the possibility through a language of color and forms, to talk to other beings. To say beautiful means nothing. A thing is beautiful only because it tells us something. A thing is ugly because it tells us nothing. All abstractions of this concept are useless. Useless sicknesses derived from a world of Platonic ideas far from life which now for me mean absolutely nothing.

As you will see from these first apparently obvious observations (but which cost me a lot of work before understanding them). Art is born as a necessity of language. And let me give you still another example. Let us suppose that man goes to another planet. If this is possible or not, this may happen sooner or later, whether other living beings may be found there or not, has no importance for my reasoning. Let us accept the fact that man goes to another planet and finds other beings with a possibility of sensorial exchange. Let us assume we are in Mars. Before us are other living beings. We do not know how they see the world⁶ world, what they think and so on. What shall we do? Shall we bring them our economic system? Our politicians, our science, our modern comforts? Can't you understand that this may have for them no meaning? What to do? Hand

4 Mistype: to be replaced with "thousand".

5 Mistype: to be replaced with "aesthetics".

6 Mistype: it refers to the following word "world".

gestures. We will mark signs on the ground. We shall point with our finger. With all possible J means, that is through artistic acts, we will try to communicate with them.

This is the wonder of art.

Admitting that art is a means of expression, the question follows: why different expressions? Why various arts?

You will realize that men have senses. Man see, touch, hear, taste, smell. Doors which open a passage between the exterior world and our interior one. Without the senses the world would not exist for us. And in addition to these so-called senses, which are apparent, we have inside us other ones, or another one which is the term of comparison, sixth sense, or soul, or as you may wish to call it. We understand what we mean. Through these senses we receive and transmit. Thus in order to satisfy the other being, willing to transmit as much as possible of ourselves into the other being, we try to use all means at our disposal. Consequently I do believe that there exist no fundamental differences among all arts, but the means of expression. I do precisely believe that the motive is the same so that the same thing may be said in different ways somewhat as it happens in the different languages, where we are able to say the same thing in English, Japanese or Italian.

But let us have a more evident example.

I am one of the first men on earth. I fall : in love with a female. I wish to tell her that I love her. I do not take this example casually. I take it because I think that love is the fundamental spring of human behavior in all its manifestations be it love for God, love for a child, love for a cat. Thus I love this woman.

I remember that one day strolling through a I cane field the wind was playing the canes. Then by accident I broke a cane and blew into it. And the cane made a sound. Then I found out that putting more cages of different lengths together was obtaining a series of more pleasant sounds. Thus I discovered music. Then I made an instrument out of canes and playing with it I came near my woman. She was fascinated and stopped to listen to me. Then we sat on the sand on the sea-shore. We smiled and caressed. But inside there was still something to say which was oppressing us. I wanted to tell her that it was her herself that I loved and not a worn man, because I liked her more than the other ones. There was in her something which touched me more deeply. Then I remember I took a shell and where the sand had been made by the water wet and flush, I designed her profile on the ground. She recognized herself and smiled back with greater sweetness. There I became painter.

Thus I stood and mooted on the sand. Then, I became dancer and actor. Before sunset I took the wet sand and made two small dolls one next to the other. I wanted to tell her that we were like one thing, so much were we embraced. Then I became s sculptor.

The night was nearing. The sun was going down and giving me that feeling

of swoon that the dying light gives. Alone I did not care to remain . I was afraid that she would go away. After eating a few fruits on lake leaves I took her to the dunes facing the sea. I opened a passage into the jungle prepared a place to lay upon, weaved together some small branches, and made a little hut to spend the night together.

Thus with those branches and leaves woven together I made like longer arms to protect her better. That hut was something of myself enlarged. Then I became architect.

I remember. I remember that only later I j started articulating sounds, and with different sounds I expressed different things. That one morning at sunrise I told her words which meant: "The dark night has passed. During the night we mixed our blood together. Now the sun is shining and you are mine". There I became poet.

Millions of years have gone by. Now with few rare exceptions when a man says to a woman: "Dear, what could I do to show that I love you?" the answer generally is, "Buy me a Cadillac, my girlfriend has just bought one some days ago". Not that I object to this. To the woman I love I would love to donate not only Cadillacs, but the earth and the sky together, and I am ready to sell my soul to the devil, but the manner is different.

To satisfy my woman's senses I became musician, painter, sculptor, architect, poet.

I think it is by now clear that, notwithstanding the fact that love was my motive of action I expressed myself differently according to my faculties to satisfy all of her faculties. But what was the relation among all of these acts?

I remember that when I designed the profile of my woman on the sand through one sense I was expressing also the life of the other senses. I designed the hair with such a rhythm the wind couldn't have played any better with them. Her nostrils were open to grab that taste of sea and sea weeds and wild flowers.

But I also remember that when, more expert, by making part of the wall erected to protect her the stone with her profile engraved, by playing my flute near the wall so that the wind would not disturb its melody, by, in other words, correlating ay impressions, I could give of myself a more complete expression, that would better signify my whole self in love, instead of part of myself. I thus obtained a difference of potential if not of quality, because indeed when drawing her profile or playing the flute I was giving her the same identical love. Thus it seems evident, this marvellous correlation of arts among themselves as increase of potential if not of quality of the human expression.

Allow me to continue with my fantasy, go back in history, making here and there some brief remarks on what I love most or is more clear in my memory. I have said fantasy, but in reality it is not, because all of us, you and I, have in our blood the blood of men bygone and it is enough to be able to listen in the silence of ourselves to let to the surface, from the lake of the self, all that we men have

done on this earth. I remember.

I remember so well when accidentally rubbing one against the other two silica stones some sparks came out. And when after rubbing because of the wonder at the shining sparks, some dry leaves nearby took fire. At first I run away scared. Then dominating my fear I came back and looked at the fire in ecstasy. And I also remember when I put on the fire the meat of an animal I had just killed, and ate cooked meat. Then I did not know that cooked meat can be better digested. I had strong teeth and a strong stomach. It was an esthetical pleasure. But I also remember how happier I was when in order to dry my little statue of clay I used the fire instead of the sun. I saw the black clay become golden like the sky at sundown and it seemed to me marvelous⁷ that the dark clay could become something like the light of the sun. Not only this, but it became stronger, something had I hardened add made it more durable, so that I could carry my statue home to my woman and show it to my children as something more precious and less temporary had happened inside myself.

I remember. I remember so well when at night, sorcerer of my wild people I was playing the tam-tam and the dancers with their gestures were following the rhythm. What was I doing then? I was killing the time. Think for a moment. I started at sunset and ended at sunrise, I was passing from the light to the shadow and from the shadow to the light. The stars were changing their position in the sky, so that we had the feeling of time which was going inexorably by. But I, by measuring the time with the rhythm, always the same, always the same, I was killing it. Because I, by so doing I was an immutable measure to the movement of things. I, with that rhythm, was signifying that something different from the things that live and die was hidden behind the appearance of things. It was only for this reason that at sunrise, tired of the dance and of that continuous sound, inebriated from the juice of tree bark, we were able to enter a new world where God was present with us, something like in the afterlife.

Do you think that when in the temple of Paestum I measured those columns and grooved the pillars, and engraved the triglyphs, and gave precision of relation to all these forms, I was doing anything but create, with more refined and I conscious means, an immutable rhythm in the changing of things? I remember.

I remember when I made the temple of Ankor⁸, and those roads lined with statues, and engraved in the rocks with the labor of slaves all those] monsters of elephants and snakes, broke the columns to have them create mysterious light contrasts, and in this apparent chaos X made precise the perfect figure of a dancer, and the face of a woman] of unknown sweetness. What do you think dl was doing then? I lined the roads with statues to remind men that they are not alone but only together they make life. I made my people walk through those long roads to free them from their daily tiring labor, from their egoism and self-pity. I shook them with that titan's strength and made them enter into a visceral

7 Mistype: to be replaced with "marvellous".

8 Mistype: to be replaced with "Angkor".

world of ancient chaos to give them in this earthquake of soul the smile and the embrace of a woman and a man reflecting the secret life of the afterdeath.

I remember. I remember when I built the dome of Constantinople and covered it with gold mosaics. I did not make something to protect me better from rain, but I wanted to reproduce for the first time the sky, covered with precious stones like the light of the stars. I aky⁹ which would remind me of the real sky but would not scare me as much, and under this sky be with the others In a similar expectation as when I was expecting the sun-rise after a night of meditation, conscious! of the same human venture. I remember.

I remember when I played the organ in the cathedral and could, in accordance to precise and written laws, push the sound through the arches and could make that matter of stones vibrate as if it were of flesh, and send my fugues outside the domes, breaking their limits! I broke then a crust of tiredness and flew our being in a world beyond tiredness and sorrow.

And if I were able here in this room to break its limits, to make you feel the gravitation of the earth and the attraction of the stars, and the subtle secret which makes the flowers close at night and open at sunrise, and if I were able to stop for an instant the time, I would tell you all I remember of myself, a little as I used to do with my wife, with my students in Florence, with my soldiers during the war, trying to dip you into the real meaning of things made toy man; the secret and intimate one, not the false and apparent one, only suitable to book-worms who classify forms and styles like stamp collectors, because to me this is the only way to understand man's history and what man testified in history. To pass through the vital blood which forced things to be born, and not to see things which are born only for curiosity and for a mania of statistical classification. Otherwise we are outside life, and thus being we cannot understand I it and consequently live it.

Remembering we can walk forward in history j and reach our today. Reach the present time which in the field of arts has created a deep break with the past, also if in the future, when the point of perspective will be farther, men will find that this fracture was not so wide after all.

I wish I had the time at my disposal to demonstrate to you how this fracture took place, to explain the causes behind the various movements and revolutions in the field of arts during this last century, and how they influenced architecture, which began its revolution at a later date, because it is an art more strongly linked with society than other arts.

I would like to tell you my opinion, because I do not agree at all with the more prominent and official critics. They tend to accept the change! instead of investigating its secret causes, and I leave to public sentiment only the understanding of the legend of the life of artists, life which] after all is like the life of any other human being, because artists are men like everyone else. Let me give you an

9 Mistype: to be replaced with "A sky".

example: Van Gogh. There have I been so many books written on this artist that the field for investigation seems exhausted. And yet, I believe that the crucial secret of Van Gogh is still a secret. In Holland I was able to see approximately two thousand paintings by Van Gogh in the course of a few days, because at the time there were available to me not only the finest and most important local collections, but also those which I afterwards were toured round the world. I was made very curious by the fact that from a distance, when the complementary colors in Van Gogh neutralized each other, because of the excessive focal distance, the landscapes were looking like those colored postcards that the impressionists detested so much. The miracle, if you like to call it so, took place when I got nearer the paintings. Because only then could I feel that alive and vibrating matter which made the painting. So alive that it appeared not so much created by a painter who was expressing his idea of the world, but by a man who unconsciously had the knowledge of the secret of the world and with it was expressing himself. I remember the impression I got from paintings I was allowed to turn upside down. I found out that a field of golden wheat would become a sky at sunset, and a Verona green sky could become a grass field. Thus one could feel that he, before our physicists of today, discovered the atomic energy, or better the creative energy of all things on earth, and so doing was destroying that dialectic world of body and soul¹⁰, of good and evil, which was at the basis of our past cultural formation. He was therefore destroying all conventional conceptions of time, space, death, resurrection, and so on. These are I problems that today the most progressive theologian of both Catholic and protestant churches are forced to re-examine trying a new exegesis of their religious texts.

I would like to make you understand how the so-called "cursed" poets, French and not French, as Baudelaire, Rilke, and so on, and the painters such as Van Gogh Cezanne, Gauguin¹¹, or the philosophers such as Nietzsche and so on, prepared the ground for a new eschatologic¹² position of man on earth, trying new Justifications as the basis of the life of the modern man risking total failure, and whose best demonstrations are these last wars which, more than economic wars as they seem to appear, are religious wars in the largest meaning of the word.

And it would be very interesting to examine how the revolution brought by the modern architects, which has so far expressed itself with conceptions very far from one another both as far as both form, and human conception are concerned, have their roots in these first ruptures. It would be very interesting to examine the reason for a Wright, or a Le Corbusier, or of a Gropius, and of their manifestation. I would love to make a genealogical tree showing how these experiences give birth to new architectural experiences, but time is lacking. We have very rapidly reviewed how I see the theoretical correlation among the various

10 Mistype: to be replaced with "soul".

11 Mistype: to be replaced with "Gauguin".

12 Mistype: to be replaced with "eschatological".

arts. We will follow with some general deductions with what I see and do in today's life, leaving the remaining time to your possible questions.

Painting, architecture and sculpture. These three arts which had lived a parallel life up to the point of making it difficult to find a perfect line of demarcation¹³, started following different paths. Painting became from mural painting more and more easel painting. This separation may seem apparently damaging, but this is not the case. It has been very useful that these two arts have clarified their language of expression, since, for instance, painting is no nearer architecture than it may be to music. Therefore I today, both an architect and a painter, and exercising both professions, know that color in architectural function has nothing to do with real painting, because as an architect I reason and express myself in colored volumes, where color is within the matter forming architecture and is part of its intrinsic formal value. Painting is another means of expression which can live together as well as completely separated from architecture. So much so that much of the architectural works considered till today miracles of the exchange painting-architecture, are considered by me abortions, also if the painters who made them were very great painters. Indeed, if the painter, instead of expressing himself in a definite special¹⁴ world, changes the spacial¹⁵ relations to create architectural volumes, of whatever order they may be, he alters inexorably the compositive equilibrium belonging to architecture. Architecture is indeed three-dimensional, while painting is two-dimensional. The research in painting of the third dimension, and in painting and architecture of the fourth and nth dimensions, must proceed in altogether different manners. Particularly because the relation which takes place between a man and a piece of architecture is completely different from the one which takes place between a man and a painting. In the first instance the man is inside the work, in the second in front of the work. Thus many elements of esthetic order of modern architecture, derived from painting, and particularly from cubist painting, and afterwards from abstract painting, have introduced an improvement in the simplifying of many architectural forms.

These elements however have also created a great confusion as far as the relation is concerned between man and the architectural composition. They have brought to the absurd contrast for which many works of architecture are more in function of the photographic machine, or better, of the publication in an architectural magazine, as a beautiful play of abstract form, instead of being living forms in contact with man. This mistake is evident also in many great architects living today, and a demonstration would not be difficult by taking as an example the way of using reinforced concrete, as pilasters and beams, that is an a trilitic system of support, (which is belonging to stone and wood) instead of using reinforced concrete in a dynamic sense, since concrete is a casting process like the casting of a statue in bronze. This naturally with the only exception of those

13 Mistype: to be replaced with "demarcation".

14 Mistype: to be replaced with "spatial".

15 Mistype: to be replaced with "spatial".

panels which are cast on the ground, and then erected mechanically and bound together, because in this type of construction esthetics are of a different order.

This confusion is unfortunately increasing today with the movement and the affirmation of many abstract painters and sculptors. In fact there is a completely misunderstanding of language and forms of expression when the architect tries to reason in the language of a painter or sculptor and vice versa. Because, let me emphasize one more, while there may be a very useful contribution indeed of critical exchange, there must be no confusion of means of expression. For this reason I myself, as an architect and an artist push my research and my teaching toward a world of forms as far as possible from naturalistic, mutative, sentimental, and consequently to an abstract vision, while as a painter and sculptor I go toward a new figurativism and that is a new representation of man through man himself. Let me express myself better. When I think, reason and create as an architect, I cannot abstract from man as a being participating and living in the architectural composition. When I make a project for a house a hospital, a square and so on I do not make a valid work unless when designing I imagine the man who is to live in these works, who must walk in them, measure them with his internal physical and spiritual dimensions and if on the contrary I just think of a piece of work of easy photography and possibility of easy eye-appeal. I have been often very much upset seeing works of well-known and highly esteemed modern architects first in a picture and then in reality. In the picture these works seemed very valid and well measured, but in reality they would appear to me, as we technically say, out of scale. And this because the designer had forgotten that human measure inborn to ourselves, which is the measure of all things. Thus for instance, a mathematical relation, two, three, four, which we may for the sake of example accept as harmonious, if it is not in relation to that number X which we have inside ourselves and to which we relate the other numbers, may become unharmonious and disorganic¹⁶. And here we could make several and well-pointed examples.

When I reason as a painter my reasoning is completely different. Man is no longer inside, he is facing the work. That number which is inside us and which in architecture must live in contact with the work, must in this case enter the painting. Thus if I must say what I think of the world and of man and of the things which live near man, also speaking in terms purely critic of abstract painter, I shall say: "There is no form designed by man which cannot find roots within the totality of the outside world. From the apparently simple and elementary forms such as the circle, the square, the triangle, to the most complicated, such as the graphic tridimensional representation of complex mathematical integrals (as I have seen in a museum in Paris) we can find the theory in nature. Be it the circle of the sky, the sun, the moon, be it the vegetal spiral of some plants of some sea-shells. Now in the visible world I am unable to find a more complete and evolved form than the human form, both biologically, and, if you wish, spiritually

¹⁶ In English this adjective does not exist, but it is expected that the author would have liked to employ "disorganized/fragmented".

speaking. Through this form, be it the gesture, the look, the smile of a woman, I am able to have penetration in the world. If I wish to use the word God I will say. It is true. The sky tells me of God, and thus the stars, the plants, the flowers, and thus the animals and thus all things, but what most tells me of God is man. And through man, through his acts, his gestures, his eyes, I am able to enter the most complete! understanding of this scatologic reality beyond the apparent forms. Thus, desiring to express myself. I am forced to pass primarily through these forms. Because it is true that the world is a machine, the world is mathematic, the world is law, the world is whatever you wish, but the world is above all living blood, heart, living breath which surrounds all things, and which for us men principally manifests itself through men.

The same I could more or less say about sculpture, also if the language changes from two-dimensional to three-dimensional, from visual to tactile and so on.

Architecture and music. It is a strange thing that happens between architecture and music. Architects and composers ignore each other unless they come to contact in a theatre. Nonetheless not only many philosophers of the past in their treaties on esthetics made many parallels between the two arts, which I deem logic because though both arts express themselves through completely different languages but are both base on abstract and numeral elements, but also I would dare say also biologically in the musical and architectural reasoning there exist evident similarities. In modern music I and architecture the contacts are very rare, however I think that a meeting will become necessary. In the modern revolution, at whatever point in history! You may wish to place the starting point of this revolution? in music, be it in the tonal or coloristic variation of Ravel, or of Debussy or of Schonberg, the fact remains that also music is attempting a new language of expression, a simplification of form, a more constructive precisation¹⁷, a more mathematical responsibility of sound expression, particularly in the field of dodecaphonic music; on which I have no authority or time to pass judgement as to its validity, density and transparency, but where I often find analogies particularly regarding sound reflections, which are nothing else than to attempt in a different form spacial¹⁸ spatial and new openings in the traditional conceptions of space, time, life, death. And I wish that architects could deepen their study and devote more interest in the art of music.

Architecture and poetry and (allow me to accelerate my speech) philosophy. Poets and philosophers, separately and together, since some years are attempting a new justification of life, apart from the traditional consuetudes. Generalizing we may observe two quite distinct positions, one aiming at an existential¹⁹ position in life and the other to a positive and mathematical position. And just now some modern poet and philosophers are trying to relate these two currents. Architecture has already been doing so and has partially achieved its

17 To be replaced with "precision".

18 To be replaced with "spatial".

19 Mistype: to be replaced with "existential".

aims. Because architecture, owing to its intrinsic nature works in both fields. Modern architecture, after escaping from a mystic past, tries to live autonomically in its own poetry and self-justification, and is therefore existential. On the other hand, having to undergo laws of a physical character, it must answer to mathematical laws. Architecture too will have to saturate these two positions, which not so long ago were so confused that also professionally we had architects (poets and decorators of architecture) and engineers (those who kept architecture on its feet). Much more has been made in this field and much more has to be done. Architecture and the movies, I do not want to enter the discussion of whether movies are art or not, since it is evident that the movies, being a means of expression, could be art I wish only to touch on a fact which can be very useful to architects. The documentation of architecture before the movies was made through prints or photographs. This determined a very serious fault in the public the critics and the architects themselves. Architecture was unfortunately judged with a formal and aesthetical conception, as a critic for painting. The demonstration of this fact is that real critics of architecture did not exist. Architecture was judged only for the facade, so much so that more intimate architecture, more interested in the interior than in the exterior, was less known to the public, less esteemed, and less considered a work of art. Look at what happens also today to us modern architects when we have to photograph small rooms, for which large optical angles are needed, which bring to large deformations of scale. Since the movie camera is like a moving eye, it is able to enter architecture, move with man, and consequently correlate the volumetric sequences which constitute one of the fundamental characteristics²⁰ of architecture. In effect, the esthetic pleasure from a piece of architecture is the correlation of spaces and forms more than the esthetical enjoyment over a single form. Here the movies are of great help.

If I were a producer I would start a series of short shots on architecture, so as well as having picture books on architecture we could have short shots in order to reach a more evident documentation on architecture, and a better understanding of the problem of what architecture is.

And now allow me to end sentimentally, as sentimentally I have begun.

I am young, nonetheless I have the sadness and despair of being unable of seeing the birth of what I dream and would like to see in act. What keeps me in the fight is however a great hope, not an egoistical²¹ one for myself, but that soon all men may proceed together toward a new civilization. Because a civilization is a collective thing and not created by few individuals. For this reason I love to teach: to transmit to others that vital force that perhaps I will not be able to objectivate.

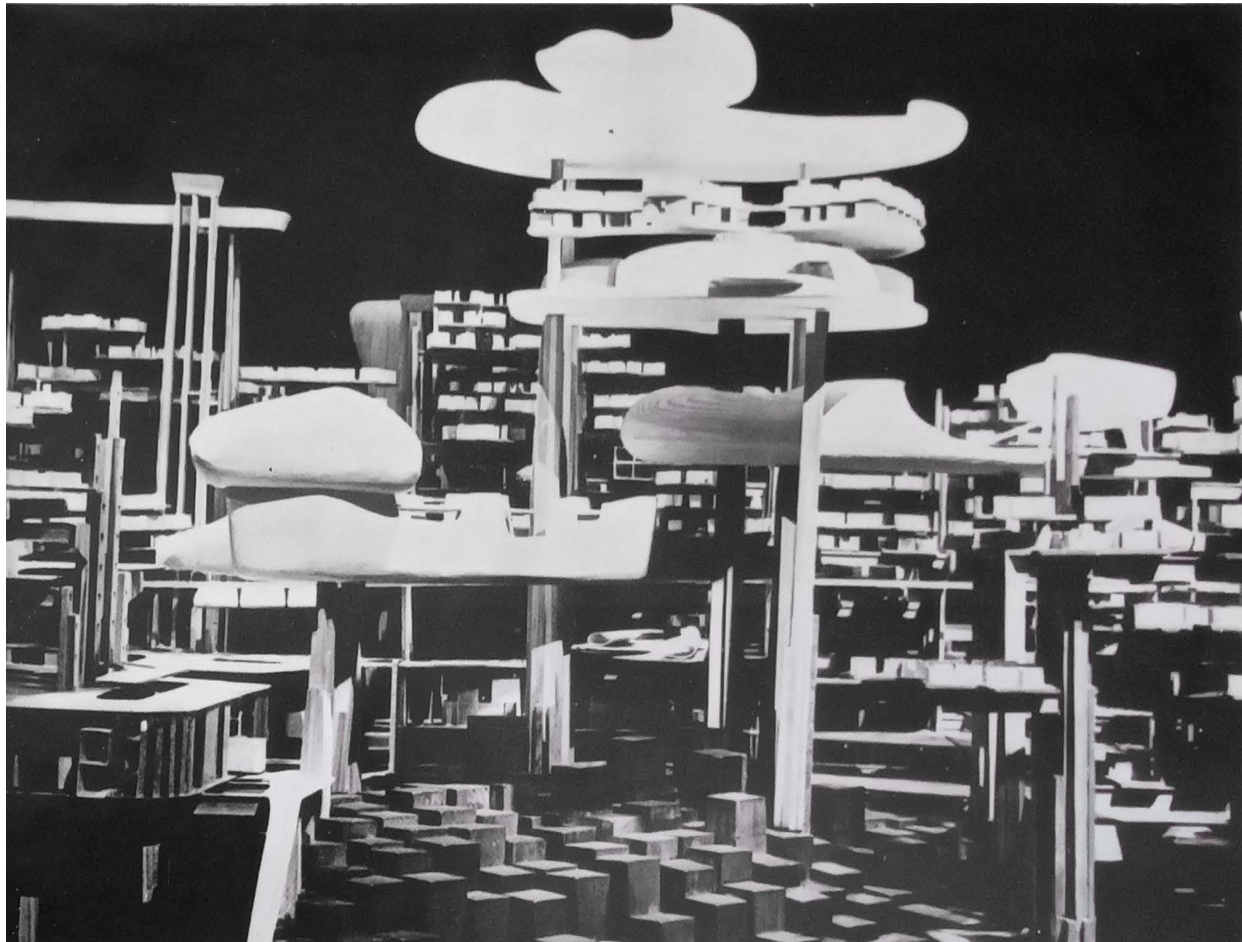
We must pass from the position of professor to student to one of master to disciple and even better of friends to friends, of a friend who because of culture,

20 Mistype: to be replaced with "characteristics".

21 Mistype: to be replaced with "egotistic".

experience and knowledge of life is able to say a word to the younger and open new visions for them.

I thank you therefore again for your affectionate welcome and I hope to meet you all again.



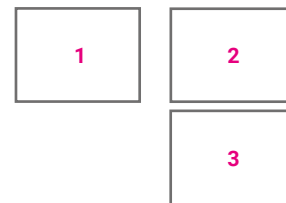
Project for
Macrostructure for an Integrated Town

ARCHIVAL DATA

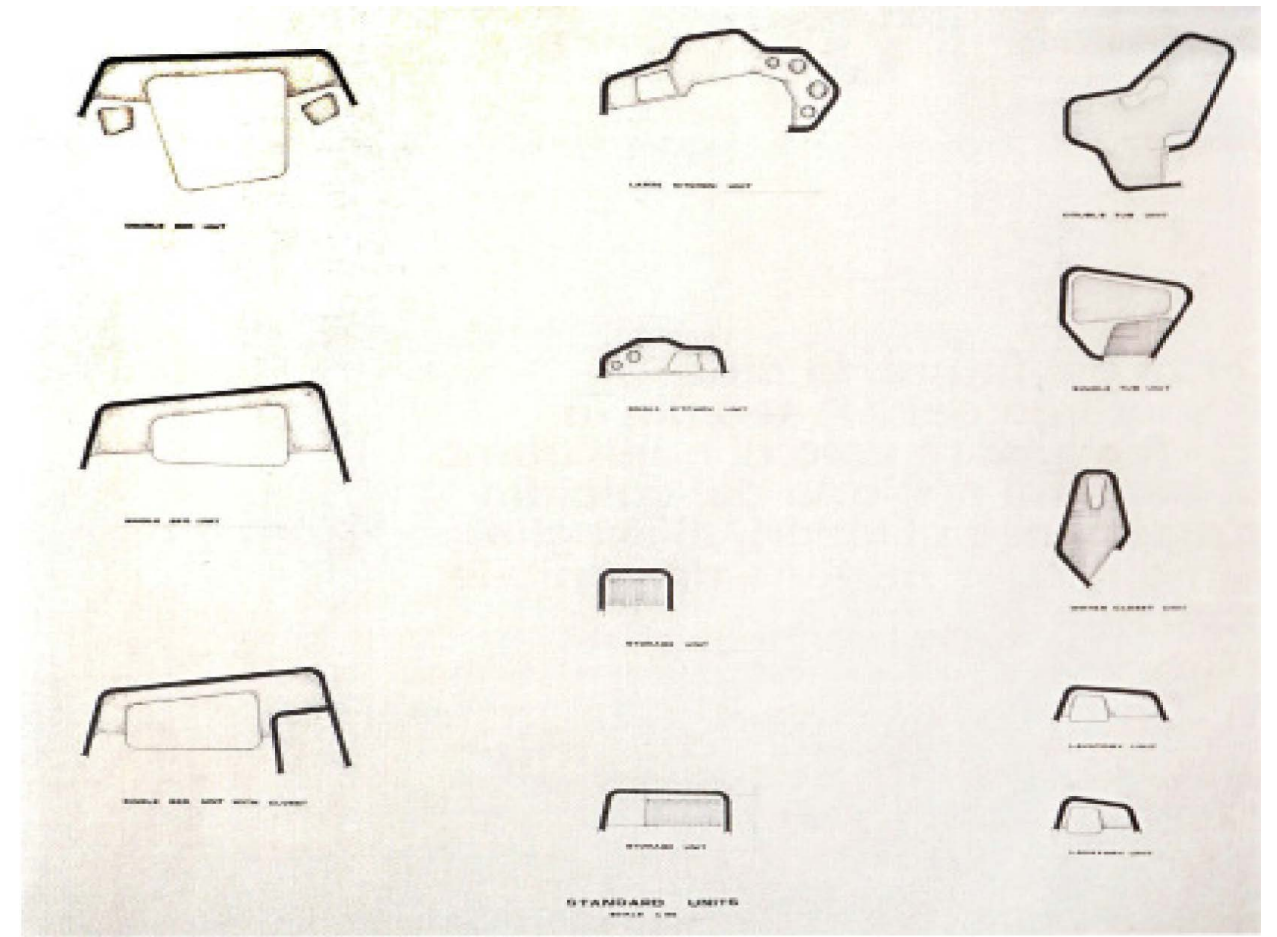
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PLACE/ADDRESS	-
COLLABORATORS	Pennsylvania State University students
CUSTOMER	-
SOURCES	CSAC, CSR

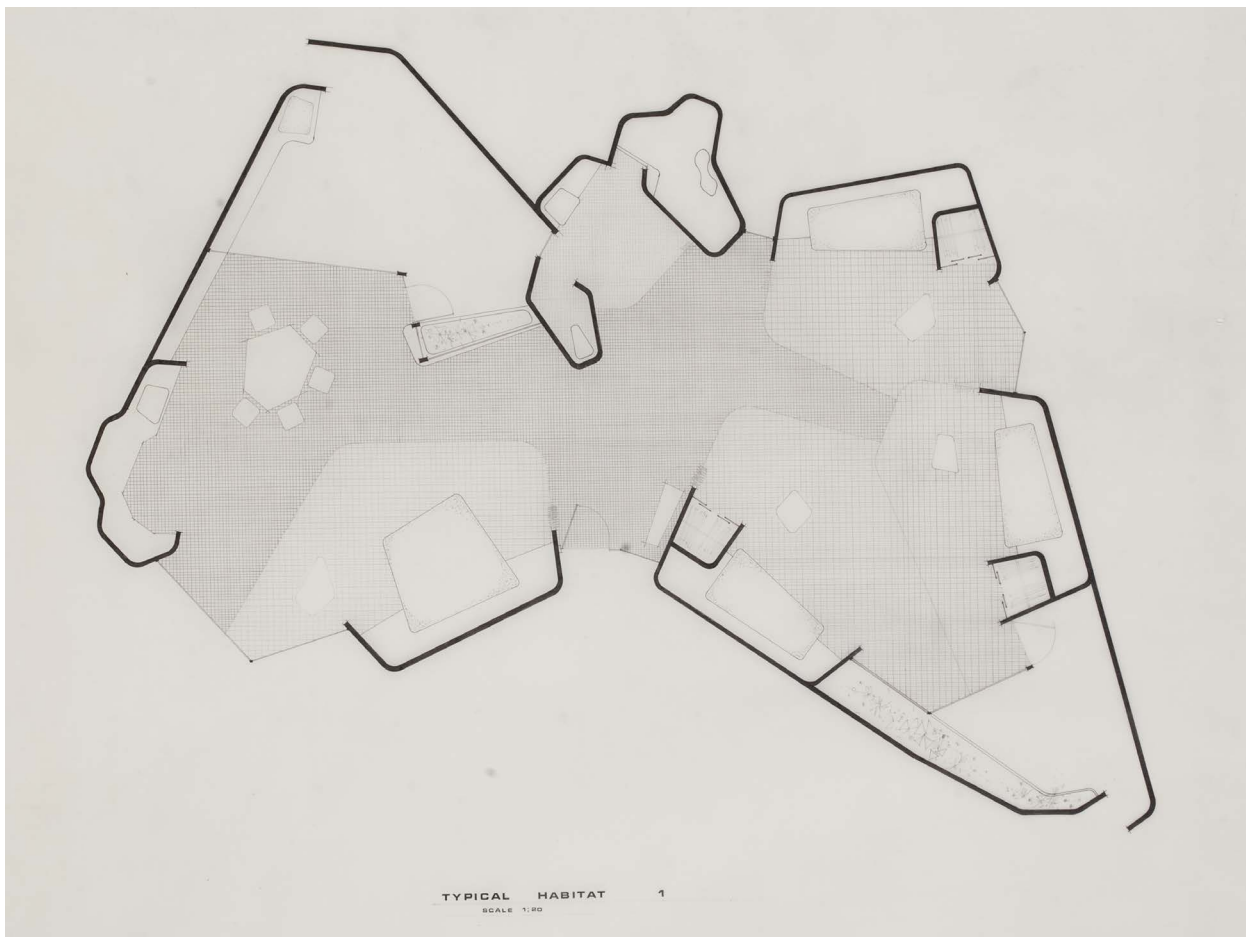
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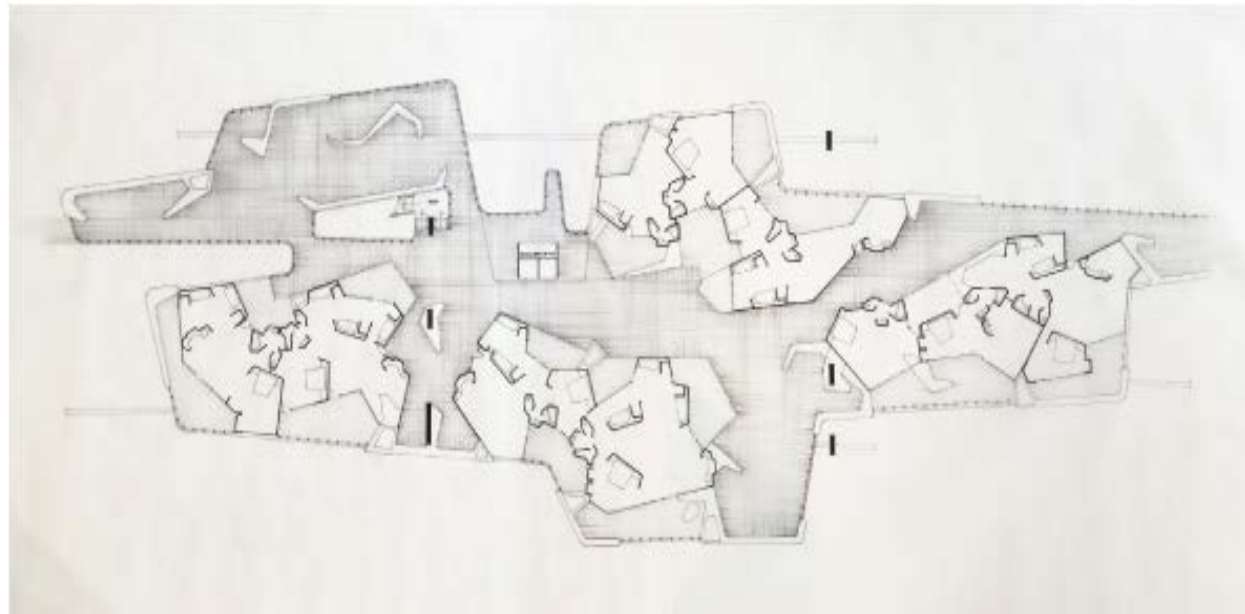


IMG.1: MODEL I: Harbor-center with water-sea-earth communication routes (Pennsylvania State University, 1965), picture of the model, folder "USA", CSR; IMG.2: Macrostructure for an Integrated Town, Standard units, ink on transparency, CSAC; IMG.3: Macrostructure for an Integrated Town, Section B-B, ink on transparency, CSAC.

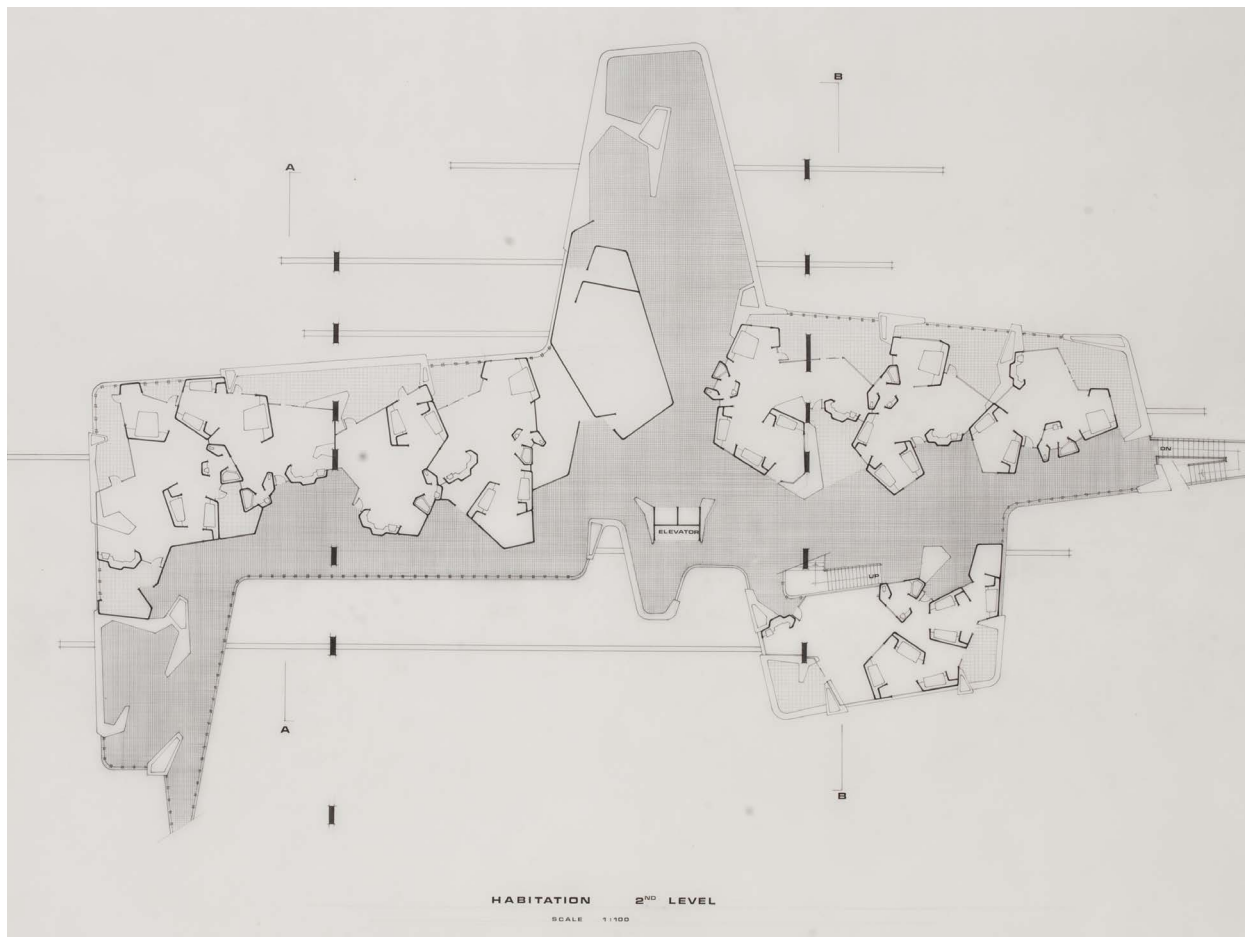


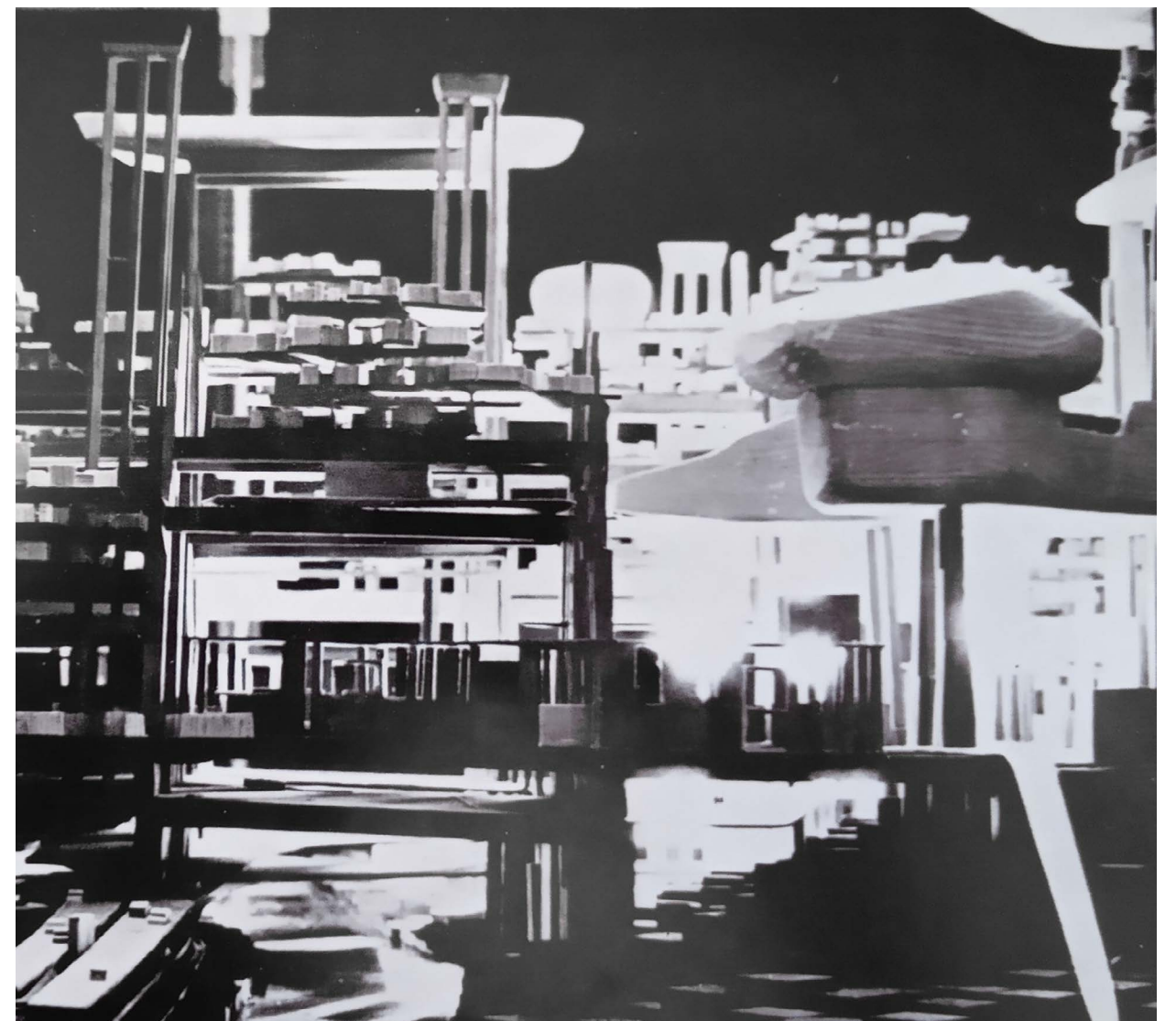
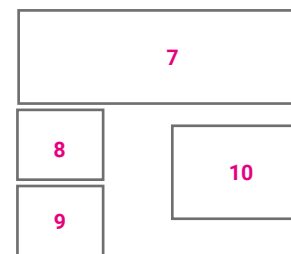
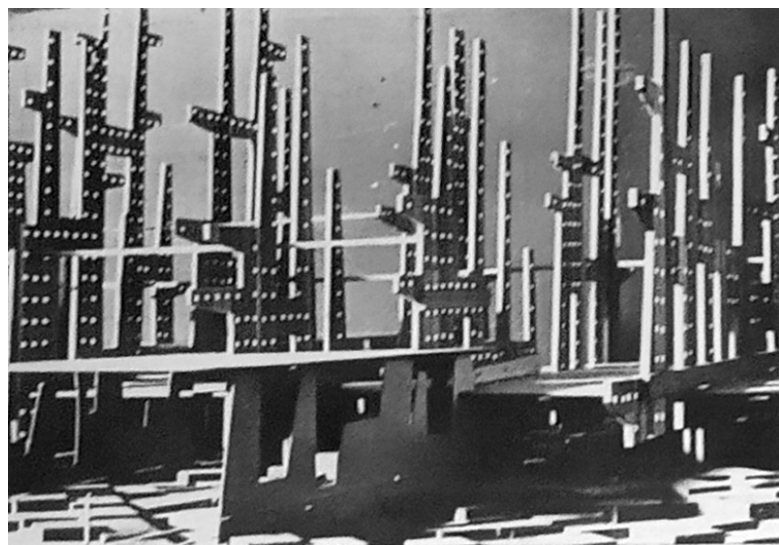


4 IMG.4: Macrostructure for an Integrated Town, Typical Habitat, ink on transparency, CSAC.



5 IMG.5: Macrostructure for an Integrated Town, Typical Level 1, ink on transparency, CSAC;
6 IMG.6: Macrostructure for an Integrated Town, Typical Level 2, ink on transparency, CSAC.





IMG.7: MODEL I: Harbor-center with water-sea-earth communication routes (Pennsylvania State University, 1965), picture of the model, general view, folder "USA", CSR; IMG.8: MODEL I: Harbor-center with water-sea-earth communication routes (Pennsylvania State University, 1965), picture of the model, model of the structure, folder "USA", CSR; IMG.9-10: MODEL I: Harbor-center with water-sea-earth communication routes (Pennsylvania State University, 1965), picture of the model, folder "USA", CSR.

A Project of the Synopia of the Future Integrated City.

MODEL I: *Harbor-Center with Water-Sea-Earth Communication Routes*

Synopia, Integrated City, Macrostructure, Open Form, Formativity

/Abstract

This paper wants to introduce Leonardo Ricci's project for the integrated town identifiable on two kinds of archival series: the pictures of a three-dimensional model titled MODEL I: Harbor-center with water-sea-earth communication routes kept in Casa Studio Ricci in Florence and the bidimensional drawings kept in CSAC (Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione) Archive, by framing it in his architectural work and research of the Sixties, which saw an intense exchange with the United States. It will be outlined in its fundamental aspects by explaining firstly the theoretical then the applied research Ricci dedicated to the elaboration of the model, as he maybe would have presented it according to its strong belief in the intertwining between these two layers. The final part will deal with a comparison of the analyzed project to the coeval model for the "Casa Abitata" exhibition, presented one year before in Florence. Both models show the same purposes and final similar morphological results, the first elaborated in the United States, the second one in Italy, as a consequence of Ricci's research for a synthesis between architecture and sculpture and as a necessary melting between the physical and the social structures, thus the search for the most livable and useful spaces for the best development of modern life.

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Introduction

This paper wants to introduce Leonardo Ricci's project for the integrated town identifiable on two kinds of archival series: the pictures of a three-dimensional model titled MODEL I: *Harbor-center with water-sea-earth communication routes* kept in Casa Studio Ricci in Florence and the bidimensional drawings kept in CSAC (Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione) Archive, by framing it in his architectural work and research of the Sixties, which saw an intense exchange with the United States. It will be outlined in its fundamental aspects, recalling the wider coeval research conducted on the international scene concerning the new urban utopias, which used the artistic devices, "creativity" and "fantasy" as methodological premises of the project, to face the design of models on anthro-sociological studies and on the topographical morphology. This article suggests the comparison of the the MODEL I to the coeval model for the "Casa Abitata" exhibition, presented one year before in Florence as both models show the same purposes and final similar morphological results, the first elaborated in the United States, the second one in Italy, as a consequence of Ricci's research for a synthesis between architecture and sculpture and necessary melting between the physical and the social structures, thus the search for the most livable and useful spaces for the best development of modern life.

In the Sixties Leonardo Ricci was a relevant scholar in Florence¹ and a well-known architect²: in Italy he realized some of his founding projects such as the the last houses in Monterinaldi (Florence, 1949-1963), the district of Sorgane in Florence (1957-1966), the residential settlements of Montepiano (Florence, 1961-1968), and the Community Village "Monte degli Ulivi" in Riesi (Caltanissetta, Sicily, 1962-1968). In addition to those important works Ricci designed the staging of the "Espressionismo: pittura scultura architettura" (Florence, 1964) and the "Casa Abitata" exhibitions (Florence, 1965), while abroad the costume section of the Italian pavilion for Montréal Exposition (Montréal, 1967). What is more, while trying to actualize, with these projects, his revolutionary ideal of a community space, fighting against the Italian urban legislation and municipal administrations referring to zoning policies and urban standards, Ricci decided to find a new way in the United States: after the first experience at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as visiting professor (1959-1960), he moved to the Pennsylvania State University (1965-1968), then to the University of Florida (1968-1972). He had therefore established a constant exchange with the United States that continued after his resignation as Director of the

1 Since 1964 he was Full Professor of "Elementi di Composizione Architettonica" and "Urban Design" at the Faculty of Architecture in Florence.

2 To deepen the figure of the Italian architect Leonardo Ricci: Antonio Nardi, ed., *Leonardo Ricci: testi, opere, sette progetti recenti di Leonardo Ricci* (Pistoia: Edizioni del Comune di Pistoia, Italia Grafiche, 1984); Giovanni Bartolozzi, *Leonardo Ricci: lo spazio inseguito* (Torino: Testo & immagine, 2004); Corinna Vasić Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci: architetto 'esistenzialista'* (Firenze: Edifir, 2005); Michele Costanzo, *Leonardo Ricci e l'idea di spazio comunitario* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2009); Giovanni Bartolozzi, *Leonardo Ricci: nuovi modelli urbani* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2013); Maria Clara Ghia, Clementina Ricci, and Ugo Dattilo, eds., *Leonardo Ricci 100. Scrittura, Pittura e Architettura. 100 Note a Margine Dell'Anonimo Del XX Secolo* (Firenze: Didapress. Dipartimento di Architettura, Università degli Studi di Firenze, 2019); Maria Clara Ghia, *La nostra città è tutta la Terra. Leonardo Ricci architetto (1918-1994)* (Wuppertal: Steinhäuser Verlag, 2021).

University of Florence in 1971 that coincided with his resignation from the University of Florida. After 1972 Ricci continued his teaching activity only at the Kentucky University until 1980s³.

In the United States of the consumer society a defined distinction between wealth and poor people existed, the suburbs growth was a result of the postwar prosperity and the individual estate industry increased. Suburbs were the symbol of the mass society that caused differences and discrimination between the white and Afro-American population who was not allowed to live in the suburbs. That was why urban renewals were needed, to build a new society and avoid segregation, based on new interdisciplinary and participated urban planning processes⁴. This was the focus of Ricci's studies firstly at the Pennsylvania State University and then at the University of Florida. The political, cultural, and social background on which he grafted his research resulted in the models for urban macrostructures elaborated, both at Penn State University and in Florence, between 1964 and 1968.

Ricci's studies for urban macrostructures produced, among other projects, a wide range of untitled polymetric models, which reflected the idea of the "forma-atto"⁵ design method, which implied life as act developing in the project and constantly changing it⁶. The models' design was conceived in respect of the principles of clarity, formativity, infinite growth of the city, integrability of acts, activities and functions, and identification between landscape and structure, all Urban Design cornerstones embodied by Ricci's design method concerning "architecture at urban scale". On them Ricci grounded his refusal of predetermined forms and his applied research to elaborate the synopia of the "City of the Earth", as he named the model of a macrostructure applicable to reality which gave the title of his second unpublished book *Città della Terra. Disegno per una urbanistica non alienata* ["City of the Earth. Design for a non-alienated urban design"]⁷.

3 About Leonardo Ricci's experience in the United States: Ilaria Cattabriga, *Leonardo Ricci in the United States (1952-1972). A Twenty-year American Transfer and a Turnig Experience in Teaching and Design* (Siracusa: LetteraVentidue, 2023).

4 In this purpose very interesting were the studies conducted at the Harvard-M.I.T. Joint Center where Ricci approached the discipline of Urban Design in its fundative period. Those have resulted in some interesting studies as Sam Bass Warner Jr., *Streetcar Suburbs* (Cambridge-Ma: Harvard University Press, 1962) and the following *Planning a Pluralist City. Conflicting Realities in Ciudad Guayana* by Donald Appleyard (Cambridge-Ma: Harvard University Press, 1976), which concerned the Guayana Project conceived according to the Urban Design theories and participated methods firstly formulated by Kevin Lynch in *The Image of the City*, the first book of the Harvard-M.I.T. Joint Center Studies Series (see Harvard-MIT Joint Center for Urban Studies Series | The MIT Press, last accessed March 2022).

5 The name Ricci gave to his design method can be translated into "form-act": the name suggests the conception of form from the analysis of human acts, since it concerned the study of the human acts and activities before any predetermined morphological conception.

6 The pictures of the models are kept in Casa Studio Ricci.

7 Leonardo Ricci, *Città della Terra. Disegno per una Urbanistica non Alienata*, unpublished manuscript, introduction, Casa Studio Ricci. The content of the book and the description of the synopia for the city of the future was explained by Ricci in the texts of the conferences titled "Ricerche per una urbanistica non alienata" and "The Future of Cities" the present work also deals with. The precise description of the synopia is contained in the unpublished book, in line with the already published contributions' contents. Ricci also declared that «This new book [was] born from the previous one *Anonymous (XX century)*, it [was] a continuation of it, better a filiation. But the condition [was] different».

City of the Earth: a synopia of the future city as an “open form”

City of the Earth, constitutes the second fundamental manifesto of the architect's theoretical research to the architectural and town planning design after his book *Anonymous (XX century)*⁸, in which he had already mentioned the theory of the *Earth-City*: in his words it was still a sort of ambition about a future city bound to an existential dimension due to the value crisis of the second postwar period.

The city of the future, the city of *Anonymous (XX century)*, Earth-City, will belong only to that man who has teetered on the brink of suicide for want of values, and, finally, one morning, has aroused himself from this state and is ready for anything, and that's that⁹.

In the synopia of the Earth-City Ricci exemplified a theory that would have influenced his following years of applied research to solve the problem of the urban crisis, mostly developed in the U.S.A.

On a theoretical layer, to carry on his research, Ricci focused on three main keywords: reality, existence, and history. Real social conditions and tangible architectural problems were the necessary starting point to improve human life focusing on the real concept of existence, which consisted in living with other people. Yet the investigation field was the boundary between theory and the surrounding reality, between the private and the collective living¹⁰, and the relations between them¹¹.

As Ricci wrote in the *Anonymous* and in “Ricerche per una urbanistica non alienata”¹² - an introduction to his work done during one-year-work in 1964 for the Architecture School in Florence - the need of a new existence due to the human crisis of the postwar period invaded humans, architecture, and all human manifestations. In the urban-architectural field the new words of directional centers, town-region, territorial town, connection routes, referred to what Ricci called new utopias, urban designs, new entities, systems and organisms, new shapes that had to be designed by the architects who necessarily needed to think of new design methods. To Ricci they could be found neither in the

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

9 Ricci, *Anonymous*, 186.

10 These contents were also widely explained by Ricci in his *Anonymous* which represented the real opportunity for Ricci barely to express his opinion on the matter not using the classical expressive methods and instruments of the architect, but with writing. Ricci, *Anonymous*, 168-169.

11 With the sentence «it is enough to exist. It is enough to find the relationships among the things that exist. It is enough to create new relationships among things» (Ricci, *Anonymous*, 19) Ricci explained the core of his thought, the relational value of architecture moving from the existential instance, referring to Enzo Paci's studies on the matter that the architect quoted in the introduction to the Urban Planning II and Elements of Composition courses¹¹ kept in Casa Studio Ricci. Paci's interest in contemporary architecture has given rise, since the mid-1950s, to original reflections contained in numerous essays such as, in chronological order: “Il cuore della città”, *Casabella-continuità*, no. 202 (August-September 1954), vii-x, “Problematica dell'architettura contemporanea”, *Casabella-continuità*, no. 209 (January-February 1956), 4146 (republished with the title “Sull'architettura contemporanea”, *L'architettura e il mondo della vita*, *Casabella-continuità*, no. 217 (1957), “Continuità e coerenza della BBPR”, *Zodiac*, no. 4 (April 1959), 82-115, “Wright e lo 'spazio vissuto’”, *Casabella-continuità*, no. 227 (May 1959), 9-10, “La crisi della cultura e la fenomenologia dell'architettura contemporanea”, *La Casa*, no. 6 (1960) (then republished with the title “Fenomenologia e architettura contemporanea”). Moreover, there are some essays collected in Enzo Paci, *Relazioni e significati*, Vol. III (Milano: Lampugnani Nigri, 1966).

12 Leonardo Ricci, “Ricerche per una urbanistica non alienata”, typescript, Casa Studio Ricci.

bases of a supposed functional objectivity of rationalists, which had demonstrated its ineffectiveness, nor in reality, as the contemporary society showed models belonging to an exhausted civilization of the machine where the human being was reduced to the equation producer-consumer. It had to be traced by observing the alienated society, it was utopia, a dangerous path, and a way of thinking where imagination and invention could trace citizenship at the same time¹³.

Some years later, in his lecture titled "The Future of Cities"¹⁴ to the Accent Symposium at the University of Florida in Gainesville¹⁵, Ricci reported the results of his research in Urban Design and, more in detail, suggested a new architectural model for the new democratic society analyzing its own structure and avoiding an aesthetical perspective. He focused only on morphological and psychological viewpoints and stated that, as human beings were influenced by the environment, no one could ignore the existing interaction between space made of cities, towns, villages, and mankind. This conditioning could be "vitalizing, neutral or repressive"¹⁶, because city models, also in history, were the reflection of a precise culture, and justified a precise way of living, an economic situation, or a social organization. In his speech, Ricci reflected on the historical evolution of human living in upgrading scale unit as groups, tribes, communities, and neighborhoods, he would have suggested in the analyzed project. Those settlements became towns, later organized in megalopolis until they reached the territorial scale and, finally, the dimension of the Earth thanks to the new means of communication. Therefore, Ricci stressed the idea of designing the earth as an «only one large community in which each phenomenon produced in one part of the earth caused an interaction with the others¹⁷».

Leonardo Ricci's purpose for a new town model was based on the assumption that, despite the human instinct of living in communities, the contemporary society bad living structure insisted on an obsolete rationalist culture, which was already outdated¹⁸. The rules of city planning were forgetting further key factors because human beings were alienated and segregated in three main zones –city, periphery, and country- connected by systems of infrastructure, each holding a symbol of the activities run in them: tertiary activities in the city, secondary activity of the industries in the periphery and agriculture

13 Ricci, "Ricerche per una urbanistica non alienata", 4.

14 When Ricci typed this simple by fundamental reflection he is in the United States, on February 10, 1970. It was just before deciding to leave that country, where he had been teaching as visiting professor since the early Sixties, the following year, because of his disappointment against the immobility and stagnation of American University. Despite the students' support, he could not handle the situation and decided to leave the University of Florida. Leonardo Ricci, "The Future of Cities", typescript, Casa Studio Ricci, lecture presented to the Accent Symposium on February 11, 1970 at the University of Florida in Gainesville.

15 Leonardo Ricci spoke to an audience of politicians and students aiming at triggering a new dialogue among politicians and intellectuals about the possibility to develop innovative models for the cities of the future. Ricci wanted them and all the university members to go out of their academic positions, out of their offices to become active forces for the society. Leonardo Ricci's purpose came from his involvement in the 1968 revolt with his colleague and friend Leonardo Savioli, and with Umberto Eco. Their ideas gave the progress key to the Radicals in Florence.

16 Ricci, "The Future of Cities", 3.

17 Ricci, "The Future of Cities", 12.

18 Ricci, "Ricerche per una urbanistica non alienata".

in the country. Ricci's purpose was to study what the three zones signified, who lived in each of them and what kind of life each zone allowed. This kind of study had to be economically sustained by private or public drive, but it could help in finding new morphologies of a territorial area intended as the whole city. Thus, urbanism was a global problem based on real phenomena such as the population growth and the environmental equilibrium to be solved by the action of intellectuals in preparing new types of analyses and methodologies, a comprehensive and exhaustive interdisciplinary analysis of the environment including both metropolitan areas and smaller cities, done by scholars, students, mayors, and inhabitants. The inhabitants' interactions were the only possible path to be followed to design the right town for people and build an environment reflecting the society. The tool proposed by Ricci was scale grouping using new technologies.

Potentially, a territory would be like a continuous town, sometimes denser, sometimes less dense, but continually interacting and allowing each person to enjoy and utilize all the possible choices of a whole territory¹⁹.

During the conference titled *Modern Movement, International Style, Postmodern*, which took place in the Architecture Faculty in Milan (academic year 1983/1984), Leonardo Ricci and Anthony Eardley drew a debate on Postmodern architecture in the United States²⁰. Leonardo Ricci remembered his teaching experience in the United States and recognized that the great force of the architectural production there was due to that high technological aspiration which drove the "matrix" elaboration for each vocation²¹. As opposed to the existing chaotic aggregation, Ricci imagined the new structure for the Earth City as a single organism made of different parts connected and belonging to the whole, where each component, either cities or county, planned its own development in the same way providing infrastructures and facilities at different scales.

Ricci defined the *City of the Earth* "synopia" because it referred to a prefiguration of a city, a real model that could be applied to reality. His integrated city derived from two basic careful studies: the survey of the existing city structure and an interdisciplinary investigation on human acts and activities, and developed by means of communications, transport, infrastructures, and facilities systems. Communications and transport had to rebuild the relationships among alienated people, recalling the ancient streets and squares able to link residence, work, and public spaces²². Therefore, architects and planners should have modified their planning method and moved from drawing a street

19 Ricci, "The Future of Cities", 14.

20 Giampietro Giuseppe, "Thony Eardley e Leo Ricci: tra Stile Internazionale e Post Modern", *Parametro*, no. 123-124 (1984).

21 «In the territory, a new system of infrastructure is necessary to tie together all the public facilities and services at the territorial scale – the harbors, airports, specialized agriculture and industries. From the territorial scale we should pass to the scale of the megalopolis and then to the town, neighborhood, and group scales, always using the same methodology». Ricci, "The Future of Cities", 14.

22 Here Ricci is precisely referring to the Middle Age town structure.

on paper, a separation line connecting two points, to designing it as integrating element of the urban landscape. The solution was to examine all the means of communication in an interrelated way and not separately. All the past studies on the city were not unuseful but had led to the awareness that a new “maitrise” of the Earth was needed.

The Model of the integrated town

After his experience as visiting professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in 1962 Ricci undertook a new cycle of conferences at Yale and M.I.T. and in 1965 he was mentioned distinguished visiting professor at the Pennsylvania State University, where he taught Urban Design from 1965 to 1969. That qualification allowed him to apply the teaching and new research issues acquired at M.I.T. experimented in the Harvard-M.I.T. Joint Center for Urban Studies, also founded in 1959²³, and continue his studies on the “integrated town” both in America and in Italy, which resulted in the project of a macrostructure at a territorial scale designed with the students and assistants.

From 1965 to 1967, Ricci coordinated Maria Grazia Dallerba’s research project titled “Aspetti antro-sociologici degli atti umani” [“Anthro-sociological aspects of human acts”], conducted both at the faculty of Florence and in Pennsylvania, aimed at studying all the possible spatial configurations based on human acts²⁴. The seminars with the students, his academic research, and the applied research of Dallerba’s project resulted in a series of models intertwining the social and physical structures. The possible spatial configurations of the urban macrostructure derived both from Ricci and Maria Grazia Dallerba’s research on the anthro-sociological aspects of human acts and the interdisciplinary joint research on Visual Design by Ricci and Dusan Vasić²⁵ established in Florence on the base of the Visual Design course evolved under the supervision of György Kepes, who had developed a vigorous program in the field of representational drawing, firstly in his course at M.I.T., then at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies in Cambridge: materials and space were manipulated in pursuit of aesthetic meanings free of the functional and technological pressures that could

23 As already outlined above, there he got in contact with the founding principles of Urban Design experienced in Kevin Lynch and György Kepes applied research projects of the Fifties and Sixties which affected his methodological approach to teaching and design irreversibly.

24 Report of the project kept in Casa Studio Ricci. See also Maria Grazia Dallerba, “Città della terra: recherches d’urbanisme, Faculté de Florence,” *L’Architecture d’aujourd’hui* 36, no.128 (November 1966): 54–56.

25 Dušan Vasić was an architect, artist, friend, and collaborator of Leonardo Ricci, who took over him in the Florentine course of Visual Design in 1967. Dušan Vasić, “Sul rapporto delle configurazioni plastiche artificiali con lo spazio-ambiente-paesaggio”, in 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), 139-148.

pre-empt the designer's thinking²⁶. The students worked in a studio equipped with special tools and devices for light control and photography to develop the artistic skills of the students. The "studio work" taught by Kepes and the influences among all the arts he had experienced in the exhibition "La Cava" ten years before²⁷ constituted the core of Ricci's approach to architecture defined in the refusal of predetermined forms.

As Ricci specified in "Prolusione al corso di Urbanistica II ed Elementi di Composizione"²⁸ some of the produced polymateric models had been already published²⁹ and were to be published in his second book. Among the models elaborated between Italy and U.S.A., Ricci recognized the MODEL I: *Harbor-center with water-sea-earth communication routes* as the physical representation of the synopia³⁰ of the future integrated town. In the elaboration of the model Ricci realized the idea of urban design as the invention of temporalized space for the human individual and collective life in respect of the Mumfordian equation "city=sign of the integrated social activities" to design desirable spaces for human acts³¹.

The model for a urban macrostructure of the integrated town is made of wood and is six meters long, it was realized in 1965 by Ricci with forty students of the Pennsylvania State University at the end of a three-months course. It was presented and displayed on the third floor of Sackett building to the whole audience of students and teachers by Ricci and three students: James H. Pappas,

26 In the design process, the synthesis of the arts combined with the study of the History of Art and Architecture had given birth at M.I.T. to a new methodological approach to urban design, while the course in *Form of the City* prompted by Kevin Lynch had introduced aesthetic problems: spatial relations and perceptual elements were analyzed through group discussions, observation in the field and special project work. A short time before leaving Italy to teach at M.I.T. for the Spring term 1960, Leonardo Ricci and Giovanni Klaus Koenig wrote a report concerning the teaching of plastic formativity to architects following Kepes' example and formulated a purpose addressed to the Dean of the Faculty of Architecture in Florence for the renewal of the teaching program in that field titled "Sull'insegnamento della plastica nelle facoltà di architettura" ["On the teaching of plastic formativity in the courses of architecture"] dated October 16, 1959, typescript, Casa Studio Ricci.

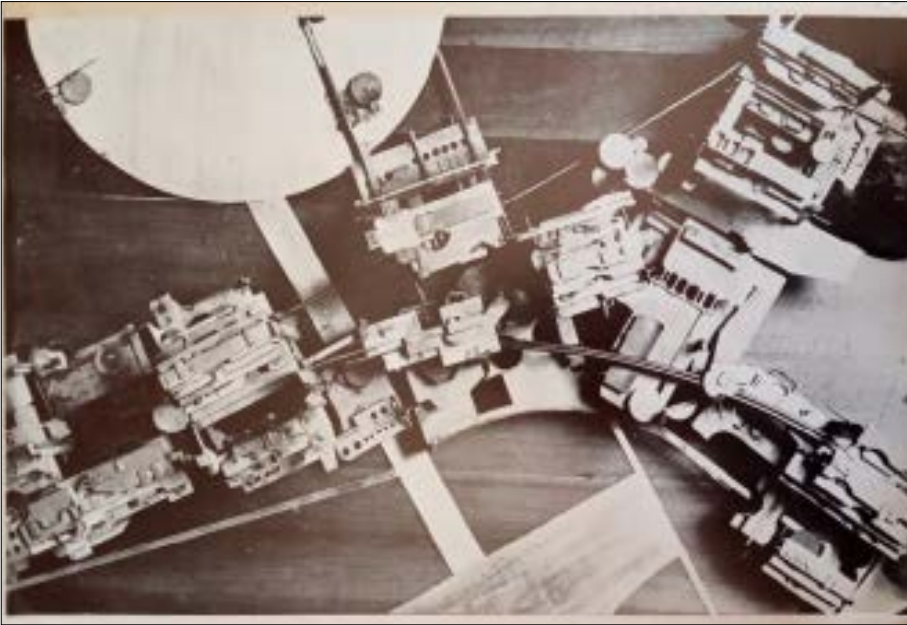
27 The exhibition "La Cava. Mostra internazionale d'arti plastiche" held in Monterinaldi in 1955 set off the collaboration between Ricci and André Bloc, one of the most important initiators of the synthesis of the arts and founder of the Group Espace, which had arranged an open air exhibition in Boit in Provence the year before. That exhibition, as "La Cava", gave strength to the belief in restoring the role of the artist in modern life, as he could realize works of art and object that, to Ricci, could accompany human life becoming parts of their houses. "La Cava" represented a meaningful moment of reflection for contemporary art about the relationship between art and the habitat, about that close interaction between architecture and figurative art, which were melting and working as complementary fundamental expressive elements of a whole. Ricci, Leonardo. "Scritto-manifesto per la mostra 'La Cava', *Architettura: Cronache e Storia*, no. 57 (July, 1960): 188; Fiamma Vigo. "Numero. La Cava. Mostra internazionale all'aperto di arti plastiche organizzata da 'Numero' con la partecipazione dell'architetto Leonardo Ricci, catalogo della mostra (Firenze Monterinaldi, 24 September-30 November 1955)". Firenze, 1955. Therefore, as the Group Espace was founded by Bloc during Ricci's stay in Paris between 1948 and 1950, we can infer that Bloc's archi-sculptural work, and its forms as well, influenced Ricci's ones of the following years. See: Corine Girieud, "La Revue Art d'aujourd'hui (1949-1954): Une vision sociale de l'art" (PhD diss., Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2011); *L'été 1954 à Biot Architecture Formes Couleur*, catalogue d'exposition, 25 juin - 26 septembre 2016, édition de la Réunion des musées nationaux-Grand Palais et Musée national Fernand Léger, Paris 2016.

28 Leonardo Ricci, "Prolusione al corso di Urbanistica II ed Elementi di Composizione", 5.

29 In detail, the model titled "Centro-porto con vie di comunicazione acqua-mare-terra" (1965) was published in *Marcatré*, no. 19-22 (April, 1966) and in *Lineastruttura*, no. 2 (1968), while the model "Macrostruttura situata in zona pianeggiante" (1966) in György Kepes, Vision+Value series *The Man-Made Object* (1966), *Aujourd'hui* and *Lineastruttura*, no. 2 (1968).

30 In his *Città della Terra. Disegno per una urbanistica non alienata* Ricci specified that "synopia" meant to him a model that could be applied to reality.

31 Leonardo Ricci, "Space in Architecture: the visual image of environment", 244 - *Journal of University of Manchester Architectural and Planning Society*, no. 7 (Winter -1957 1956): 7-11; Giovanni Klaus Koenig, "Leonardo Ricci e la 'casa teorica' (alla ricerca di un nuovo spazio architettonico)." *Bollettino Tecnico - Rassegna bimestrale fondata nell'anno 1936*, no.7-8 (August 1958): 3-12.



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Anthony S. Pierce and Anthony C. Platt³², before being exposed at the Universal Exposition in Montréal in 1967. The model represents a flexible settlement for a population varying from 20,000 to 100,000 inhabitants and provided with all the integrated city functions and activities, which are homogeneously distributed in the whole territorial generative matrix. All the primary, secondary, and tertiary activities are rethought in function of a general equal handing out avoiding the separation among ancient city, periphery, and countryside. The model is based on an infrastructure connecting all the facilities and habitat units in a unique system with the landscape: it is the model of an open and continuous city, the expression of a new spatial and formal urban conception³³ in respect of the new temporal-spatial dimension affecting the concepts of duration and continuity. Its continuity is related to the evolution of human acts and building techniques. The territory is the base global structure, on which secondary structures with different scales and technologies are grafted according to different permanence and persistency degrees³⁴. In Ricci's work, as in the work of many designers in the Sixties, the importance of the ground as morphological and topographic generator³⁵ must be also understood in the results of his applied research in Urban and Visual Design as a translation of his ideal of anonymous

32 The Pennsylvania State University News. Department of Public Information, document number 813760.

33 To deepen the infrastructural dimension of Ricci's future city model: Ricci, "Space in Architecture", 7-11; Leonardo Ricci, *Aspetti degli squilibri del territorio toscano in relazione alle tendenze di sviluppo del paese: problema della casa, dei poli terziari e dei fasci infrastrutturali* (Firenze: Rotografica Fiorentina, 1974); Leonardo Ricci (et alii), *Area del cuoio. Ipotesi di piano comprensoriale* (Firenze: Tipografia Giuntina, 1977); Leonardo Ricci, "Parlando nel 1978", in Carlo Doglio, Paola Venturi, *La pianificazione organica come piano della vita?* (Padova: Cedam, 1979).

34 This idea of an open-ended entity was described in *Opera Aperta* by Umberto Eco, with whom Ricci worked in the Sixties at the University of Florence, where Ricci taught Architectural Composition and Eco Visual Communications. From their collaboration the book *La Struttura Assente* by Eco originated. The book is dedicated to Ricci. 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 of perceiving knowing intellectually that brought to education. Umberto Eco, *Opera Aperta* (Milano, Bompiani, 1962); Umberto Eco, *La Struttura Assente* (Milano: Bompiani, 1968).

35 Worldwide the interest of planners and architects moved from the habitat to the urban-territorial scale maturing a new will to analyze the geographical situation as the altered balance between "townscape" and "landscape" produced a visual and existential chaos. Christian Norberg Schulz, "Il paesaggio e l'opera dell'uomo", *Edilizia Moderna*, no. 87-88 (1966): 63-76.

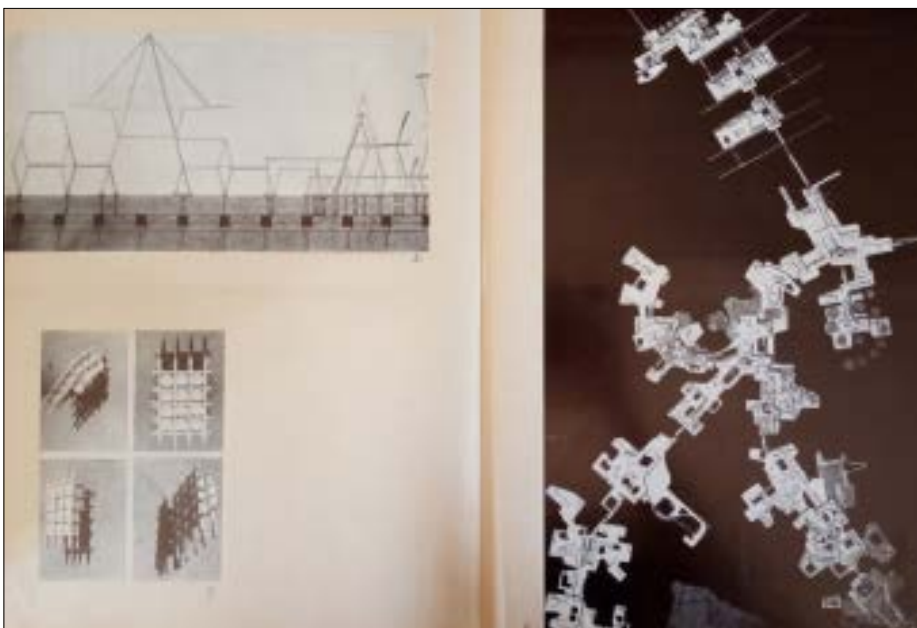
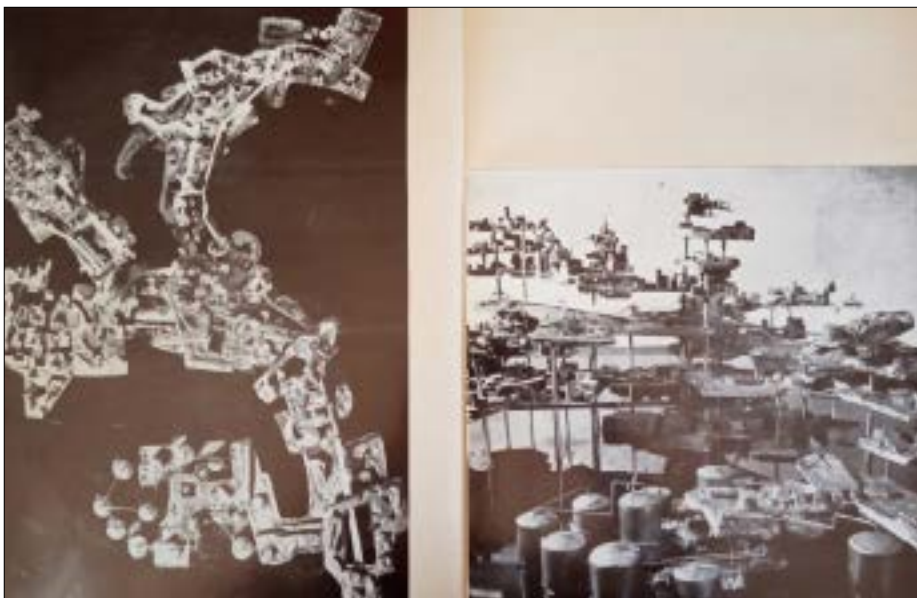


Fig. 1, 2, 3, 4

Leonardo Ricci, with the students of the Faculty of Architecture of Florence and of Pennsylvania State University, polymateric models: "MODEL II - Macrostructure in a flat area" (University of Florence, 1966), "MODEL III - On the relationship nature-form" (University of Florence, 1966-1967), "MODEL V - Floating harbor-city" (University of Florence, 1966), "MODEL VI - Revision of an urban tissue" (University of Florence, 1966-1967), Casa Studio Ricci, folder titled "USA".

architecture: a building art avoiding any hierarchical and authorial evidence or importance. Ricci and Dušan Vasić applied research in Visual Design³⁶, started with the definition of space, the “space-environment-landscape”: the intermediate element resulting from the relationship between itself and the spatial-plastic possible configurations reflecting the general behavior of culture in relation to space. Only the objectification of this relationship should have impressed the architectural-urban configurations instead of predetermined spatial conceptions. All possible objectifications and configurations would have taken shape coherently with the constitutive reasons and, at the same time, in the actualization of the relationships between space-environment-landscape and between it and the plastic-spatial configurations.

According to Ricci and Vasić’s studies, in megastructural projects one could think that space could assume attitudes based on the culture of the future inhabitants. Therefore, space could be active or passive and determine specific configurations with different expressiveness derived from the use of plastic narratives [Fig. 1, 2, 3 4].

Ricci chose the infrastructure to connect the chaotic empty space between the working and the habitat units of the modern cities, where the association as form of existence had to happen. Yet the social exchange was not possible in ancient rhetoric buildings belonging to an obsolete time. All those buildings were readapted to host new association forms and new activities of modern life, so the model clearly shows how new specific buildings are not needed because human acts and activities develop spontaneously in suitable spaces, which can host more than one kind of activity³⁷.

In the contemporary world Ricci noticed a chaos between domestic and workspaces, a sort of “non-city” including architectural buildings and organisms that imitated an obsolete time. Infrastructures and services should be planned by focusing on their existentialist function, they were buildings, but did not need specific typologically determined organism, because some existing functions were born in an alienated society to allow the unification of what was broken and fragmented.

In the City of the Earth the only need for the new society living in the integrated city were qualified spaces. No isolated forms were admitted, but existing forms, as those produced by nature, unified expressions of a society without functional conceptions.

The main advantage of this model was the coincidence of the territorial with the human structure, of the urban and the social structure as it happened in the

36 In Florence, the course of Visual Design replaced the “Ornamental Plastic” course following György Kepes’ Visual Design teaching methods at M.I.T. on Leonardo Ricci and Giovanni Klaus Koenig’s suggestion. Leonardo Ricci, Giovanni K. Koenig, “Sull’insegnamento della plastica nelle facoltà di architettura”, October 16, 1959, typescript, Casa Studio Ricci.

37 Leonardo Ricci, “New Towns’ a scala territoriale,” *Spazio e società*, no. 3 (March, 1976): 73–81.



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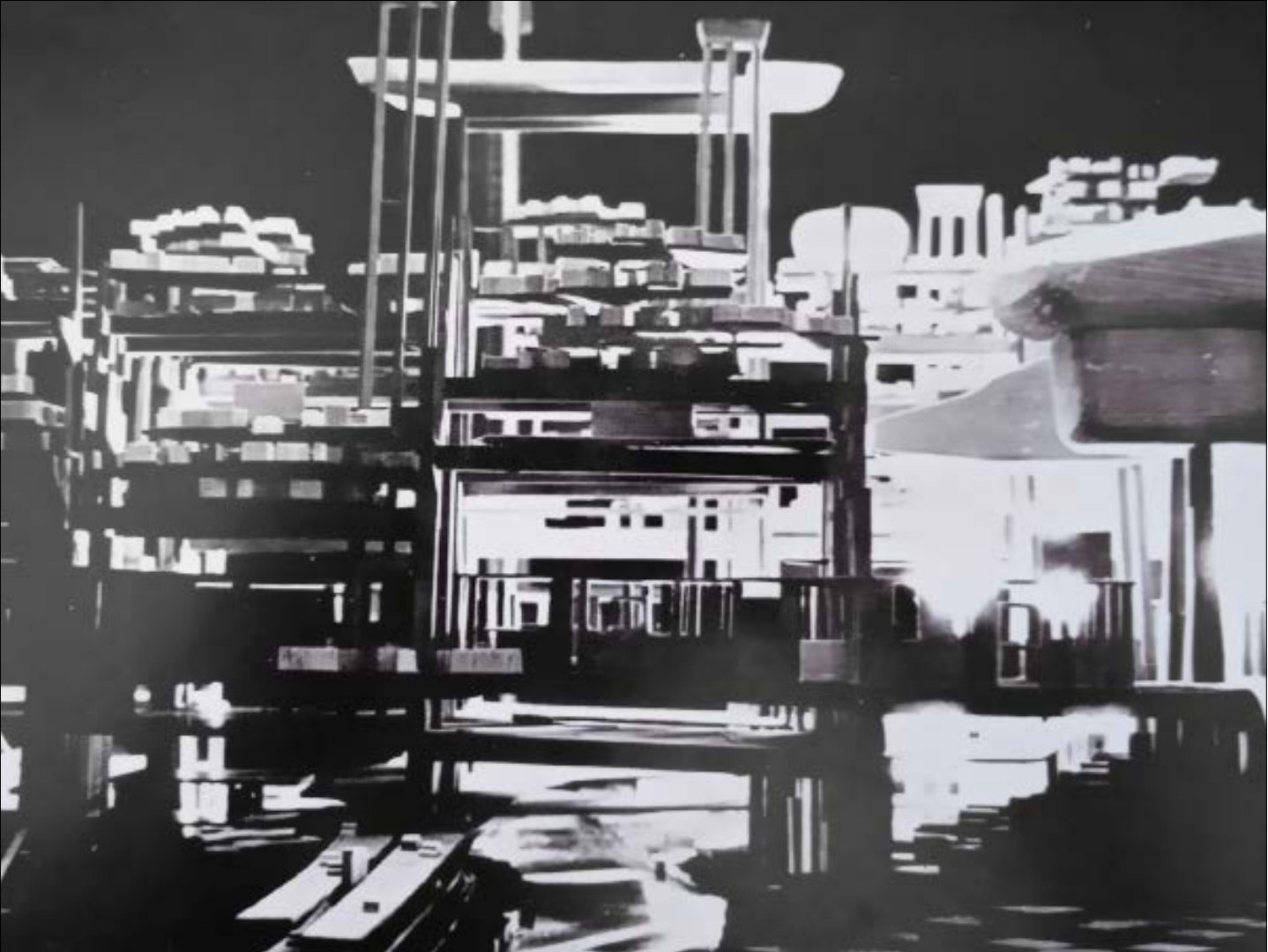
MODEL IV - "The town as a three-dimensional communication node"³⁸ that represented the town as a real exchange tool, a three-dimensional communication node according to the principles of formativity and infinite growth. It allowed Ricci to experiment the overlapping of social and physical structures that intertwined in the subsequent Miami Model Cities plan of 1968 as well. [Fig. 5]

The activities were positioned in the city on the base of an analysis of the territorial vocations of the parts: types of cultivation, manufacture, and production systems. That analysis was followed by the identification of the productive units at the different scales to integrate them correctly in the human life. The transportation and communication systems served that decentralization of activities and in the model are distributed to bring anyone to both walk out in an unspoiled landscape and reach the working units from the habitat units in a calculated time of ten-fifteen minutes. The communication routes have no hierarchies and are displayed to reach each point of the macrostructure. They do not connect attractive poles, thus dividing separate areas, but minimal units of the primary, secondary, and tertiary activities as well as free landscape, facilities, and habitat units. The harbor-center is the core of all the communication routes for the primary, secondary, and tertiary activities and for all types of means of transportation: water, sea, or earth (see image 1 of the archival sheet). From the core, communications were calculated and critically revised on the base of an

38 This is a model of a city realized in 1966 by a group of students of the University of Florence and exchange students of the Penn State University guided by Leonardo Ricci with the help of the assistant professors Mary Colli, Armando Donnamaria, Fabrizio Milanese and Stefano Naef. Masini, Leonardo Ricci. *Progetti di un'architettura per l'uomo del futuro*, 76-86.

Fig. 5

Leonardo Ricci, assistant professors Mary Colli, Armando Donnamaria, Fabrizio Milanese and Stefano Naef, students of the University of Florence and exchange students of the Penn State University, "MODEL IV: The Town as a Three-Dimensional Communication Node" (University of Florence, 1966), the model represents the town as a real exchange tool, a three-dimensional communication node according to the principles of formativity and infinite growth. Pictures of the model kept in Casa Studio Ricci, folder titled "USA".



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evaluation of the necessary integration and possible existing alienation quantum each means provided.

After the infrastructure, the structure is the second unifying device of the urban system: the main structural system consists in vertical machine drawn elements in reinforced pre-stressed concrete (see image 3 and 8 of the archival sheet). Thanks to metallic boxes this primary structure hosts simple and composed beams studied to be shifted at will and hold different weights. These beams harbor all services and canalizations and are composed to be able to plug in the different self-sustaining secondary structures as services and facilities for culture, education, health, spare time and all the modular elements suitable to house all the needed functions. For instance, in the model a civic center, government offices, an auditorium, museums, a site for general religious observances, a stadium, areas for large public shows, and theatres are recognizable as those sculptural white shells positioned in the upper part of the macrostructure (see image 1 of the archival sheet). Therefore, the structure welcomes human beings of all genres and ages in their different acts: they become human structures opposed to mechanic ones and suggest the latent human dimension. To Ricci those were structures intrinsically belonging to the human condition objectifying

Fig. 6

"MODEL I - Harbor-center with water-sea-earth communication routes" (Pennsylvania State University, 1965), habitat units in prefabricated self-sustaining cells and cultural facilities at the upper level, Casa Studio Ricci, folder titled "USA".

outwards³⁹. More in detail, for what concerns education, Ricci positioned in the model nursery, primary, secondary, and high schools at different scales, as they reflected different associative models of human life: nursery schools are part of the habitat because babies need limited social experiences within the family to live the personal recognition phase and not to suffer the aggressive forces of the society. Primary and secondary schools are inserted at the neighborhood and group scales, as they imply an active participation to the neighborhood social life but within spaces integrated to the structure. High schools appear at the town scale since human life can face the metropolis experience. Universities instead are considered by Ricci - as factories and all working places, cultural and religious facilities, civic centers, commercial units, sanitary and entertaining services - areas in contact with the global life of the megalopolis instead of aristocratic separate urban equipments. [Fig. 6]

Vertical units could be added as needed. These equipments are in sprayed concrete⁴⁰ on an iron mesh. Tertiary structures for habitats consist in prefabricated self-sustaining cells, which can be realized with light prefabricated materials to foresee a customized architectonic intervention as well. The habitat units are the result of possible varied combinations of the standard units to satisfy the needs of all kinds of family, which was considered by Ricci the minimal group unit expressing the civilization conditions of a changing society.

At the soil level all kinds of industries are inserted: transformation and automatic industries, respectively thought as anti-pollution factories (for instance agricultural industries) to allow the contemporary presence of secondary and tertiary structures are distributed at a precise distance from nodal centers and controlled by study centers and laboratories⁴¹ (see images 9 and 10 of the archival sheet).

Thanks to the vertical and horizontal systems free communications and a flexible growing are possible. The city has a communications spine running throughout its length while no traffic is allowed inside its boundaries. Transportation is by monorail, elevators and moving sidewalks; in the harbor there are sides for cars, trucks, railroads and shipping, and also a heliport.

Ricci focused on one last important point: materials and structure. The first ones were integrated materials with no distinction between the natural and the artificial, while the structure could use existing frameworks and build new ones in prestressed concrete. What was important about the City of the Earth structure was the possibility it gave to life to insert in a flexible way: each inhabitant would have been able to change its habitat unit according to the single or family

39 On this point, Ricci will evolve his own theory in the project for the Miami Model Cities Plan (1968-1970), in which he applied the synopia to the real case study of the Dade County in Miami and studied with Riccardo Morandi applicable structural solutions supported by precise structural evaluations in prestressed concrete. Ricci, "Architecture at an urban scale: Ricci and Morandi at the University of Florida", Casa Studio Ricci.

40 In the same years, Ricci was realizing the buildings of the Village "Monte degli Ulivi" (1962-1968) where the same curvilinear structure profiles can be noticed, and the same refining in sprayed concrete was realized.

41 Masini, Leonardo Ricci. *Progetti di un'architettura per l'uomo del futuro*, 40-50. The pictures of this model and of all the models described below are kept in Casa Studio Ricci.



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needs. The model is not conceived to represent the final appearance of the harbor-center, the whole space has no specific function, it is arranged on different levels, where morphology suggests the possible uses of a space but avoiding either a univocal correspondence between one space and one function or the general multifunction of the whole system. [Fig. 7]

Leonardo Ricci donated to CSAC most of his archive in 1983, where the drawings of a macrostructure very similar to the pictures of the "Model I" are kept in a folder titled "Habitation Study"⁴². By the observation and comparison of the pictures of the model for an integrated city ("Model I") kept in Casa Studio Ricci in Florence with the drawings of project titled "Habitation Study" in CSAC, we can argue that the two projects coincide, with the only observation that the second seems to be the two-dimensional representation - from the largest to the smallest scale - of the first one. Besides, "Habitation Study" is the archival title of the folder, since it appears in one of the transparencies donated by the architect, but no evidence exists about that as the title of the project, which is quite unknown and only a few drawings with writings in English remain. Yet, the writing "Habitation Study" probably describes the detailed study of the habitat and group scale of Model I⁴³. The pictures of the model are kept in Casa Studio Ricci because the reproductions were asked by the Centre Pompidou in 1992⁴⁴, whereas the drawings kept in CSAC archive were part of Ricci's donation. The mailing between the Centre Georges Pompidou and Leonardo Ricci gives evidence of the fact that

42 CSAC keeps ten drawings with the project code B018640 P, Coll. 145/6.

43 See images in the archival sheet.

44 The Centre Georges Pompidou indeed asked Ricci a model of the project named "La Città Integrata 1960-1965" to be presented in the exhibition titled "Visions Urbaines 1870-1990" organized in the Grande Galerie from February 9 to May 9, 1994 and at the Centre of Contemporary Art in Barcellona from June 21 to October 9, 1994. The exhibition focused on the invention and representation of the City of the XX century in Europe through architecture, painting, and photography and included further events like films, installations, parallel exhibitions to incite the debate about the urban changes at the beginning of the XX century. Paintings represented the transformation of Europe in urban civilization. Ricci's work would have been showed next to Sitte, Wagner, Garnier, Berlage, Loos, Sant'Elia, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Doré, Monet, Munch, Boccioni Sironi, Grosz, Dix, Kandinsky, Dubuffet, and Mondrian, but at the end the photographic blow-up of his model was not included in the exhibition because of lack of space.

Fig. 7

MODEL I, pictures kept in Casa Studio Ricci.

the project at urban scale for an integrated city was done at the University of Florence between 1960-1965 and that it was composed of five panels: one only representing the final model and four panels with 18 photos of the constructive details of the model⁴⁵.

Moreover, in 1963 Frances E. Coughlin, the Director of the United States Information Service in Florence, wrote to Leonardo Ricci to invite him to take part in the Italian session of the itinerant exhibition "Visionary Architecture", curated by Arthur Drexler, firstly held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1960, arranged for December 1963, after its session in Belgrad⁴⁶. The exhibition was to be held in La Strozzi Gallery and then continued in Rome, Genoa, and Israel⁴⁷. The United States Information Service asked Ricci to prepare an introductory lecture at the inauguration of the exhibition on December 19 relating to the theme of visionary architecture to be part of the event promoted by an American Institute. The contact between the United States Information Service in Florence and Ricci happened thanks to Elizabeth Mann Borgese⁴⁸. Leonardo Ricci accepted Mrs Coughlin invitation, because the invitation card of the inauguration is kept in Casa Studio Ricci, but there is no trace of Ricci's speech type-script for the event in the archival documents, even if Ricci actually introduced the exhibition with a conference in Florence three years later, which was published in *L'Avanti* by Lara Vinca Masini⁴⁹. In the Sixties, visionary architecture and megastructures were the translation of that change of scale mirroring

45 A lot of photos and the quoted correspondence are kept in Casa-Studio Ricci.

46 Letter from Frances E. Coughlin to Leonardo Ricci dated November 8, 1963, kept in Casa-Studio Ricci.

47 The exhibition was adapted for a travelling show and a major book by Arthur Drexler was published by the Museum of Modern Art. The MOMA press release of the exhibition quoted also as follows: «Le Corbusier's plan for a road which is itself a building; Kiyonori Kikutake's city built over water which could be cultivated for food; BuclonInster Puller's dome to shelter Manhattan Island; and Paolo Soleri's tubular concrete bridge which eliminates ascending and descending roads. Other projects such as William Katavolos' proposal for chemical architecture suggests new forms for new material, while Louis Kahn's Philadelphia line center suggests a new solution for street and parking problems. Frederick Kiesler's Endless House, shown in an 8 feet model and in life-size photo murals of the interior develops the surface of the building as a twisting, continuously curved ribbon wrapped around itself. Paul Nelson's "suspended house," designed in 1938, is also shown in a scale model as is Reginald Malcolmson's Metro-Linear city I project, which organizes a community along the axes of a head. Among the forms created by these architects are great cone-shaped structures, glass pyramids, concrete bowls, mushroom-shaped houses, spirals and a building shaped like a flight of steps. They range in date from the 20s to the present. In addition, an historical introduction includes work by Leonardo de Vinci, Piranesi and other architects of the past some of whose visions have proved prophetic». Press release of the Museum of Modern Art, September 29, 1960, 1, source: https://assets.moma.org/documents/moma_pressrelease_326200.pdf?_ga=2.221829400.1093098411.1603957859-1289831711.1603834957 (last accessed October 28, 2020).

48 Frances E. Coughlin specifies it in the same letter of November 8, 1963..

49 Lara Vinca Masini, "L'architettura dell'impossibile," in *L'Avanti*, February 1, 1964. See also Matteo Cassani Simionetti's article published in this issue: "Staging of the Costume Sector in the Italian Pavilion of Expo 67 in Montréal, Canada (1966-1967). From "Urschrei" to "Correalism". Considerations on Some Motifs in Leonardo Ricci (1962-1967)", pages 171-175.

the needs of the mass society⁵⁰ and, taking a step behind, when Dean Pietro Belluschi convened Leonardo Ricci with Lewis Mumford, Kenzo Tange and Paul Nelson at MIT in 1959, Kenzo Tange's project for the Boston Harbor was also published: designed with his students at M.I.T., it is considered the first authentic megastructure, one year before the megastructural masterpiece project for the Tokyo Bay (1960)⁵¹. Those projects arose from the theoretical field and became the megastructural founding project for Metabolism as well as for French and Italian schools, disconnected teams at a first glance, but melted in a single school of Megastructure after 1964. Therefore, Ricci got in contact with megastructural issues on the occasion of his transfer to the United States, and his projects, worked in the Sixties with his American and Italian students mirror the definitions of "megastructure" given in the following years⁵², which permeated Ricci's projects of the Seventies and Eighties⁵³.

Megastructures were born when the historical awareness spread out among modern architects' knowledge: all the innovations were justified by architects with a historical preceding example, and, therefore, as Reyner Banham noticed, they were historically positioned either in a changing period (post-Mies van der Rohe) or in a non-changing period (since Ponte Vecchio)⁵⁴. According to Banham's vision, the most important reference for megastructures could be traced in Florence, Leonardo Ricci's town, where Ponte Vecchio was the symbol of a not intentionally built megastructure before 1966, and in his master Giovanni Michelucci's theories about "La Nuova Città" ["The New Town"].

50 In Italy 1963 is the date of the birth of Urban Design when a group of scholars was formed around the figure of Ludovico Quaroni who did not teach urban planning, but "urban design" until the early Seventies. After what is considered, even by Quaroni himself, the first text of urban planning by Giuseppe Samonà: *L'Urbanistica e l'avvenire delle città* (1959), the first Italian texts that dealt with the urban design project were published: *Origini e sviluppo della città moderna* by Carlo Aymonino (1965), *L'Architettura della città* by Aldo Rossi (1966), *La Torre di Babele* by Ludovico Quaroni (1967). Unlike the already cited American texts, the urban project was still understood - and still is - as a design of the city through architecture. (Giuseppe Samonà, *L'urbanistica e l'avvenire delle città* (Bari: Laterza, 1959); Carlo Aymonino, *Origini e sviluppo della città moderna* (Padova: Marsilio, 1965); Aldo Rossi, *L'Architettura della Città* (Padova: Marsilio, 1966); Ludovico Quaroni, *La Torre di Babele* (Padova: Marsilio, 1967)). In Italy, for a long time, the business centers opened the discussion about the definition of an urban form that could hold the development of the city-region. The related analysis were centered on the growth of the city and its control through design: it could have implied a growth by parts, where each part could have worked as a development and growth node.

There will be no urban design courses in Italian universities until 1985, although the discipline had already recognition by the academy although *Casabella*, *Lotus* and *Controspazio* began to play a fundamental role in the treatment of urban design as well by publishing the US theories.

51 Even before the megastructuralist current was set in motion, Tange had produced what was to become the movement's masterpiece in the Tokyo Bay: an urban structure that extended the center of Tokyo by eighteen kilometers across the bay, distributing housing structures on the water, connected to the main connecting axis thanks to highway systems. In this way, Japan became the main reference for visionary architects and urban planners of the 1960s. Reyner Banham, *Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past Le Tentazioni Dell'architettura. Megastrutture* (Londra: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 51.

52 Fumihiko Maki defined the "Mega-structure" as «a man-made feature of the landscape. It [was] like the great hill on which Italian towns were built», an artificial element realized thanks to contemporary technology, but he also quoted his master Kenzo Tange when he stated that it was a shape at mass humanity scale which could have included a "Mega-shape" and discrete functional units. These could have changed rapidly and in them a wider structure could have been inserted. Fumihiko Maki, *Investigations in Collective Forms* (Washington University: St. Louis, 1964), 8-10.

Four years later Ralph Wilcoxon introduced his *Megastructure Bibliography* with a useful definition of megastructures: it was described not only as a big structure but also as a structure frequently realized with modular units, able of an unlimited increase, a structural framework in which minor prefabricated units could be built, provided with a longer life than the minor units it supports. Ralph Wilcoxon, *Council of Planning Librarians Exchange Bibliography* (Monticello, 1968).

53 On megastructures see: "Megastructures", HPA no. 3 vol. I (2018), edited by Dominique Rouillard, Anna Rosellini, Lorenzo Ciccarelli and Beatrice Lampariello.

54 Banham, *Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past*, 10, 11.

The megastructure, as a three-dimensional matrix-system for the containment of man's activities like working, playing, governing, worshipping, and living with the others, seemed to be the best new physical form for urban life, the most appropriate route to deal with the future environment. The concept of creating these new structures to be used as energizing transformers of older urban areas implied the problem of conceiving neutral containers allowing the hosting of mutual feedbacks of individuals and of the entire community living in them. Megastructures were in line with Ricci's ideal of the future city as they were a sustain to life both intended as structural supports and services equipments for utilities, transit, and communications for the city. They had to allow additive inputs and total flexibility for human life evolution.

Architects and planners from every country elaborated their proposals for housing community: Kenzo Tange, Fumihiko Maki, Manfredi Nicoletti, Archigram, Moshde Safdie, Paolo Soleri⁵⁵ and the Japanese Metabolists designed some of the endless supply of purposes for these vast matrix-systems dealing with the several features of megastructures. These projects were refused and feared on one side, because of the possibility of being flung into a mass of control and anonymity, but this was exactly the dimension Leonardo Ricci was interested in.

Megastructures, as new urban utopias, had the potential of making greater change and variety possible in human life, they could make the liberation and ecological recreation of more open land happen, and the more immediate response of community to citizen and vice-versa in a newly revealed interface of the individual with his cultural, social, political, and physical environment. These structures had effects on their inhabitants concerning the social and psychological fields which had to be considered in the design process with the needs, activities, feelings, and resources of the future dwellers. On the base of these issues architecture had to manage creative solutions on the design process and, the intention to add a new dimension to old cities, handled as new increased communities, the project of megastructures could be intended as an evolution of Leonardo Ricci's view on the project for the community space: the involvement of people, different professionals belonging to different disciplines and the future residents, helped in establishing a dialogue that led to a more

55 Straits of Messina was Manfredi Nicoletti's project dealing with problems of transportation and movement, while Let Zetlin suggested integrated systems which could become communities housed in perimetral or interstitial spaces of structures forming part of a floating airport in offshore waters, serving different purposes, as Soleri also suggested the use of dams, bridges, and airports for multi-use community purposes.

With regard to the habitat, Moshe Safdie's design for Montreal's Habitat (1967) showed a hilltop habitat project for Puerto Rico, a seaside complex for S. Thomas in Virgin Islands and a New Community in Israel, all dealing with habitat units studies through a comparatively diminutive size.

Paolo Soleri, after having moved to Arizona in 1956, where he founded the first Cosanti Foundation, exhibited to the United States his ideas about the megastructural future in what he called "arcologies", expressing the need for seeking utopian concepts in theoretical investigations «where the ifs are accepted as the best potential, the hows must produce as much as they can, and the whys embody the real motivations» (Paolo Soleri, *Arcology: The City in The Image of Man* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, England: The MIT Press, 1969). Soleri's "Arcologies" emerged as closed systems, aesthetically designed physical objects appropriate for museum display, but they were born as a new manifestation of intents and "Arcosanti" (1970), one of his "arcologies" destined to be the headquarters of his Cosanti Foundation, seemed to be more likely to be constructed than his more visionary projects. See James T. Burns Jr., "Social and psychological implications of megastructures", in *Arts of the Environment*, ed. György Kepes (New York: George Braziller, 1972), 136-137.

fruitful interchange between user and planner, and, therefore, to Ricci's idea of new equal relationship between architect and customer as well⁵⁶.

Giorgio Piccinato, Vieri Quilici and Mafredo Tafuri maintained that in Italy it was at the beginning of the Sixties when the plurality of languages resulting from the various works of "revision of rationalism" was affirming that Italian architecture underwent an involution partly due to the economic crisis and partly to the re-discussion of international issues in a local key⁵⁷. Italian architects, aligned with the international debate, shifted their attention from the scale of the individual building to the neighborhood and territorial scale. In Italy and abroad, therefore, a new dimension was being studied, that of the "city territory", which favored the emergence of a "new utopianism" intended as a possible improvement of reality rather than a tentative escape from it. In some cases, the study of the city territory meant the complete abandonment of the specific languages developed in the previous years and of any constraint in them.

The "Habitation Study" project – synopia of the future city exemplified in MODEL I - represented in the transparencies suggested a structural maze in concrete with tower supports which reminded the Middle Age walls used also for the residential settlement of Monterinaldi. This structure of great height developed in vertical, giving birth to a continuous growth of plate levels anchored to it. These parallel frames suggested the idea of an endless city⁵⁸ where the multiplication of the habitat units conveyed the sense of unlimited expansion.

At the habitat scale Leonardo Ricci studied first open standard units: double bed, single bed, single bed unit with closet, large kitchen, and small kitchen, two types of storage, single and double tub, a water closet, two lavatory units (see image n. 2 of the archival sheet). They were successively combined to study a "typical habitat" which was used to design three possible plate floors. These units and plates could have been repeated infinitely till they would have shaped the Earth City megastructure (see image n. 4, 5, 6 of the archival sheet).

The project showed that the structure could not be characterized by closed modular spatial frames because it had to result from the analysis of the relationship between human beings and the environment. Closed modules would have reflected segregation and produced containers for unknown lives, thus it could not bear all the necessary spaces for human acts and activities neither for the

56 Leonardo Ricci's idea of anonymous architecture lied in the idea that the project could result from a fruitful equal interchange of ideas between the architect, the engineer, the customer and all the artisans involved, if the final result was melted and balanced with the customer, the engineer, the artisan's work and everyone had the same importance in the design process.

57 Giorgio Piccinato, Vincenzo Quilici and Mafredo Tafuri, "La città territorio. Verso una nuova dimensione", *Casabella-continuità*, no. 270 (1962): 16-25.

58 This idea of the endless city as well as the expressionist forms Ricci MODEL I shows let us infer an immediate reference to the *Endless House* by Frederick Kiesler. Bruno Zevi wrote about this idea of finding new suggestions for architecture from the art. The Rationalism crisis brought to the rediscovery of Antoni Gaudi work, of Hermann Finsterlin's vision, the "endless house" and the "universal theatre" by Frederick Kiesler, which became examples to follow. André Bloc's work arose the problem in the reviews *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* and *Aujourd'hui* and the concept of architecture without architects came out. Bernard Rudofsky set up a great exhibition about exotic buildings at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and it was clear that real architecture was not the result of some intellectuals' work, but a spontaneous activity coming from the shared heritage of a people developed under the influence of collective experiences. Bruno Zevi, "Dal centro civico di Cumbernauld all' habitat di Moshe Safdie", *L'Espresso*, then collected in *Cronache di Architettura XII*, (Bari: Laterza, 1970), 275-277, 299-301, 419-438.

habitat nor for facilities and services. On the contrary, in the project the sense of fluidity is conveyed by the organic forms characterizing each compositive unit from the habitat to the territorial scale.

If we focus on the combination of the open standard units and their curvilinear, sculptural, three-dimensional profiles, as well as on the project purpose, we can compare the standard units for MODEL I to the model studied by Ricci in the same year for the first edition of the exhibition "La Casa Abitata: biennale degli interni di oggi" ["The Inhabited House: biennial of today's interiors"] inaugurated in the Spring of 1965, from March 6 to May 2.

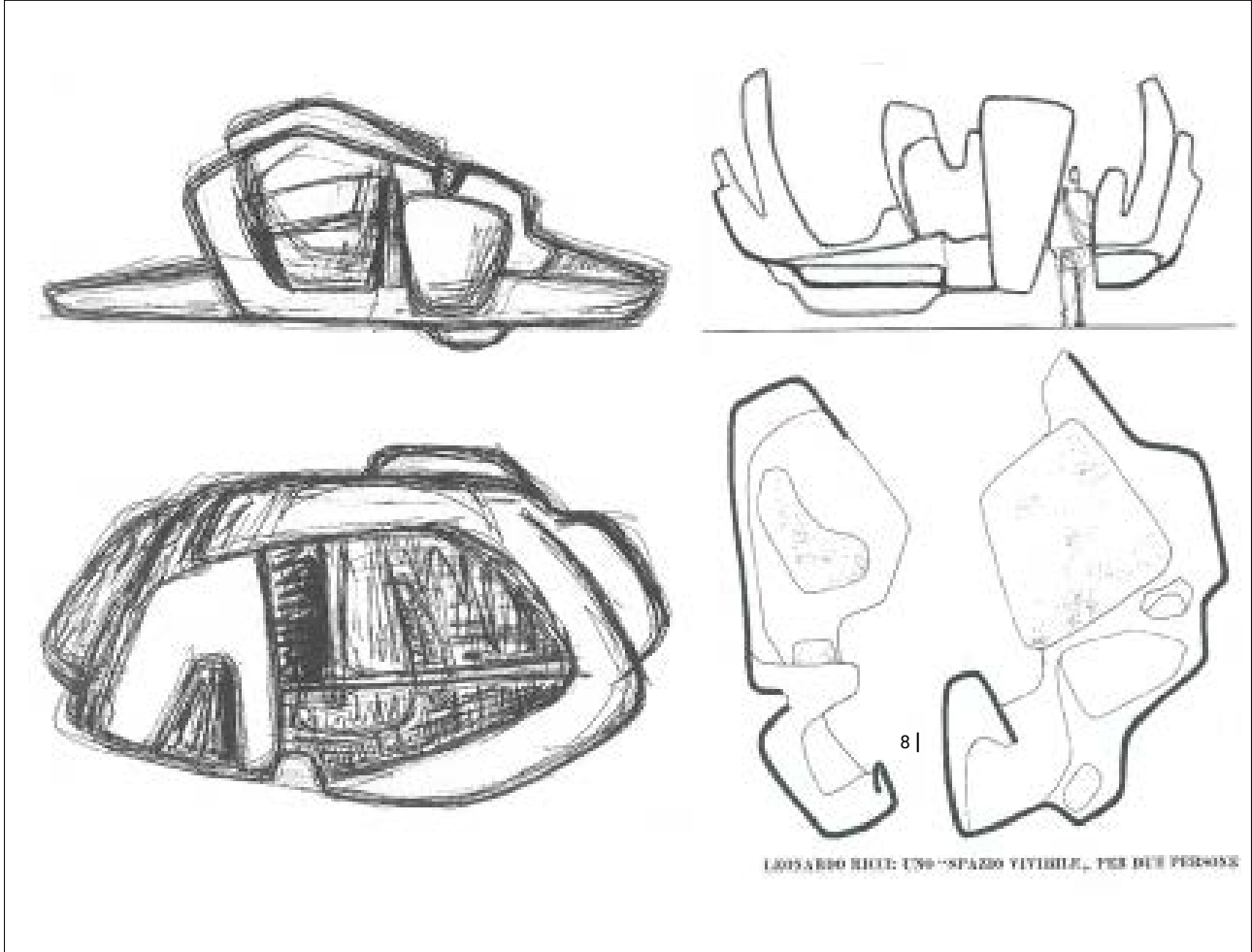
For what concerns the purpose, the organizing committee formed by Giovanni Michelucci, Ricci's master, in the role of president, Domenico Benini, Tommaso Ferraris and Pierluigi Spadolini, proposed as main exhibition theme the interior living of a house, since in those years the subject was increasingly moving away from the interests of architecture and urban planning, more concentrated on the metropolitan dimension rather than on the private life of man and on the human «right to sociality, to ethics, to the need for community factors⁵⁹». The theme of living the inside of a house and its possible configurations had to be reexamined in function of the mass culture, of the industrial and technological society⁶⁰. Some of the most qualified Italian architects, Leonardo Ricci, Leonardo Savioli, Giovanni Bassi, Carlo De Carli⁶¹, Achille e Pier Giacomo Castiglioni, Marco Zanuso, Angelo Mangiarotti, Luigi Moretti, Vico Magistretti, Edoardo Gellner, Eduardo Vittoria, Giovanni Bassi, and Gregotti Meneghetti Stoppino, were called to answer. The participants were not asked to provide definite solutions but to think and suggest solutions that would have welcomed the spontaneous flow of family life and its continuous change. The interior architecture proposals had to host the spontaneous and autonomous variability and modification that reflected the trend of psychological, social and economic changes of the inhabitants of an average house. Besides, the house could be defined as "inhabited" when it allowed the "sentimental stratification" of life. The proposals could concern possible interventions on pre-established spaces or new integrated spaces, that was «constituting an 'open formativity', capable of reciprocal, lively and usable relationship between the various elements that [made] up the house⁶²»: the same purposes of the integrated macrostructure, even at a different scale. Giovanni Michelucci, who influenced Ricci to all the possible extents, from his

59 Mario Miccinesi, "Una mostra a Firenze: La Casa Abitata", *Rivista dell'arredamento*, no. 130 (1965): 9-29.

60 «It was a question of seeing how, in the current average living situation, from the assumption of pre-established data (the supply of the market, pre-existing rooms, etc.) it [was] possible to achieve a solution that [allowed] those who [lived] in a house to really live it. They [the architects] were asked for directions, suggestions, interpretations of today's way of life». Miccinesi, "Una mostra a Firenze: La Casa Abitata", 10.

61 Carlo De Carli designed the introductory hall of the exhibition dedicated to the "Liberty" and to the living solutions it suggested for the contemporary living.

62 Miccinesi, "Una mostra a Firenze: La Casa Abitata", 11. On the open formativity issue see Luigi Pareyson, *Estetica: Teoria della Formatività* (Torino: Ed. di Filosofia, 1954).



very early research in the “form act” to the vision of a future city⁶³, exposed the problem of the “inhabited house” in his introductory speech, giving to the problem a high cultural value. To Michelucci the theme reconnected the social, human, architectural and urban dimensions because every proposed solution, if inserted in the city, could lead it towards the definition of a precise form. The theme, according to Michelucci, was stigmatized in the relationships architect-population and habitat-city-metropolis, starting from the small to the large scale⁶⁴.

Leonardo Ricci’s contribution intended to promote the idea of a «continuous architecture, which [took] place outside the usual concept of closed form, but in

63 Ricci makes a constant reference to his master who before him had supported the search for the truth of architecture, the study in plan and section, the strong conviction in the search for space that welcomes the variability of the city and, above all, the idea of anonymous architecture, according to which the architect had to disappear in front of architecture to transform the rationalized function into a natural functionality. It was therefore an existential architecture (as he defines it, non-existentialist), anonymous and phenomenological relational. Michelucci’s vision of organic architecture also inevitably influenced Ricci’s vision, but organic architecture was also elaborated and incorporated into Tuscan architecture in the multidirectional fluidity of interior spaces guided by conduction, expansion, contraction and concatenation as happened in Leonardo Ricci’s project for the Monterinaldi Houses (1949-1963). Organicity, according to Michelucci, resided in the naturalness of the relationships between the parts expressed in nature that had nothing to do with the forced search for the relationship between construction and the environment: beauty lied in the harmony between architecture and nature because “it arises from ‘intuition of vital relations between things’, not in formal relations”.

Michelucci’s architectural thought was also rooted in existentialism, understood as the ability to go beyond codes and boundaries to continue human history shaped in the physical structure of space, and as the main generative force to build a variable and livable space by privileging the relationships between the elements. Giovanni Michelucci, “Wright: Un Colloquio Mancato,” *Letteratura e Arte Contemporanea*, no. 11 (1951); Giovanni Michelucci, “La città variabile,” *La Nuova Città*, no. 13 (January 1954); Giovanni Klaus Koenig, *Architettura in Toscana 1931-1968*, (Torino: ERI-Edizioni RAI, 1968); Amedeo Belluzzi and Claudia Conforti, *Architettura Italiana 1944-1994* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1994); Corinna Vasić Vatovec, “Leonardo Ricci e Giovanni Michelucci: confronti preliminari.” *La Nuova Città*, no.2-3 (December 2001): 100-127; Claudia Conforti, Roberto Dulio and Marzia Marandola, *Giovanni Michelucci (1891-1990)* (Milano: Electa, 2006); Fabio Fabbrizzi, *Giovanni Michelucci. Lo spazio che accoglie* (Firenze: Edifir, 2015). 7

64 Miccinesi, “Una mostra a Firenze: La Casa Abitata”, 12.

Fig. 8

“Leonardo Ricci, sketch for the “form-space” model, “Spazio vivibile per due persone”, realized for the “La Casa Abitata” exhibition, Casa Studio Ricci; Leonardo Ricci, sketches and picture of the model for the “form-space” model, “Spazio vivibile per due persone”, realized for the “La Casa Abitata” exhibition, published in Lara Vinca Masini and Agnoldomenico Pica, “Intenti e Aspetti Della Mostra “La Casa Abitata”. Leonardo Ricci Uno “Spazio Vivibile” per Due Persone. La Casa Abitata: Arredamenti Di Quindici Architetti Italiani, La Mostra a Firenze, Palazzo Strozzi, Dal 6 Marzo al 2 Maggio”, *Domus*, no. 426 (May 1965): 55, 56.

that of open form, according to the dynamic needs, of choice, which [allowed] new relationships between living and other human acts such as working, educating, moving around, the integration of a single organism open to all functions that [were] sectorially separated, in an architecture on an urban scale⁶⁵».

The project looked as a detached cell of the described macrostructure for an integrated city. Almost perfectly following the words of the master Michelucci on the exhibition, Ricci described his proposal as a possible model to be inserted in a macrostructure, in which all the housing units and services had to be distributed in such a way as to be easily accessible both in the vertical and horizontal directions. Within Ricci's "livable space for two people" any user could have been the interior designer of his own house in order to allow life to develop according to elementary needs, once freed from all the unnecessary. Indeed, the exhibition regulations assigned an area from twenty-five to thirty-five square meters to the exhibiting architects, as the minimal existence rational cells, and it wanted to offer an alternative model of "Existenz Minimum". The habitat model proposed by Ricci was a sculptural envelope without internal partitions, allowing the hypothetical flow of human actions inside, a limited internal space connected to an open space outside. Ricci called his model "form-space", it was in "centinella" wood, suspended from the floor by means of small and low stone walls as those on which Ricci's houses were also suspended. The prototype was in real scale and accompanied by the architect's sketches. It effectively suggested a unique "form-space" derived from the inhabitants' possible movements and could change thanks to moving elements. The model embraced the fundamental principle of variability both in the way of life and in the use of different materials and colors.

It could be made industrially or by hand, designed for a certain form of industrialization or used independently from structures. The fixed furniture was integrated into the space and shaped with the organic external shell, while the moving elements could be varied and could differentiate the interior⁶⁶. **[Fig. 8]**

In conclusion, from the philological analysis of the archival sources and from the projects' observation emerges that Leonardo Ricci's most important result lied firstly in the application of his design method to different programs across time and typologies, from the community projects to the macrostructures, which allowed him to reach different and high design results and morphological solutions. Secondly, a strong experimentation to find a correct synthesis of the arts arose in Ricci's work both as a painter and as an architect between 1952 and 1972. That experimentation resulted in a precise branch of his production and found its exalted and clearest expression in the synthesis

65 Ricci's report about his project, from which this quotation was taken, was published in Italian in Miccinesi, "Una mostra a Firenze: La Casa Abitata", 13.

66 The complete bibliography on the Exhibition "La Casa Abitata" is: Lara Vinca Masini, "Mostra Della Casa Abitata a Firenze", *Marcatrè*, no. 16-17-18 (1965): 215-17; Lara Vinca Masini and Agnoldomenico Pica, "Intenti e Aspetti Della Mostra "La Casa Abitata". Leonardo Ricci Uno "Spazio Vivibile" per Due Persone. La Casa Abitata: Arredamenti Di Quindici Architetti Italiani, La Mostra a Firenze, Palazzo Strozzi, Dal 6 Marzo al 2 Maggio", *Domus*, no. 426 (May 1965): 29-56; Miccinesi, "Una Mostra a Firenze: La Casa Abitata", 9-29; Vasič Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto "esistenzialista"*, 39.

of architecture and sculpture not only in the models for an integrated town, in the model accomplished for “La Casa Abitata” living unit project, but in a series of projects of the Sixties: the project for the Commerce Chamber of Carrara (1956), the project for the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial (1959-1960), in the buildings of the Village “Monte degli Ulivi” (1962-1968), the set up of the Expressionism Exhibition (1964), the project for the Cemetery of Montecatini (1967), the “Customs” section of the Italian Pavillion if the Montréal Exposition (1967), the project for Dog Island (1968-1970).

The importance of the investigation on Ricci’s theoretical and applied research on the temporalized space for the future community living in the so-called integrated city lies in its focus on the design process instead of the image of architecture. A focus on the result of the architectural project, producing a form, is not enough, especially nowadays, to understand the act of design, which is a political act, inevitably contributing to and modifying the people’s life.

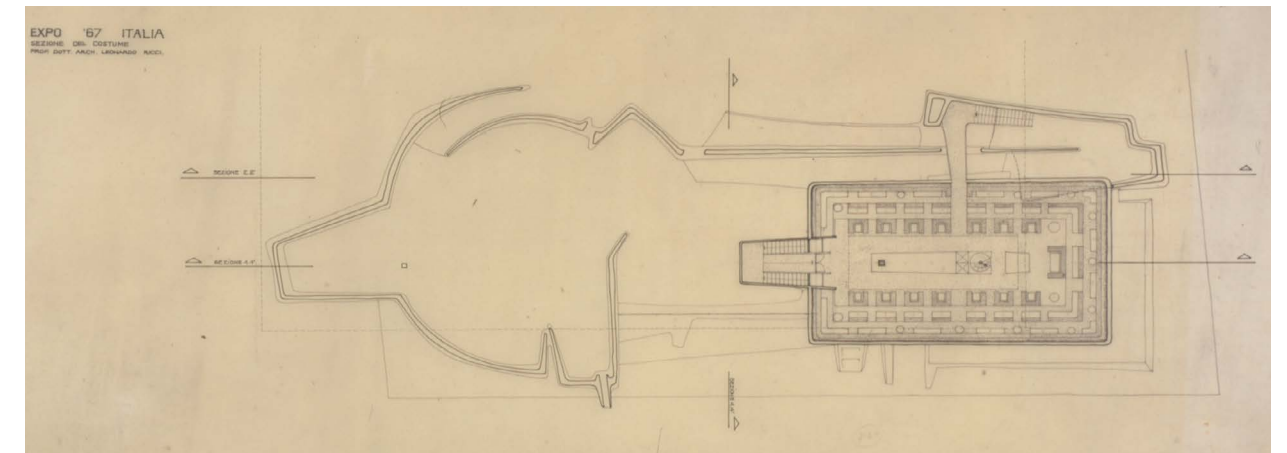
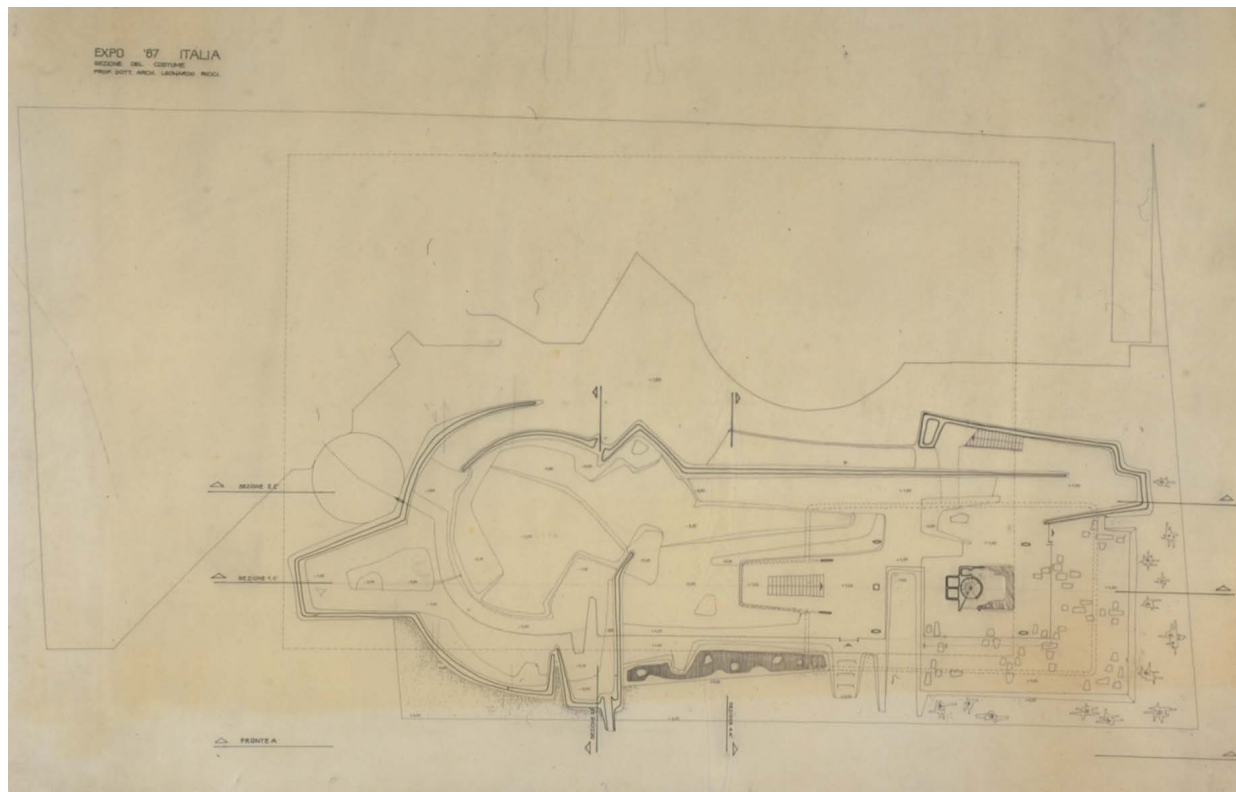
If the first attitude to reason on the human acts and activities derived from Michelucci’s teaching⁶⁷, Ricci’s exchange with the United States enriched his vision on the duties of architecture: among others, the MIT researchers Kevin Lynch and Christopher Alexander’s studies on the process⁶⁸ have been for Ricci and are at present fundamental to interpret human needs in the city, through the study on human movements, now accelerated by quick communication and transport times. In Ricci’s investigation on the city it is possible to trace, as maintained above, the open form design instance, in which time and space melt: the new spatial solutions follow changes in time and translate the need of flexibility, precept of present times cultural debate and material urgency.

67 Leonardo Ricci and the Florentine architects’ work stood out from the coeval architectural scene and relevant design approaches towards the reconstruction for its being “relational” and concentrated on the design process, on its main components, rather than on its results. Leonardo Ricci and Leonardo Savioli started from Michelucci’s lesson to apply a continuous research and revision of the compositive processes, which affected the non-definiteness perception of their design solutions undergoing the recovery of history and tradition, the integration of different scales, the continuity between project and city, architecture and memory, form and permanence of the ancient and rooted tradition. See Giovanni Michelucci, “La città variabile,” *La Nuova Città*, no. 13 (January 1954); Vittorio Gregotti, *New Directions in Italian Architecture* (New York: George Braziller, 1968), 86-91; Belluzzi, Conforti, *Architettura Italiana 1944-1994*, 21; Fabio Fabbrizzi, *Opere e progetti di scuola fiorentina, 1968-2008* (Firenze: Alinea, 2008), 51-60.; Fabio Fabbrizzi, *Giovanni Michelucci. Lo spazio che accoglie* (Firenze: Edifir, 2015).

68 About Lynch’s studies: Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960); Donald Appleyard, Kevin Lynch, and John R. Myer, *The View From the Road* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1965); Kevin Lynch, *Managing the Sense of a Region* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), Kevin Lynch, *A Theory of Good City Form* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981). About Christopher Alexander’s studies: Christopher Alexander, *Notes on the Synthesis of Form* (Cambridge-MA: Harvard University Press, 1964); Christopher Alexander, “From a set of forces to a form”, in *Man-Made Object*, ed. György Kepes, (New York: Braziller, 1966), 96-107; Christopher Alexander, *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977) and Maria Bottero, “Lo strutturalismo funzionale di C. Alexander”, *Comunità* (1967): 148, 149. See also: Brent Ryan, *The Largest Art. A Measured Manifesto for a Plural Urbanism* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2017).

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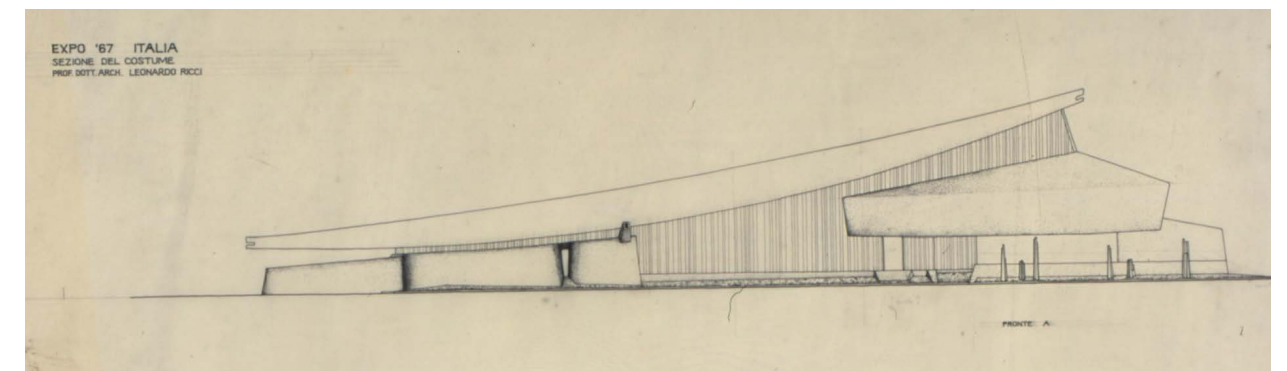
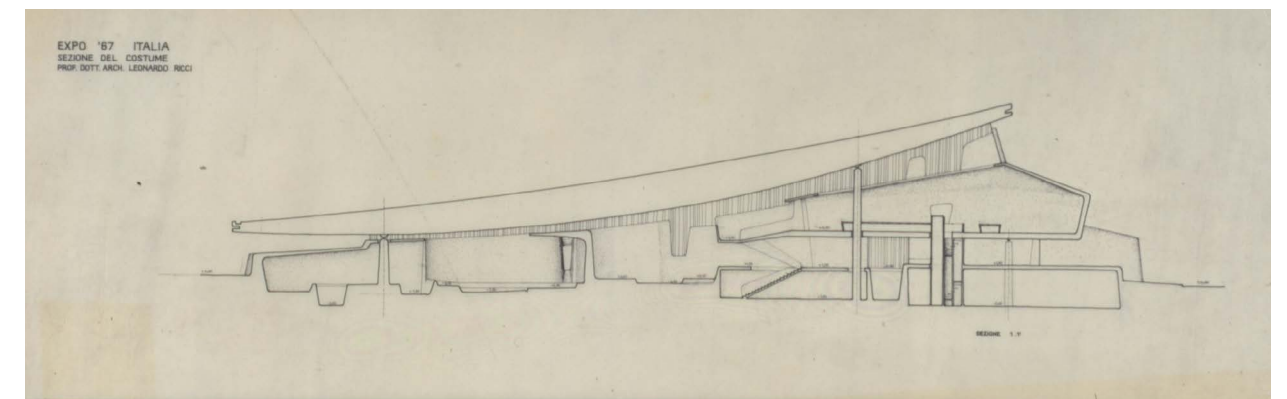
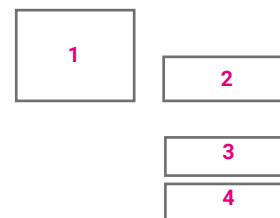
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Staging of the Costume Sector in the Italian Pavilion of Expo 67

ARCHIVAL DATA

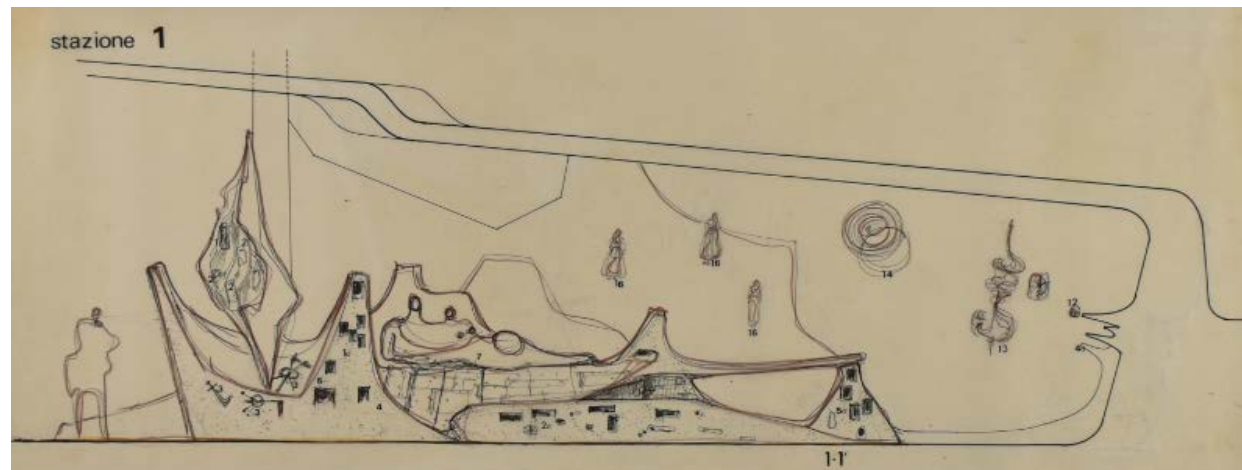
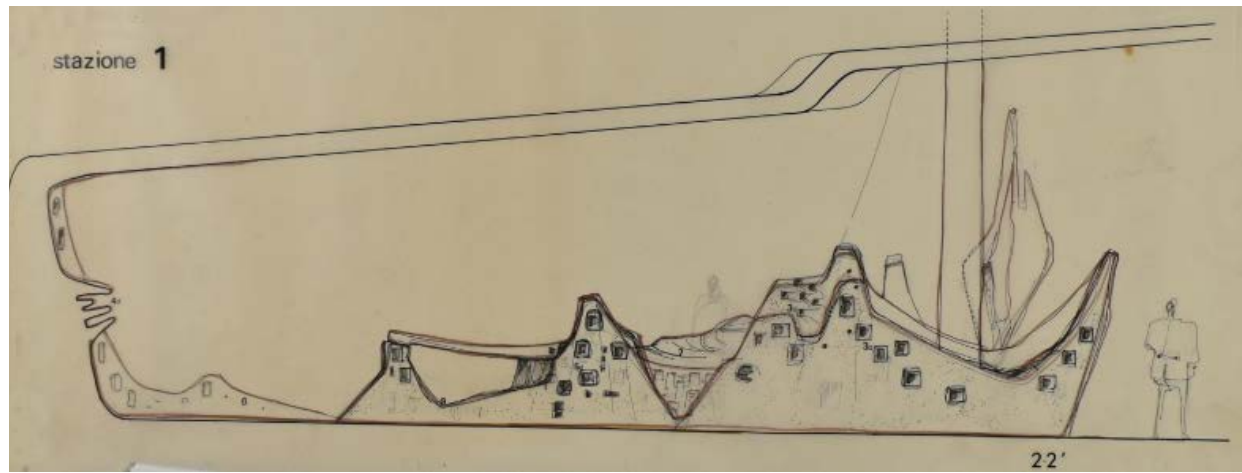
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PLACE/ADDRESS	Montréal
COLLABORATORS	Maria Grazia Dallerba
CUSTOMER	Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
SOURCES	CSAC, CSR



ESSENTIAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

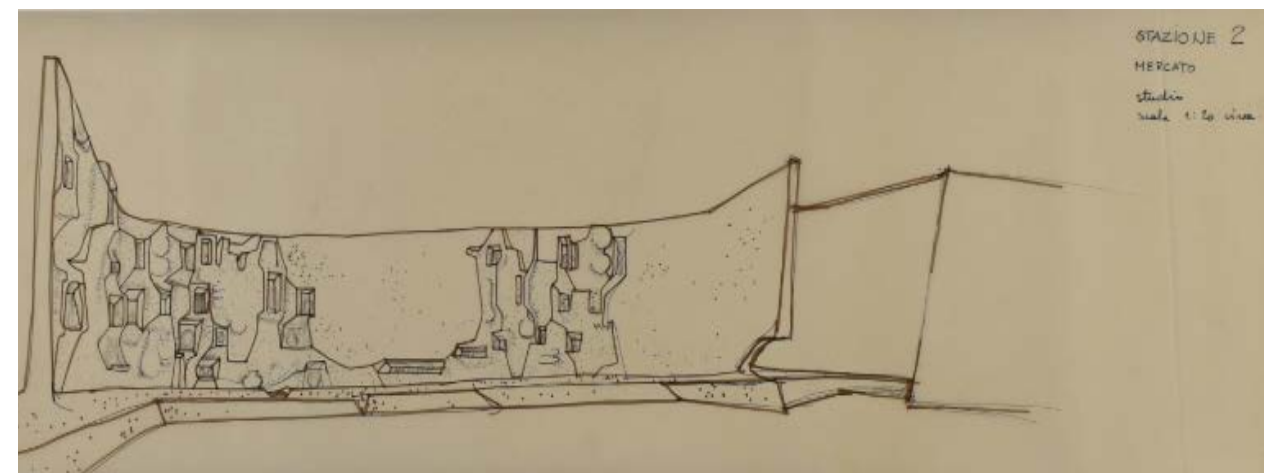
B. Zevi, "L'Architettura Italiana e l'Esposizione di Montréal", in *Autoritratto dell'Italia*, ed. U. Eco (Milano: Bompiani, 1967); G. C. Argan, "Expo universale '67 a Montréal: il padiglione italiano", *L'Architettura: cronache e storia*, no. 141 (luglio 1967): 147-165; B. Zevi, "The Architect's Expo", *Progressive Architecture*, no. 47 (1967); "L'Italia all'Expo Universale 1967 di Montréal", *L'Architettura: cronache e storia*, no. 141 (luglio 1967): 142-44; "Il duemila a Montréal/L'Expo '67 vale per l'habitat di Safdie", *L'Espresso*, then collected in *Cronache di Architettura* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1970), 419-438; R. Banham, *Le tentazioni dell'architettura. Megastrutture* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1980), 115-142; C. Vasić Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto "esistenzialista"* (Firenze: Edifir, 2005), 40.

IMG.1: Italian Pavilion Expo 1967, Customs Section, general plan, heliographic copy, CSAC; IMG.2: Plan of the entrance staircase, heliographic copy, CSAC; IMG.3: Elevation A, heliographic copy, CSAC; IMG. 4: Section 1-1', heliographic copy, CSAC.



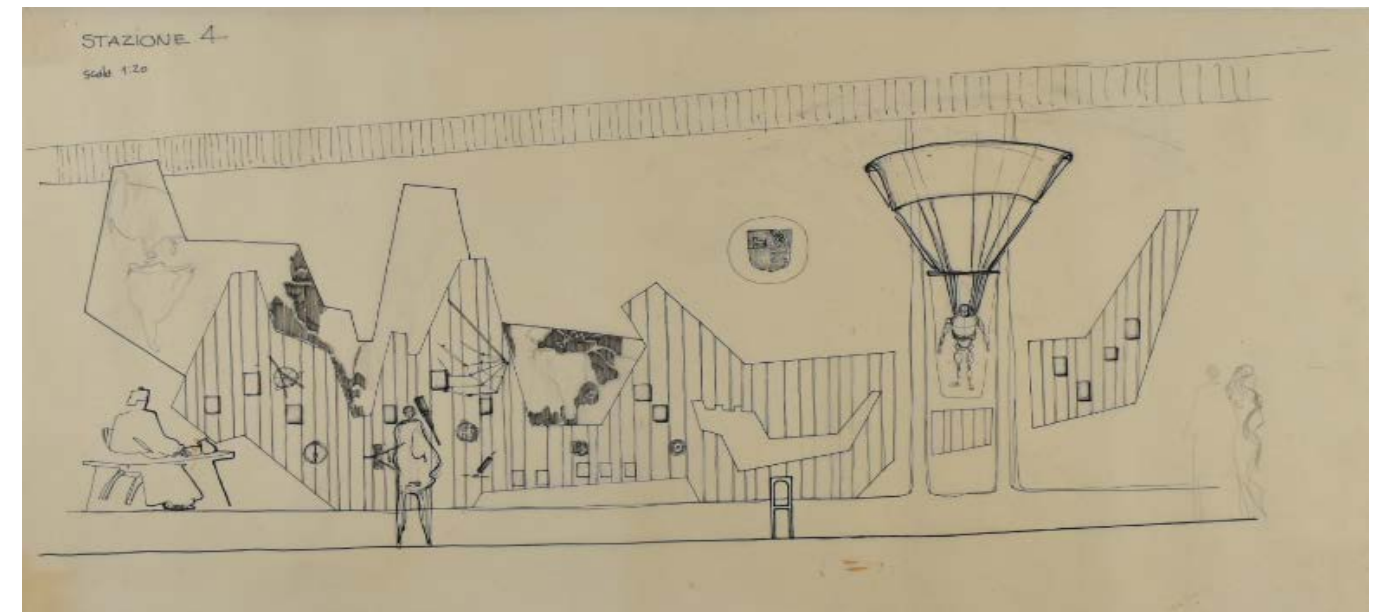
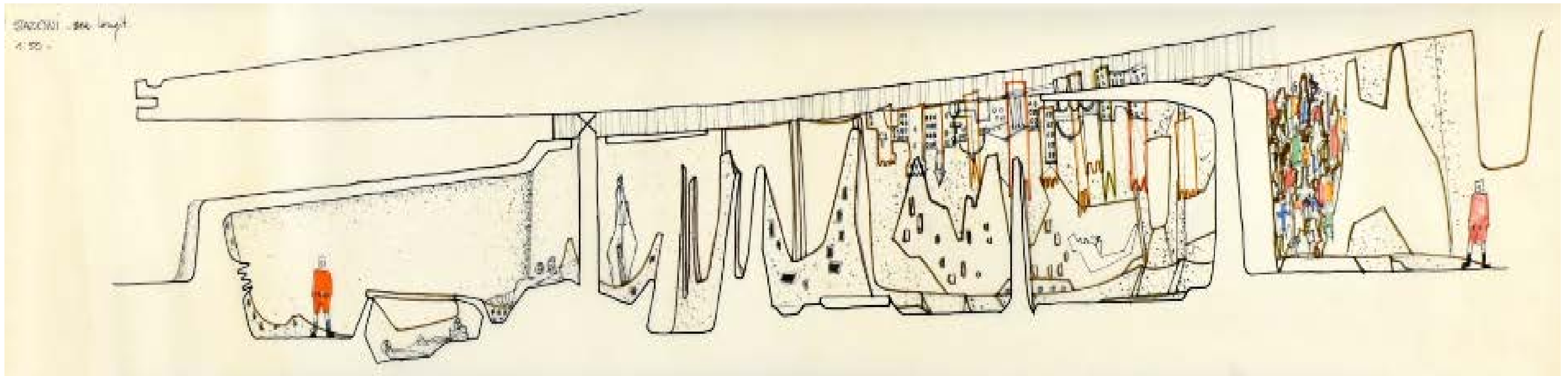
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IMG.5-6-7: Italian Pavilion Expo 1967, Customs Section, "stazione 1", sketches on paper, CSR; IMG.8: "stazione 3", sketch on paper, CSR.



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IMG.9-10-11: "stazione 2", sketches on paper, CSR.



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IMG.12: Italian Pavillion Expo 1967, Customs Section, longitudinal section, sketch on paper, CSR; IMG.13-14: Italian Pavillion Expo 1967, pictures of the model (picture by G. Gamelie), CSR; IMG.15: Italian Pavillion Expo 1967, Customs Section,, "stazione 4", sketch on paper, CSR.

Staging of the Costume Sector in the Italian Pavilion of Expo 67 in Montréal, Canada (1966-1967). From “Urschrei” to “Correalism”. Considerations on Some Motifs in Leonardo Ricci (1962-1967)

Leonardo Ricci, Expressionism, Montréal, Expo 67, Correalism, Endless House

/Abstract

The design of the Italian pavilion at Expo 67 in Montréal, Canada (1966-1967) was the result of a choral effort which involved Giulio Carlo Argan, Cosimo Carlucci, Umberto Eco, Leoncillo Leonardi, Bruno Munari, the Passarelli studio, Arnaldo Pomodoro, Leonardo Ricci, Carlo Scarpa, Emilio Vedova and Bruno Zevi.

Leonardo Ricci designed the Staging of the costume sector by creating cavernous concretions that housed an exhibition curated by Umberto Eco. The interpretation proposed here, focuses on the formal genealogies of the work, trying to contextualise its birth in the Florentine cultural context during the 1960s and within Ricci's research.

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Leonardo Ricci himself and the critics – first – and historiography – later – outlined the poetics of the Roman architect as being mainly based on the conception of architecture as an existential expression aimed at anonymity rather than authorship. Historiographical construction has particularly insisted on this aspect of his architecture, seeking support in the exegesis of his prose, and through it justifying the heterogeneity of the forms, language and spaces employed. Less attention has been paid to the analysis of the genealogy and the occurrences of these within certain sides of his work. An inverse process has been attempted even less, daring to trace the rare, elusive words in his texts that he dedicated to the conception of the morphogenesis of his spaces.¹

Starting from Giovanni Klaus Koenig's interpretation of the Casa teorica as a "conformazione spaziale dell'esistenza"² – an interpretation that could almost be described as a self-criticism given the close bond that the two authors shared in the 1950s – Ricci's architecture has been interpreted by underscoring the pre-eminence of space over form, prioritising a fascinating yet elusive existential and experiential dimension of the former rather than the centrality of the latter, for Ricci the outcome – and not the goal – of the project.

While a linguistic reading – as suggested by Koenig³ – could reveal the pattern of reasons underlying the formal heterogeneity of Ricci's architecture – according to whom, on the other hand, "il problema della forma in sé non esiste"⁴ – I would like to propose here an interpretation of a formal matrix, insisting on that "formalisme" that Giulia Veronesi recognised with regard to Monterinaldi's houses⁵: the extreme complexity of 'endless' form used in the staging of the costume sector of the Italian pavilion at Expo 67 in Montréal and the insistence with which Ricci used it in temporary or unrealised projects that can be circumscribed to a rather defined period of his work – the 1960s – makes it legitimate to attempt to reconstruct its hypothetical genesis within his work and within the Florentine context in which it found fertile ground to take root. The writer's interest in this type of interpretation was prompted by the complexity of the formal themes Ricci used in his projects – bordering on the geometric uncontrollability of the project: a question Ricci resolved by building models or constructing his architecture directly on site – and by their apparent

1 For an exhaustive overview of Ricci's historiography to date, see Ilaria Cattabriga, "Leonardo Ricci in the United States (1952-1972). A Twenty-Year American Transfer as a Turning Experience in Teaching and Design," PhD diss., (University of Bologna, 2021); see also the recent text by Maria Clara Ghia, *La nostra città è tutta la terra. Leonardo Ricci architetto (1918-1994)* (Wuppertal: Steinhäuser Verlag, 2021). I would like to thank Ilaria Cattabriga for pointing out the documents she found during her PhD at Casa Studio Ricci in Monterinaldi (FI) and Loreno Arboritanzza for those he reorganised during his internship and then during the research for his thesis – Loreno Arboritanzza, "Leonardo Ricci. L'Abitare (umano) 1950-1970," undergraduate thesis, (University of Bologna, 2017). I would like to thank Claudia Conforti for sharing with me some reflections on this matter and for suggesting that I explore further aspects – which turned out to be crucial – of this project. I dedicate this text to Giovanni Zanzi.

2 [spatial conformation of existence]. All translations of quotations are by the author. Giovanni Klaus Koenig, "Leonardo Ricci e la 'casa teorica' (alla ricerca di un nuovo spazio architettonico)," *Bollettino tecnico degli Architetti e Ingegneri della Toscana*, nos. 7-8 (July-August 1958): 5.

3 Giovanni Klaus Koenig, *Architettura in Toscana 1931-1968* (Turin: ERI, 1968), 142-52. This is not the place to attempt a reconstruction of this topic, which was the foundation of a significant section of the Florentine school along the lines of Gamberini-Eco-Koenig and which finds constant resonance in Ricci's texts. See for example Leonardo Ricci, "Progetto per il villaggio Monte degli Ulivi a Riesi, Sicilia," *Edilizia moderna*, nos. 82-83 (1963): 116-18.

4 [the problem of form in itself does not exist]. Leonardo Ricci, "La pittura come linguaggio (da una conferenza tenuta all'Università di Brooklyn NY, nel 1952 e a Numero nel Novembre 1953)," *Numero*, no. 6 (1953): 19.

5 Giulia Veronesi, "Du nouveau à Florence," *Zodiac*, no. 4 (1959): 10.

self-referentiality, only at first glance contrary to any ambition for anonymity.⁶ At the same time, during the course of the research, I noted the authors involved used a prominence of certain forms and words: they were treated as occurrences, and on this basis an attempt was made to transpose them into *motifs*, in the hope that this operation would “valorizz[] la funzione, in apparenza ornamentale, ma in sostanza di sottolineatura, di potenziamento, anche di convinzione e di suggestione che ha il ripetersi di affermazioni, considerazioni, descrizioni, allusioni, ecc. nella tessitura verbale”;⁷ or in the architectural weave. A field has thus emerged in which the insistence on certain terms, on certain emphases, on certain interpretations, makes it possible to unite distant, even antithetical, architectural expressions.

The event studied, the Universal Exhibition in Montréal in 1967, by reputation among the major works commissioned from Ricci, the ‘primordial’ expressive impetus he manifested in the project in contrast with the technical magniloquence and ideology that permeated the event and most of the buildings of the Exhibition, and finally the comparison with the other sections of the Italian pavilion, allow us to highlight Ricci’s posture in relation to some fundamental themes of architecture – expression, community and living – made space through an endless form. The reconstruction of the exhibition area, made memorable by Moshe Safdie’s Habitat 67, by the roof of the German pavilion by Frei Otto and by the American pavilion with its geodesic ‘spatial’ dome by Richard Buckminster Fuller more than by the Italian pavilion, and the juxtaposition with the work of the Passarelli studio, of Carlo Scarpa, of Bruno Munari and of Emilio Vedova – co-authors of the pavilion – allow the alternative proposed by Ricci to emerge through his staging.⁸ [fig. 1]

The archaic and natural appearance of these concavities and forms – obtained by means of a “morfogenesi organica naturale” dependent on a “utopia-concreta-organica”⁹ as Ricci would define his creative process years later – and their extremely experimental nature question those who seek to decipher their reasons, and above all their antecedents and contemporary influences: it is therefore a question of recognising the utopian and expressive component at its foundation by retracing the process from which the form originated, following the conviction shared by Ricci and Koenig that “la creazione di una forma sia logica interpretazione del mondo e non ‘giuoco’”.¹⁰

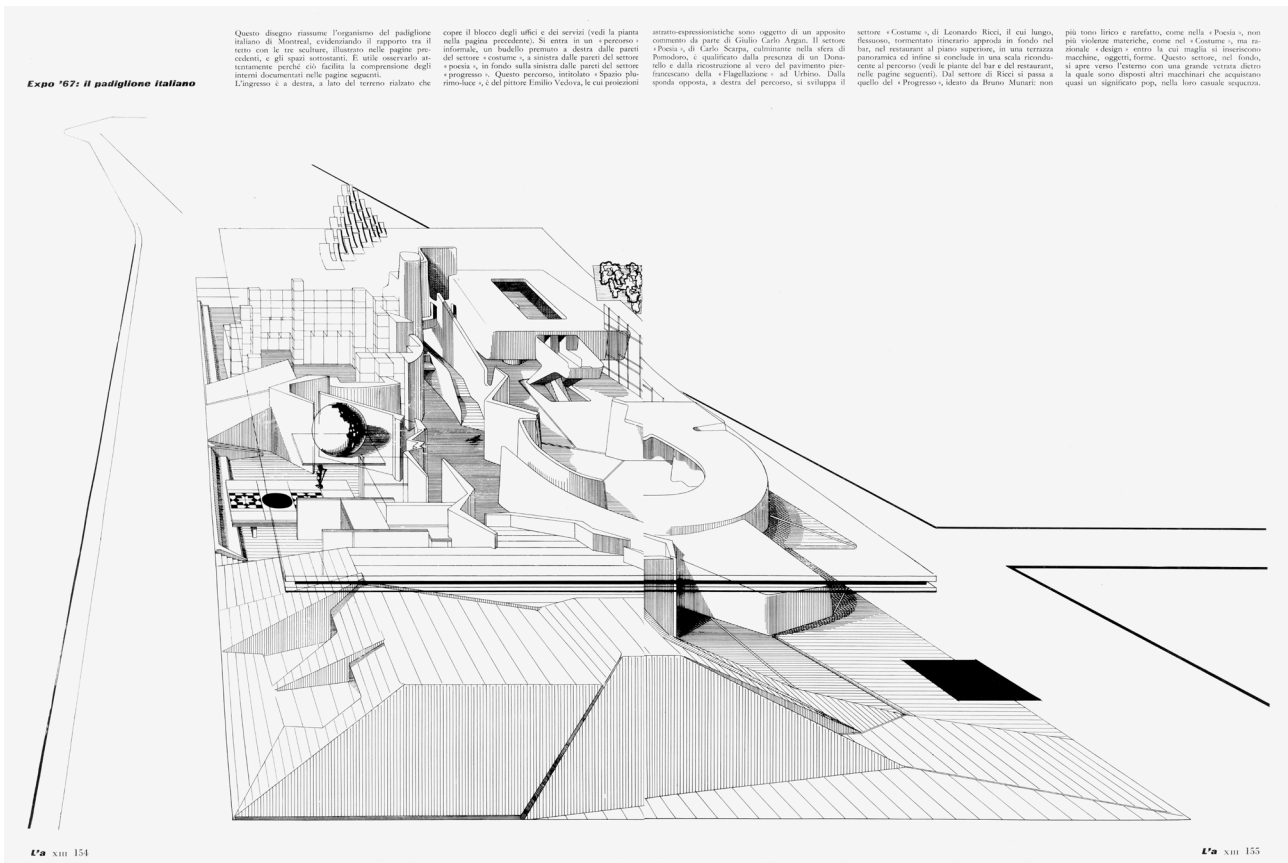
6 On this subject see Giovanni Leoni, “L’Anonimo come tema di discontinuità nella cultura architettonica italiana tra Primo e Secondo Novecento,” in *Un palazzo in forma di parole. Scritti in onore di Paolo Carpeggiani*, ed. Carlo Togliani (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2016), 463-72.

7 [enhance the function, apparently ornamental but essentially underlining, reinforcing, even convincing and suggestive, of the repetition of statements, considerations, descriptions, allusions, etc. in the verbal weave]. Cesare Segre, “Tema/motivo,” in *Enciclopedia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1981), vol. 14, 10.

8 Among the many texts on the presentation and study of the Montréal Expo: Abraham Rogatnick, “Expo 67, The Past Recaptured,” *Lotus* 5, 1968, 13-33; “Panoramica dell’Expo ‘67,” *L’architettura. Cronache e storia* 13, no. 141 (3 July 1967): 166-75; Johanne Sloan, Rhona Richman Kenneally, eds., *Expo 67: Not Just a Souvenir* (Toronto; Buffalo: London University of Toronto Press, 2010).

9 [natural organic morphogenesis]; [concrete-organic utopia]. This and the previous rep. in Lara Vinca Masini, ed., *Topologia e morfogenesi. Utopia e crisi dell’antinitatura. Momenti delle intenzioni architettoniche in Italia* (Venice: Edizioni La Biennale di Venezia, 1978), 124. On Ricci’s “creative process” see Koenig, “Leonardo Ricci e la ‘casa teorica’ (alla ricerca di un nuovo spazio architettonico)”, 14.

10 [the creation of a form is a logical interpretation of the world and not a ‘game’]. Leonardo Ricci, Giovanni Koenig, *Sull’insegnamento della plastica nelle facoltà di architettura, memoria presentata al Preside della Facoltà di Architettura di Firenze*, 16 October 1959, typescript. Casa Studio Ricci – Monterinaldi (FI).



1. Terre des Hommes, Montréal 1967. On Different Expressive Intentions

Just one year separated the official establishment of the Italian government's commissariat for participation in the 1967 Universal Exhibition in Montréal – and the consequent allocation of funds for the construction of the pavilion, two billion lire in total – from the inauguration of the Canadian event, which took place on 25 April 1967.¹¹ The banner of the exhibition was the generic slogan *Terre des Hommes*, a transposition of the title of a novel by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. Although less rhetorical than the one chosen for the 1958 Brussels exhibition – *Bilan du monde pour un monde plus humain*, a humanity that was intended to be recognised in André Waterkeyn's Atomium, the symbol of the exhibition – its general nature lent itself to welcoming all kinds of content and architectural expression for the more than 100 pavilions built. [figg. 2-4]

There was so little time to develop the project that the Italian commissariat decided, even before its formal institution, to establish a "Comitato di consulenza Tecnico-Artistica" formed "per ovvi motivi pratici" by "personalità residenti a Roma"¹² and not, as happened for Brussels, for the announcement of a design competition. In fact, for the 1958 exhibition the commission followed this process, contradicted however by the involvement of all the architects participating in the competition

11 Law of the Italian Republic no. 210 of April 5, 1966 (Published in Official Gazette no. 99 of April 23, 1966): Partecipazione dell'Italia all'Esposizione universale di Montréal del 1967.

12 [Technical-Artistic Advisory Committee]; [for obvious practical reasons]; [personalities residing in Rome]. This and the previous taken from letters from Giovanni Luccioli on Ministry of Foreign Affairs letterhead to Carlo Scarpa, Rome, February 7, 1966. MAXXI Architecture Archive Centre – Rome, Carlo Scarpa Archive (hereinafter SA), b. 230 "Allestimento della sezione La Poesia, padiglione italiano, Expo '67, Montréal (1966-1968)," folder P1/18.

Fig. 1

Axonometry of the Italian pavilion at Expo '67 in Montréal, Canada (1966-67). From *L'architettura. Cronache e storia* 13, no. 141 (Jul. 1967).

in the drafting of the final design. This large design group, which included BBPR, Ignazio Gardella, Giuseppe Perugini and Ludovico Quaroni, but above all the outcome – “un finto villaggio italiano [...] inaccettabile, nel carattere ‘né spontaneo’ ‘né colto’ dei piccoli edifici” according to Giulia Veronesi¹³ – and the management of the competition triggered a great deal of criticism in Italy, including that of Bruno Zevi, a central figure in the design of the subsequent pavilion for Montréal. He himself, together with Giulio Carlo Argan and the Passarelli studio, members of the advisory committee (later joined by Michele Guido Franci), had the intention of conducting the operation differently, both for contingent reasons and in order to break away from the process followed previously.¹⁴

This authoritative committee – Argan and Zevi were already leading figures in Italian culture and politics; the Passarelli studio was already one of Rome’s leading studios and had a privileged relationship with Zevi himself, who appreciated its work and with whom he was the promoter of Studio Asse; Franci, general secretary of the Milan Fair, had already collaborated on the 1958 exhibition – orchestrated the operation in February 1966. In agreement with the General Commission being set up by Francesco Babuscio Rizzo, who was in turn appointed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they asked Umberto Eco, Bruno Munari, Leonardo Ricci, Carlo Scarpa and Emilio Vedova to design the pavilion’s layout. Already before the end of January¹⁵ the Committee had prepared and agreed on “l’impostazione generale del padiglione”¹⁶ with the Compagnie Canadienne de l’Exposition Universelle de 1967, which was coordinating the event’s organisation. The “progettazione generale”¹⁷ was mainly followed by Lucio Passarelli, assisted by some colleagues.¹⁸ The pavilion was to host four sections:

a) la Poesia, in cui dovrebbero essere espressi i valori tradizionali dell’Italia (arte, etc.); b) il Costume; c) l’Industrializzazione (ovvero il progresso, l’Italia protesa verso l’avvenire, etc.); d) il Percorso, nel quale il pubblico, attraverso un adeguato allestimento scenotecnico, dovrebbe in un certo senso percepire lo stato d’animo del popolo italiano, su cui agiscono le tre forze espresse nei settori sopra indicati.¹⁹

The conception of the elements shaping the overall project, based on three

13 [a mock Italian village... unacceptable in the ‘neither spontaneous’ ‘nor cultured’ character of the small buildings]. Giulia Veronesi, “Visita all’Esposizione di Bruxelles,” in *Emporium* 128, no. 766 (1958): 150, rep. in Lucia Masina, *Vedere l’Italia nelle esposizioni universali del XX secolo: 1900-1958* (Milan: EDUCatt, 2016), 402.

14 See Lucia Masina, *Vedere l’Italia nelle esposizioni universali del XX secolo: 1900-1958* (Milan: EDUCatt, 2016), 393-415.

15 Arch. Edouard Fiset – Compagnie Canadienne de l’exposition universelle de 1967 (Canada) Montréal [*Pro-memoria*], January 24, 1966, in MAXXI Architecture Archive Centre – Rome, Studio Passarelli Archive (hereinafter PA), b. “1R-47 Padiglione italiano all’Expo ‘67 a Montréal (3),” folder Designers general area.

16 [the general layout of the pavilion]. Letter from Luccioli to Scarpa, Rome February 7, 1966.

17 [general design]. “Per l’esposizione di Montréal,” *Domus*, no. 441 (August 1966): 2.

18 Lucio Passarelli, [*Relazione*], 15 May 1966, in PA, b. “Montréal Expo 70 [sic]. Fotografie,” folder “1968 Montréal. Relazioni – Pubblicazioni”. The executive design was overseen by Antonio Antonelli, Manfredo Greco, Franco Piro and Sara Rossi. In Canada the project was supervised by the architects Papineau, Gérin-Lajoie and Le Blanc, the engineers Cartier, Coté, Piette, Boulva, Wermenlinger, Monti Lefebvre, Lavoie and Nadon and the company Edilteco.

19 [a] Poetry, where the traditional values of Italy should be expressed (art, etc.); b) Costume; c) Industrialisation (i.e. progress, Italy leaning towards the future, etc.); d) the Path, where the public, through an adequate scenic staging, should in a certain sense be able to perceive the state of mind of the Italian people, influenced by the three forces expressed in the aforementioned sectors]. Letter from Luccioli to Scarpa, Rome February 7, 1966.

general components, was fixed from the very first hypotheses, as was the arrangement of the four sections, which only found its final form thanks to the contribution of Munari, Scarpa, Ricci and Vedova, who were to take on the *inscape* project. The pavilion in its entirety would be defined by

due elementi, fisici, bidimensionali. La copertura (chiara; astratta, tenda e nello stesso tempo supporto visivo di opere d'arte); Il terreno (scuro; modellato; unitario; emergente o incassato nell'asfalto che lo circonda). Un elemento ideale, il più importante (si chiami "percorso", "angoscia", "l'italiano oggi" o che so io non importa il termine) che anche nella sua inconsistenza fisica, deve poter dare una forza e compiutezza al tutto.

Having established the general coordinates of the project, Passarelli, Munari, Ricci, Scarpa and Vedova intervened employing a collaborative process based on "rapporti, che partecipano dell'indipendenza e della coordinazione, della flessibilità e della chiarezza", or rather on the juxtaposition of their expressions without pursuing any other homogeneity of method or, even less, of result:

I tre progetti di Munari, Ricci e Scarpa, saranno invece come i tre artisti; indipendenti, contrastanti, reali. Essi si incastrano o si appoggiano al terreno (ma non vi si confondono); vivono sotto la tenda (con un proprio spazio) e vi si collegano mediante le opere d'arte; hanno con il percorso, quei rapporti più sottili e possibilistici che nasceranno dalla coordinazione, e dagli stimoli reciproci.²⁰

With this in mind, Scarpa was commissioned to design the Poetry section, Ricci the Costume section and Munari the Industrialisation section, while the path was interpreted by Vedova and "il discorso generale della mostra"²¹ – the exhibition programme – was entrusted to Eco. Each section was linked to a symbolic sculpture placed on the curved roof, which would represent its pinnacle and emblem for visitors approaching the pavilion: an informal polychrome ceramic sculpture by Leoncillo Leonardi for the Costume section, a sparkling eroded sphere by Arnaldo Pomodoro for the Poetry section, a metal scaffold by Cosimo Carlucci for the Industrialisation section.²² [fig. 5]

The richness and heterogeneity of such a group of authors gives us to pause before viewing the finished work to speculate on the reasons that led Argan, Passarelli and Zevi to converge on the names of designers and artists who were anything but secondary in the Italian context in the mid-1960s. While Vedova's

20 [two physical, two-dimensional elements. The roof (clear; abstract; tented and at the same time visual support of works of art); the ground (dark; shaped; unitary; emerging or embedded in the surrounding asphalt). An ideal element, the most important one (whether it is called "path", "anguish", "today's Italian" or whatever the term is, it does not matter) which even in its physical immateriality must be able to give strength and completeness to the whole]; [relationships that participate in independence and coordination, flexibility and clarity]; [Conversely, the three projects by Munari, Ricci and Scarpa were like the three artists; independent, contrasting, real. They dovetail or rest on the ground (but do not intermingle). They exist under the tent (with their own space) and connect to it through the artwork. With the path they have more subtle and possibilistic relationships that arise from coordination and mutual stimuli]. This and the previous ones from [Studio Passarelli], [Appunto], 26 February 1966, in SA, b. *230: Allestimento della sezione la Poesia, padiglione italiano, Expo '67, Montréal (1966-1968),* folder P1/18.

21 [the general message of the exhibit]. Letter from Luccioli to Scarpa, Rome February 7, 1966.

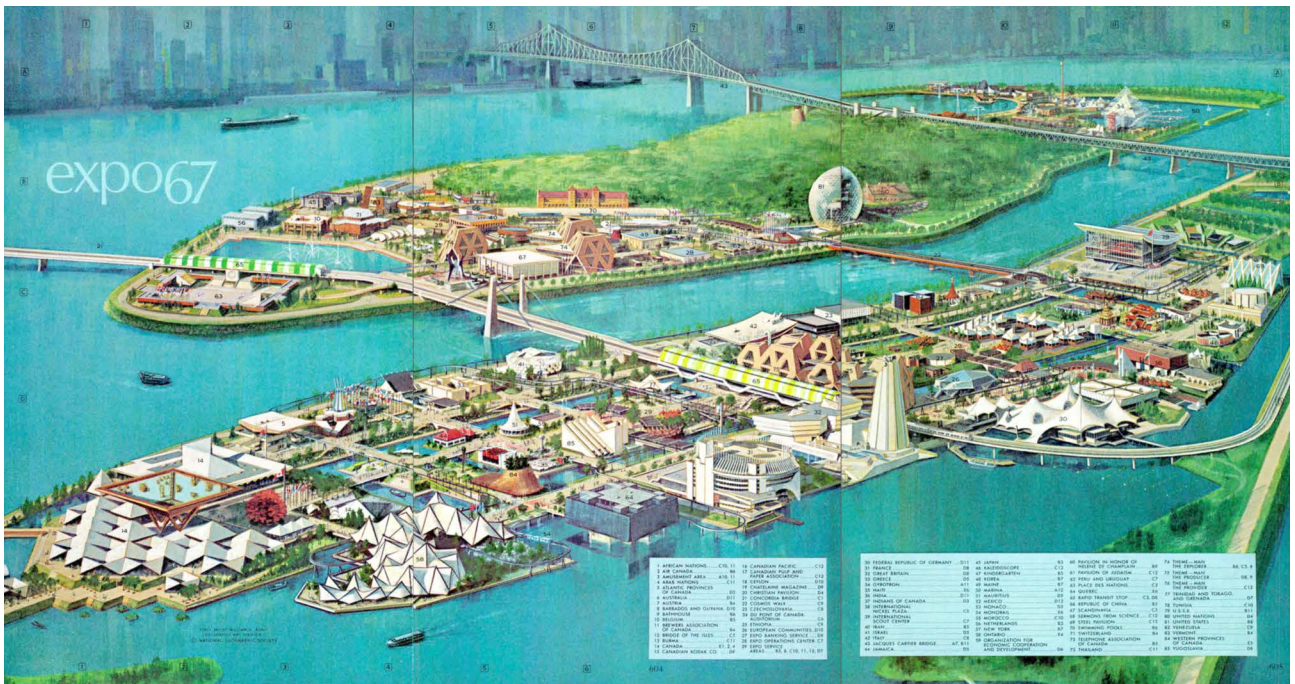
22 The pavilion was presented in numerous articles in Italian magazines, including: "La fiera di Montréal in costruzione," *Domus*, no. 446 (January 1967): 9-20; Bruno Zevi, "L'Italia all'Expo universale 1967 di Montréal," *L'architettura. Cronache e storia* 13, no. 141 (July 1967): 142-65.

Fig. 2

The Montreal Expo 1967 in an advertisement drawing of the time. The Italian pavilion (no. 42) is to the left of the United States pavilion (no. 81) and the Soviet Union pavilion (no. 79), located opposite each other but on two different islands.

Fig. 3

An advertising postcard of the Montreal Exhibition. The Italian pavilion is on the left.



2



3

work had been appreciated by both Argan and Zevi – both had already written about his *Plurimi*²³ – as had Scarpa’s – an architect who was already an international master of museographic stagings with whom they had shared various projects – the choice of Munari could have been the result of Argan’s interest in his work.²⁴ The involvement of Ricci and Eco may have been sought by Zevi, who had already had the opportunity to appreciate the architect’s work, including the staging of the Florentine exhibition on Expressionism (1964), where he had also probably met Eco, whose *Opera aperta* (1962) Zevi had already commented on.²⁵ Finally, while Leoncillo’s work had already been commented on by both Zevi and Argan before 1967, Carlucci and Pomodoro were probably indicated by the Turin critic, who had already had the opportunity to get to know the work of the former and to frequent the latter rather assiduously.²⁶



4

However, beyond the individual hypothetical relationships – which were also confirmed by the almost daily attendance at the same universities: Venice, Florence, Rome – the continuous commitment or passionate participation of many of the members of this grouping in occasions of shared reflection – such as the Gruppo 63 or the Convegni internazionali di artisti, critici e studiosi d’arte held in Rimini, Verucchio and San Marino, or those of the Gruppo 70 in Florence in the early 1960s, for example – remains the common denominator for understanding the complex cultural network and personal relationships that bound their lives and works.

23 Including: Bruno Zevi, “Plurimi e quadri da calpestare,” *L’Espresso*, December 22, 1963; Giulio Carlo Argan, *Vedova* (Rome: Editalia, 1963).

24 Including Giulio Carlo Argan, Rosario Assunto, Bruno Munari, Filiberto Menna, “Design e mass media,” *Op. cit.* 1, no. 2 (January 1965): 8-30.

25 Bruno Zevi, “La poetica dell’opera aperta in architettura,” *L’architettura. Cronache e storia* 8, no. 84 (October 1962): 362-63. On Eco, Ricci e Zevi see Ilaria Cattabriga, “Leonardo Ricci and Bruno Zevi. The Translation of ‘Anonymus’ and ‘Organic’ in the ‘Open Work,’” in *Bruno Zevi. History, Criticism and Architecture after World War II*, eds. Matteo Cassani Simonetti and Elena Dellapiana (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2021), 73-89. Note also that Eco was one of the members of the Steering Committee of *Marcatré*, a journal that gave ample space to the Florentine initiatives of 1964, which will be discussed in the third part of this text.

26 With regard to Leoncillo, by way of example, note also the matter of the Monumento alla partigiana (1957) in Venice, which he designed – together with Scarpa – at the invitation of a jury whose members included Zevi and Argan. Carlucci’s work was exhibited at the group exhibition “Parabola 66. Mostra di pittura scultura architettura” held in Florence in 1966, the catalogue of which contains texts by Argan, Marcello Fagiolo and Lara Vinca Masini. Finally, Argan and Pomodoro’s acquaintance is evidenced by the correspondence in the Arnaldo Pomodoro archive in Milan.

Fig. 4

The cover of *L’Espresso* of 30th April 1967.

The result of this heterogeneous *ensemble* was summarised by Lucio Passarelli as follows:

Ai tre poli corrispondono tre linguaggi architettonici e tre espressioni artistiche diverse. La poesia (progetto del Prof. Scarpa) ha un tono lirico o rarefatto con un'opera d'arte conclusa e astratta, forse uno sferoide, levitante sulla tenda. Il costume è di tono espressionistico, denso di materia reale. È progettato dall'arch. Ricci. L'opera d'arte sarà in carattere, una forma di ceramica, incastrata sul fianco della copertura. L'industrializzazione si avvale del suo linguaggio, della strumentazione espressiva delle macchine, di oggetti e forme. Progettata da Bruno Munari, potrà partecipare sia della pop che della op art. A prosecuzione della copertura e stagliantesi verso l'alto un "pezzo" in metallo. Il percorso è risultante dei tre linguaggi che si annullano o insieme il vuoto che essi formano aspirando lo spazio. Uno spazio luminoso, animato da proiezioni e immerso nelle composizioni astratto-espressionistiche del pittore Vedova.²⁷

According to Zevi, this way of working based on the juxtaposition of individual expressions was one of the greatest peculiarities of this pavilion, whose creative process he praised as much as the final result. For Zevi, the method used – focused first on the direction of the project before its outcome – was an alternative to the rhetoric of the Modern Movement that praised the profoundly authorial act of design, or on the contrary to those that saw teamwork as the new dimension of design, and in the specific case of this project solved the problems arising from entrusting the task to heterogeneous groups of authors: a frequent solution for the design of national pavilions even before the Brussels pavilion, as demonstrated by the ambiguous outcome of the one for the Paris exhibition in 1937, the result of the equivocal blending of Pagano's architecture with that of Piacentini and Valle. "Chi ne è l'autore?", Zevi was asked, and he answered:

Nessun architetto, e nemmeno un team di architetti e designers che abbia lavorato in accordo, trovando un minimo denominatore comune. L'incontro si è effettuato al livello opposto, in un'escalation di empieti individuali. Come è stato possibile ottenere questo risultato? Vi era un'idea, un programma anticonformista e coraggioso, non freno e limite ma provocazione a creare, ciascuno secondo la propria ispirazione. Il successo del padiglione italiano a Montréal non dipende dal suo valore assoluto, ma dal fatto che suggerisce un metodo, un'ipotesi progettuale ancora da esplorare: consiste nel pensare a fondo i contenuti di un'op-

27 [The three poles correspond to three architectural languages and three different artistic expressions. Poetry (Professor Scarpa's project) has a lyrical or rarefied tone with a concluded and abstract work of art, perhaps a spheroid, levitating on the tent. Costume is expressionistic in tone, dense with real material. It is designed by the architect Ricci. The artwork will be in character, a ceramic form, set into the side of the roof. Industrialisation uses its language, the expressive instrumentation of machines, objects and forms. Designed by Bruno Munari, it can participate in both pop and op art. A metal "piece" continues the roof and stands out at the top. The path is the result of the three languages cancelling each other out or together the void they form by sucking in space. A luminous space, animated by projections and immersed in Vedova's abstract-expressionist compositions]. Passarelli, [Relazione], 15 May 1966.

era articolandoli nella loro diversa intenzionalità espressiva, e poi nello scegliere gli artisti capaci di realizzarne le immagini.²⁸

For Zevi, this architecture was the best fruit of what he considered the best – subversive – Italian tradition. Within this reckless critical parabola Zevi wanted to hold together the greatest achievements of Italian architectural culture: the brilliant Borromini (the third centenary of his death fell in 1967); the ethics of the martyrs of modernity associated with that of the Resistance (Terragni, Pagano, Persico); the recent projects that broke out of the rigidity of rational models (from the Velasca tower to the Autostrada church; from the Marchiondi Institute to the building in Via Campania by the Passarelli studio; from Scarpa's and Albini's installations; from Cosenza's Olivetti to Gardella's Venetian house and Morandi's structures) for Zevi were the building blocks of the Italian pavilion, those that best testified to the absence of "retorica, niente propaganda, ma comunicazione di eventi antichi, di realtà e situazioni inquiete".²⁹

With these building blocks in place, the rapid planning and equally effective development began: while the Passarelli studio, assisted by a number of associates, worked on the design of the metal lattice roof supported by only four pillars, in just one and a half months the other designers drew up plans for the singular sections, which, by juxtaposition, made up the overall design by the end of March 1966. It was completed by mid-May and construction began immediately afterwards, which lasted until the end of September, before the break imposed by the harsh Canadian winter, before resuming immediately afterwards to allow for the fitting out of the interior (in April) and finally the inauguration on 25 April 1967.³⁰

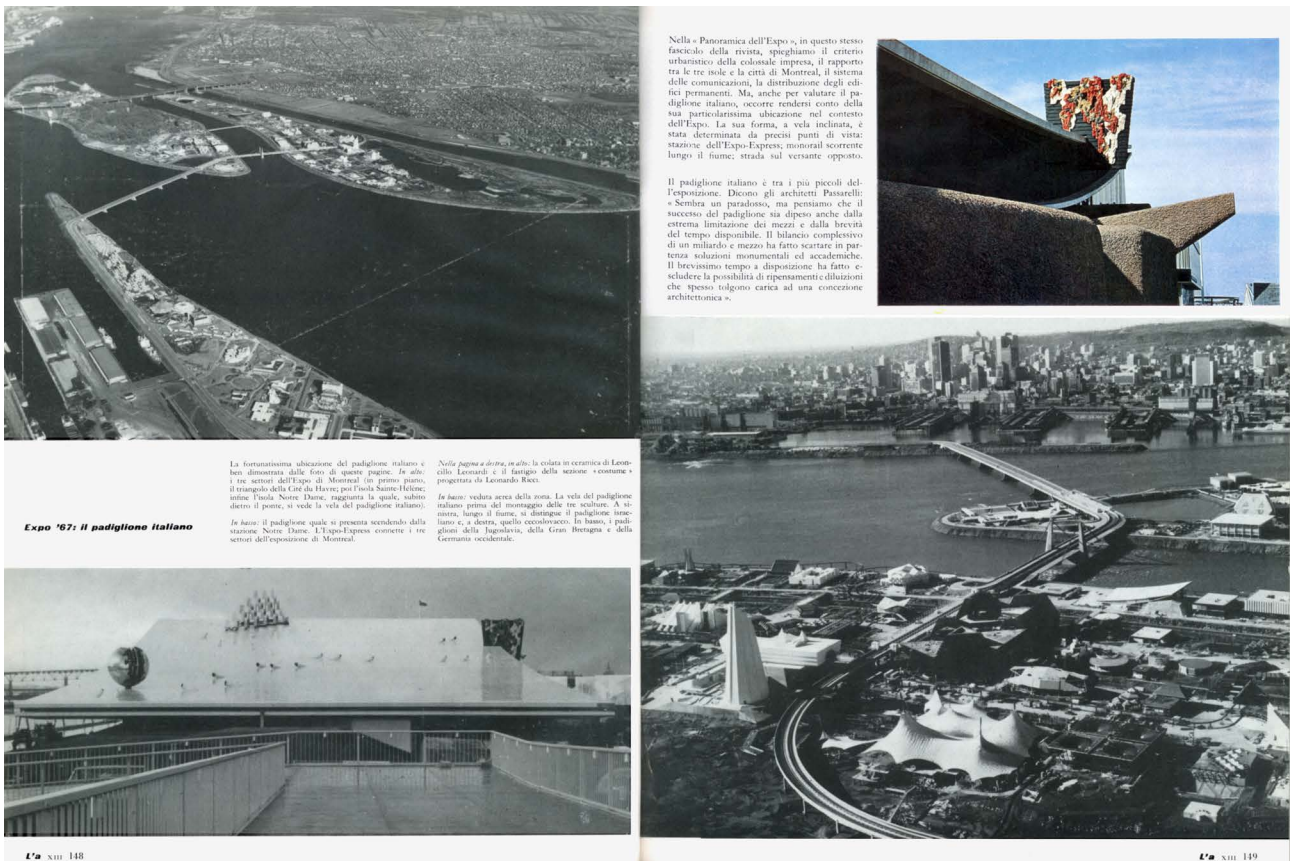
Thus the Italian pavilion took shape, located on the edge of Île Notre-Dame near what was to become turns 8 and 9 of the Gilles Villeneuve circuit, and on whose white sail-like roof, visible and accessible from the monorail that transported visitors from one end of the exhibition to the other, stood the three sculptures, and from whose limits emerged part of the shadowy spaces designed by Munari, Ricci and Scarpa. The entrance was situated between the rough, massive volumes the ground had been modelled into on the side of the building facing the square, next to the Italie-Italy emblem – attributable to Scarpa – which marked the pavilion's threshold.³¹ Once descended into the penumbra of the interior space, which was one and a half metres below the surrounding space, visitors found themselves

28 [Who is the author?]; [No architect, not even a team of architects and designers working in concert, finding the lowest common denominator. The meeting took place at the opposite level, in an escalation of individual empathies. How was it possible to achieve this result? There was an idea, a non-conformist and courageous programme, not a brake and a limit but a provocation to create, each according to their own inspiration. The success of the Italian pavilion in Montréal does not depend on its absolute value, but on the fact that it suggests a method, a design hypothesis yet to be explored: it consists in thinking deeply about the contents of a work, articulating them in their different expressive intentions, and then choosing the artists capable of creating their images]. Zevi, "L'Italia all'Expo universale 1967 di Montréal," 143.

29 [rhetoric, no propaganda, but communication of ancient events, of restless realities and situations]. Bruno Zevi, "L'architettura italiana e l'esposizione di Montréal," in *Autoritratto dell'Italia* (Milan: Bompiani, 1967), 125.

30 For the chronology of the construction see the typescript on the letterhead of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, s.d, kept in PA, b. "1R-47 Padiglione italiano all'Expo '67 a Montréal (3)," folder Progettisti zona generale.

31 In presenting the Italian pavilion in *L'architettura. Cronache e storia*, it is noted that the design of the emblem is by Munari. Note that in the Scarpa Archive at MAXXI there is a drawing attributable to Scarpa. See "Il padiglione italiano all'Expo '67 di Montréal," *L'architettura. Cronache e storia* 13, no. 141 (July 1967); in SA, b. "230: Allestimento della sezione la Poesia, padiglione italiano, Expo '67, Montréal (1966-1968)".



Nella «Panoramica dell'Expo», in questo stesso fascicolo della rivista, spieghiamo il criterio urbanistico della colossale impresa, il rapporto tra le tre isole e la città di Montreal, il sistema delle comunicazioni, la distribuzione degli edifici permanenti. Ma, anche per valutare il padiglione italiano, occorre rendersi conto della sua particolarissima ubicazione nel contesto dell'Expo. La sua forma, a vela inclinata, è stata determinata da precisi punti di vista: stative dell'Expo-Express; monumenti scorrente lungo il fiume, strada sul versante opposto.

Il padiglione italiano è tra i più piccoli dell'Esposizione. Dicono gli architetti Passarelli: «Sembra un paradosso, ma pensiamo che il successo del padiglione sia dipeso anche dalla estrema limitazione dei mezzi e dalla brevità del tempo disponibile. Il bilancio complessivo di un miliardo e mezzo ha fatto scattare in partenza soluzioni monumentali ed accademiche. Il brevissimo tempo a disposizione ha fatto escludere la possibilità di ripensamenti e dilazioni che spesso tollgono carica ad una concezione architettonica».

La fortunatissima ubicazione del padiglione italiano è ben dimostrata dalle foto di queste pagine. In alto: i tre settori dell'Expo di Montreal (in primo piano, il triangolo della Cité du Havre; poi l'isola Sainte-Hélène; infine l'isola Notre-Dame, raggiunta da un ponte, subito dietro il ponte, si vede la vela del padiglione italiano). In basso: il padiglione quale si presenta scendendo dalla stazione Notre-Dame. L'Expo-Express costrette i tre settori dell'esposizione di Montreal.

Nella pagina a destra, in alto, la collata in ceramica di Leoncillo Lavouard e il fangino della sezione « costume » progettata da Leonardo Ricci. In basso: veduta aerea della zona. La vela del padiglione italiano prima del montaggio delle tre sculture. A sinistra, lungo il fiume, si distinguono il padiglione israeliano e, a destra, quello cecoslovacco. In basso, i padiglioni della Jugoslavia, della Gran Bretagna e della Germania occidentale.

Expo '67: il padiglione italiano

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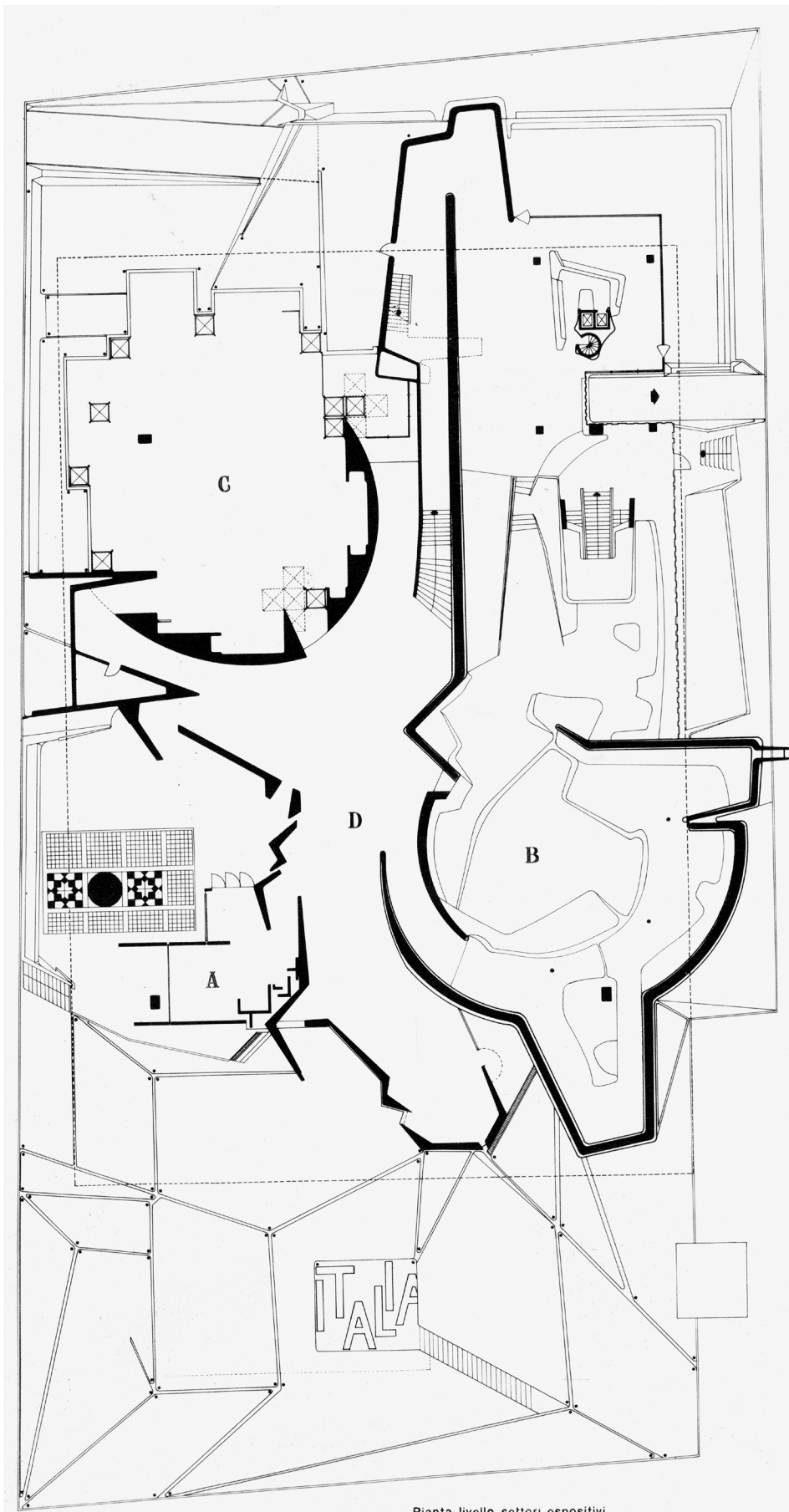
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immediately in Vedova's Percorso/Plurimo/Luce, the beginning of a tortuous pathway through the various sections. The visit could start from the poetry section, and then, returning to Vedova's path, visitors could enter the costume section. Here the cavernous concretions designed by Ricci, i.e. the "scavo primordiale"³² took the form of a continuous up and down that led to the staircase for the restaurant – located on the upper floor – and to a hall for the bar at 1.50 m. The visit continued by re-entering the Percorso/Plurimo/Luce that led to the industrialisation section, the itinerary then finally coming to an end below the spaces designed by Ricci, exiting from the pavilion's side. [fig. 6]

Central to this collective work, not only in terms of layout, was Vedova's Percorso/Plurimo/Luce, an "architettura/luce"³³ that, thanks to a complex system of thirteen projectors modified by a sequential projection of glass plates made by Venini, produced 'informal' light effects on the walls and ceiling of the space similar, in terms of figurative outcome, to the works Vedova produced in those years but with decidedly more earthy means. In addition to the light, the electronic music created by Marino Zuccheri of the Studio Internazionale di fonologie Radio Milano shaped the space. For Vedova himself it was a "spazio percorso dal pubblico in tutte le direzioni, per accedere alle altre Sezioni; spazio con "plurime" possibilità di visione; in relazione

32 [primordial excavation]. Zevi, "L'Italia all'Expo universale 1967 di Montréal," 164.
 33 [architecture/light]. Letter from Emilio Vedova to Giulio Carlo Argan, January 2, 1966, transcribed in Germano Celant, ed., *Expo '67. Alexander Calder, Emilio Vedova* (Milan: Skira, 2016), 89.

Fig. 5
 Some views of the Italian pavilion. From *L'architettura. Cronache e storia* 13, no. 141 (July 1967).



Pianta livello settori espositivi

LEGENDA: A: settore della poesia o dei valori del passato. B: settore del costume o della « terre des hommes » in Italia. C: settore del progresso o dell'industrializzazione. D. percorso « Spazio plurimo-luce ».

Fig. 6

Plan of the exhibition areas of the Italian pavilion (1966-67). From *L'architettura. Cronache e storia* 13, no. 141 (Jul. 1967).

Fig. 7

Emilio Vedova's Percorso-Plurimo-Luce in the Italian pavilion, 1967. From *L'architettura. Cronache e storia* 13, no. 141 (Jul. 1967).

Fig. 8

The Poetry section designed by Carlo Scarpa, 1967. From *L'architettura. Cronache e storia* 13, no. 141 (Jul. 1967).

Fig. 9

The Industrialisation sector designed by Bruno Munari, 1967. From *L'architettura. Cronache e storia* 13, no. 141 (Jul. 1967).



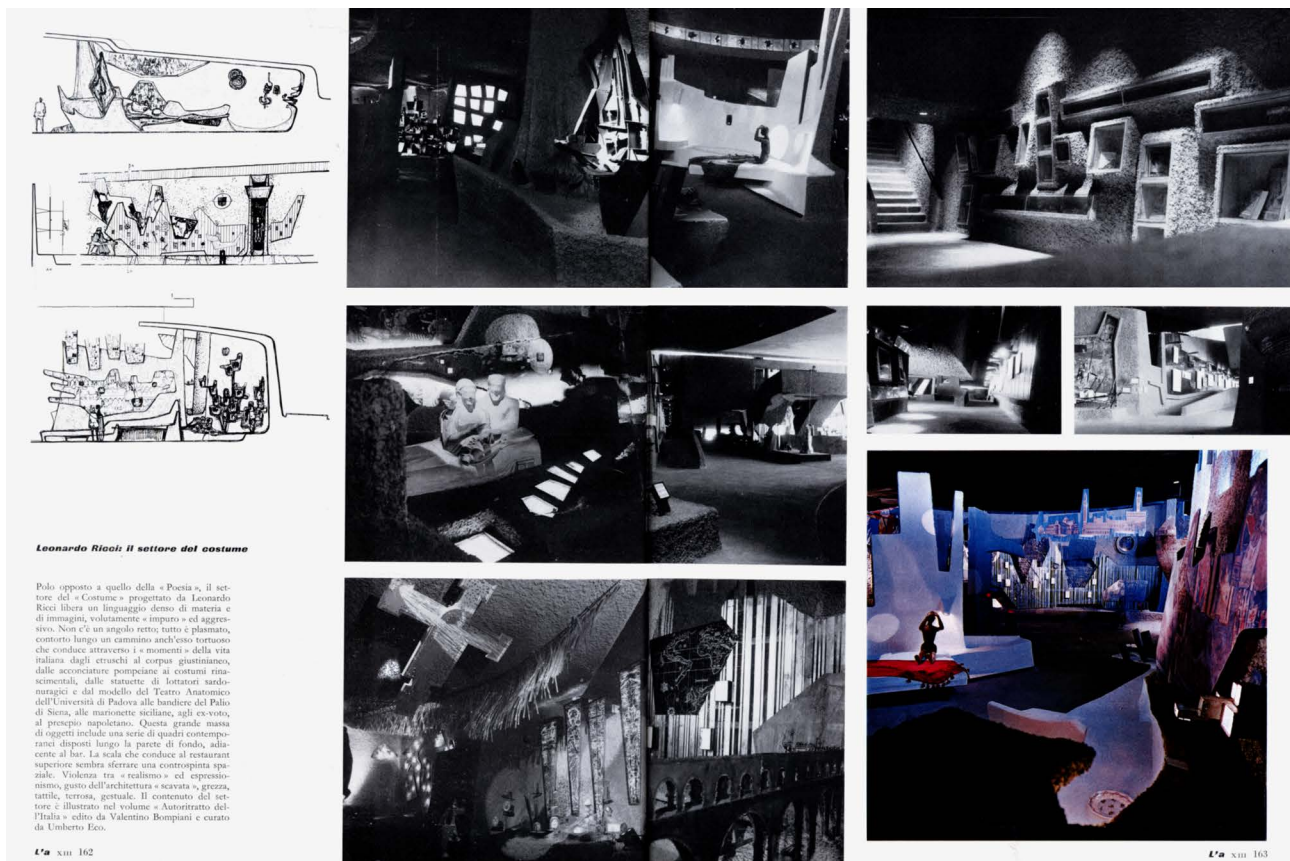
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| 9



Leonardo Ricci: il settore del costume

Polo opposto a quello della « Poesia », il settore del « Costume » progettato da Leonardo Ricci libera un linguaggio denso di materia e di immagini, volutamente « impuro » ed aggressivo. Non c'è un angolo retto tutto è plasmato, contorto lungo un cammino anch'esso tortuoso che conduce attraverso i « momenti » della vita italiana dagli etruschi al corpus giustiniano, dalle accortizie pompiane ai costumi rinascimentali, dalle statuette di lottatori sardo-maragati e dal modello del Teatro Anatomico dell'Università di Padova alle bandiere del Palio di Siena, alle marionette siciliane, agli ex-voto, al presagio napoletano. Questa grande massa di oggetti include una serie di quadri contemporanei disposti lungo la parete di fondo, adiacente al bar. La scala che conduce al restaurant superiore sembra sferrare una controspinta spaziale. Violenza tra « realismo » ed espressionismo, gusto dell'architettura « scavata », grezza, tattile, terrosa, gestuale. Il contenuto del settore è illustrato nel volume « Amoritratto dell'Italia » edito da Valentino Bompiani e curato da Umberto Eco.

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alla luce, al ritmo delle immagini, allo spazio asimmetrico”,³⁴ articulated around the “fulcro cosciente dell'uomo italiano contemporaneo”, that is, the experience of “resistenza”.³⁵ [fig. 7]

The fragmentary and rarefied interior space of the Poetry section, the smallest of the three, designed by Scarpa, hosted some autographs by Petrarca, Leopardi, Monteverdi, Galilei and Machiavelli, as well as reproductions of two drawings by Michelangelo and Raffaello housed in cases supported by colossal blocks of marble. The spaces designed by Scarpa also displayed antique musical instruments and, above all, Donatello's Athys placed in front of a Venini glass window designed by Mario De Luigi.³⁶ Leaving the small room, visitors found themselves below the large roof of the pavilion, in a space that was partially underground but external and visible from above from the public spaces, where a marble reconstruction of the floor of Piero della Francesca's Flagellation hovered in mid-air, with a bronze copy of Donatello's David on top, in a highly articulated spatial representation of Italian art: “Carlo Scarpa”, Zevi stated, had achieved his

34 [dataspace traversed by the public in all directions, to access the other Sections; a space with 'multiple' possibilities of vision; in relation to the light, the rhythm of the images, the asymmetrical space given]. Padiglione italiano - Sezione "D" - Pittore Emilio Vedova. Tema: "L'Italiano oggi" - "Percorso-plurimo- Luce", hall sheet reproduced in Celant, *Expo '67. Alexander Calder, Emilio Vedova*, 128.

35 [conscious fulcrum of the contemporary Italian man]; [resistance]. This and the previous one from Emilio Vedova's letter to Umberto Eco, s.d., transcribed in Celant, *Expo '67. Alexander Calder, Emilio Vedova*, 98.

36 C. Monini, *Rapporto sull'incontro avvenuto a Venezia il 15 dicembre 1966 tra il prof. Scarpa, l'arch. Loss, il sig. Calabrese e ing. Monini*, in SA, b. "230: Allestimento della sezione la Poesia, padiglione italiano, Expo '67, Montréal (1966-1968)", folder P1/18.

Fig. 10

The Costume sector designed by Leonardo Ricci, 1967. From *L'architettura. Cronache e storia* 13, no. 141 (Jul. 1967).

objective, and “per il settore della ‘Poesia’, ha sfruttato la liricità del suo linguaggio in ogni elemento”.³⁷ [fig. 8]

Scarpa’s refinement was contrasted by the modular space designed by Munari for the industrialisation pavilion. Here, the most modern technical and electronic devices blended with the architecture of the pavilion itself, which obeyed the same compositional logic and an industrial style: inside cars were displayed – but not the Montréal, “symbol of creative genius, of courage, of faith in the future” according to an advertisement of the time, which Alfa Romeo had specially designed for the exhibition and which had the honour of being placed in the *Men the Producer* themed pavilion – vehicles, instruments and equipment of various kinds placed on every floor within the kaleidoscopic space designed by Munari. [fig. 9]

Without further describing the sectors, the context in which Ricci conceived his work is already quite evident: it is possible to recognise how some of the recurring themes in the projects housed under the roof of this pavilion were already akin to Ricci’s poetics both at an ‘existential’ level and in the interpretation of the figure of the anonymous in relation to the attitude that governed the direction of the project. It is also possible to recognise similarities on a formal level, as in the design of the ground, which saw a correspondence between what Passarelli had initially thought of and what Ricci had proposed elsewhere, or in the concept, similar to Vedova’s, of space in relation to the path.³⁸ Having acknowledged these correspondences, it is perhaps appropriate to describe in more detail what Ricci designed as a counterpoint to the exhibition programme developed by Umberto Eco in order to attempt, finally, to trace the possible motives and traits of the formal genealogy of this work of his.

2. Content and Architecture of the Costume Section

The costume section was organised by Umberto Eco, who described its contents in *Autoritratto dell’Italia* (1967), published by Bompiani. In this book, which also contains texts by Bruno Zevi, Giulio Carlo Argan, Guido Piovene, Luigi Chiarini, Vittorio Gregotti, Vincenzo Caglioti, Gino Bozza, Francesco Masera and Francesco Rosso aimed at illustrating contemporary Italian culture and technology, in a section entitled “La vita italiana”, illustrated and with comments by himself, Eco recounts “per sommi capi, per esempi significativi, come gli italiani hanno concepito la maternità, l’amore, la tavola, la preghiera, i contatti con gli altri popoli, la vita in comune o la morte”:³⁹ the viaducts of the new Autostrada del Sole appear next to the Tabula Peutingeriana, Leonardo’s

37 [for the ‘Poetry’ sector he exploited the lyricism of his language in every element]. Zevi, “L’Italia all’Expo universale 1967 di Montréal,” 160.

38 See [Studio Passarelli], [Appunto], February 26, 1966.

39 [briefly, with significant examples, how Italians have conceived motherhood, love, food, prayer, contact with other peoples, life in common and death]. “Prefazione,” in *Autoritratto dell’Italia* (Milan: Bompiani, 1967), 5.

Aerial Screw next to an Agusta helicopter, Rudolph Valentino and Gloria Swanson next to a 15th-century gallant scene while a photograph of Ricci's building in the Sorgane district of Florence (juxtaposed with Villa Barbaro in Maser, a synthesis of the ancient building) was included to illustrate the contemporary home. This sort of *atti fondamentali* of a community – in the same years identified by Ricci as the foundation of his formal expression⁴⁰ – were displayed along five stations: Life and death, Life in common, Religion, Contacts with the world, Science, Technology and Citizens and the State.

[fig. 10] “Una corrente aggressiva, inquieta neorealistica o meglio neo espressionistica, fondata sullo scavo manuale e brutalistico, remota da ogni geometria elementare, memore di una tradizione artigiana”,⁴¹ according to Zevi, permeated the spaces designed by Ricci to stage this exhibition programme in which all the costumes of Italy, from the most remote to the most recent times, were made contemporary and even elected as an indication to follow for “come dovrebbe essere la Terra degli Uomini”.⁴² They appeared to be carved out of a rough, continuous material that twisted into cavernous masses

and stretched out into multi-coloured stalagmites from which the rock concretions or metal prostheses supporting the objects on display developed. Sculptures or reproductions of works of art, ceramics, city outlines, mannequins, decorative elements were imprisoned on these supports; or more regularly shaped cases emerged from the bare rock to protect the most precious items. Everything was only artificially lit, and the brightness of the light on the exhibits contrasted with the darkness of the pathway, where space vanished into shadow. Ricci's staging probably had more in common with Vedova's *Percorso/Plurimo/Luce* than with the installations in the other sections. Certainly not in the material that configured the space – serious and rough for the former, completely immaterial, light and music, for the latter – but in the formation of a labyrinthine space perceptible only thanks to the movement of the visitor and defined by a non-Euclidean geometry. [figg. 11-12]

Ricci neither described this project nor proposed a symbolic interpretation of it. This interior landscape could be read as yet another variation on the theme of the myth of the cave in the staging of a cosmographic exhibition programme on Italy. Within this ancestral space, figures seem to hurl themselves at the visitor like simulacra of a pre-industrial, primordial culture. On semblance and shadow, according to



11

40 See Leonardo Ricci, “Form, the tangible expression of a reality,” in György Kepes, ed., *The Man-Made Object* (New York: George Brasiller, 1966), 108-19.

41 [An aggressive, restless neo-realistic or rather neo-expressionistic current, founded on manual and brutalistic excavation, remote from any elementary geometry, mindful of an artisanal tradition]. Zevi, “L’Italia all’Expo universale 1967 di Montréal,” 143.

42 [how the Land of Men should be]. “Prefazione,” in *Autoritratto dell’Italia*, 5.

Fig. 11

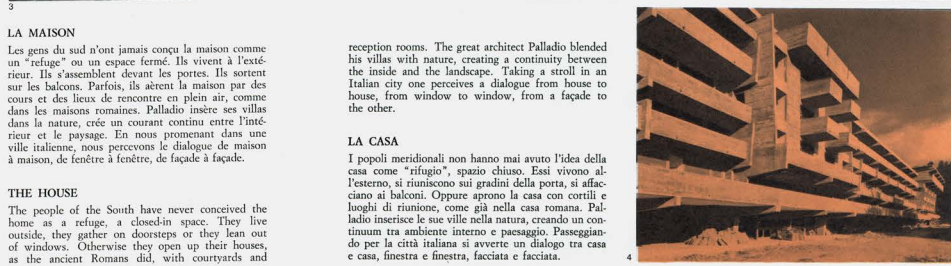
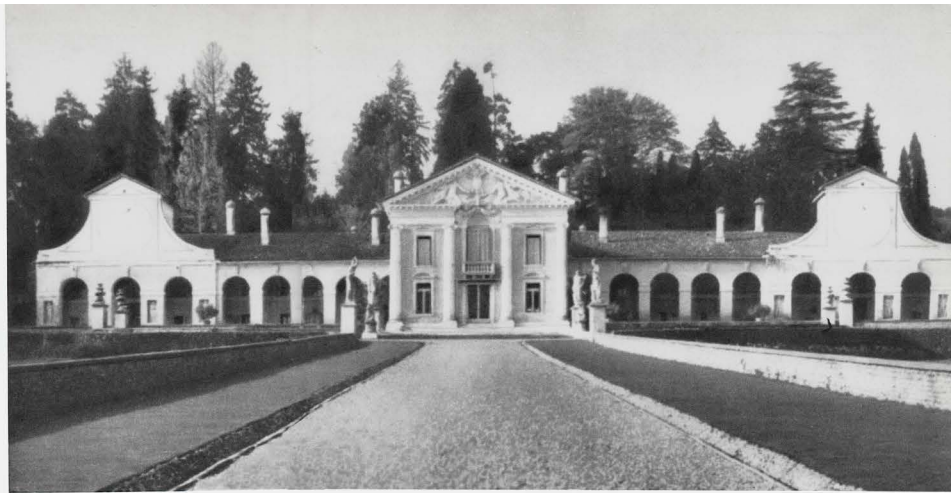
Autoritratto dell’Italia, 1967. Front plate.

Fig. 12

Two pages, illustrated and commented by Umberto Eco, from *La vita Italiana*. From *Autoritratto dell’Italia*, 1967.



1. Casa degli amonini d'oro (Pompei).
2. Trullo (Alberobello).
3. A. Palladio, Villa Barbaro (Maser).
4. Leonardo Ricci, Quartiere autosufficiente per lavoratori (Firenze, Sorgane).



LA MAISON

Les gens du sud n'ont jamais conçu la maison comme un "refuge" ou un espace fermé. Ils vivent à l'extérieur. Ils s'assemblent devant les portes. Ils sortent sur les balcons. Parfois, ils aèrent la maison par des cours et des lieux de rencontre en plein air, comme dans les maisons romaines. Palladio insère ses villas dans la nature, crée un courant continu entre l'intérieur et le paysage. En nous promenant dans une ville italienne, nous percevons le dialogue de maison à maison, de fenêtre à fenêtre, de façade à façade.

THE HOUSE

The people of the South have never conceived the home as a refuge, a closed-in space. They live outside, they gather on doorsteps or they lean out of windows. Otherwise they open up their houses, as the ancient Romans did, with courtyards and

reception rooms. The great architect Palladio blended his villas with nature, creating a continuity between the inside and the landscape. Taking a stroll in an Italian city one perceives a dialogue from house to house, from window to window, from a façade to the other.

LA CASA

I popoli meridionali non hanno mai avuto l'idea della casa come "rifugio", spazio chiuso. Essi vivono all'esterno, si riuniscono sui gradini della porta, si affacciano ai balconi. Oppure aprono la casa con cortili e luoghi di riunione, come già nella casa romana. Palladio inserisce le sue ville nella natura, creando un continuum tra ambiente interno e paesaggio. Passeggiando per la città italiana si avverte un dialogo tra casa e casa, finestra e finestra, facciata e facciata.

what we read in the pages dedicated to painting in Anonymous (20th Century), Ricci seems to resort to a sort of eulogy of shadows derived from the myth of Butade. He writes that like architecture, painting is made of "atti integrati"⁴³ into life and so the caverns of Montréal need to be crossed through to be experienced, but at the same time they sink into mystery – "unica possibilità di esistenza"⁴⁴ – and into the atavistic tradition of myth without becoming a "simbolo" or a way of "giudizio".⁴⁵ It is on these same principles that we seem to find the communitarian and experiential measure that characterises the endless forms of the ecclesia designed a few years earlier for the Waldensian community of Riesi by Tullio Vinay. [figg. 13-15]

The Montréal caverns, with their artisanal, gestural, strongly empirical form, were probably perceived by visitors as a polemical and violent response to the precision and determinism of the technique that permeated the 1967 exhibition. In contrast with the infinite applications of the coupling designed by Buckminster Fuller, with a technique that had become technocracy, the space designed by Ricci sought to be strongly emotional, linked to human expression and certainly not aimed at supporting the realisation of "the largest world fair ever".⁴⁶

In terms of authorial poetics, it is possible to recognise a formal genealogy in the research that Ricci had been carrying out for some years. In order to understand the

43 [acts integrated]. Leonardo Ricci, *Anonymous (20th Century)* (New York: George Braziller, 1962), ed. it., *Anonimo del XX secolo* (Milan: Il saggiatore, 1965), 127.

44 [the only possibility of existence]. Ricci, *Anonimo del XX secolo*, 21.

45 [symbol]; [judgement]. Ricci, *Anonimo del XX secolo*, 16.

46 Documentary "Expo '67 Doc: World's Fair in Montréal, Canada (1967)", British Pathé, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEly-bm5eU0&t=0s> (last viewed: 25 May 2021).

project for Montréal it is necessary to go back over these experiences, developed in Florence some years before and which saw a moment of synthesis in the Maggio musicale fiorentino of 1964, dedicated to expressionism, within which Ricci had for the first time the concrete opportunity to realise an *endless form*.

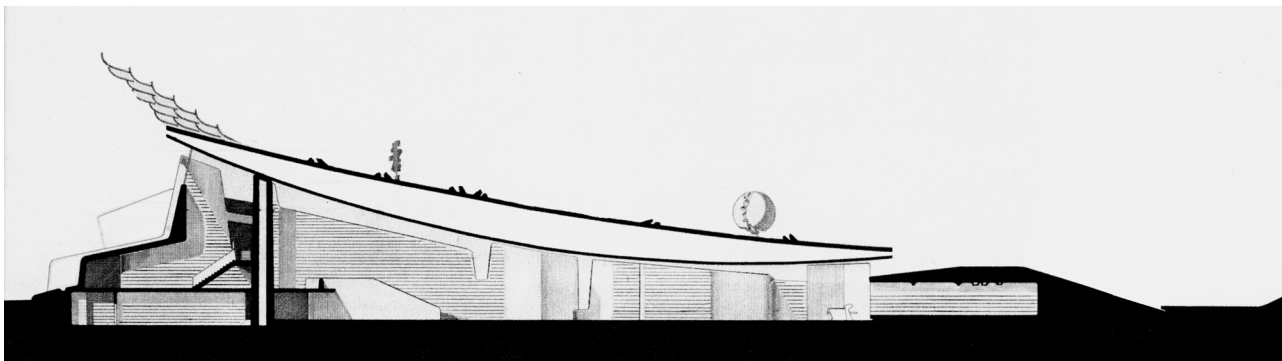
However, leaving aside for a moment the expressive artistic or architectural issues that such an exhibition programme brought into play, its political significance certainly did not appear revolutionary. If an exhibition is, for a nation, an opportunity to self-represent its political and economic vision and to position itself within the international chessboard, then the declarations of President Saragat appear significant. Against the backdrop of the military escalation desired by Lyndon Johnson's United States in the Vietnam War and on the occasion of his visit to the Expo, he reiterated the importance of the "consolidamento e [del]lo sviluppo dell'alleanza atlantica".⁴⁷ Conceived during the third Moro government while Amintore Fanfani was Minister for Foreign Affairs and Giuseppe Lupi (PSDI), Giorgio Oliva (DC) and Mario Zagari (PSI) were undersecretaries, the exhibition programme appeared to follow many clichés of Italian culture and history by avoiding taking polemical positions on international or domestic policies - suffice it to recall, for example, the occupation of university and the death of Paolo Rossi, which occurred during the design of the pavilion, episodes that would lead to the protests of 1968 and in which many of these authors were personally involved – limiting the themes exhibited to a certain disengagement and the formal outcomes to eminently authorial poetics such as, precisely, the *endless form*.

3. Endless form as an Expression of Existence. Florence, 1962-1964

It was precisely this form that Ricci began to conceive in the early 1960s, years in which Florence was a crossroads of those experiences eventually defined by critics as *informal*, *expressionist* or *brutalist* and that were added to those he had developed during his travels to Paris and the United States: it was the sum of these that, according to Koenig, had led him "verso un esistenzialismo mistico ed anarcoide".⁴⁸ It was in Florence that his conception developed and grew, nourished by the expressionist temperament that characterised the Florentine milieu in the years 1962-1964. On the one hand, the expressionist vein was already evident in the work of Giovanni Michelucci, founder of what is usually referred to as the Florentine school, whose definition is as elusive as it is fascinating. Adolfo Natalini sardonically saw its typical traits as "riassumibili in una idea di misura, ma affanciati da una robusta vena di follia [...]. Senza dubbio, dal dopoguerra in poi, ha

47 [consolidation and [the] development of the Atlantic alliance]. On Saragat's trip to Montréal, see: "Saragat porta in Canada la voce di un'Europa che vuol rafforzare la cooperazione con l'America", *Corriere della sera*, 12 set. 1967; "Patto Atlantico Vietnam Medio Oriente temi dei colloqui di Saragat con Pearson," *Corriere della sera*, September 13, 1967

48 [towards a mystical and anarchic existentialism]. Koenig, *Architettura in Toscana*, 142.



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Fig. 13

Longitudinal section of the Italian pavilion, 1967. From *Autoritratto dell'Italia*, 1967.

Figg. 14-15

The raw volumes of the Costume section, [1966-67]. Fotografie. Ricci Studio House - Monterinaldi (FI).

preso il sopravvento la linea irrazionale”.⁴⁹ On the other hand, it found a moment of consolidation and sharing in the Mostra sull’espressionismo designed by Ricci himself at Palazzo Strozzi in the spring of 1964. This very event, the birth of which was part of a broader project on expressionism that involved the entire city and developed as the programme of the Maggio musicale fiorentino, was a moment of construction and recognition of a contemporary artistic and architectural identity not only for the Florentine school. The exhibition, which was intended to build a bridge between the present day and the 1910s, concluded with the presentation of Mendelsohn’s solar tower, which until then had been thought to be destroyed, and above all with Hans Scharoun’s Philharmonie, which had just been inaugurated. The parabola of expressionism, not based on a linguistic unity, produced a mode of expression nourished by strong social connotations that Luigi Chiarini effectively summarised: it “promosse nuove espressioni, che senza [...l’espressionismo] non si sarebbero prodotte; fu come il lievito che è necessario per fare il pane, ma che non si avverte più nel pane”.⁵⁰

The idea of dedicating the 27th Maggio musicale fiorentino in 1964 to Expressionism came from Raffaello Ramat, councillor for fine arts and culture of the municipality of Florence, who in mid-1962 asked Romanian-born, naturalised Italian musician Roman Vlad to take charge of the artistic direction. With the idea that the programme should be divided into different events, a steering committee was appointed consisting of Luciano Anceschi, Giulio Carlo Argan, Fedele D’Amico, Luigi Chiarini, Paolo Chiarini, Luigi Rognoni, Vlad himself and, finally, Bruno Zevi.⁵¹ Without dwelling on the detailed programme of the event – which included exhibitions, conferences, lectures and, of course, shows and the participation of some of the leading intellectuals, directors and set designers of the time – worthy of note, in addition to the exhibition that will be discussed below, is the Convegno internazionale di studi sull’Espressionismo, which was attended by Argan, Koenig, Ungers and Zevi among others. It was a particularly important occasion for Italian culture in the 1960s for the historical and critical elaboration of the Expressionist movement in the various arts, and a central moment for the definition of architecture in light of the most recent experiences. Koenig, who was also the curator of the architecture section of the exhibition, aimed to establish continuity between the Expressionism of the 1910s and 1920s and the actuality of Expressionism in the years following the Second World War. At the time, he described the current phenomena as

49 [summed up in an idea of measure, but flanked by a strong vein of madness [...]. Undoubtedly, from the post-war period onwards, the irrational line has prevailed]. “Interni fiorentini e altre divagazioni. Un pomeriggio con Adolfo Natalini, intervista di Fabio Fabbrizzi e Francesca Mugnai,” *Firenze Architettura* 16, no. 1 (2012): 72. On the Florentine school and “the irrational line” see Elvio Manganaro’s booklet, *Warum Florenz? O delle ragioni dell’espressionismo di Michelucci, Ricci, Savioli e Dezzi Bardeschi* (Melfi: Libria, 2016).

50 [promoted new expressions that would not have been produced without [...expressionism]; it was like the yeast that is necessary to make bread, but which is no longer perceived in the bread]. This is Luigi Chiarini’s thesis on expressionist cinema: cited in Ladislao Mittner, “L’espressionismo a Palazzo Vecchio,” *Belfagor* (July 1964) published in Id., *Saggi, divagazioni, polemiche* (Naples: Morano, 1964), 283. For the programme of the 1964 event, see *XXVII Maggio musicale fiorentino 1964. L’espressionismo* (Florence: AGAF, 1964).

51 Antonella Gargano, “L’espressionismo a Firenze: Documenti e testimoni,” in *Expressionismus. Una enciclopedia interdisciplinare*, eds. Paolo Chiarini, Antonella Gargano, Roman Vlad, (Rome: Bulzoni, 1986), XIV-XXIII.

“espressionismo organico”⁵² with strong political and ethical overtones – its aversion to Nazism and Fascism – and saw it as a formal alternative to the modern movement crystallised in the International Style.⁵³ Koenig’s reflections were based on those of Oswald Mathias Ungers, who in the previous year had curated an exhibition in Cologne on the collection of drawings and letters on Expressionism entitled “Die gläserne Kette”, a body of documents that he had collected over time and which would make up most of the section on architecture in the Florence exhibition.⁵⁴ For Ungers, what characterised expressionism was not language or formal research but the *Erscheinungsformen* (outward form) of “expressionistischen kunstvollens”. It was based on three qualities:

Abkehr von der Wirklichkeit. In der radikalsten Auswirkung bis zur völligen Auflösung [...]. Besinnung auf Ursprünglichkeit und elementare Ausdrucksweise [...]. Verwandlung und Überwindung der Welt und der Materie durch den schöpferischen Geist.⁵⁵

The same research into the expression of spiritual and primordial needs that Ungers read in architecture was synthesised in literary experimentation by Ladislao Mittner in the dualism between *scream* and *geometry*, or, according to Luigi Chiarini, in the antagonism between *chaos* and *geometry*.⁵⁶ If individual expression grew out of the *Urschrei*, the primordial scream, as Mittner argues, at the same time expressionism expressed a moral sentiment and theosophical visions that were politically grounded “attraverso l’idea di una società senza classi, felicemente pacificata”.⁵⁷

Mittner also recalls how, while during the conference the discussions oscillated between interpretative poles understood as “indirizzo stilistico” or as “contenutistico sociologico”, it was Zevi who proposed a “mozione”, approved by the conference, which placed “decisamente l’accento sullo ‘stimolo provocatorio e vitalizzante’ che l’espressionismo conserva tuttora e sulla ‘carica morale’ insita nella sua

52 [organic expressionism]. Giovanni Klaus Koenig, *Introduzione alla mostra di architettura espressionista, Comunicazione al Convegno Internazionale di Studi sull’Espressionismo*, Firenze, 18-23 mag. 1964, typescript. A copy is kept at the Municipal Library of the Archiginnasio of Bologna in the Luciano Anceschi collection. The text was later republished in Chiarini, Gargano, Vlad, *Expressionismus. Una enciclopedia interdisciplinare*.

53 On Koenig and the historiography of expressionism see Ezio Godoli, “Il ruolo di Koenig nella storiografia dell’architettura dell’espressionismo,” in *Giovanni Klaus Koenig. Un fiorentino nel dibattito nazionale su architettura e design (1924-1989)*, ed. Maria Cristina Tonelli (Florence: FUP, 2020), 213-23.

54 Adolfo Natalini writes in his reminiscences on Koenig that Ungers hosted “a young professor with a German surname for research in his library in Belvederestrasse in Cologne”: “the Florentine exhibition on Expressionism began with this research”. See Adolfo Natalini, “Note per un ritratto a memoria di Giovanni Klaus Koenig,” in *Giovanni Klaus Koenig. Un fiorentino nel dibattito nazionale su architettura e design (1924-1989)*, ed. Maria Cristina Tonelli (Florence: FUP, 2020), 103.

55 [1] Turn away from objective reality. In its most radical effects and until its complete dissolution.... 2) Reflection on originality and elementary means of expression.... 3) Transformation and overcoming of the world and matter through a creative spirit]. This and the previous ones from Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Die Erscheinungsformen des Expressionismus in der Architektur, 1964, Comunicazione al Convegno Internazionale di Studi sull’Espressionismo*, Firenze, 18-23 mag. 1964, typescript. A copy is kept at the Municipal Library of the Archiginnasio of Bologna in the Luciano Anceschi collection. The text was later republished in Chiarini, Gargano, Vlad, *Expressionismus. Una enciclopedia interdisciplinare*.

56 See Ladislao Mittner, *L’espressionismo* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1965), 49-73; Paolo Chiarini, *Caos e geometria. Per un regesto delle poetiche espressioniste* (Florence: La nuova Italia, 1964).

57 [through the idea of a classless, happily pacified society]. Giovanni Klaus Koenig, *Introduzione alla mostra di architettura espressionista, Comunicazione al Convegno Internazionale di Studi sull’Espressionismo*, Firenze, 18-23 mag. 1964, typescript.

testimonianza".⁵⁸ Zevi, who at the time had already published a number of studies on Mendelsohn and was probably already imagining the *Opera completa* dedicated to him that was to be published in 1970,⁵⁹ saw the path of expressionism as an 'ethical' choice – and even an identifying choice if incorporated in his interpretation of Judaism⁶⁰ – alternative to the "ideologie del lavoro di gruppo, della presunta obiettività razionalista, della funzionalità 'pura' e anonima",⁶¹ i.e. by turning his critique against that season of the Modern, which, in his opinion, had exhausted its parabola: practices that he proposed to methodologically dismantle precisely by directing the Montréal project. "Chi è avverso agli eroi detesta l'espressionismo", he said, and expressionism, "se non si limita ad essere un'arte di consolazione, o di protesta, solitaria, ha gli strumenti per aggredire i problemi contemporanei. Si tratta di coraggio, di ottimismo ribelle"⁶² and, finally, for Zevi, what had mainly been confined to drawings and principles between the two wars could, with these prerequisites, be realised.

If part of Zevi's considerations corresponded to Ricci's attitude, the same could be said about those expressed by Argan. The latter insisted on the Expressionists' "concezione dello spazio [...] non più come ambiente naturale costante, ma come dimensione dell'esistenza umana" capable of "porsi come rivelazione concreta della realtà attraverso la vicenda esistenziale umana".⁶³ The Expressionists "opened the way to an aesthetic no longer based on the concept of form or representation, but on signs: semantic aesthetics",⁶⁴ statements that echoed the positions of Ricci, Zevi himself, Koenig and Eco.

58 [stylistic orientation]; [sociological content]; [motion]; [decisive emphasis on the 'provocative and vitalising stimulus' that expressionism still retains today and on the 'moral charge' inherent in its testimony]. This and the previous ones from Mittner, "L'espressionismo a Palazzo Vecchio," 279-84.

59 Ita Heinze-Greenberg, "Heroic Narratives. Bruno Zevi and Eric Mendelsohn", in *Bruno Zevi. History, Criticism and Architecture after World War II*, eds. Matteo Cassani Simonetti and Elena Dellapiana, (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2021), 129-49.

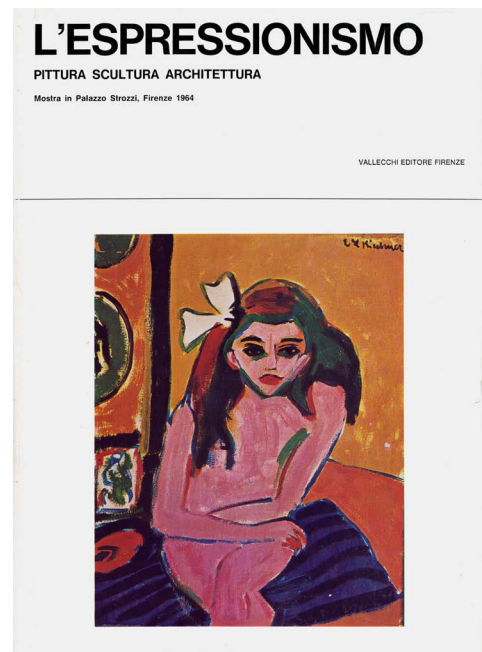
60 See Matteo Cassani Simonetti, "Assimilation' or 'Diversity' of Jewish Architects and Jewish Architecture in Italy during the 20th Century. Notes on the Debate and the Reflection of Bruno Zevi", in *Bruno Zevi. History, Criticism and Architecture after World War II*, eds. Matteo Cassani Simonetti and Elena Dellapiana, (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2021), 37-57.

61 [ideologies of group work, of supposed rationalist objectivity, of 'pure' and anonymous functionality]. Bruno Zevi, *L'eredità dell'espressionismo in architettura, Comunicazione al Convegno Internazionale di Studi sull'Espressionismo*, Firenze, 18-23 mag. 1964, typescript. A copy is kept at the Municipal Library of the Archiginnasio of Bologna in the Luciano Anceschi collection. The text is partially published in Marcatré 8-9-10 (1964) and then, modified, in Chiarini, Gargano, Vlad, *Expressionismus. Una enciclopedia interdisciplinare*.

62 [Those who are averse to heroes detest expressionism]; [if it is not limited to being a solitary art of consolation or protest, has the tools to attack contemporary problems. It is about courage, about rebellious optimism]. This and the previous ones from Zevi, *L'eredità dell'espressionismo in architettura, Comunicazione al Convegno Internazionale di Studi sull'Espressionismo*, Firenze, 18-23 mag. 1964.

63 [conception of space [...] no longer as a constant natural environment, but as a dimension of human existence]; [presenting itself as a concrete revelation of reality through human existential events]. This and the previous ones from Giulio Carlo Argan, "L'architettura dell'espressionismo", in *Bilancio dell'espressionismo* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1965), 95-108. The volume gathers the texts of the series of conferences "Incontro con l'espressionismo" held in April 1964 in Florence.

64 Argan's statement is cited by Zevi in "Caos e geometria contro il nazismo. Riscattata l'attualità dell'espressionismo," *L'Espresso*, June 7, 1964, reprinted in Id., *Cronache di architettura*, vol. V (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1971).



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Fig. 16

The catalogue of the exhibition on Expressionism held at Palazzo Strozzi in 1964. Front plate.

Fig. 17

Franco Borsi and Giovanni Klaus Koenig's volume on the architecture of Expressionism, 1967. Front plate.

If the conference was an opportunity to reinterpret the qualities of expressionism, the exhibition made it possible to see its figurative expression. It was accompanied by a catalogue – which devoted very little space to architecture – to which Franco Borsi and Koenig's book *Architettura dell'espressionismo*, published in 1967, constitutes an important addition. It consists of a first, more philological part by Franco Borsi – *Per un archivio dell'espressionismo in architettura* – and a more militant part – *L'eredità dell'espressionismo* – written by Koenig.⁶⁵ [figg. 16-17]

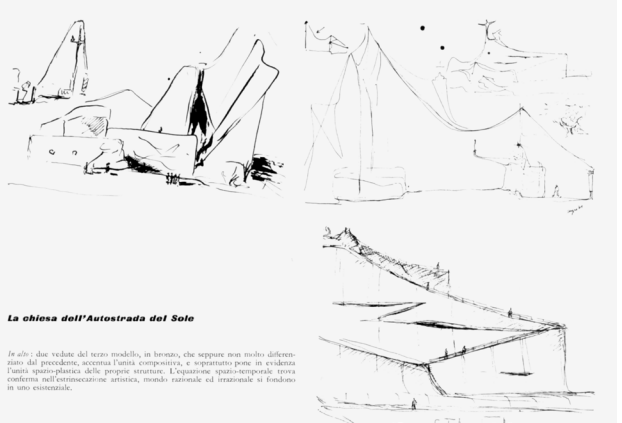
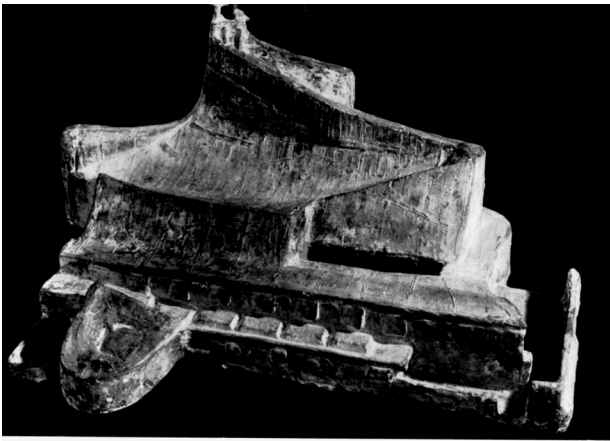
Organised by Palma Bucarelli for the painting, sculpture and graphics sections and by Koenig for the architecture section, the exhibition presented the public with a wide selection of works from all over Europe.⁶⁶ Compared to the 532 works exhibited in the sections curated by Bucarelli, the architecture section featured more than 130 works including drawings, models and photographs – the most-represented author was Hermann Finsterlin with 42 works and four models while only one drawing by Mendelsohn was on display – and concluded with a colour slide show of Scharoun's Philharmonie and Mendelsohn's Solar Tower. The three years that separate the 1964 exhibition from the book by Borsi and Koenig seem to shift the interest of the authors, after an initial phase of necessary recognition of the expressionist event, to a reinterpretation of this in a key more of vital experience: "la ormai riconosciuta conclamata crisi del razionalismo architettonico", write the authors, "porta la necessità di vedere se alle origini – alle origini specifiche e non pionieristiche – del movimento moderno, ci stanno altre vene, altri filoni ideali, altre ipotesi di lavoro"⁶⁷ through which to interpret their present, and so it is not surprising, with these assumptions and thanks to Finsterlin's legacy, if the volume makes mention of many authors who in the post-war period followed paths diametrically opposed to those beaten by International Style, after Hugo Haring and Hans Scharoun.

una vasta corrente "informale" che recuperava un vecchio membro del gruppo De Stijl come Kiesler o il giovane Italo americano Paolo Soleri; o l'esperienza della scultura che si abita di André Bloc; o in Italia il Michelucci della Chiesa dell'autostrada (il cui disegni hanno entusiasmato Finsterlin quando glieli abbiamo fatti vedere), e dell'ancor più sciolta chiesa di San Marino; fino ai giovanissimi che a Firenze alla scuola di Ricci, come in California (Goldman) e un po' dappertutto vanno sbrigando la loro architettura-scultura fuori dal cilizio dei tre assi

65 *L'espressionismo. Pittura, scultura, architettura. Mostra in Palazzo Strozzi, Firenze, maggio-giugno 1964* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1964); Franco Borsi, Giovanni Klaus Koenig, *Architettura dell'espressionismo* (Genoa: Vitali e Ghianda; Paris: Vincent, Fréal e C.ie, 1967).

66 The exhibition committee consisted of Giulio Carlo Argan, Cesare Brandi, Palma Bucarelli, Giovanni Klaus Koenig and Bruno Zevi.

67 [the now acknowledged crisis of architectural rationalism]; [brings the need to see if at the origins – at the specific, non-pioneering origins – of the modern movement, there are other veins, other ideal strands, other working hypotheses]. This and the previous one from Franco Borsi, Giovanni Klaus Koenig, *Architettura dell'espressionismo*, 8.



cartesiani: tutti possono riconoscere in Finsterlin un po' il loro padre.⁶⁸

It is thanks to this genealogy – which is reflected in another acute observation by Borsi in which he drew a bridge between the city-land argued by Bruno Taut and the one imagined by Ricci⁶⁹ – which unites direct masters, putative masters and students that we can begin to relate Ricci's work to some of the themes that resounded in the early 1960s in the streets of Florence, and that Ricci both heard and helped to spread: the primordial expression spawning an existential interpretation of architecture; the dimension of social utopia that architecture can contribute to achieve; the insistence on the fundamental acts of human life. These are in an area in which at least three of the authors mentioned by Borsi played a decisive role for Ricci: Frederick Kiesler, André Bloc and, of course, Giovanni Michelucci whose works and influence appear inextricably intertwined in the Florence of the late 1950s and early 1960s.

68 [A vast "informal" current that recovered an old member of the De Stijl group such as Kiesler or the young Italo-American Paolo Soleri; or the experience of sculpture that recalls André Bloc; or in Italy the Michelucci of the Church of the Motorway (whose drawings enthused Finsterlin when we showed them to him), and of the even more dispersed church of San Marino; up to the very young people who in Florence at the school of Ricci, as in California (Goldman) and a little bit everywhere are developing their architecture-sculpture outside the circle of the three Cartesian axes: they can all consider Finsterlin as a bit of their father]. Franco Borsi, "Per un archivio dell'espressionismo in architettura," in Franco Borsi, Giovanni Klaus Koenig, *Architettura dell'espressionismo*, 109.

69 Franco Borsi, "Per un archivio dell'espressionismo in architettura," in Franco Borsi, Giovanni Klaus Koenig, *Architettura dell'espressionismo*, 76. Particularly important for this genealogy is the series *Locchio e le seste* conceived by Koenig and Borsi, consisting of just two volumes for the publisher LEF, whose combination appears very significant: *Giovanni Michelucci* (1966) and *Hermann Finsterlin. Idea dell'architettura* (1968), both edited by Franco Borsi.

Fig. 18

Leonardo Ricci's presentation of Giovanni Michelucci's work. From *L'architettura. Cronache e storia* 7, no. 76 (Feb. 1962).

4. Towards an Existential Form. Three Masters Faced with the Problem of Expression: Giovanni Michelucci, Frederick Kiesler and André Bloc

While it is useless to argue about Michelucci's relationship with Ricci – it is sufficient to reread the largely autobiographical text Ricci dedicated to his master in 1962⁷⁰ – the relationship with Bloc can be traced back at least to 1955, when he exhibited some of his sculptures at Ricci's home in Monterinaldi as part of the exhibition organised by Ricci together with Fiamma Vigo, "La Cava. Mostra internazionale all'aperto di arti plastiche" [fig. 18].⁷¹ The relationship between Ricci and Kiesler, on the other hand, while there does not seem to be any documented evidence of them meeting, probably dates back to 1952, the year when Ricci became acquainted with his work.⁷² However, it is not certain that Ricci visited the exhibitions "15 Americans" – in whose catalogue Kiesler published *Note on the Correalism*⁷³ – and "Two Houses: New Ways to Build" – curated by Arthur Drexler and which compared the Endless House and Buckminster Fuller's Geodesic Dome House – both at MoMA in New York in the summer of 1952 when his presence was documented at nearby Brooklyn College.⁷⁴ Nor is it certain that in the autumn of 1960, when Ricci was at MIT, he had the opportunity to visit the MoMA exhibition "Visionary architecture", again curated by Drexler, which brought together many works of the 20th century under the common theme of visionary architecture, from that of the expressionists – Hermann Finsterlin, Hans Poelzig and Bruno Taut – to more recent experiments, such as that of Kiesler. On the other hand, it is certain that he presented the latter exhibition with a lecture in Florence three years later as part of the cultural exchanges between Palazzo Strozzi and the United States.⁷⁵ For Drexler, the theme that guided the exhibition was vision expressed through certain social and architectural utopias, issues that were also crucial for Ricci in the same years: "Social usage", wrote Drexler, "determines what is visionary and what is not. Visionary projects cast their shadows over into the real world of experience, expense and frustration. If we could learn what they have to teach, we might exchange irrelevant rationalizations for more useful critical standards. Vision and reality might then coincide".⁷⁶ What remains of Ricci's Florentine presentation is a testimony by Lara Vinca Masini published in *L'Avanti* in which she relates the Endless House to the village of Riesi and to Vittorio Giorgini's research. In addition to commenting on the projects, Vinca Masini also reports on Ricci's vision of architecture in relation to Kiesler's work: [fig. 19]

Questa mostra, al di là della contraddittorietà dell'impostazione, oltre a di-

70 Leonardo Ricci, "L'uomo Michelucci, dalla casa Valiani alla Chiesa dell'Autostrada del Sole," *L'architettura. Cronache e Storia* 7, no. 76 (February 1962): 664-89.

71 Gillo Dorfles, "Una mostra all'aperto di arti plastiche," *Domus*, no. 313 (1955): 61-64.

72 Before his death, Kiesler's work was not particularly well illustrated in Italian publications. See Maria Bottero, *Frederick Kiesler. Arte, architettura, ambiente* (Milan: Electa, 1996).

73 Dorothy C. Miller, ed., *15 Americans* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1952), 8.

74 On the exhibition see: *Two Houses: New Ways to Build, Exhibition's press release*, MoMA Archives, <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/2420> (last viewed: 25 May 2021).

75 Silvia Massa and Elena Pontelli, eds., *Mostre permanenti. Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti in un secolo di esposizioni* (Lucca: Edizioni Fondazione Ragghianti Studi sull'Arte, 2018), p. 243-44 (article by Francesca Giusti).

76 *Visionary architecture, Exhibition's press release*, MoMA Archives, <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/2554> (last viewed: 25 May 2021).

mostrare (citiamo ancora Ricci) “che la spinta della civiltà meccanica si è esaurita” e a manifestare la necessità, per l’uomo attuale “di entrare in una nuova avventura umana”, in un processo culturale “interdisciplinare, più aperto a nuovi orizzonti di cui non conosciamo ancora la portata” ci sembra prospettare una nuova concezione dell’architettura, orientata verso una dinamica dell’immaginazione intesa come articolazione di un nuovo spazio, uno spazio, appunto, continuo, interpretato emozionalmente, per la vita dell’uomo del nostro tempo (ne abbiamo una trascrizione esemplare nella nuova chiesa dell’autostrada del sole di Giovanni Michelucci). Questa concezione di uno spazio “naturalistico” si contrappone, succedendole, a quella dello spazio “organico” di impostazione intellettualistica e razionale, con un processo inverso a quello delle altre arti figurative, in cui la posizione neo-concretista e gestaltica è, semmai, di un grado più attuale (o attualizzata) rispetto a quella postinformale di recupero dell’immagine.⁷⁷

If, as Marco Dezzi Bardeschi argued years later, Ricci “riprendeva quasi alla lettera il modello della Endless House senza timore di sfiorarne il plagio per realizzare l’archetipico villaggio valdese del Monte degli ulivi a Riesi”,⁷⁸ emphasising the centrality of Kiesler in the Florentine context – the first Florentine variation on the Endless House was probably Giorgini’s “Quadrante” art gallery, dated 1959, a gallery that would host a solo exhibition of Bloc⁷⁹ in 1962 – does not only mean that Ricci assimilated only the forms conceived by Kiesler. In fact, in the latter’s texts there are many analogies with Ricci’s both in terms of content and form. A heartfelt prose, in which a spiritual dimension recognised in all the circumstances of life permeates the narrative, testifies to how the theme of the endless form was existentially central before being so architecturally:

It is endless like the human body – there is no beginning and no end to it. The “Endless” is rather sensuous, more like the female body in contrast to sharp-angled male architecture. All ends meet in the “Endless” as they meet in life. Life’s rhythms are cyclical. All ends of living meet during twenty-four hours, during a week, a lifetime. They touch one another with the kiss of Time. They shake hands, stay, say goodbye, return through the same or other doors, come and go through multi-links, secretive or obvious, or through the whims of memory [...]. Nature creates bodies, but art creates life. Thus living in the “Endless House” means to live an exuberant life, not only the

77 [This exhibition, apart from the contradictory nature of its approach, not only demonstrates (quoting Ricci again) “that the thrust of mechanical civilisation has come to an end” and demonstrates the need for modern man “to enter a new human adventure”, in a cultural process that is “interdisciplinary, more open to new horizons whose scope we do not yet know”, seems to us to envisage a new conception of architecture oriented towards a dynamic of the imagination understood as the articulation of a new space, a continuous space, emotionally interpreted, for the life of man in our time (we have an exemplary transcription of this in Giovanni Michelucci’s new church of the Autostrada del Sole). This conception of a “naturalistic” space is contrasted and succeeds that of the “organico” space of an intellectual and rational approach, with an inverse process to that of the other figurative arts, where the neo-Concretist and Gestaltist position is, if anything, one degree more current (or actualised) than the post-informal one of recovery of the image]. Lara Vinca Masini, “L’architettura dell’impossibile,” in *L’avanti*, February 1, 1964.

78 [took up the model of the Endless House almost to the letter without fear of being plagiarised in order to create the archetypal Waldensian village of Monte degli ulivi in Riesi]. Marco Dezzi Bardeschi, “Kiesler, la scuola fiorentina e la curvatura del mondo,” in *ANAKH*, no. 14 (June 1996): 72.

79 See *André Bloc* (Florence: Quadrante, 1962).

Fig. 19

Photograph of the interior of Frederick Kiesler’s Endless House. The photograph, kept in Casa Studio Ricci, bears a MoMA stamp and the words ‘Visionary Architecture’ on the back. Casa Studio Ricci - Monteternaldi (FI).

Fig. 20

Photograph of André Bloc’s Habitable II, Meudon, 1964. From Bloc. *Le monolithe frac-ture*, 1996.



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life of a digesting body, of routine social duties, or the wind-up of functions of the four seasons, the automatism of day and night, of high noon and the midnight moon. The “Endless House” is much more than that and much less than the average dwelling of the rich of pseudo rich. It is less because it reverts to fundamental needs of the human in his relationship to man, to industry, to nature (that is, to eating, sleeping and sex) [...]. While it is being built, the “Endless House” will grow its colors, in vast areas of condensed into compositions (fresco-like or paintings), into high or low reliefs, into the plasticity of full sculptures. Like vegetation, it grows its form and color at the same time. And so let us avoid the museum term “art” in connection

with architecture, because, as we understand it today, architecture has been degraded to old-fashioned or modern-fashioned make-up and décor. Art as a ritual cannot be an after-thought. It must again become the usual link between the known and the unknown.⁸⁰

However, it is likely that Ricci was not familiar with this text by Kiesler but rather with the better known *Manifeste du Corréalisme* published in 1949 with *L'architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, still directed by Bloc. It allows us to better interpret the analogies between formal expression and spiritual relationship: thanks to the continuity – for Kiesler *The New Principle of Architecture* – that “il devenait possible de recourir a des solutions simples aux problèmes primordiaux sans négliger les besoins essentiels de l'existence humaine”. This continuity, not expressed in an individualistic vision but, to the contrary, aimed at a social one – “Nous voulons”, Kiesler continues, “la création de nouvelles possibilités d'existence qui aiguilleront l'évolution de la société sur une voie nouvelle”⁸¹ – becomes a generative method of architectural space obtained, for Kiesler, from the continuous movement of man in space, or from what he defined as “action living”.⁸² This spatial research – in some respects close to his own work – makes it possible to elaborate further observations on Ricci's conception of form in architecture, this time in relation to a similar study that was headed by Bloc himself and *L'architecture d'Aujourd'hui*: while for Bloc and *Groupe Espace* the crux of the problem mainly concerned the plastic arts in relation to architecture and sculpture itself – the approach can be understood in continuity with the problem of the decorative arts already set out on the occasion of the 1925 Exhibition and with the positions on the synthesis of the arts, in this regard, of Le Corbusier and Fernand Léger – and only consequently the architectural conception, Ricci's research is instead expressly architectural. In fact, Bloc's *Habitacle* is a sculpture on a non-habitable architectural scale made by an author who in the *Groupe Espace* Manifesto defined himself as a sculptor.⁸³ Consistent with this analysis is the presentation of Ricci's work in 1966 in the issue of *Au Jour d'hui* dedicated to “Espaces sculptés - Espaces architecturés”, in which, around the church of San Giovanni Battista and the church of San Marino by Michelucci, recognised as exemplary projects, the works of Marco Dezzi Bardeschi, Vittorio Giorgini and Leonardo Savioli were read out together with those – unrealised and presented thanks to models – by Ricci: a model for the ecclesia – defined as *Maquette pour un “espace habitable”*⁸⁴ and seemingly reminiscent of an Etruscan sculpture – and three projects by his students in Florence for a new megastructural

80 Frederick Kiesler, *The “Endless House”: a Man-Built Cosmos* (1962), reprinted in Frederick J. Kiesler, *Selected Writings*, Siegfried Gohr and Gunda Luyken, eds. (Stuttgart: G. Hatje, 1996), 126-29.

81 This and the previous one from Frederick Kiesler, *Manifeste du Corréalisme*, 1949.

82 See Bottero, *Frederick Kiesler. Arte, architettura, ambiente*, 29.

83 *André Bloc* (Boulogne: *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui*, 1967), 55, 133. The following quote of Ricci regarding inhabiting and living in a space expresses the opposite meaning of Bloc's *Habitacle*: “l'architecture c'est une sculpture à vivre”. See Ricci, “L'uomo Michelucci, dalla casa Valiani alla Chiesa dell'Autostrada del Sole”, 675.

84 Thus defined in Gérald Gassiot-Talabot, “Les architectes de Florence,” *Aujourd'hui*, no. 53 (1966): 76. The issue featured works by Finsterlin, Kiesler, Paolo Soleri, Hans Hollein and Walter Pichler. Two years earlier, in 1964, the village of Riesi was presented in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* as an “architecture sculpture”. See Leonardo Ricci, “Village pour una communauté nouvelle, Riesi, Sicilia,” *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 34, no. 115 (June-July 1964): 86-89.

urban settlement.⁸⁵ In order to understand the difference in approach to architecture-sculpture that distinguishes Bloc's work from Ricci's existential interpretation, it is perhaps useful to take up what the latter wrote about the church of San Giovanni Battista: [fig. 20]

Ma interessante è domandarci: "questa forma a che categoria, tra le classificate, appartiene?" È cioè essa di ordine cubista od espressionista o neoplasticista od organica? E la risposta è semplice: "non è classificabile o per lo meno dovremmo inventare una categoria nuova". Perché se è vero che fra quelle elencate certo la più vicina è la forma organica, è anche vero che la chiesa di Michelucci da esse si differenzia per l'intervento di alcuni coefficienti non presenti in essa. Prima di tutto il coefficiente latino della volontà dell'uomo di costruire e di misurarsi con la natura anziché divenirne soltanto partecipe. In secondo luogo una volontà di pensiero più precisa rispetto all'esistenza. In conclusione, una forma a contatto dell'uomo più che della natura soltanto. E poiché a me sta a cuore la parola esistenziale, in quanto essa permette una significazione più completa e relazionata all'uomo, mentre la parola organica potrebbe attribuirsi a qualsiasi architettura, fatta magari non dall'uomo e su un altro pianeta, poiché questa architettura di Michelucci partecipa proprio di questo moderno valore di relazione tra l'uomo e le cose, io definirei questa architettura e questa forma "esistenziali" e, secondo il mio modo di vedere le cose, è il massimo tributo che posso dare a Michelucci per questa opera.⁸⁶

This "categoria nuova", for a form that is by nature unclassifiable, is the existential form that seems to unite Ricci's work with that of Kiesler and Michelucci. This denomination, which for Ricci seems to find reference also in the philosophy of Enzo Paci in his *Dall'esistenzialismo al relazionismo* (1957) and in *Diario fenomenologico* (1961) published just before Ricci's *Anonymous*, shuns every historiographic label and every further attempt at singular clarification and definition: it is the fruit of a personal approach that aspires to hold together the legacy of these masters and that of Expressionism – and of Finsterlin in particular – and that coagulates in three works that are precursors to the Montréal exhibition: the unrealised project for the Ecclesia di Riesi (1962), the installation for the exhibition on Expressionism (1964) and the Living Space for Two staged for the exhibition *La casa abitata* (1965), both held at Palazzo Strozzi.

85 On this subject see Kepes, *The Man-Made Object*.

86 [But it is interesting to ask ourselves: "which of the classified categories does this form belong to?", is it cubist or expressionist, neo-plastic or organic? And the answer is simple: "it is not classifiable, or at least we would have to invent a new category". Because while it is true that among those listed the closest is certainly the organic form, it is also true that Michelucci's church differs from them by the intervention of certain coefficients that are not present in it. First of all, the Latin coefficient of man's willingness to build and measure himself against nature rather than merely becoming part of it. Second, a more precise will to think with respect to existence. In conclusion, a form in contact with man rather than nature alone. And since I care about the word existential, because it allows a meaning that is more complete and related to man, while the word organic could be attributed to any architecture, perhaps not made by man and on another planet, since this architecture of Michelucci participates precisely in this modern value of relationship between man and things, I would define this architecture and this form as "existential", and according to my way of seeing things this is the highest tribute I can give to Michelucci for this work]. Ricci, "Luomo Michelucci, dalla casa Valiani alla Chiesa dell'Autostrada del Sole," 676-77. The rejection of an "organic" label for his architecture was also expressed by Michelucci himself, see Franco Borsi, ed., *Giovanni Michelucci* (Florence: LEF, 1966), 127-30.



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5. Against the Form of Mechanical Civilisation

In a presentation of the Riesi project published in 1963 in *Domus* Ricci illustrated the process that led him to model these “forme ancora insolite”.⁸⁷ The author’s main concern was to reject any critical label and to conceive a free, modifiable, imprecise living space alternative to those produced by the mechanisation of the construction process: in this utopian dimension alternative to the determinism of the society of the economic miracle, Ricci found the identity of modern man. “Riguardo alla ‘forma’ architettonica”, he wrote, “nessun problema speciale. Ho cercato di fare come sempre, un’architettura che stia su quella terra, non drogata ma essenziale, anche se spinta al massimo dell’avventura moderna dell’uomo”.⁸⁸ “desideriamo”, he continued, “che questa gente dimenticata dalla civiltà si incammini verso un altro tipo di civiltà, non quella attuale, meccanica, che sta distruggendo la nostra vita”.⁸⁹ The utopian tension – together with the theme of the organic nature of crystal – seems to recall that of the expressionist projects that he must have had during those months while designing the layout of the Florentine exhibition. While this

87 [still unusual forms]. Leonardo Ricci, “Nascita di un villaggio per una nuova comunità in Sicilia,” in *Domus*, no. 409 (December 1963): 5.

88 [Regarding the architectural ‘form’]; [no particular problem. I tried to do as I always do, an architecture that stands on that ground, not enhanced but essential, even if pushed to the limit of man’s modern adventure]. Leonardo Ricci, “Nascita di un villaggio per una nuova comunità”: 6.

89 [We would like]; [for these people who have been forgotten by civilisation to move towards another type of civilisation, not the current, mechanical one, which is destroying our lives]. Leonardo Ricci, “Nascita di un villaggio per una nuova comunità”: 10. Ricci will argue the same points about the Montréal pavilion. See: Wanda Lattes, “Il padiglione italiano alla expo di Montréal,” *La Nazione*, April 26, 1967.

Fig. 21

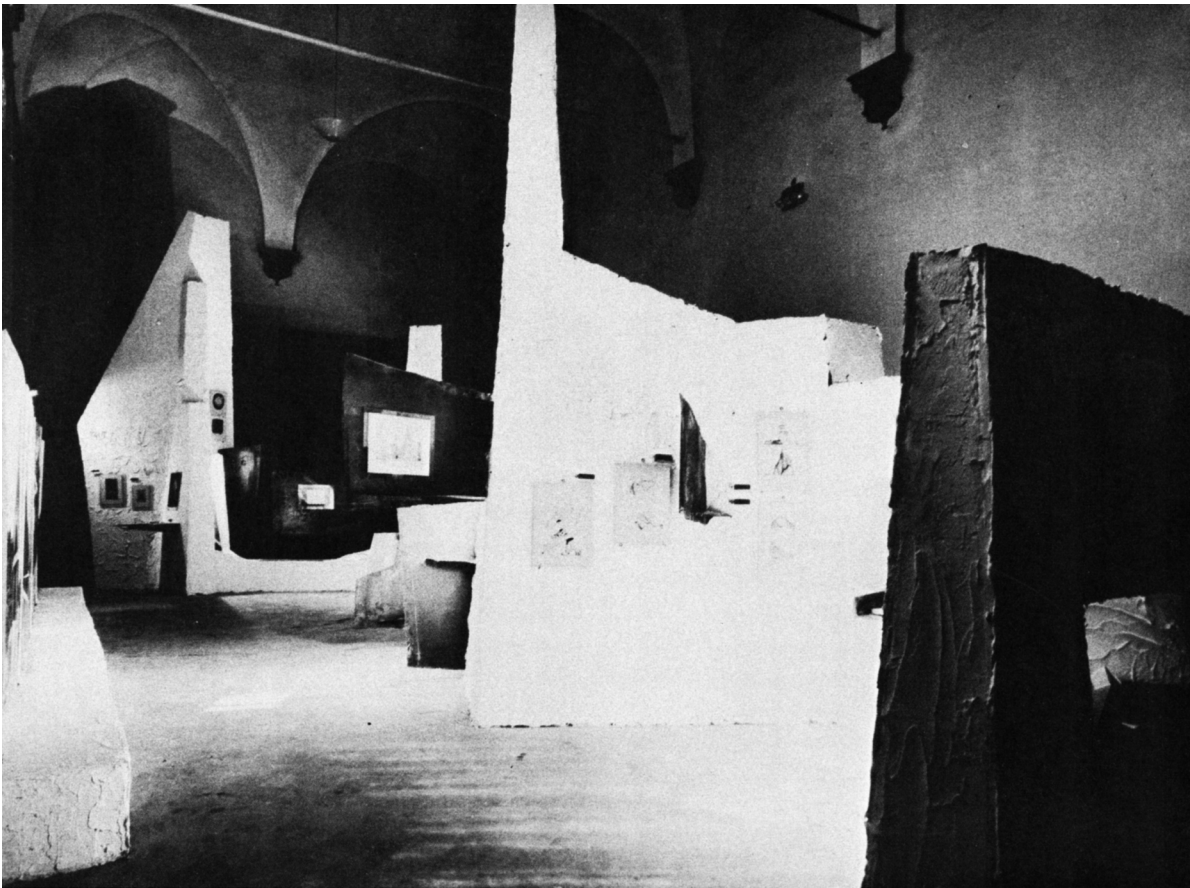
The model of the Chiesa di Monte degli Ulivi photographed against the backdrop of the Fiesole hills. From *Edilizia moderna*, nos. 82-83 (1963).

Fig. 22

The layout of the exhibition on Expressionism held at Palazzo Strozzi, 1964. From *Marcatré* 8-9-10 (1964).

Fig. 23

The living space for two people created for the exhibition “La casa abitata” held at palazzo Strozzi, 1965. From *La casa abitata*, exhibition catalogue, 1965.



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tension was related to the specific context of Rieti, it became a distinctive feature of much of his architecture. [fig. 21]

With regard to questions of spatial modelling, Ricci's impatience with any definition is always recognisable. For example, in the text there are references to – which on closer reading seem more like a distancing from – Bloc's work, the definition of which Ricci finds unsatisfying: "Nella sommarietà e bellezze degli schizzi-idee, queste forme ancora insolite – che appaiono quasi 'sculture da abitare', e come tali risolte solo come un problema formale (anzi informale, come oggi si usa definire queste espressioni per non cercar di comprenderle)". The rejection of any definition of his, or other's architecture, except as "fatto d'arte spontaneo, libera da schemi prestabiliti, volta a suggerire un nuovo modo di vita" makes any form of classification of his works almost impossible:

Già molti anni fa, da alcuni critici io fui catalogato come "brutalista". Oggi l'unico architetto italiano "informale". Poiché considero le correnti del brutalismo e dell'informale non solo conseguenti fra loro, ma anche le più vitali del nostro tempo, in fondo dovrei sentirmi soddisfatto. Ma non è così. È vero che brutalismo ed informale hanno rotto gli schemi accademici del razionalismo e dell'astrattismo geometrico, riportando l'artista sul piano del mistero, della libertà creativa, della fantasia, aprendo nuove possibilità espressive e linguistiche. Ma io avverto che la mia posizione umana, il mio impegno intellettuale sono diversi. Io non sono in posizione anarchica, talvolta confinante con l'arbitrario e gratuito ed antistorico di certi movimenti neo-dadaisti. Al contrario mi sento al servizio dell'uomo tanto da dare all'uomo possibilità di esistenza. La mia forma non si sviluppa al di fuori di un contenuto agendo in se stessa e di per se stessa, come ad esempio nella pittura di azione, di gesto. Ho distrutto, certo, e cerco di distruggere gli schemi, i moduli accademici, artificiali, non coerenti né con la materia né con il pensiero antiidealista dell'uomo d'oggi, che sono alla base di quasi tutta l'architettura cosiddetta moderna. Ma questo solo per amore di verità e realtà. Non è certo il desiderio di ritorno a forme arcaiche, preistoriche, "incivili" come dice lo Zevi, che spinge, ma proprio il contrario. Sento che lo spazio in cui io e gli altri possiamo muoverci a nostro agio non è quello morto, statico, incapsulato dentro gli schemi formalistici dei moduli. Quello spazio è veramente antico. Appartiene ancora ad una terra bidimensionale che tenta la terza dimensione sempre con la bidimensionalità. Ma allora un tempio greco dovrebbe essere ancora il nostro ideale e la nostra aspirazione. [...] Una struttura nasce dalla terra ed assume la sua forma precisa in funzione della vita che noi vogliamo svolgere, dello spazio che permette quella vita, della materia che adoperiamo. Allora cosa è la forma? Non certo quella a priori, di facciate contenenti spazi non qualificati e non qualificabili, ancora concezione ottocentesca dell'oggetto visto come "taglio", quadretto di paesaggio o facciata in prospettiva non fa differenza. La forma in architettura non può essere che la conseguenza naturale, logica, di un pensiero che si fa spazio, plasmato da una struttura coerente nel materiale. Non è una visione

Fig. 24

The model of the "Spazio vivibile per due persone" created for the exhibition "La casa abitata" held at palazzo Strozzi, 1965. From *La casa abitata*, exhibition catalogue, 1965.

a priori, non una scelta volontaria, ma solo realtà diventata atto. Le forme che così nascono, certo sembrano naturali, quasi non fatte dall'uomo ma prodotte da se stesse. Ma tali forme non sono per niente casuali o gratuite. Tutto il contrario.⁹⁰



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The ambition to create a form that springs from nature and reality – and not to follow a somewhat superficial and *à la page* operation as Zevi would say a few years later about the French experiences promoted by *L'architecture d'Aujourd'hui*⁹¹ – define the spaces of the village of Riesi planimetrically developed around nuclei delimited by curved walls, which three-dimensionally develop in space in other endless forms. The ambition to generate a natural form is evident in the photographs of the model published in the *Domus* article, where the brown volumes of the imagined architecture, almost as if they had sprung from the rocky surface of the top of a stone wall, blend in with those of the green hills of Fiesole, in counterpoint with the profile of the convent of San Francesco.

If the Riesi experience is the initiator of this research, at least from a formal and spatial point of view, the almost simultaneous work for the exhibition on Expressionism was a first opportunity for its partial development. [fig. 22] The exhibition offered Ricci and his collaborators the opportunity to “diverti[rsi]” non nel senso del ‘gusto’,

90 [In the roughness and beauty of the sketch-ideas, these still unusual forms – which appear almost a ‘sculptures to be inhabited’ and as such resolved only as a formal problem (or rather informal, as we nowadays use to define these expressions so as not to try to understand them)]; [spontaneous art, free from pre-established schemes, aimed at suggesting a new way of life]; [Many years ago, some critics categorised me as a “brutalist”. Today the only “informal” Italian architect. Since I consider the currents of brutalism and informalism to be not only consequential but also the most vital of our time, I should feel satisfied. But this is not the case. It is true that brutalism and informalism broke the academic mould of rationalism and geometric abstractionism, bringing the artist back to the plane of mystery, creative freedom and imagination, opening up new expressive and linguistic possibilities. But I feel that my human position, my intellectual commitment are different. I am not in an anarchic position, sometimes bordering on the arbitrary and gratuitous and anti-historical of certain neo-dadaist movements. To the contrary, I feel I am at the service of mankind to the extent of giving mankind the possibility of existence. My form does not develop outside of a content acting in and of itself, as for example in action painting, gesture painting. I have certainly shattered and try to continue to shatter moulds, academic, artificial modules that are not consistent either with the subject matter or with the anti-idealist thinking of today’s man, which are the basis of almost all so-called modern architecture. But this is only for the sake of truth and reality. It is certainly not a desire to return to archaic, prehistoric, “uncivilised” forms, as Zevi says, that drives us, but precisely the opposite. I feel that the space in which I and others can move at ease is not the dead, static space encapsulated within the formalistic schemes of modules. That space is truly ancient. It still belongs to a two-dimensional earth that pursues a third dimension using just two. But then a Greek temple should still be our ideal and our aspiration.... A structure is born from the earth and takes on its precise form according to the life we want to lead, the space that allows that life, the material we use. So what is form? Certainly not the a priori concept of facades containing unqualified and unqualifiable spaces, a 19th-century concept of the object seen as a “cut”, a picture of a landscape or a facade in perspective makes no difference. Form in architecture can only be the natural, logical consequence of a thought that becomes space, shaped by a coherent structure in the material. It is not an a priori vision, not a voluntary choice, but only reality that has become action. The forms thus created certainly seem natural, almost not man-made but self-produced. But such forms are by no means random or gratuitous. Quite the opposite]. This and the previous one from Leonardo Ricci, “Nascita di un villaggio per una nuova comunità”: 6-8.

91 Bruno Zevi, “Sculpture à habiter. In Francia si torna alle caverne,” *L’Espresso* (August 28, 1966), reprinted in Id., *Cronache di architettura*, vol. VI (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1970).



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ma divertiti a vivere questa avventura espressionista come se fosse nostra, come se fossimo noi gli artisti che hanno fatto le opere e desiderano uno spazio adatto ad esse". This identification, the result of the desire to "vivere a contatto con l'opera" in an everyday life where the work of art was demythologised and made domestic and understood as "opera dell'uomo e non di semidei" is reflected in the choice of forms and spaces for the staging: "una specie di scultura continua dentro le stanze del palazzo, con spazio a sé stante ed autonomo, che possa veramente contenere il mondo espressionista. Una scultura che permette un viaggio attraverso l'espressionismo dove i singoli artisti possono raccontare la loro 'storia' personale e la loro storia collettiva",⁹² that is, a single expressionist sculpture made up of works on display and staging – a "scultura plurima"⁹³ according to Zevi – capable of making the experience of visiting alive and current. Apart from the



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92 [have fun] not in the sense of 'taste', but have fun living this expressionist adventure as if it were ours, as if we were the artists who made the works and want a space that is suitable for them; [live in contact with the work]; [the work of man and not of demigods]; [a kind of continuous sculpture within the rooms of the building, with its own autonomous space that could truly contain the expressionist world. A sculpture that allows a journey through expressionism where individual artists can tell their own 'story' and their collective history]. This and previous ones from "Risponde Leonardo Ricci," *Marcatré* 2, nos. 8-9-10 (1964): 55-56.

93 [multiple sculpture]. Bruno Zevi, "Mostra dell'espressionismo. Temporalità antilessicale e sdegno materico," *L'Espresso* (May 31, 1964), reprinted in Id., *Cronache di architettura*, vol. V (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1971).

Figg. 25-26

The layout of the Costume section designed by Ricci in the Italian pavilion, 1967. Federal Photos. Ricci Studio House - Monterinaldi (FI).

ways in which museum layouts were conceived in those years and the criticism of the one in Florence⁹⁴ – in 1964, for example, a critical Exhibition of Michelangelo's works was held in Rome, which was very different from the Florentine exhibition in terms of its formal outcome, but not so different from the cultural climate that provoked it – it is important to note that for Ricci this identification with expressionism corresponded on the one hand to his authorial research, and on the other with his desire to understand otherness and community in the perspective of a new society founded on “partecipazione universale”.⁹⁵

The rough, zigzagging rocky spur that ran through the Renaissance rooms of Palazzo Strozzi is a prelude to the Living Space for Two created for the “La casa abitata” exhibition also held at Palazzo Strozzi, in 1965. [figg. 23-24] Once again, in the perspective of a “architettura ‘continua’ che si doveva svolgere alla scala dell'intera ‘città terra’ grazie a una ‘formatività aperta’” which was not to “provocare nessuna separazione fra gli atti delle nostre giornate”,⁹⁶ and on the contrary was to support a new nomadic society – here, as in many other texts by Ricci of those years, there are very strong similarities with those that the radical Florentine architects would begin to write a few months later – a domestic space was created whose characteristics were rooted in the genealogy we have just described. [figg. 25-26] By means of “uno spazio naturalistico-espressionista”⁹⁷ that proposed an “alternativa”⁹⁸ to the technical interpretation of architecture then current and based on standards and calculations, Ricci seemed to elaborate a concrete spatiality capable of holding together the *mondo della vita* and architecture on a mega scale with that of the most minute staging: an expression of motifs, made even more strident by the occasion of its realisation compared to current practice, which would take form on the other side of the world a few years later, precisely in the “esistenziale relazionale” space⁹⁹ in Montréal, the maximum outcome of this formativity as expression of imagination and utopia.

94 Nello Ponente, “L'allestimento della mostra sull'espressionismo,” *Marcatré* 2, nos. 8-9-10 (1964): 53-55.

95 [universal participation]. Leonardo Ricci, “Confessione,” *Architetti*, no. 3 (1950).

96 [‘continuous’ architecture] that was to take place on the scale of the whole ‘city-land’ thanks to an ‘open formativity’; [provoke any separation between the actions of our days]. This and the previous one are from “La casa abitata. Arredamenti di quindici architetti italiani, in mostra a Firenze, Palazzo Strozzi, dal 6 marzo al 2 maggio,” *Domus*, no. 426 (May 1965).

97 [a naturalistic-expressionist space]. Lara Vinca Masini, “Mostra della casa abitata a Firenze,” *Marcatré* 3, nos. 16-17-18 (1965): 215.

98 [alternative]. Thus defined by Zevi in “Monte degli Ulivi a Riesi. Il kibbutz nei feudi della mafia,” *L'Espresso* (July 14, 1963), reprinted in Id., *Cronache di architettura*, vol. V (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1971).

99 [existential-relational]. Ricci, “Progetto per il villaggio Monte degli Ulivi a Riesi, Sicilia,” 118.

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L'allestimento del settore del costume nel padiglione italiano dell'Expo 67 di Montréal, Canada (1966-67). Tra "Urschrei" e "Correalism". Considerazioni su alcuni motivi in Leonardo Ricci (1962-1967)

Leonardo Ricci, Espressionismo, Montréal, Expo 67, Correalism, Endless House

/Abstract

The design of the Italian pavilion at Expo 67 in Montréal, Canada (1966-1967) was the result of a choral effort which involved Giulio Carlo Argan, Cosimo Carlucci, Umberto Eco, Leoncillo Leonardi, Bruno Munari, the Passarelli studio, Arnaldo Pomodoro, Leonardo Ricci, Carlo Scarpa, Emilio Vedova and Bruno Zevi.

Leonardo Ricci designed the Staging of the costume sector by creating cavernous concretions that housed an exhibition curated by Umberto Eco. The interpretation proposed here, focuses on the formal genealogies of the work, trying to contextualise its birth in the Florentine cultural context during the 1960s and within Ricci's research.

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Leonardo Ricci stesso e la critica – prima – e la storiografia – in seguito – hanno delineato la poetica dell'architetto romano come essere fondata, principalmente, sulla concezione di un'architettura intesa come espressione esistenziale tesa verso l'anonimato piuttosto che l'autorialità. La costruzione storiografica ha insistito particolarmente su questo aspetto della sua architettura cercando sostegno nell'esegesi delle sue prose e giustificando, mediante esse, l'eterogeneità delle forme, del linguaggio e degli spazi impiegati; meno attenzione è stata rivolta all'analisi della genealogia e delle occorrenze di questi all'interno di alcuni nuclei della sua opera; ancor meno è stato tentato il processo a ritroso, arrischiandosi a rintracciare nei suoi testi le episodiche ed elusive parole da lui dedicate alla concezione della morfogenesi dei suoi spazi.¹

Già a partire dall'interpretazione di Giovanni Klaus Koenig della Casa teorica come "conformazione spaziale dell'esistenza"² – interpretazione che si potrebbe quasi indicare come un' 'autocritica' visto lo stretto legame che accomunava i due autori nel corso degli anni Cinquanta – l'architettura di Ricci è stata letta sottolineando la preminenza dello spazio rispetto alla forma, privilegiando una tanto affascinante – quanto altrettanto inafferrabile – dimensione esistenziale ed esperienziale del primo piuttosto che la centralità della seconda, esito – e non fine – per Ricci, del progetto.

Mentre una lettura di carattere linguistico – come suggerito da Koenig³ – potrebbe rivelare la trama delle ragioni sottese all'eterogeneità formale dell'architettura di Ricci – secondo il quale, d'altra parte, "il problema della forma in sé non esiste"⁴ – si vuole qui proporre una interpretazione di matrice formale, insistendo su quel "formalismo" che Giulia Veronesi riconosceva a proposito delle case di Monterinaldi:⁵ l'estrema complessità della forma 'senzafine' impiegata nell'Allestimento del settore del costume nel padiglione italiano dell'Expo '67 di Montréal e l'insistenza con la quale Ricci la impiega in progetti temporanei o non realizzati circoscrivibili a un periodo piuttosto definito della sua opera – gli anni Sessanta – rende lecito tentare la ricostruzione di una sua ipotetica genesi all'interno della sua opera e all'interno dell'ambito fiorentino

1 Per un quadro esaustivo, ad oggi, della storiografia ricciana si rinvia a Ilaria Cattabriga, *Leonardo Ricci in the United States (1952-1972). A Twenty-Year American Transfer as a Turning Experience in Teaching and Design*, tesi di dottorato, Dottorato di ricerca in Architettura e culture del progetto, Università di Bologna, supervisore Giovanni Leoni, co-supervisore Matteo Cassani Simonetti, 2021; si veda inoltre il recente Maria Clara Ghia, *La nostra città è tutta la terra. Leonardo Ricci architetto (1918-1994)* (Wuppertal: Steinhäuser Verlag 2021). Ringrazio Ilaria Cattabriga per la segnalazione dei documenti da lei rinvenuti durante le sue ricerche presso la Casa Studio Ricci di Monterinaldi (FI) e Loreno Arboritanzza per quelli riordinati durante il suo tirocinio e poi durante le attività di ricerca per la sua tesi di laurea – Loreno Arboritanzza, *Leonardo Ricci. L'abitare (umano) 1950-1970*, tesi di laurea, Corso di laurea in architettura, Università di Bologna, relatore Giovanni Leoni, correlatori Matteo Cassani Simonetti, Matteo Agnoletto, A.A. 2016-17 – presso il Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione di Parma (PR). Sono grato a Claudia Conforti per aver condiviso con me alcune sue riflessioni su questa vicenda e per avermi suggerito di approfondire ulteriori aspetti – che si sono poi rivelati determinanti – di questo progetto. Questo testo è dedicato a Giovanni Zanzi.

2 Giovanni Klaus Koenig, "Leonardo Ricci e la 'casa teorica' (alla ricerca di un nuovo spazio architettonico)," *Bollettino tecnico degli Architetti e Ingegneri della Toscana*, n. 7-8 (Luglio-Agosto 1958): 5.

3 Giovanni Klaus Koenig, *Architettura in Toscana 1931-1968* (Torino: ERI 1968), 142-152. Non è questa la sede per tentare una ricostruzione di questo tema, fondativo di un tratto rilevante della scuola fiorentina sulla linea Gamberini-Eco-Koenig e che trova nei testi di Ricci una continua risonanza. Si veda, per esempio, Leonardo Ricci, "Progetto per il villaggio Monte degli Ulivi a Riesi, Sicilia," *Edilizia moderna*, n. 82-83 (1963): 116-118.

4 Leonardo Ricci, "La pittura come linguaggio (da una conferenza tenuta all'Università di Brooklyn NY, nel 1952 e a Numero nel Novembre 1953)," *Numero*, n. 6 (1953): 19.

5 Giulia Veronesi, "Du nouveau à Florence," *Zodiac*, n. 4 (1959): 10.

nel quale essa trovò terreno fertile per attecchire. Il dedicarsi a questo tipo di lettura è stato suscitato, in chi scrive, dalla complessità dei motivi formali impiegati da Ricci nei suoi progetti – motivi formali al limite dell'incontrollabilità geometrica del progetto: difficoltà che Ricci ha risolto costruendo modelli o realizzando direttamente in cantiere la sua architettura – e dalla loro apparente autoreferenzialità, solo a prima vista contraria a ogni ambizione all'anonimato.⁶ Parallelamente, nello svolgersi dello studio, è emersa l'insistenza, da parte degli autori coinvolti in questa vicenda, su alcune forme e su alcune parole: esse sono state trattate come occorrenze e, a partire da ciò, si è tentato di trasportarle in *motivi*, nella speranza che questa operazione “valorizz[] la funzione, in apparenza ornamentale, ma in sostanza di sottolineatura, di potenziamento, anche di convinzione e di suggestione che ha il ripetersi di affermazioni, considerazioni, descrizioni, allusioni, ecc. nella tessitura verbale”,⁷ o in quella architettonica. È così apparso un ambito nel quale l'insistenza su alcuni lemmi, su alcune sottolineature, su alcune interpretazioni, permette di accomunare espressioni architettoniche distanti, persino antitetiche.

La circostanza indagata, l'Esposizione universale di Montréal nel 1967, per rinomanza tra le maggiori opere commissionate a Ricci, l'impeto espressivo “primordiale” da lui manifestato nel progetto in contrasto alla magniloquenza tecnica e all'ideologia che permeavano l'evento e la maggiore parte degli edifici dell'Esposizione e, infine, il confronto con le altre sezioni del padiglione italiano, permettono di mettere in luce la postura di Ricci in relazione ad alcuni temi fondamentali dell'architettura – l'espressione, la comunità e l'abitare – resi spazio mediante una *forma senza fine*. La ricostruzione dell'ambito dell'esposizione, resa memorabile dall'Habitat 67 di Moshe Safdie, dalla copertura del padiglione tedesco di Frei Otto e dal padiglione americano con la cupola geodetica “spaziale” di Richard Buckminster Fuller più che dal padiglione Italiano, e l'accostamento con l'opera dello studio Passarelli, di Carlo Scarpa, di Bruno Munari e di Emilio Vedova – coautori del padiglione – consentono di far emergere l'alternativa proposta da Ricci mediante il suo allestimento.⁸ [fig. 1]

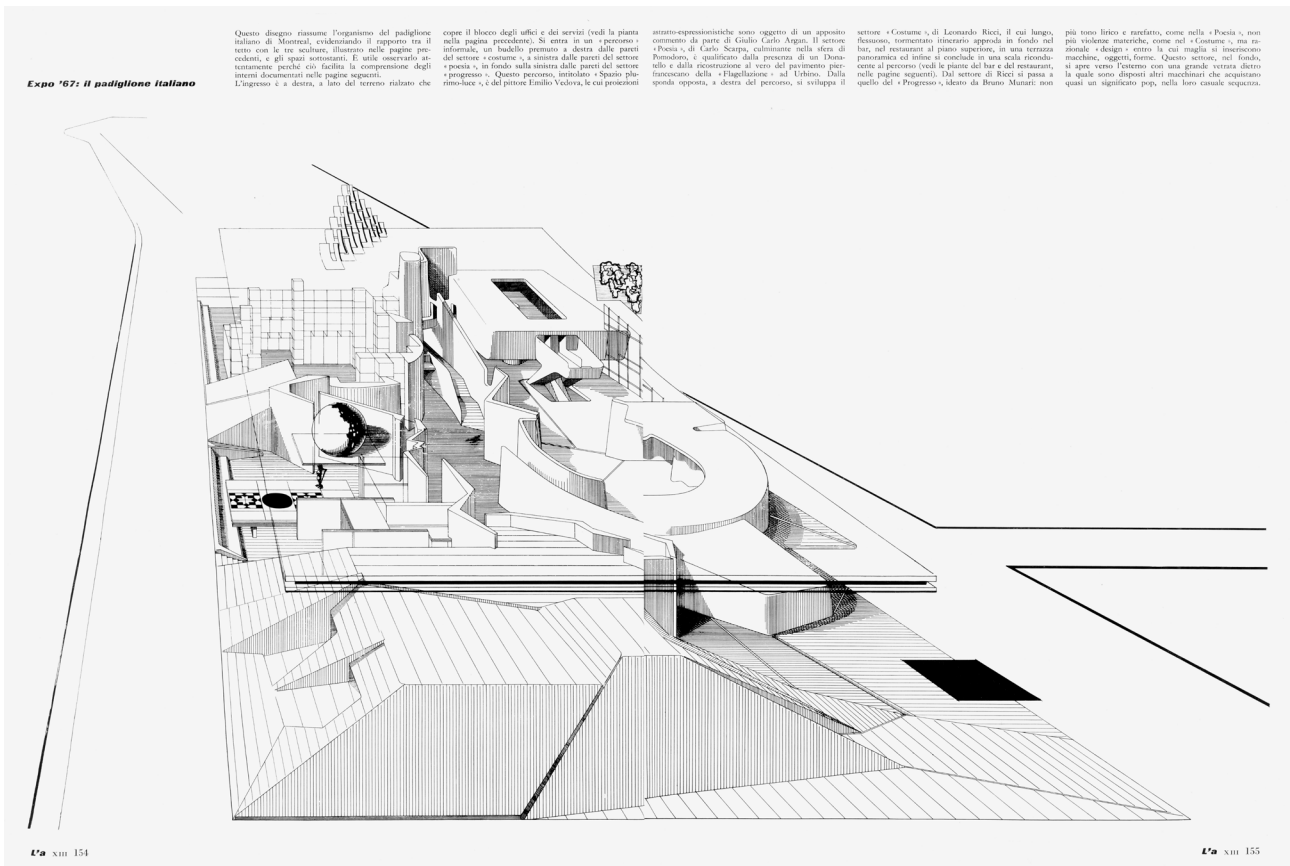
L'apparenza arcaica e naturale di queste concavità e di queste forme – ottenute mediante una “morfogenesi organica naturale” dipendente da una “utopia-concreta-organica”⁹ come Ricci definirà, anni dopo, il suo processo creativo – e la loro natura estremamente sperimentale interrogano chi cerca di decifrarne le ragioni e, soprattutto, gli antecedenti e le contemporanee influenze: si tratta, dunque, di riconoscere, ripercorrendo il processo dal quale la forma è

6 Sul tema si veda Giovanni Leoni, “L'Anonimo come tema di discontinuità nella cultura architettonica italiana tra Primo e Secondo Novecento”, in *Un palazzo in forma di parole. Scritti in onore di Paolo Carpeggiani*, a cura di Carlo Togliani (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2016), 463-472.

7 Cesare Segre, “Tema/motivo”, in *Enciclopedia* (Torino: Einaudi, 1981), vol. 14, 10.

8 Tra i molti testi dedicati alla presentazione e allo studio dell'Expo di Montréal si segnalano: Abraham Rogatnick, “Expo 67, The Past Recaptured”, *Lotus 5* (1968), 13-33; “Panoramica dell'Expo '67”, *L'architettura. Cronache e storia* 13, n. 141 (3 lug. 1967): 166-175; *Expo 67: Not Just a Souvenir*, a cura di Johanne Sloan, Rhona Richman Kenneally (Toronto; Buffalo: London University of Toronto Press, 2010).

9 Questa e la precedente rip. in *Topologia e morfogenesi. Utopia e crisi dell'antinatura. Momenti delle intenzioni architettoniche in Italia*, a cura di Lara Vinca Masini (Venezia: Edizioni La Biennale di Venezia, 1978), 124. Sul “processo creativo” di Ricci si veda Koenig, “Leonardo Ricci e la ‘casa teorica’ (alla ricerca di un nuovo spazio architettonico)”, 14.



Questo disegno riassume l'ingombro del padiglione italiano di Montréal, evidenziando il rapporto tra il tetto con le tre salubre, illustrato nelle pagine precedenti, e gli spazi sottostanti. È utile osservarlo attentamente perché ciò facilita la comprensione degli interni documentati nelle pagine seguenti.

copre il blocco degli uffici e dei servizi (vedi la pianta nella pagina precedente). Si entra in un «percorso» informale, un labirinto percorso a destra dalle pareti del settore «coscienza», a sinistra dalle pareti del settore «poesia», in fondo sulla sinistra dalle pareti del settore «progresso». Questo percorso, intitolato «Spazio primo-luce», è del pittore Emilio Vedova, le cui proiezioni

arrivano espressionistiche sono soggetto di un apposito commento da parte di Giulio Carlo Argan. Il settore «Poesia», di Carlo Scarpa, culmina nella stanza di Parolotto, il qualificato dalla presenza di un Donatello e dalla ricostruzione al vero del pavimento partecuzioso, della «Figurazione» ad Ulisse. Dalla sponda opposta, a destra del percorso, si sviluppa il

settore «Costume», di Leonardo Ricci, il cui lungo, flessuoso, tormentato itinerario approda in fondo nel bar, nel ristorante al piano superiore, in una terrazza panoramica ed infine si conclude in una scala riconducibile al percorso (vedi le piante del bar e del ristorante, nelle pagine seguenti). Dal settore di Ricci si passa a quello del «Progresso», ideato da Bruno Munari: non

più tanto lirico e raffinato, come nella «Poesia», non più violente materiche, come nel «Costume», ma razionale «design» entro la cui maglia si inseriscono macchine, oggetti, forme. Questo settore, nel fondo, si apre verso l'esterno con una grande vetrata dietro la quale sono disposti altri macchinari che acquistano quasi un significato pop, nella loro casuale sequenza.

scaturita, la componente utopica ed espressiva a suo fondamento seguendo la convinzione, condivisa da Ricci e Koenig, che “la creazione di una forma sia logica interpretazione del mondo e non ‘giuoco’”.¹⁰

1. Terre des Hommes, Montréal 1967. Della diversa intenzionalità espressiva

Appena un anno separa l’istituzione formale del Commissariato del Governo italiano per la partecipazione all’Esposizione universale di Montréal del 1967 – e il conseguente stanziamento dei fondi per la realizzazione del padiglione, due miliardi di lire in totale – dall’inaugurazione della rassegna canadese, avvenuta il 25 aprile 1967.¹¹ Dell’esposizione fu bandiera il generico slogan *Terre des Hommes*, trasposizione del titolo di un romanzo di Antoine de Saint-Exupéry: sebbene meno retorico di quello scelto per quella di Bruxelles nel 1958 – *Bilan du monde pour un monde plus humain*, umanità che si voleva riconoscere nell’Atomium di André Waterkeyn, simbolo dell’esposizione – esso si prestò, nella sua genericità, ad accogliere ogni tipo di contenuto e di espressione architettonica per gli oltre cento padiglioni realizzati. [figg. 2-4]

Tempi così contingentati per la realizzazione del progetto fecero propendere

10 Leonardo Ricci, Giovanni Koenig, *Sull'insegnamento della plastica nelle facoltà di architettura, memoria presentata al Preside della Facoltà di Architettura di Firenze*, 16 ott. 1959, dattiloscritto. Casa Studio Ricci – Monterinaldi (FI).

11 Legge della Repubblica Italiana n. 210 del 5 aprile 1966 (Pubblicata nella G.U. del 23 aprile 1966 n. 99): Partecipazione dell’Italia all’Esposizione universale di Montréal del 1967.

Fig. 1
Assonometria del padiglione italiano dell’Expo ‘67 di Montréal, Canada (1966-67). Da *L’architettura. Cronache e storia* 13, no. 141 (lug. 1967).

il Commissariato italiano, ancor prima della sua istituzione formale, per la costituzione di un "Comitato di consulenza Tecnico-Artistica" formato "per ovvi motivi pratici" da "personalità residenti a Roma"¹² e non, come accaduto per Bruxelles, per il bando di un concorso di progettazione. Per l'esposizione del 1958, infatti, l'incarico seguì questo processo, contraddetto, però, dal coinvolgimento di tutti gli architetti partecipanti al concorso nella redazione del progetto finale. Questo nutrito gruppo di progettazione, in cui figuravano BBPR, Ignazio Gardella, Giuseppe Perugini e Ludovico Quaroni ma soprattutto l'esito – "un finto villaggio italiano [...] inaccettabile, nel carattere 'né spontaneo' 'né colto' dei piccoli edifici" secondo Giulia Veronesi¹³ – e la gestione del concorso, scatenarono non poche critiche in Italia tra cui quelle di Bruno Zevi, figura centrale per l'ideazione del successivo padiglione per Montréal. Egli stesso, insieme a Giulio Carlo Argan e allo studio Passarelli, membri del Comitato di consulenza (a cui si aggiungerà Michele Guido Franci), avevano in animo di condurre diversamente l'operazione sia per motivazioni contingenti sia per distaccarsi dalle prassi messe in campo precedentemente.¹⁴

Questo così autorevole comitato – Argan e Zevi erano già figure di primissimo piano della cultura e nella politica italiane; lo studio Passarelli era già tra i maggiori studi romani e aveva un rapporto privilegiato con lo stesso Zevi che apprezzava il suo lavoro e con il quale fu promotore dello Studio Asse; Franci, segretario generale della fiera di Milano, aveva già collaborato all'esposizione del 1958 – orchestrò, nel febbraio 1966, l'operazione. D'accordo con il costituendo Commissariato generale tenuto da Francesco Babuscio Rizzo a sua volta nominato dal Ministero per gli affari esteri, chiesero a Umberto Eco, Bruno Munari, Leonardo Ricci, Carlo Scarpa e Emilio Vedova di occuparsi della progettazione dell'allestimento del padiglione. Già prima della fine di gennaio,¹⁵ il Comitato aveva predisposto e concordato con la Compagnie Canadienne de l'Exposition Universelle de 1967, che coordinava la realizzazione dell'evento, "l'impostazione generale del padiglione";¹⁶ la "progettazione generale"¹⁷ fu seguita principalmente da Lucio Passarelli coadiuvato da alcuni collaboratori.¹⁸ Il padiglione avrebbe dovuto ospitare al suo interno quattro sezioni:

a) la Poesia, in cui dovrebbero essere espressi i valori tradizionali

12 Questa e le precedenti da lettera di Giovanni Luccioli su carta intestata del Ministero degli Affari Esteri a Carlo Scarpa, Roma 7 feb. 1966. Centro Archivi Architettura MAXXI – Roma, Archivio Carlo Scarpa (d'ora in poi AS), b. 230 "Allestimento della sezione La Poesia, padiglione italiano, Expo '67, Montréal (1966-1968)", fasc. P1/18.

13 Giulia Veronesi, "Visita all'Esposizione di Bruxelles", in *Emporium* 128, n. 766 (1958): 150, rip. in Lucia Masina, *Vedere l'Italia nelle esposizioni universali del XX secolo: 1900-1958* (Milano: EDUCatt, 2016), 402.

14 Vedi Lucia Masina, *Vedere l'Italia nelle esposizioni universali del XX secolo: 1900-1958* (Milano: EDUCatt, 2016), 393-415.

15 Arch. Edouard Fiset – Compagnie Canadienne de l'exposition universelle de 1967 (Canada) Montréal, [*Pro-memoria*], 24 gen. 1966, in Centro Archivi Architettura MAXXI – Roma, Archivio Studio Passarelli (d'ora in poi AP), b. "1R-47 Padiglione italiano all'Expo '67 a Montréal (3)", cart. "Progettisti zona generale".

16 Lettera di Luccioli a Scarpa, Roma 7 feb. 1966.

17 "Per l'esposizione di Montréal," *Domus*, n. 441 (ago. 1966): 2.

18 Lucio Passarelli, [*Relazione*], 15 mag. 1966, in AP, b. "Montréal Expo 70 [sic]. Fotografie", cart. "1968 Montréal. Relazioni – Pubblicazioni". La progettazione esecutiva fu seguita a Antonio Antonelli, Manfredo Greco, Franco Piro e Sara Rossi. La supervisione del progetto in Canada fu condotta dagli architetti Papineau, Gérin-Lajoie e Le Blanc e dagli ingegneri Cartier, Coté, Piette, Boulva, Wermenlinger, Monti Lefebvre, Lavoie e Nadon e dalla società Edilteco.

dell'Italia (arte, etc.); b) il Costume; c) l'Industrializzazione (ovvero il progresso, l'Italia protesa verso l'avvenire, etc.); d) il Percorso, nel quale il pubblico, attraverso un adeguato allestimento scenotecnico, dovrebbe in un certo senso percepire lo stato d'animo del popolo italiano, su cui agiscono le tre forze espresse nei settori sopra indicati.¹⁹

La concezione degli elementi caratterizzanti il progetto di massima, basata su tre elementi generali, venne fissata fin dalle prime ipotesi così come la disposizione delle quattro sezioni che trovò, però, definitiva conformazione solamente grazie al contributo di Munari, Scarpa, Ricci e Vedova che avrebbero dovuto occuparsi del progetto dell'*inscape*. Il padiglione nella sua interezza sarebbe stato definito da

due elementi, fisici, bidimensionali. La copertura (chiara; astratta, tenda e nello stesso tempo supporto visivo di opere d'arte); Il terreno (scuro; modellato; unitario; emergente o incassato nell'asfalto che lo circonda). Un elemento ideale, il più importante (si chiami "percorso", "angoscia", "l'italiano oggi" o che so io non importa il termine) che anche nella sua inconsistenza fisica, deve poter dare una forza e compiutezza al tutto.

Stabilite da Passarelli le coordinate generali del progetto, Munari, Ricci, Scarpa e Vedova sarebbero intervenuti secondo una modalità operativa dialogica basata su "rapporti, che partecipano dell'indipendenza e della coordinazione, della flessibilità e della chiarezza", ovvero sulla giustapposizione delle loro espressioni senza perseguire alcuna altra omogeneità di metodo o, tanto meno, di risultato:

I tre progetti di Munari, Ricci e Scarpa, saranno invece come i tre artisti; indipendenti, contrastanti, reali. Essi si incastrano o si appoggiano al terreno (ma non vi si confondono); vivono sotto la tenda (con un proprio spazio) e vi si collegano mediante le opere d'arte; hanno con il percorso, quei rapporti più sottili e possibilistici che nasceranno dalla coordinazione, e dagli stimoli reciproci.²⁰

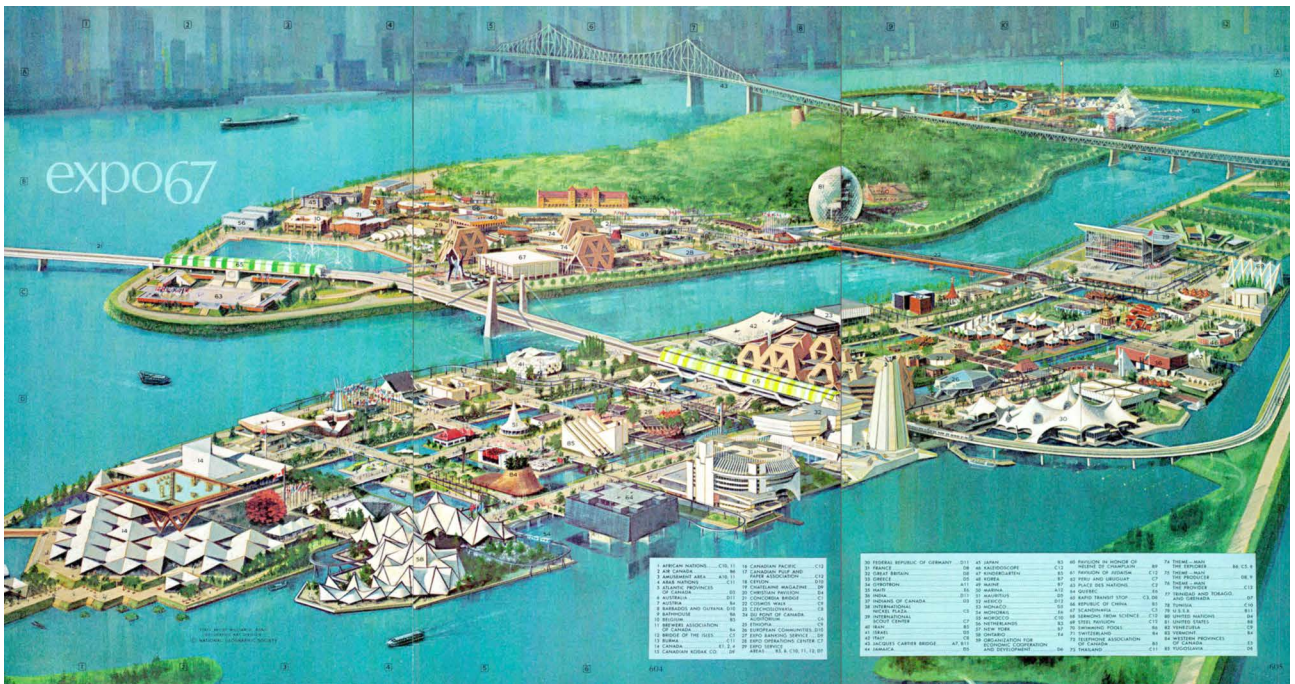
Con questi presupposti, venne commissionata a Scarpa la sezione della poesia, a Ricci quella del Costume, a Munari quella dell'Industrializzazione, mentre il percorso venne interpretato da Vedova e "il discorso generale della mostra"²¹ – il programma espositivo – venne affidato a Eco. A ogni sezione corrispondeva simbolicamente una scultura, posata sulla curva copertura, che ne avrebbe rappresentato il fastigio e l'emblema per i visitatori che si avvicinavano al padiglione: un'informale scultura in ceramica policroma di Leoncillo Leonardi per la sezione del Costume, una scintillante sfera erosa di Arnaldo Pomodoro per quella della Poesia, un impalcato metallico di Cosimo Carlucci per quella dell'Industrializzazione.²² [fig. 5]

19 Lettera di Luccioli a Scarpa, Roma 7 feb. 1966.

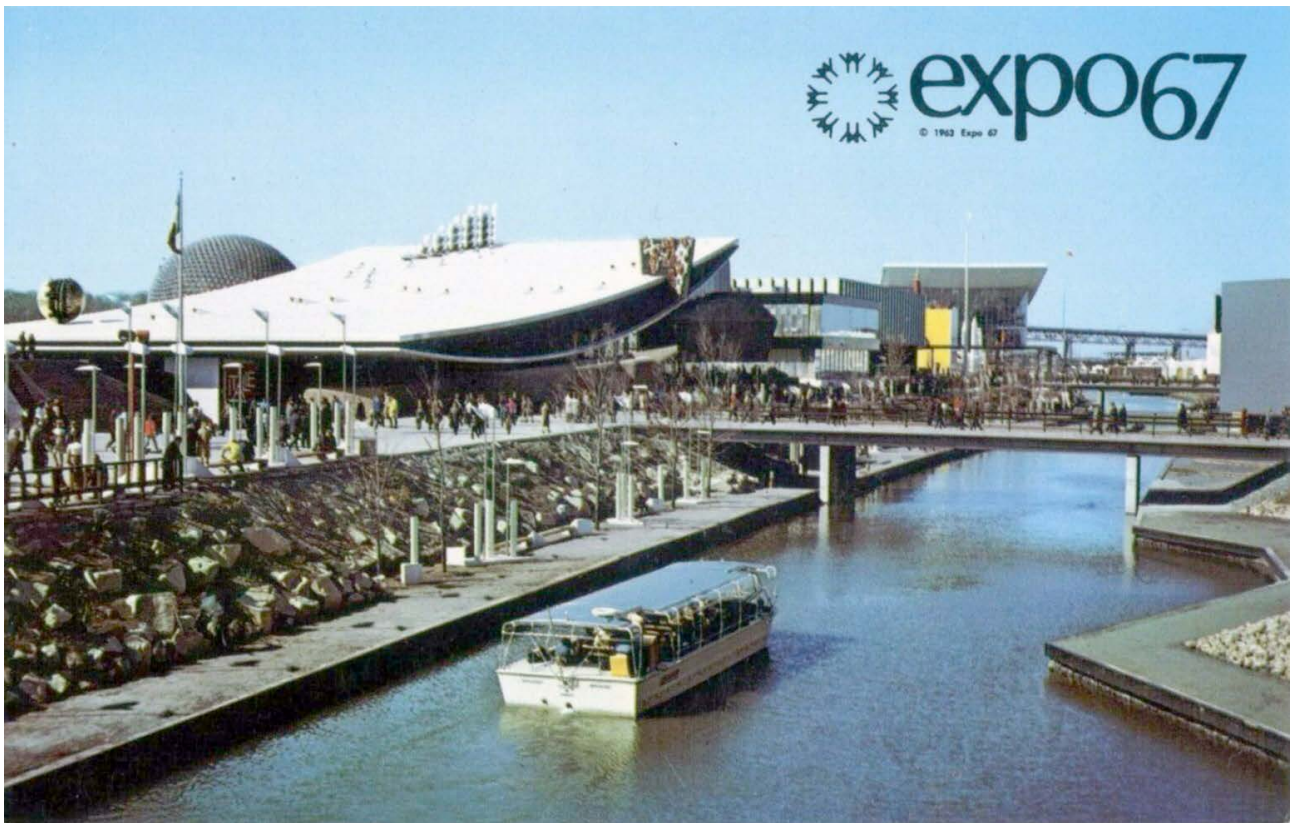
20 Questa e le precedenti da [Studio Passarelli], [Appunto], 26 feb. 1966, in AS, b. "230: Allestimento della sezione la Poesia, padiglione italiano, Expo '67, Montréal (1966-1968)", fasc. P1/18.

21 Lettera di Luccioli a Scarpa, Roma 7 feb. 1966.

22 Il padiglione venne presentato in numerosi articoli apparsi su riviste italiane, tra cui: "La fiera di Montréal in costruzione," *Domus*, n. 446 (gen. 1967): 9-20; Bruno Zevi, "L'Italia all'Expo universale 1967 di Montréal," *L'architettura. Cronache e storia* 13, n. 141 (luglio 1967): 142-165.



2



3

Fig. 2
L'Esposizione di Montréal 1967 in un disegno pubblicitario dell'epoca. Il padiglione italiano (n. 42) è alla sinistra del padiglione degli Stati Uniti (n. 81) e di quello dell'Unione Sovietica (n.79), situati l'uno di fronte all'altro ma su due isole diverse.

Fig. 3
Una cartolina pubblicitaria dell'Esposizione di Montreal. Il padiglione italiano è sulla sinistra.

La ricchezza e l'eterogeneità di un simile raggruppamento di autori rende lecito soffermarsi, prima di osservare l'opera finita, a ipotizzare, sul filo delle congetture, i motivi che spinsero Argan, Passarelli e Zevi a convergere sui nomi di progettisti e artisti tutt'altro che secondari nel panorama italiano della metà degli anni Sessanta: mentre l'opera di Vedova era stata apprezzata sia da Argan sia da Zevi – entrambi avevano già scritto sui suoi Plurimi²³ – come quella di Scarpa – architetto già maestro internazionale degli allestimenti museografici con il quale avevano condiviso varie attività – la scelta di Munari potrebbe essere stata frutto dell'interesse di Argan per il suo lavoro;²⁴ il coinvolgimento di Ricci e Eco potrebbe essere stato voluto da Zevi che aveva già avuto modo di apprezzare le opere dell'architetto tra cui l'allestimento della mostra fiorentina sull'Espressionismo (1964), probabile occasione di incontro con Eco del quale Zevi aveva già commentato il suo *Opera aperta* (1962).²⁵ Infine, mentre l'opera di Leoncillo era già stata oggetto di critica sia da parte di Zevi sia di Argan prima del 1967, Carlucci e Pomodoro furono probabilmente indicati dal critico torinese, il quale aveva già avuto modo di conoscere l'opera del primo e di frequentare piuttosto assiduamente il secondo.²⁶ Tuttavia, al di là delle singole ipotetiche relazioni – che trovavano, inoltre, conferma nella quasi quotidiana frequentazione delle stesse Università: Venezia, Firenze, Roma – il continuo impegno o la partecipazione appassionata di molti dei membri di questo raggruppamento a occasioni di riflessione condivisa – come il Gruppo 63 o i Convegni internazionali di artisti, critici e studiosi d'arte svoltesi tra Rimini, Verucchio



4

23 Tra cui: Bruno Zevi, "Plurimi e quadri da calpestare," *L'Espresso*, 22 dic. 1963; Giulio Carlo Argan, *Vedova* (Roma: Editalia, 1963).

24 Tra cui Giulio Carlo Argan, Rosario Assunto, Bruno Munari, Filiberto Menna, "Design e mass media," *Op. cit.* 1, n. 2 (gennaio 1965): 8-30.

25 Bruno Zevi, "La poetica dell'opera aperta' in architettura", *L'architettura. Cronache e storia* 8, n. 84 (ott.1962): 362-363. Su Eco, Ricci e Zevi si veda 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*, a cura di Matteo Cassani Simonetti e Elena Dellapiana (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2021), 73-89. Si segnala, inoltre, che Eco figurava tra i membri nel Comitato Direttivo della rivista *Marcatré*, rivista nella quale venne ampiamente dato spazio alle iniziative fiorentine del 1964 di cui si dirà nella terza parte di questo testo.

26 Riguardo a Leoncillo, a titolo di esempio, si ricordi la vicenda del Monumento alla partigiana (1957) a Venezia, da lui ideato – insieme a Scarpa – dietro invito di una giuria tra i cui membri figuravano anche Zevi e Argan. Opere di Carlucci erano invece state esposte alla mostra collettiva "Parabola 66. Mostra di pittura scultura architettura" tenutasi a Firenze nel 1966, il cui catalogo ospita testi di Argan, Marcello Fagiolo e Lara Vinca Masini. Infine, la frequentazione tra Argan e Pomodoro è testimoniata dal carteggio conservato presso l'archivio Arnaldo Pomodoro di Milano.

Fig. 4

La copertina de *L'Espresso* del 30 aprile 1967.

e San Marino, o quelli del Gruppo 70 a Firenze dei primi anni Sessanta, per esempio – risulta il comune elemento per intuire la complessa rete culturale e i rapporti personali che legavano le loro vite e le loro opere.

Il risultato di tale eterogeneo *ensemble* venne così riassunto da Lucio Passarelli:

Ai tre poli corrispondono tre linguaggi architettonici e tre espressioni artistiche diverse. La poesia (progetto del Prof. Scarpa) ha un tono lirico o rarefatto con un'opera d'arte conclusa e astratta, forse uno sferoide, levitante sulla tenda. Il costume è di tono espressionistico, denso di materia reale. È progettato dall'arch. Ricci. L'opera d'arte sarà in carattere, una forma di ceramica, incastrata sul fianco della copertura. L'industrializzazione si avvale del suo linguaggio, della strumentazione espressiva delle macchine, di oggetti e forme. Progettata da Bruno Munari, potrà partecipare sia della pop che della op art. A prosecuzione della copertura e stagliantesi verso l'alto un "pezzo" in metallo. Il percorso è risultante dei tre linguaggi che si annullano o insieme il vuoto che essi formano aspirando lo spazio. Uno spazio luminoso, animato da proiezioni e immerso nelle composizioni astratto-espressionistiche del pittore Vedova.²⁷

Questa modalità di lavoro basata sulla contrapposizione di espressioni singole era, secondo Zevi, una delle maggiori peculiarità di questo padiglione il cui processo creativo era da lui elogiato in egual misura al risultato finale. Il metodo adottato, incentrato sulla regia del progetto prima ancora che sull'esito, si poneva, per Zevi, come un'alternativa alle retoriche, figlie del Movimento Moderno, che elogiavano l'atto progettuale profondamente autoriale o, al contrario, a quelle che vedevano nel *teamwork* la nuova dimensione della progettazione e risolveva, nel caso specifico di questo tema di progetto, i problemi derivanti dall'affidare l'incarico a eterogenei gruppi di autori: atteggiamento ricorrente nella progettazione dei padiglioni nazionali ancor prima di quello di Bruxelles, come dimostra l'ambiguo esito di quello per l'esposizione di Parigi del 1937, frutto dell'equivoca convivenza dell'architettura di Pagano con quella di Piacentini e Valle. "Chi ne è l'autore?", veniva chiesto a Zevi, ed egli rispondeva:

Nessun architetto, e nemmeno un team di architetti e designers che abbia lavorato in accordo, trovando un minimo denominatore comune. L'incontro si è effettuato al livello opposto, in un'escalation di empiti individuali. Come è stato possibile ottenere questo risultato? Vi era un'idea, un programma anticonformista e coraggioso, non freno e limite ma provocazione a creare, ciascuno secondo la propria ispirazione. Il successo del padiglione italiano a Montréal non dipende dal suo valore assoluto, ma dal fatto che suggerisce un metodo, un'ipotesi progettuale ancora da esplorare: consiste nel pensare a fondo i contenuti

27 Passarelli, [Relazione], 15 mag. 1966.

di un'opera articolandoli nella loro diversa intenzionalità espressiva, e poi nello scegliere gli artisti capaci di realizzarne le immagini.²⁸

Questa architettura era per Zevi il frutto migliore di quella che egli reputava la massima tradizione – eversiva – italiana. All'interno di questa spericolata parabola critica, Zevi voleva raccogliere i maggiori portati della cultura architettonica italiana: il geniale Borromini – nel 1967 cadeva il terzo centenario della morte –, l'etica dei martiri del moderno associata a quella della Resistenza – Terragni, Pagano, Persico – i progetti recenti che scardinavano l'irrigidimento dei modelli razionali – dalla torre Velasca alla chiesa dell'Autostrada; dall'Istituto Marchiondi all'edificio di via Campania dello studio Passarelli; dagli allestimenti di Scarpa e quelli di Albini; dalla Olivetti di Cosenza, alla casa veneziana di Gardella fino alle strutture di Morandi – rappresentavo per Zevi gli antecedenti del padiglione Italiano, quelli che meglio testimoniavano l'assenza di "retorica, niente propaganda, ma comunicazione di eventi antichi, di realtà e situazioni inquiete".²⁹

Con questi presupposti prese avvio la rapidissima progettazione e l'altrettanto efficace realizzazione: mentre lo studio Passarelli, coadiuvato da alcuni collaboratori, si occupava della progettazione della copertura reticolare metallica sostenuta da solamente quattro pilastri, in appena un mese e mezzo gli altri autori idearono i progetti per le singole sezioni che, per giustapposizione, composero il progetto generale già a fine marzo 1966; esso venne reso esecutivo prima della metà di maggio e subito dopo prese avvio la realizzazione che si protrasse fino a fine settembre, prima della pausa che il rigido inverno canadese imponeva ai cantieri, per riprendere subito dopo e consentire l'allestimento degli interni (avvenuto in aprile) e, infine, l'inaugurazione prevista per il 25 aprile 1967.³⁰

Prese così forma il padiglione italiano, posto sul bordo dell'Île Notre-Dame in prossimità di quella che diventerà le curve 8 e 9 del circuito Gilles Villeneuve, e sulla cui candida copertura a vela, visibile e raggiungibile dalla monorotaia che trasportava i visitatori da un capo all'altro dell'esposizione, campeggiavano le tre sculture e dai cui limiti fuoriuscivano parte degli umbratili spazi progettati da Munari, Ricci e Scarpa. L'accesso si trovava confitto tra gli scabri e massivi volumi con i quali era modellato il terreno nel lato della costruzione verso la piazza, a fianco dell'emblema Italie-Italy – attribuibile a Scarpa – che indicava la soglia d'ingresso del padiglione.³¹ Una volta discesi nella penombra dello spazio interno, di un metro e mezzo ipogeo rispetto a quello circostante, ci si trovava subito nel Percorso/Plurimo/Luce di Vedova: da qui iniziava

28 Zevi, "L'Italia all'Expo universale 1967 di Montréal," 143.

29 Bruno Zevi, "L'architettura italiana e l'esposizione di Montréal," in *Autoritratto dell'Italia* (Milano: Bompiani, 1967), 125.

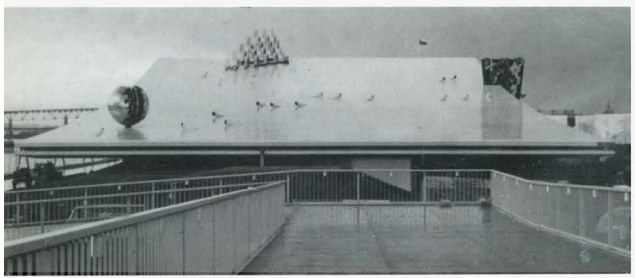
30 Per la cronologia della realizzazione si veda il dattiloscritto su carta intestata del Ministero degli Affari Esteri, s.d., conservato in AP, b. "1R-47 Padiglione italiano all'Expo '67 a Montréal (3)", cart. Progettisti zona generale.

31 Nel presentare il padiglione italiano in *L'architettura. Cronache e storia*, si afferma che il disegno dell'emblema è di Munari. Si segnala che nell'Archivio Scarpa conservato al MAXXI è presente un disegno attribuibile a Scarpa. Cfr. "Il padiglione italiano all'Expo '67 di Montréal," *L'architettura. Cronache e storia* 13, n. 141 (lug. 1967); in AS, b. "230: Allestimento della sezione la Poesia, padiglione italiano, Expo '67, Montréal (1966-1968)".



Expo '67: il padiglione italiano

La fortunatissima ubicazione del padiglione italiano è ben dimostrata dalle foto di queste pagine. In alto: i tre settori dell'Expo di Montréal (in primo piano, il triangolo della Cité du Havre; poi l'isola Sainte-Hélène; infine l'isola Notre-Dame, raggiunta da un ponte, subito dietro il ponte, si vede la vela del padiglione italiano). In basso: il padiglione quale si presenta scendendo dalla stazione Notre-Dame. L'Expo-Express connette i tre settori dell'esposizione di Montréal.



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Nella «Panoramica dell'Expo», in questo stesso fascicolo della rivista, spieghiamo il criterio urbanistico della colossale impresa, il rapporto tra le tre isole e la città di Montréal, il sistema delle comunicazioni, la distribuzione degli edifici permanenti. Ma, anche per valutare il padiglione italiano, occorre rendersi conto della sua particolarissima ubicazione nel contesto dell'Expo. La sua forma, a vela inclinata, è stata determinata da precisi punti di vista: stazionarie dell'Expo-Express; motoriali scorrette lungo il fiume, strada sul versante opposto.

Il padiglione italiano è tra i più piccoli dell'Esposizione. Dicono gli architetti Passarelli: «Sembra un paradosso, ma pensiamo che il successo del padiglione sia dipeso anche dalla estrema limitazione dei mezzi e dalla brevità del tempo disponibile. Il bilancio complessivo di un miliardo e mezzo ha fatto scattare in partenza soluzioni monumentali ed accademiche. Il brevissimo tempo a disposizione ha fatto escludere la possibilità di ripensamenti e dilazioni che spesso tollgono critica ad una concezione architettonica».



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un tortuoso percorso attraverso le varie sezioni. La visita poteva iniziare da quella dedicata alla poesia e, ritornati nel percorso di Vedova, si poteva entrare nell'emiciclo che accoglieva il visitatore entrando nella sezione del costume. Qui, le concrezioni cavernose progettate da Ricci, ovvero lo "scavo primordiale",³² si sviluppavano in un continuo sali e scendi che conduceva alla scala per il ristorante – posto al piano superiore – e a una hall per il bar a quota 1,50; la visita proseguiva rientrando nel Percorso/Plurimo/Luce che conduceva alla sezione dell'industrializzazione da cui, infine, per concludere l'itinerario, si passava al di sotto degli spazi progettati da Ricci, uscendo sul fianco del padiglione. [fig. 6]

Centrale in questa opera collettiva, non solo per disposizione, era il Percorso/Plurimo/Luce di Vedova, una "architettura/luce"³³ che, grazie a un complesso sistema di tredici proiettori modificati per una proiezione in sequenza di lastre in vetro realizzate dalla Venini, produceva effetti di luce "informali" sulle pareti e sul soffitto dello spazio affini, come esito figurativo, alle opere realizzate da Vedova in quegli anni ma ottenuti con mezzi decisamente più materici. Oltre alla luce, le musiche elettroniche realizzate da Marino Zuccheri dello Studio Internazionale di fonologie Radio Milano, realizzavano lo spazio: per lo stesso Vedova esso era uno "spazio percorso dal pubblico in tutte le direzioni, per accedere alle altre Sezioni; spazio con "plurime" possibilità di visione; in

32 Zevi, "L'Italia all'Expo universale 1967 di Montréal," 164.

33 Lettera di Emilio Vedova a Giulio Carlo Argan, 2 gen. 1966, trascritta in *Expo '67. Alexander Calder, Emilio Vedova*, a cura di Germano Celant (Milano: Skira, 2016), 89.

Fig. 5

Alcune vedute del padiglione italiano. Da *L'architettura. Cronache e storia* 13, no. 141 (lug. 1967).

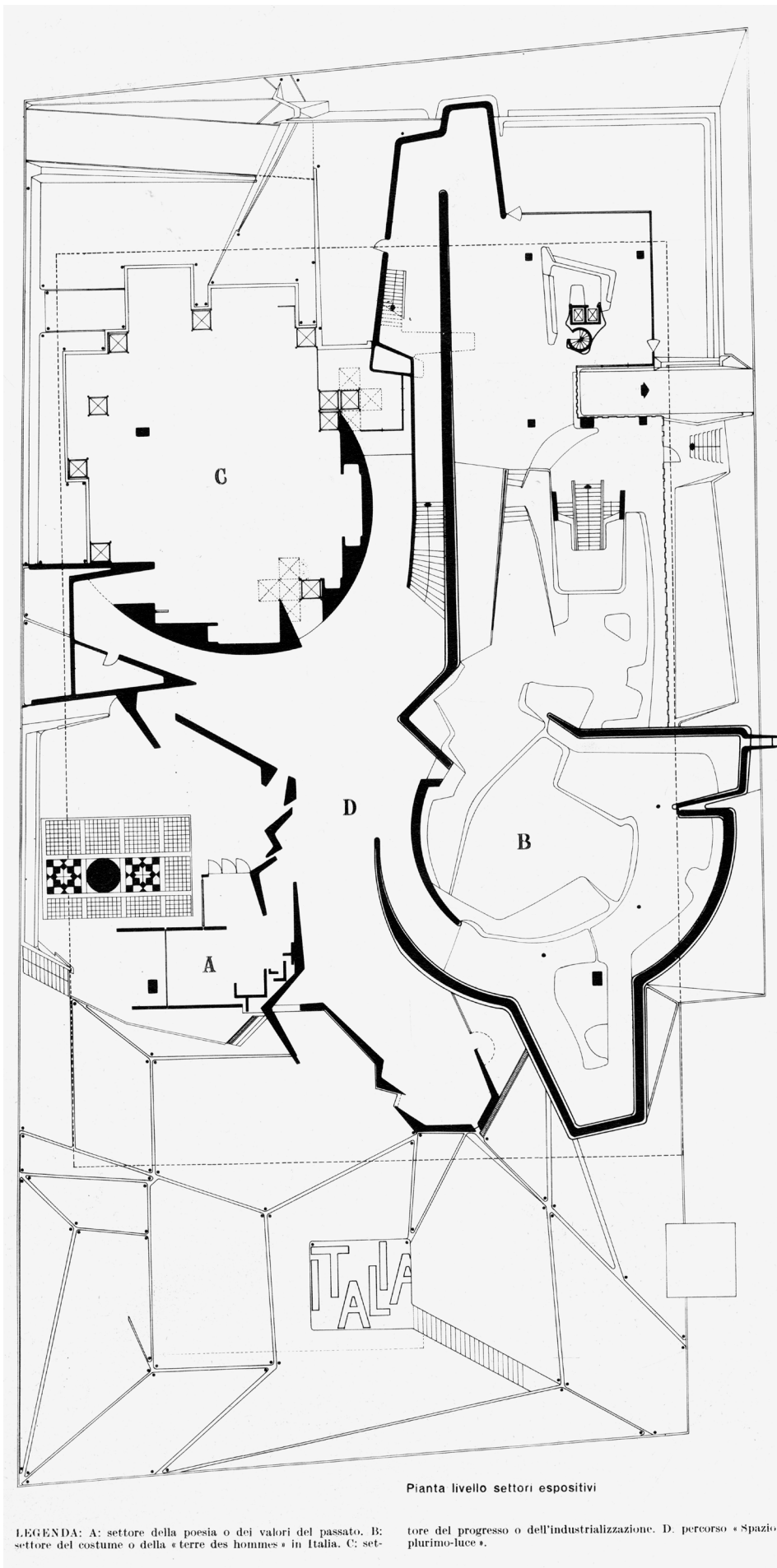


Fig. 6

Pianta dei settori espositivi del padiglione italiano (1966-67). Da *L'architettura. Cronache e storia* 13, no. 141 (lug. 1967).

Fig. 7

Il Percorso-Plurimo-Luce di Emilio Vedova nel padiglione italiano, 1967. Da *L'architettura. Cronache e storia* 13, no. 141 (lug. 1967).

Fig. 8

Il settore della Poesia progettato da Carlo Scarpa, 1967. Da *L'architettura. Cronache e storia* 13, no. 141 (lug. 1967).

Fig. 9

Il settore dell'Industrializzazione progettato da Bruno Munari, 1967. Da *L'architettura. Cronache e storia* 13, no. 141 (lug. 1967).



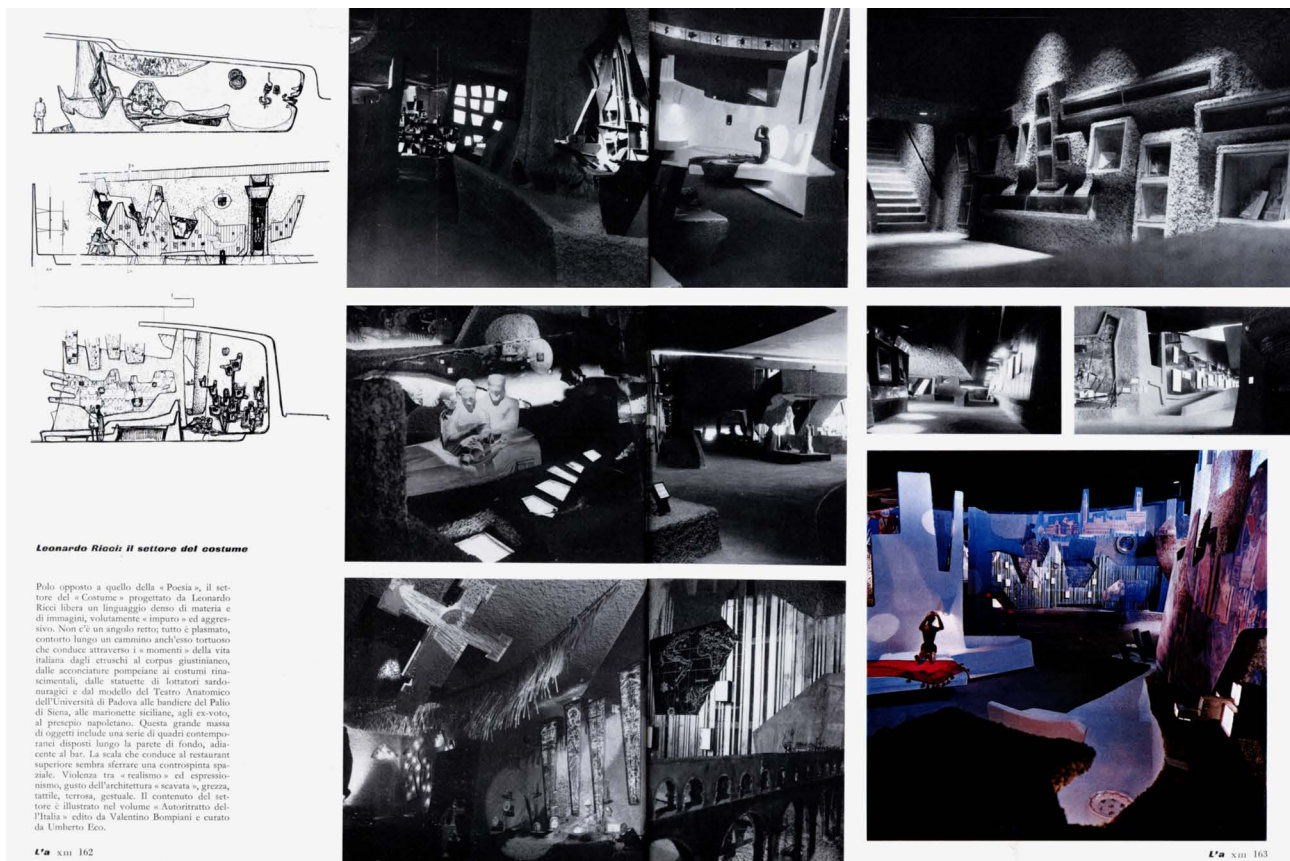
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Leonardo Ricci: il settore del costume

Polo opposto a quello della « Poesia », il settore del « Costume » progettato da Leonardo Ricci libera un linguaggio denso di materia e di immagini, volutamente « impuro » ed aggressivo. Non c'è un angolo retto: tutto è plasmato, contorto lungo un cammino anch'esso tortuoso che conduce attraverso i « momenti » della vita italiana dagli etruschi al corpus giustiniano, dalle accortizie pompiane ai costumi rinascimentali, dalle statuette di lottatori sardo-maragati e dal modello del Teatro Anatomico dell'Università di Padova alle bandiere del Palio di Siena, alle marionette siciliane, agli ex-voto, al presagio napoletano. Questa grande massa di oggetti include una serie di quadri contemporanei disposti lungo la parete di fondo, adiacente al bar. La scala che conduce al restaurant superiore sembra sferrare una controspinta spaziale. Violenza tra « realismo » ed espressionismo, gusto dell'architettura « scartata », grezza, tattile, terrosa, gestuale. Il contenuto del settore è illustrato nel volume « Ammirato dell'Italia » edito da Valentino Bompiani e curato da Umberto Eco.

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relazione alla luce, al ritmo delle immagini, allo spazio asimmetrico dato³⁴, articolato attorno al “fulcro cosciente dell'uomo italiano contemporaneo”, ovvero l'esperienza della “resistenza”.³⁵ [fig. 7]

Il settore della Poesia, il più piccolo dei tre, raccoglieva nel frammentario e rarefatto spazio interno disegnato da Scarpa alcuni autografi di Petrarca, Leopardi, Monteverdi, Galilei e Machiavelli oltre che la riproduzione di due disegni di Michelangelo e Raffaello ospitati in teche sostenute da colossali blocchi di marmo. All'interno degli spazi progettati da Scarpa erano esposti anche strumenti musicali antichi e, soprattutto l'Athys di Donatello collocato di fronte a una vetrata di Venini disegnata da Mario De Luigi.³⁶ Usciti dal piccolo ambiente, i visitatori si trovavano al di sotto della grande copertura del padiglione, in uno spazio parzialmente ipogeo ma esterno e visibile, dall'alto, dagli spazi pubblici nel quale, a mezz'aria, si librava la ricostruzione marmorea del pavimento della Flagellazione di Piero della Francesca su cui campeggiava una copia bronzea del David di Donatello in un'articolatissima rappresentazione spaziale dell'arte italiana: “Carlo Scarpa” affermava Zevi, era riuscito nel suo intento e “per il settore della 'Poesia', ha sfruttato la liricità del suo linguaggio in ogni elemento”.³⁷ [fig. 8]

34 Padiglione italiano - Sezione “D” – Pittore Emilio Vedova. Tema: “L'Italiano oggi” – “Percorso-Plurimo-Luce”, foglio di sala, riprodotto in Celant, *Expo '67. Alexander Calder, Emilio Vedova*, 128.

35 Questa e la precedente da lettera di Emilio Vedova a Umberto. Eco, s.d., trascritta in Celant, *Expo '67. Alexander Calder, Emilio Vedova*, 98.

36 C. Monini, Rapporto sull'incontro avvenuto a Venezia il 15 dicembre 1966 tra il prof. Scarpa, l'arch. Loss, il sig. Calabrese e ing. Monini, in AS, b. “230: Allestimento della sezione la Poesia, padiglione italiano, Expo '67, Montréal (1966-1968)”, fasc. P1/18.

37 Zevi, “L'Italia all'Expo universale 1967 di Montréal”, 160.

Fig. 10

Il settore del Costume progettato da Leonardo Ricci, 1967. Da *L'architettura. Cronache e storia* 13, no. 141 (lug. 1967).

Alla raffinatezza di Scarpa si contrapponeva lo spazio modulare progettato da Munari per il settore dell'industrializzazione. Qui i ritrovati tecnici ed elettronici più moderni si confondevano con l'architettura del padiglione stesso che obbediva alla medesima logica progettuale e a un linguaggio conseguentemente industriale: all'interno erano esposte automobili – non però la Montréal: “symbol of creative genius, of courage, of faith in the future” secondo una réclame dell'epoca, che Alfa Romeo aveva appositamente ideato per l'esposizione e che aveva l'onore di esser collocata nel padiglione tematico *Men the producer* – veicoli, strumenti e apparecchi di varia natura collocati su ogni piano all'interno del caleidoscopico spazio progettato da Munari. [fig. 9]

Senza indugiare ulteriormente sulla descrizione dei settori, già appare abbastanza evidente in quale contesto Ricci si trovò a concepire la sua opera: è possibile così riconoscere come alcuni temi ricorrenti nei progetti ospitati sotto il tetto di questo padiglione fossero già affini alla poetica di Ricci sia a livello 'esistenziale' sia nell'interpretazione della figura dell'*anonimo* in relazione all'atteggiamento che governava la regia del progetto; anche sul piano formale è possibile riconoscere altre similitudini come nel disegno del suolo che vedeva una corrispondenza tra quanto inizialmente pensato da Passarelli e quanto proposto, altrove, da Ricci oppure nella concezione, affine a quella di Vedova, dello spazio in relazione al percorso.³⁸ Riconosciute queste corrispondenze, è forse opportuno, però, descrivere più minuziosamente quanto progettato da Ricci in contrappunto al programma espositivo studiato da Umberto Eco per tentare, infine, di tracciare i possibili motivi e tratti della genealogia formale di questa sua opera.

2. Contenuto e architettura della sezione del costume

L'ordinamento della sezione del costume fu curato da Umberto Eco che ne descrisse i contenuti nel volume, edito da Bompiani, *Autoritratto dell'Italia* (1967). In questo libro, che raccoglie anche testi Bruno Zevi, Giulio Carlo Argan, Guido Piovene, Luigi Chiarini, Vittorio Gregotti, Vincenzo Caglioti, Gino Bozza, Francesco Masera e Francesco Rosso tesi a illustrare la cultura e la tecnica contemporanee italiane, Eco racconta, in una sezione intitolata *La vita italiana*, illustrata e con commenti di suo pugno, “per sommi capi, per esempi significativi, come gli italiani hanno concepito la maternità, l'amore, la tavola, la preghiera, i contatti con gli altri popoli, la vita in comune o la morte”:³⁹ i viadotti della nuova Autostrada del Sole compaiono accanto alla Tabula Peutingeriana, la Vite aerea di Leonardo a un elicottero Agusta, Rodolfo Valentino e Gloria Swanson a una scena galante del XV secolo mentre a illustrare la casa contemporanea è inserita una fotografia dell'edificio di Ricci nel quartiere di Sorgane a Firenze accostata a una di villa Barbaro a Maser, sintesi di quella antica. Questa sorta di *atti fondamentali* di una comunità – negli stessi anni individuati da Ricci come fondamento della

38 Cfr. [Studio Passarelli], [Appunto], 26 feb. 1966.

39 “Prefazione,” in *Autoritratto dell'Italia* (Milano: Bompiani, 1967), 5.

sua espressione formale⁴⁰ – erano messi in mostra attraverso cinque stazioni: La vita e la morte, La vita in comune, La religione, I contatti col mondo, la scienza, la tecnica e I cittadini e lo Stato. [fig. 10] “Una corrente aggressiva, inquieta neorealistica o meglio neo espressionistica, fondata sullo scavo manuale e brutalistico, remota da ogni geometria elementare, memore di una tradizione artigiana”⁴¹ permeava, secondo Zevi, gli spazi progettati da Ricci per mettere in scena questo programma espositivo nel quale tutti i costumi d’Italia, dai tempi più remoti a quelli recenti erano resi tra loro contemporanei e, persino, eletti a esempio per “come dovrebbe essere la Terra degli Uomini”,⁴² essi apparivano come scavati in una materia grezza e continua che si contorceva in masse cavernose e si protendeva in policrome stalagmiti dalle quali si sviluppavano le concrezioni rocciose o le protesi metalliche a sostegno degli oggetti esposti. Su questi sostegni erano imprigionate sculture o riproduzioni di opere d’arte, ceramiche, profili di città, manichini, elementi decorativi; oppure dalla nuda roccia emergevano teche dalle forme più regolari per proteggere gli elementi più preziosi. Tutto era illuminato solo artificialmente e al fulgore della luce sugli oggetti esposti si contrapponeva l’oscurità del percorso nel quale lo spazio svaniva nell’ombra. L’allestimento di Ricci aveva, probabilmente, più aspetti in comune con il Percorso/Plurimo/Luce di Vedova che con gli allestimenti delle altre sezioni: non certo nella materia che configurava lo spazio – grave e scabra per il primo; del tutto immateriale, luce e musica, per il secondo – ma nella formazione di uno spazio labirintico percepibile solo grazie al movimento del visitatore e definito da una geometria tutt’altro che euclidea. [figg. 11-12]

Ricci non descrisse questo progetto e neppure ne propose un’interpretazione simbolica: questo paesaggio interno potrebbe essere letto come ennesima variazione sul tema del mito della caverna della messa in scena di un programma espositivo cosmografico sull’Italia: all’interno di questo spazio ancestrale, le figure sembrano scagliarsi contro il visitatore come simulacri di una cultura preindustriale e primordiale. Sulla parvenza e sull’ombra, stante a quanto si legge nelle pagine dedicate alla pittura dell’*Anonymous (20th Century)*, Ricci sembra ricorre a una sorta di elogio delle ombre declinando il mito di Butade; egli scrive



11

Fig. 11

Autoritratto dell'Italia, 1967.
Piatto anteriore.

Fig. 12

Due pagine, illustrate e commentate da Umberto Eco, di *La vita Italiana*. Da *Autoritratto dell'Italia* (1967).

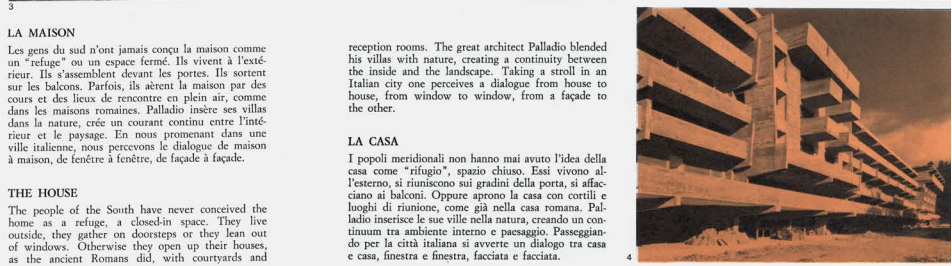
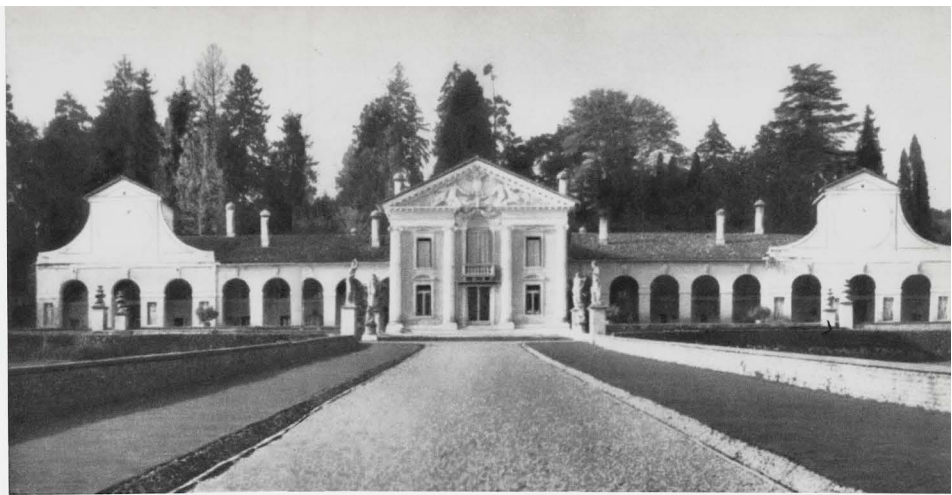
40 Cfr. Leonardo Ricci, "Form, the tangible expression of a reality," in *The Man-Made Object*, a cura di György Kepes (New York: George Brasiller, 1966), 108-119.

41 Zevi, "L'Italia all'Expo universale 1967 di Montréal," 143.

42 "Prefazione," in *Autoritratto dell'Italia*, 5.



1. Casa degli ammorini d'oro (Pompei).
2. Trullo (Alberobello).
3. A. Palladio, Villa Barbaro (Maser).
4. Leonardo Ricci, Quartiere autosufficiente per lavoratori (Firenze, Sorgane).



LA MAISON

Les gens du sud n'ont jamais conçu la maison comme un "refuge" ou un espace fermé. Ils vivent à l'extérieur. Ils s'assemblent devant les portes. Ils sortent sur les balcons. Parfois, ils aèrent la maison par des cours et des lieux de rencontre en plein air, comme dans les maisons romaines. Palladio insère ses villas dans la nature, crée un courant continu entre l'intérieur et le paysage. En nous promenant dans une ville italienne, nous percevons le dialogue de maison à maison, de fenêtre à fenêtre, de façade à façade.

THE HOUSE

The people of the South have never conceived the home as a refuge, a closed-in space. They live outside, they gather on doorsteps or they lean out of windows. Otherwise they open up their houses, as the ancient Romans did, with courtyards and

reception rooms. The great architect Palladio blended his villas with nature, creating a continuity between the inside and the landscape. Taking a stroll in an Italian city one perceives a dialogue from house to house, from window to window, from a façade to the other.

LA CASA

I popoli meridionali non hanno mai avuto l'idea della casa come "rifugio", spazio chiuso. Essi vivono all'esterno, si riuniscono sui gradini della porta, si affacciano ai balconi. Oppure aprono la casa con cortili e luoghi di riunione, come già nella casa romana. Palladio inserisce le sue ville nella natura, creando un continuum tra ambiente interno e paesaggio. Passeggiando per la città italiana si avverte un dialogo tra casa e casa, finestra e finestra, facciata e facciata.

che la pittura, come l'architettura, è fatta di "atti integrati"⁴³ alla vita e così le caverne di Montréal necessitano di essere attraversate per essere esperite ma, allo stesso tempo, affondano nel mistero – "unica possibilità di esistenza"⁴⁴ – e nella tradizione atavica del mito senza divenirne "simbolo" o via di "giudizio".⁴⁵ È su questi stessi principi che sembra ritrovarsi la misura comunitaria ed esperienziale che caratterizza le forme senza fine dell'ecclesia progettata, pochi anni prima, per la comunità valdese di Riesi voluta da Tullio Vinay. [figg. 13-15]

Le caverne di Montréal, mediante la loro forma artigianale, gestuale, fortemente empirica, erano probabilmente percepite dai visitatori come una risposta polemica e violenta alla precisione e al determinismo della tecnica che permeava l'esposizione del 1967: contro le infinite applicazioni del giunto progettato da Buckminster Fuller, contro una tecnica diventata tecnocrazia, lo spazio progettato da Ricci voleva essere fortemente emotivo, legato all'espressione umana e non certo teso ad assecondare la realizzazione de "the large world fair ever".⁴⁶

Sul piano della poetica autoriale, è possibile riconoscere una genealogia formale nella ricerca che Ricci stava portando avanti da alcuni anni; per comprendere

43 Leonardo Ricci, *Anonymous (20th Century)* (New York: George Braziller, 1962), ed. it., *Anonimo del XX secolo* (Milano: Il saggiatore, 1965), 127.

44 Ricci, *Anonimo del XX secolo*, 21.

45 Ricci, *Anonimo del XX secolo*, 16.

46 Documentario "Expo '67 Doc: World's Fair in Montréal, Canada (1967)", British Pathé, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEly-bm5eU0&t=0s> (ultima consultazione: 25 maggio 2021).

il progetto per Montréal è necessario ripercorrere queste esperienze, elaborate in ambito fiorentino alcuni anni prima e che ebbero un momento di sintesi nel Maggio musicale fiorentino del 1964 dedicato all'espressionismo, all'interno del quale Ricci ebbe per la prima volta occasione concreta di realizzare una *forma senza fine*. Tuttavia, tralasciando per un istante le questioni espressive artistiche o architettoniche che tale programma espositivo metteva in gioco, il significato politico dei contenuti esposti nel padiglione non appariva, certamente, rivoluzionario. Se un'esposizione è, per una nazione, occasione per autorappresentare la propria visione politica ed economica e collocarsi all'interno dello scacchiere internazionale, significative appaiono le dichiarazioni del presidente Saragat, sullo sfondo dell'escalation militare voluta dagli Stati Uniti di Lyndon Johnson nella guerra del Vietnam: in occasione della sua visita all'Expo egli ribadiva l'importanza del "consolidamento e [del]lo sviluppo dell'alleanza atlantica".⁴⁷ Ideato durante il terzo governo Moro mentre era Ministro per gli affari esteri Amintore Fanfani e sottosegretari Giuseppe Lupi (PSDI), Giorgio Oliva (DC) e Mario Zagari (PSI), il programma espositivo appare ricalcare molti cliché della cultura e della storia italiana evitando di prendere posizioni polemiche sulle politiche internazionali o su quelle interne – basti ricordare, per esempio, l'occupazione delle aule universitarie e la morte di Paolo Rossi, avvenuta durante la progettazione del padiglione, episodi che porteranno alle contestazioni del 1968 e verso le quali molti di questi autori erano coinvolti in prima persona – limitando i temi esposti a un certo disimpegno e gli esiti formali a poetiche eminentemente autoriali come, appunto, la *forma senza fine*.

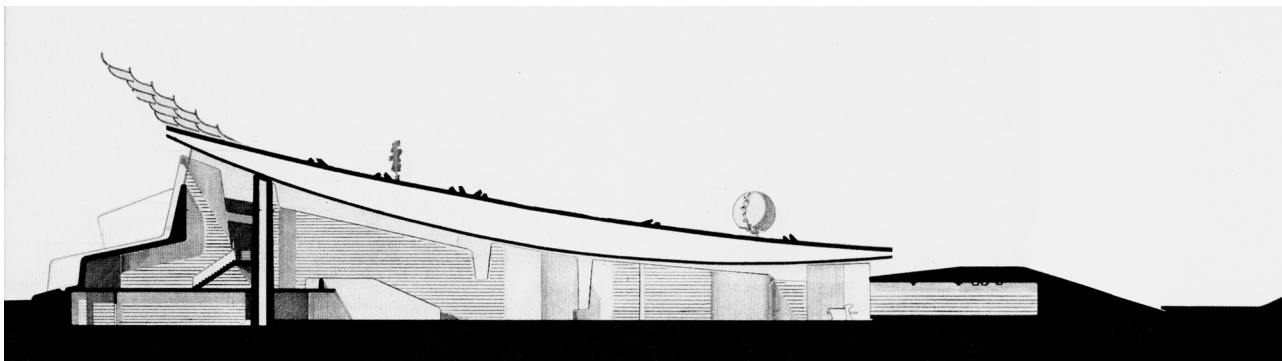
3. La forma senza fine come espressione dell'esistenza.

Firenze, 1962-1964

È proprio questa forma quella che Ricci inizia a concepire nei primi anni Sessanta, anni nei quali Firenze era un crocevia di quelle esperienze via via definite dai critici come *informali*, *espressioniste* o *brutaliste* e che si sommavano a quelle da lui maturate nei suoi viaggi a Parigi e negli Stati Uniti: era questo connubio che, secondo Koenig, aveva portato Ricci "verso un esistenzialismo mistico ed anarcoide".⁴⁸ È nel contesto fiorentino che questa sua concezione si sviluppò e crebbe, nutrita di quella temperie espressionista che caratterizzava l'ambito fiorentino degli anni 1962-1964; se da un lato la vena espressionista era già manifesta nell'opera di Giovanni Michelucci, capostipite di quella che viene usualmente indicata come scuola fiorentina – la cui definizione è tanto sfuggente quanto affascinante: Adolfo Natalini, sardonicamente, ne vedeva i caratteri tipici "riassumibili in una idea di misura, ma affiancati da una robusta vena di follia [...]. Senza dubbio, dal dopoguerra in poi, ha preso il sopravvento

47 Sul viaggio a Montréal di Saragat, si vedano: "Saragat porta in Canada la voce di un'Europa che vuol rafforzare la cooperazione con l'America", *Corriere della sera*, 12 set. 1967; "Patto Atlantico Vietnam Medio Oriente temi dei colloqui di Saragat con Pearson", *Corriere della sera*, 13 set. 1967.

48 Koenig, *Architettura in Toscana*, 142.



13



14



15

Fig. 13

Sezione longitudinale del padiglione italiano, 1967. Da *Autoritratto dell'Italia* (1967).

Figg. 14-15

Gli scabri volumi della sezione del Costume, [1966-67]. Fotografie. Casa Studio Ricci – Monterinaldi (FI).

la linea irrazionale⁴⁹ – dall'altro essa trovò un momento di coagulazione e condivisione nella Mostra sull'espressionismo il cui allestimento, per l'interno di Palazzo Strozzi, si deve allo stesso Ricci che lo ideò nella primavera del 1964. Proprio questa manifestazione, la cui nascita si deve a un progetto più ampio sull'espressionismo che coinvolgeva l'intera città e che si sviluppava come programma del Maggio musicale fiorentino, fu momento di costruzione e riconoscimento di un'identità artistica e architettonica contemporanee non solamente per la scuola fiorentina. La mostra, che voleva gettare un ponte tra l'attualità e gli anni Dieci, si concludeva con la presentazione della torre solare di Mendelsohn, fino ad allora ritenuta distrutta e, soprattutto, con la Philharmonie di Hans Scharoun, appena inaugurata: la parabola dell'espressionismo, non fondata su un'unitarietà linguistica, produsse una modalità espressiva nutrita di forti connotati sociali che Luigi Chiarini efficacemente sintetizzò: essa "promosse nuove espressioni, che senza [...l'espressionismo] non si sarebbero prodotte; fu come il lievito che è necessario per fare il pane, ma che non si avverte più nel pane".⁵⁰

L'idea di dedicare il XXVII Maggio musicale fiorentino del 1964 all'espressionismo si deve a Raffaello Ramat, assessore alle belle arti e alla cultura del comune di Firenze, che a metà del 1962 chiese al musicista rumeno naturalizzato italiano Roman Vlad di occuparsi della direzione artistica della rassegna. Con il desiderio che il Maggio dovesse essere declinato in diverse manifestazioni, venne nominato un comitato direttivo composto da Luciano Anceschi, Giulio Carlo Argan, Fedele D'Amico, Luigi Chiarini, Paolo Chiarini, Luigi Rognoni, dallo stesso Vlad e, infine, da Bruno Zevi.⁵¹ Senza soffermarsi sull'articolato programma del Maggio – che prevedeva mostre, convegni, conferenze e, ovviamente, spettacoli e la partecipazione di intellettuali, registi, scenografi tra i maggiori del tempo – è da ricordare, almeno, oltre alla mostra di cui tra poco si dirà, il Convegno internazionale di studi sull'Espressionismo al quale parteciparono, tra gli altri, Argan, Koenig, Ungers e Zevi, e che fu occasione particolarmente importante per la cultura italiana degli anni Sessanta di elaborazione storica e critica della vicenda espressionista nella varie arti e momento centrale per una definizione di quello architettonico alla luce delle esperienze più recenti. L'intervento di Koenig, curatore della sezione di architettura della mostra, era teso a stabilire una continuità tra l'espressionismo degli anni Dieci e Venti e l'attualità dell'espressionismo realizzato negli anni successivi alla Seconda guerra mondiale; egli, all'epoca, ne descriveva i fenomeni attuali etichettandoli

49 "Interni fiorentini e altre divagazioni. Un pomeriggio con Adolfo Natalini, intervista di Fabio Fabbrizzi e Francesca Mugnai," *Firenze Architettura* 16, n. 1 (2012): 72. Sulla scuola fiorentina e "la linea irrazionale" si veda il libello di Elvio Manganaro, *Warum Florenz? O delle ragioni dell'espressionismo di Michelucci, Ricci, Savioli e Dezzi Bardeschi* (Melfi: Libria, 2016).

50 Questa è la tesi di Luigi Chiarini a proposito del cinema espressionista: riportata in Ladislao Mittner, "L'espressionismo a Palazzo Vecchio," *Belfagor* (lug. 1964) pubblicato in Id., *Saggi, divagazioni, polemiche* (Napoli: Morano, 1964), 283. Per il programma della rassegna del 1964 si veda *XXVII Maggio musicale fiorentino 1964. L'Espressionismo* (Firenze: AGAF, 1964).

51 Antonella Gargano, "L'espressionismo a Firenze: Documenti e testimonianze," in *Expressionismus. Una enciclopedia interdisciplinare*, a cura di Paolo Chiarini, Antonella Gargano, Roman Vlad (Roma: Bulzoni, 1986), XIV-XXIII.

come “espressionismo organico”⁵² secondo una definizione connotata da forti sottintesi politici ed etici – l’avversione al Nazismo e al Fascismo – e ponendolo come un’alternativa formale al Movimento moderno cristallizzatosi nell’International Style.⁵³ La riflessione di Koenig si muoveva a partire da quella di Oswald Mathias Ungers che, l’anno precedente, aveva curato a Colonia una mostra sulla collezione di disegni e lettere sull’espressionismo intitolata “Die gläserne Kette”, un corpus di documenti che egli aveva nel tempo raccolto e che sarà la fonte principale per la sezione sull’architettura della mostra di Firenze.⁵⁴ Per Ungers, ciò che caratterizzava l’espressionismo non era il linguaggio o una ricerca formale ma l’*Erscheinungsformen* (forme fenomeniche) della “*expressionistischen kunstwollens*”. Essa era fondata su tre qualità:

Abkehr von der Wirklichkeit. In der radikalsten Auswirkung bis zur völligen Auflösung [...]. Besinnung auf Ursprünglichkeit und elementare Ausdrucksweise [...]. Verwandlung und Überwindung der Welt und der Materie durch den schöpferischen Geist.⁵⁵

La stessa ricerca sull’espressione delle necessità spirituali e primordiali che Ungers leggeva nell’architettura, era sintetizzata nella sperimentazione letteraria da Ladislao Mittner nel dualismo tra *urlo* e *geometria* o, secondo Luigi Chiarini, nell’antagonismo tra *caos* e *geometria*.⁵⁶ Se l’espressione individuale scaturiva dall’*Urschrei*, dall’urlo primordiale, come sostiene Mittner, allo stesso tempo l’espressionismo testimoniava un sentimento morale e visioni di sapore teosofico fondati politicamente “attraverso l’idea di una società senza classi, felicemente pacificata”.⁵⁷

Mittner ricorda inoltre come, benché durante il convegno le discussioni oscillassero tra poli interpretativi intesi come “indirizzo stilistico” o come “contenutistico sociologico”, fosse stato Zevi a proporre una “mozione”, approvata dal congresso, che pose “decisamente l’accento sullo ‘stimolo provocatorio e vitalizzante’ che l’espressionismo conserva tuttora e sulla ‘carica morale’ insita nella

52 Giovanni Klaus Koenig, *Introduzione alla mostra di architettura espressionista, Comunicazione al Convegno Internazionale di Studi sull’Espressionismo*, Firenze, 18-23 mag. 1964, dattiloscritto. Una copia è conservata presso la Biblioteca Comunale dell’Archiginnasio di Bologna nel fondo Luciano Anceschi. Il testo è stato poi ripubblicato in Chiarini, Gargano, Vlad, *Expressionismus. Una enciclopedia interdisciplinare*.

53 Su Koenig e la storiografia dell’espressionismo si veda Ezio Godoli, “Il ruolo di Koenig nella storiografia dell’architettura dell’espressionismo,” in *Giovanni Klaus Koenig. Un fiorentino nel dibattito nazionale su architettura e design (1924-1989)*, a cura di Maria Cristina Tonelli (Firenze: FUP, 2020), 213-223.

54 Adolfo Natalini scrive, nei suoi ricordi su Koenig, che Ungers ospitò “per ricerche nella sua biblioteca di Belvederestrasse a Colonia” un “giovane professore dal cognome tedesco”: “da quelle ricerche prese l’avvio della mostra fiorentina sull’Espressionismo”. Vedi Adolfo Natalini, “Note per un ritratto a memoria di Giovanni Klaus Koenig,” in *Giovanni Klaus Koenig. Un fiorentino nel dibattito nazionale su architettura e design (1924-1989)*, 103.

55 1) Allontanamento dalla realtà. Nei suoi effetti più radicali e fino alla sua completa dissoluzione [...]. 2) Riflessione su originarietà e modalità espressive elementari [...]. 3) Metamorfosi e superamento del mondo e della materia attraverso lo spirito creativo. Questa e le precedenti da Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Die Erscheinungsformen des Expressionismus in der Architektur, 1964, Comunicazione al Convegno Internazionale di Studi sull’Espressionismo*, Firenze, 18-23 mag. 1964, dattiloscritto. Una copia è conservata presso la Biblioteca Comunale dell’Archiginnasio di Bologna nel fondo Luciano Anceschi. Il testo è stato poi ripubblicato in Chiarini, Gargano, Vlad, *Expressionismus. Una enciclopedia interdisciplinare*.

56 Cfr. Ladislao Mittner, *L’espressionismo* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1965), 49-73; Paolo Chiarini, *Caos e geometria. Per un regesto delle poetiche espressioniste* (Firenze: La nuova Italia, 1964).

57 Giovanni Klaus Koenig, *Introduzione alla mostra di architettura espressionista, Comunicazione al Convegno Internazionale di Studi sull’Espressionismo*, Firenze, 18-23 mag. 1964, dattiloscritto.

sua testimonianza".⁵⁸ Zevi, che all'epoca aveva già pubblicato alcuni studi su Mendelsohn e che, probabilmente, stava già immaginando l'*Opera completa* a lui dedicata che uscirà nel 1970,⁵⁹ leggeva la via dell'espressionismo come una scelta 'etica' – e persino identitaria se la si colloca all'interno della sua interpretazione dell'ebraismo⁶⁰ – alternativa alle "ideologie del lavoro di gruppo, della presunta obiettività razionalista, della funzionalità 'pura' e anonima"⁶¹ cioè rivolgendo la sua critica contro quella stagione del Moderno, che, a suo parere, aveva esaurito la sua parabola: visioni che si propongono di scardinare metodologicamente proprio curando la regia del progetto di Montréal. "Chi è avverso agli eroi detesta l'espressionismo" egli affermava e l'espressionismo "se non si limita ad essere un'arte di consolazione, o di protesta, solitaria, ha gli strumenti per aggredire i problemi contemporanei. Si tratta di coraggio, di ottimismo ribelle"⁶² e, finalmente, per Zevi, quello architettonico, che tra le due guerre era principalmente rimasto confinato sulla carta o su astratti principi, poteva, con questi presupposti, trovare realizzazione.

Se parte delle considerazioni di Zevi corrispondevano all'atteggiamento di Ricci, altrettanto si potrebbe affermare riguardo a quelle espresse da Argan. Questi insisteva sulla "concezione dello spazio" elaborata dagli espressionisti "non più come ambiente naturale costante, ma come dimensione dell'esistenza umana" capace di "porsi come rivelazione concreta della realtà attraverso la vicenda esistenziale umana",⁶³ gli espressionisti "aprono la strada ad un'estetica non più fondata sul concetto di forma o di rappresentazione, ma su quello di segno: l'estetica semantica",⁶⁴ affermazioni che risuonavano nelle posizioni, oltre che in quella di Ricci, dello stesso Zevi, di Koenig e di Eco.

58 Questa e le precedenti da Mittner, "L'espressionismo a Palazzo Vecchio," 279-284.

59 Ita Heinze-Greenberg, "Heroic Narratives. Bruno Zevi and Eric Mendelsohn", in *Bruno Zevi. History, Criticism and Architecture after World War II*, 129-149.

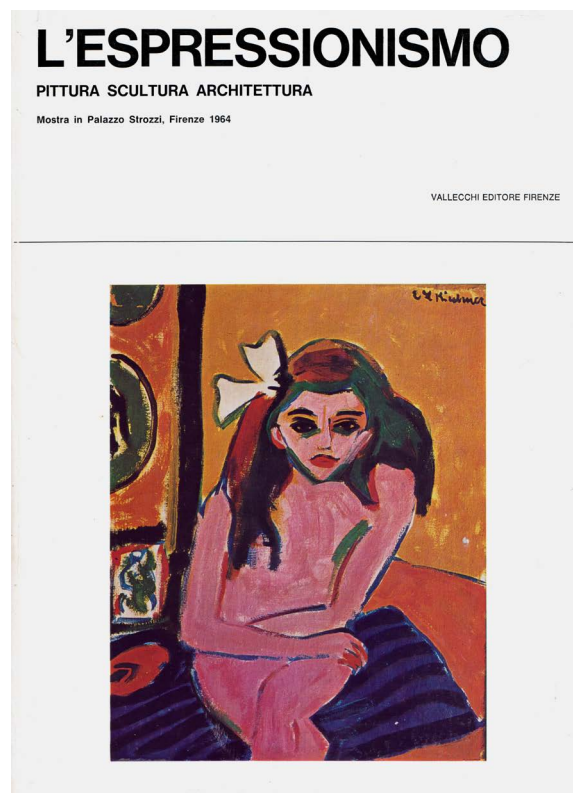
60 Cfr. Matteo Cassani Simonetti, "«Assimilation» or «Diversity» of Jewish Architects and Jewish Architecture in Italy during the 20th Century. Notes on the Debate and the Reflection of Bruno Zevi," in *Bruno Zevi. History, Criticism and Architecture after World War II*, 37-57.

61 Bruno Zevi, *L'eredità dell'espressionismo in architettura, Comunicazione al Convegno Internazionale di Studi sull'Espressionismo*, Firenze, 18-23 mag. 1964, dattiloscritto. Una copia è conservata presso la Biblioteca Comunale dell'Archiginnasio di Bologna nel fondo Luciano Anceschi. Il testo è parzialmente pubblicato in *Marcatré* 8-9-10 (1964) e poi, variato, in Chiarini, Gargano, Vlad, *Expressionismus. Una enciclopedia interdisciplinare*.

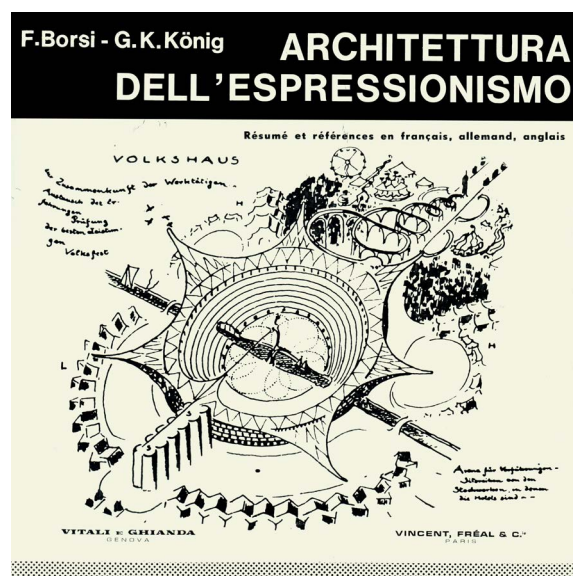
62 Questa e le precedenti da Zevi, *L'eredità dell'espressionismo in architettura, Comunicazione al Convegno Internazionale di Studi sull'Espressionismo*, Firenze, 18-23 mag. 1964.

63 Questa e le precedenti da Giulio Carlo Argan, "L'architettura dell'espressionismo," in *Bilancio dell'espressionismo* (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1965), 95-108. Il volume raccoglie i testi del ciclo di conferenze "Incontro con l'espressionismo" tenutosi nell'aprile 1964 a Firenze.

64 L'affermazione di Argan è riportata da Zevi in "Caos e geometria contro il nazismo. Riscattata l'attualità dell'espressionismo," *L'Espresso* (7 giu. 1964), rip. in Id., *Cronache di architettura*, vol. V (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1971).



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Fig. 16

Il catalogo della mostra sull'Espressionismo tenutosi a palazzo Strozzi nel 1964. Piatto Anteriore.

Fig. 17

Il volume di Franco Borsi e Giovanni Klaus Koenig sull'architettura dell'espressionismo, 1967. Piatto Anteriore.

Se il convegno fu l'occasione per rileggere le qualità dell'espressionismo, la mostra permise di vederne l'espressione figurativa. Essa fu accompagnata da un catalogo – che dedicava pochissimo spazio all'architettura – a cui costituisce un'importante integrazione il volume di Franco Borsi e Koenig *Architettura dell'espressionismo* pubblicato nel 1967 e composto da una prima parte più filologica affidata a Franco Borsi – *Per un archivio dell'espressionismo in architettura* – e una più militante – *L'eredità dell'espressionismo* – scritta da Koenig.⁶⁵ [figg. 16-17]

La mostra, ordinata da Palma Bucarelli per le sezioni di pittura, scultura e grafica e da Koenig, per quella di architettura, presentava al pubblico un'ampia selezione di opere provenienti da tutta Europa.⁶⁶ Rispetto alle 532 opere esposte nelle sezioni curate da Bucarelli, in quella dedicata all'architettura erano presenti più di 130 opere tra disegni, modelli e fotografie – l'autore più rappresentato era Hermann Finsterlin con 42 opere e 4 modelli mentre era esposto un solo disegno di Mendelsohn – e si concludeva con una proiezione di diapositive a colori della Philharmonie di Scharoun e della Torre solare di Mendelsohn. I tre anni che dividono la mostra del 1964 dal libro di Borsi e Koenig sembrano spostare l'interesse degli autori, dopo una prima fase di necessario riconoscimento della vicenda espressionista, a una rilettura di questo in chiave, ancor più, di vitale esperienza: "la ormai riconosciuta conclamata crisi del razionalismo architettonico" scrivono gli autori "porta la necessità di vedere se alle origini – alle origini specifiche e non pionieristiche – del movimento moderno, ci stanno altre vene, altri filoni ideali, altre ipotesi di lavoro"⁶⁷ attraverso le quali interpretare il loro presente e perciò non sorprende, con questi presupposti e grazie all'eredità di Finsterlin, se nel volume si fa cenno a molti autori che nel Dopoguerra percorrevano strade diametralmente opposte a quelle battute dall'International Style: dopo Hugo Haring e Hans Scharoun:

una vasta corrente "informale" che recuperava un vecchio membro del gruppo De Stijl come Kiesler o il giovane Italo americano Paolo Soleri; o l'esperienza della scultura che si abita di André Bloc; o in Italia il Michelucci della Chiesa dell'autostrada (il cui disegno hanno entusiasmato Finsterlin quando glieli abbiamo fatti vedere), e dell'ancor più sciolta chiesa di San Marino; fino ai giovanissimi che a Firenze alla scuola di Ricci, come in California (Goldman) e un po' dappertutto vanno sbrigando la loro architettura-scultura fuori dal cilizio dei tre assi cartesiani: tutti possono riconoscere in Finsterlin un po' il loro padre.⁶⁸

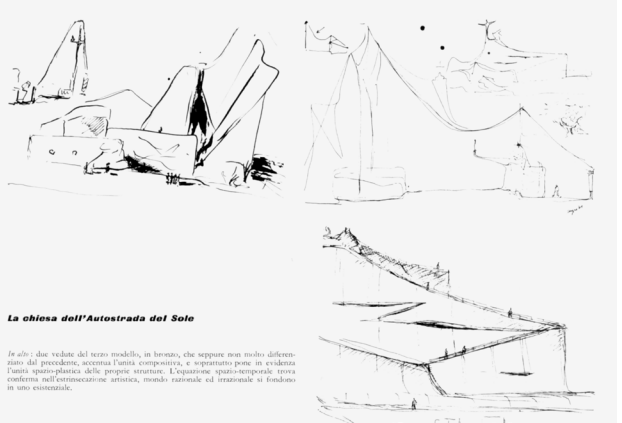
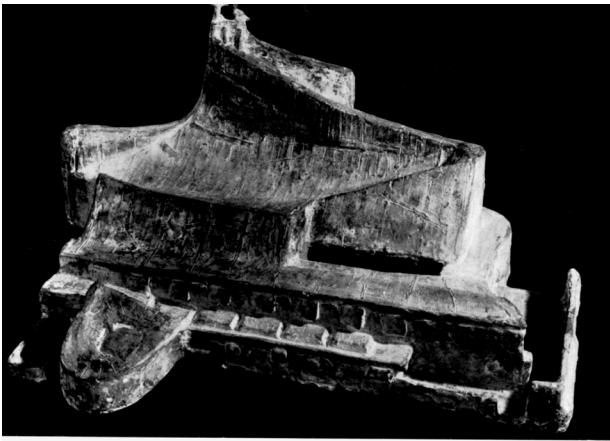
Grazie proprio a questa genealogia – che si rispecchia in un'altra acuta osservazione di Borsi nella quale egli tracciava un ponte tra la città-terra

65 *L'espressionismo. Pittura, scultura, architettura. Mostra in Palazzo Strozzi, Firenze, maggio-giugno 1964* (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1964); Franco Borsi, Giovanni Klaus Koenig, *Architettura dell'espressionismo* (Genova: Vitali e Ghian-da; Paris: Vincent, Fréal e C.ie, 1967).

66 Il Comitato della mostra era formato da Giulio Carlo Argan, Cesare Brandi, Palma Bucarelli, Giovanni Klaus Koenig e Bruno Zevi.

67 Questa e la precedente da Franco Borsi, Giovanni Klaus Koenig, *Architettura dell'espressionismo*, 8.

68 Franco Borsi, "Per un archivio dell'espressionismo in architettura," in Franco Borsi, Giovanni Klaus Koenig, *Architettura dell'espressionismo*, 109.



La chiesa dell'Autostrada del Sole

In alto: due vedute del terzo modello, in bronzo, che seppure non molto differenziate dal precedente, accostava l'unità compositiva, e soprattutto pone in evidenza l'unità spazio-plastica delle singole strutture. L'equazione spazio-temporale trova conferma nell'articolazione artistica, mondo razionale ed irrazionale si fondono in uno esistenziale.

argomentata da Bruno Taut e quella immaginata da Ricci⁶⁹ – che unisce maestri diretti, putativi e allievi, si può iniziare a mettere in relazione l'opera di Ricci con alcuni temi che risuonavano nei primi anni Sessanta per le vie di Firenze e che Ricci, oltre che udire, contribuiva a diffondere: l'espressione primordiale dalla quale discende un'interpretazione esistenziale dell'architettura; l'utopia sociale che l'architettura può contribuire a realizzare; l'insistenza sugli atti fondamentali della vita umana. Questi si collocano in un ambito nel quale ebbero parte determinante, per Ricci, almeno tre degli autori ricordati da Borsi: Frederick Kiesler, André Bloc e, ovviamente, Giovanni Michelucci le cui opere e la cui influenza appaiono indissolubilmente intrecciate tra loro nella Firenze dei tardi anni Cinquanta e dei primi Sessanta.

4. Verso una forma esistenziale. Tre maestri di fronte al problema dell'espressione: Giovanni Michelucci, Frederick Kiesler e André Bloc

Se riguardo a Michelucci è persino inutile argomentare le relazioni che lo legavano a Ricci – è sufficiente rileggere il testo, per larghi tratti autobiografico, che Ricci dedica al suo maestro nel 1962⁷⁰ –, quelle con Bloc si possono far

69 Franco Borsi, "Per un archivio dell'espressionismo in architettura," in Franco Borsi, Giovanni Klaus Koenig, *Architettura dell'espressionismo*, 76. Particolarmente importante, per questa genealogia, è la collana *Locchio e le seste* ideata da Koenig e Borsi composta, per i tipi della LEF, da due soli volumi il cui accostamento appare quanto mai significativo: *Giovanni Michelucci* (1966) e *Hermann Finsterlin. Idea dell'architettura* (1968), entrambi curati da Franco Borsi.

70 Leonardo Ricci, "L'uomo Michelucci, dalla casa Valiani alla Chiesa dell'Autostrada del Sole," *L'architettura. Cronache e Storia* 7, n. 76 (feb. 1962): 664-689.

Fig. 18

Due pagine tratte dalla presentazione di Leonardo Ricci dell'opera di Giovanni Michelucci. Da *L'architettura. Cronache e Storia* 7, no. 76 (feb. 1962).

risalire almeno al 1955 quando questi espone, proprio a casa Ricci a Monterinaldi nell'ambito della mostra organizzata da Ricci insieme a Fiamma Vigo "La Cava. Mostra internazionale all'aperto di arti plastiche" alcune sue sculture [fig. 18];⁷¹ il rapporto tra Ricci e Kiesler, invece, benché non sembri testimoniata dai documenti una frequentazione, è probabilmente risalente al 1952, data in cui si può riscontrare la conoscenza da parte di Ricci della sua opera.⁷² Non è, però, certo che Ricci abbia visitato le mostre "15 Americans" – nel cui catalogo Kiesler pubblica le *Note on the Correalism*⁷³ – e "Two Houses: New Ways to Build" – curata da Arthur Drexler e che confrontava la *Endless House* e una *Geodesic dome House* di Buckminster Fuller – entrambe tenutesi al MoMA di New York nell'estate 1952 quando la presenza di Ricci è documentata al vicino Brooklyn College.⁷⁴ Neppure è altrettanto certo che, nell'autunno 1960, quando Ricci si trovava al MIT, egli abbia avuto modo di visitare, sempre al MoMA, la mostra "Visionary architecture", nuovamente curata da Drexler e che raccoglieva, sotto il comune tema della visionarietà, molte opere del XX secolo, da quella degli espressionisti – Hermann Finsterlin, Hans Poelzig e Bruno Taut – fino alle esperienze più recenti, come quella di Kiesler. È invece assodato che egli abbia presentato con una conferenza a Firenze, tre anni dopo, quest'ultima mostra nell'ambito di quegli scambi culturali intessuti da Raghianti che legavano palazzo Strozzi e gli Stati Uniti.⁷⁵ Il tema che per Drexler guidava la mostra era la visionarietà espressa mediante alcune utopie sociali e architettoniche, questioni determinanti, negli stessi anni, anche per Ricci: "Social usage", scriveva Drexler, "determines what is visionary and what is not. Visionary projects cast their shadows over into the real world of experience, expense and frustration. If we could learn what they have to teach, we might exchange irrelevant rationalizations for more useful critical standards. Vision and reality might then coincide".⁷⁶ Della presentazione fiorentina di Ricci è rimasta una testimonianza di Lara Vinca Masini pubblicata su *L'Avanti* nella quale la studiosa mette in relazione la *Endless house* con il villaggio di Riesi e con le ricerche di Vittorio Giorgini; oltre a chiosare i progetti, Vinca Masini riporta anche quanto espresso da Ricci sulla sua visione dell'architettura in rapporto all'opera di Kiesler: [fig. 19]

Questa mostra, al di là della contraddittorietà dell'impostazione, oltre a dimostrare (citiamo ancora Ricci) "che la spinta della civiltà meccanica si è esaurita" e a manifestare la necessità, per l'uomo attuale "di entrare in una nuova avventura umana", in un processo culturale "interdisciplinare, più aperto a nuovi orizzonti di cui non conosciamo ancora la portata" ci sembra

71 Gillo Dorfles, "Una mostra all'aperto di arti plastiche," *Domus*, n. 313 (1955): 61, 64.

72 L'opera di Kiesler, prima della sua morte, non era particolarmente illustrata nella pubblicistica italiana. Cfr. Maria Bottero, *Frederick Kiesler. Arte, architettura, ambiente* (Milano: Electa, 1996).

73 *15 Americans*, a cura di Dorothy C. Miller (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1952), 8.

74 Sulla mostra si veda: *Two Houses: New Ways to Build, Exhibition's press release*, MoMA Archives, <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/2420> (ultima consultazione: 25 maggio 2021).

75 *Mostre permanenti. Carlo Ludovico Raghianti in un secolo di esposizioni*, a cura di Silvia Massa e Elena Pontelli (Lucca: Edizioni Fondazione Raghianti Studi sull'Arte, 2018), pp. 243-244 (scheda di Francesca Giusti).

76 *Visionary architecture, Exhibition's press release*, MoMA Archives, <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/2554> (ultima consultazione: 25 maggio 2021).

prospettare una nuova concezione dell'architettura, orientata verso una dinamica dell'immaginazione intesa come articolazione di un nuovo spazio, uno spazio, appunto, continuo, interpretato emozionalmente, per la vita dell'uomo del nostro tempo (ne abbiamo una trascrizione esemplare nella nuova chiesa dell'autostrada del sole di Giovanni Michelucci). Questa concezione di uno spazio "naturalistico" si contrappone, succedendole, a quella dello spazio "organico" di impostazione intellettualistica e razionale, con un processo inverso a quello delle altre arti figurative, in cui la posizione neoconcretista e gestaltica è, semmai, di un grado più attuale (o attualizzata) rispetto a quella postinformale di recupero dell'immagine.⁷⁷

Se, come ha sostenuto anni dopo Marco Dezzi Bardeschi, Ricci "riprendeva quasi alla lettera il modello della *Endless House* senza timore di sfiorarne il plagio per realizzare l'archetipico villaggio valdese del Monte degli ulivi a Riesi"⁷⁸ rimarcando, ancora una volta, la centralità di Kiesler nell'ambito fiorentino – la prima variazione fiorentina sulla *Endless House* fu, probabilmente, la Galleria d'arte "Quadrante" di Giorgini datata 1959: galleria che ospitò nel 1962 una personale di Bloc⁷⁹ – ciò non significa soltanto che Ricci assimilasse unicamente le forme concepite da Kiesler: nei testi di quest'ultimo, infatti, si riscontrano molte analogie con quelli di Ricci sia per quanto riguarda i contenuti sia per la forma impiegata. Una prosa accorata, nella quale una dimensione spirituale riconosciuta in tutte le circostanze della vita permea la narrazione, testimonia come il tema dalla *forma senza fine* fosse centrale nella sua opera nella quale si possono riconoscere echi di un naturalismo darwiniano e di esistenzialismo:

It is endless like the human body – there is no beginning and no end to it. The "Endless" is rather sensuous, more like the female body in contrast to sharp-angled male architecture. All ends meet in the "Endless" as they meet in life. Life's rhythms are cyclical. All ends of living meet during twenty-four hours, during a week, a lifetime. They touch one another with the kiss of Time. They shake hands, stay, say goodbye, return through the same or other doors, come and go through multi-links, secretive or obvious, or through the whims of memory [...]. Nature creates bodies, but art creates life. Thus living in the "Endless House" means to live an exuberant life, not only the life of a digesting body, of routine social duties, or the wind-up of functions of the four seasons, the automatism of day and night, of high noon and the midnight moon. The "Endless House" is much more than that and much less than the average dwelling of the rich of pseudo rich. It is less because it reverts to fundamental needs of the human in his relationship to man, to industry, to nature (that is, to eating, sleeping and sex) [...]. While it is being built, the "Endless House" will grow its colors, in vast areas of condensed into compositions (fresco-like or paintings), into high or low reliefs, into the plasticity of full sculptures. Like vegetation, it grows its form

Fig. 19

Fotografia dell'interno dell'*Endless House* di Frederick Kiesler. La fotografia, conservata presso Casa Studio Ricci, reca, sul verso, un timbro del MoMA e la dicitura "Visionary Architecture". Casa Studio Ricci – Monterinaldi (FI).

Fig. 20

Fotografia dell'*Habitacle II* di André Bloc, Meudon, 1964. Da Bloc. *Le monolithe fracturé* (1996)

77 Lara Vinca Masini, "L'architettura dell'impossibile," in *L'avanti*, 1 feb. 1964.

78 Marco Dezzi Bardeschi, "Kiesler, la scuola fiorentina e la curvatura del mondo," in *ANAKH*, n. 14 (giu. 1996): 72.

79 Cfr. *André Bloc* (Firenze: Quadrante, 1962).



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and color at the same time. And so let us avoid the museum term “art” in connection with architecture, because, as we understand it today, architecture has been degraded to old-fashioned or modern-fashioned make-up and décor. Art as a ritual cannot be an after-thought. It must again become the usual link between the known and the unknown.⁸⁰

È probabile, però, che Ricci non conoscesse questo testo di Kiesler ma il più noto *Manifeste du Corréalisme* pubblicato nel 1949 con *L'architecture*

⁸⁰ Frederick Kiesler, *The “Endless House”: a Man-Built Cosmos* (1962), rip. in Frederick J. Kiesler, *Selected Writings*, a cura di Siegfried Gohr and Gunda Luyken (Stuttgart: G. Hatje, 1996), 126-129.

d'Aujourd'hui, ancora diretta da Bloc. Esso permette di leggere ancor meglio le analogie tra espressione formale e relazione spirituale: grazie alla *continuità* – per Kiesler *The New Principle of Architecture* – che “il devenait possible de recourir a des solutions simples aux problèmes primordiaux sans négliger les besoins essentiels de l'existence humaine”. Tale *continuità*, non declinata in una visione individualista ma, anzi, rivolta a una sociale – “Nous voulons” prosegue Kiesler “la création de nouvelles possibilités d'existence qui aiguilleront l'évolution de la société sur une voie nouvelle”⁸¹ – diviene metodo generativo dello spazio architettonico ottenuto, per Kiesler, dal continuo movimento dell'uomo nello spazio, ovvero da quello che egli definiva “action living”.⁸² Questa ricerca spaziale – per alcuni aspetti vicina alla sua opera – permette di elaborare ulteriori osservazioni sulla concezione della forma nell'architettura da parte di Ricci in relazione, questa volta, a una simile ricerca che faceva capo a Bloc stesso e a *L'architecture d'Aujourd'hui*: se per Bloc e per il *Groupe Espace* il nodo del problema riguardava, principalmente, le arti plastiche in rapporto all'architettura e la scultura stessa – l'approccio può essere letto in continuità con il problema delle arti decorative già impostato in occasione dell'Esposizione del 1925 e con le posizioni sulla sintesi delle arti, a riguardo, di Le Corbusier e Fernand Léger – e, solo conseguentemente, la concezione architettonica, la ricerca di Ricci è, invece, espressamente architettonica. *L'Habitacle* di Bloc, infatti, è una scultura a scala architettonica non abitabile realizzata da un autore che si definiva, nel Manifesto del *Groupe Espace*, scultore.⁸³ Risulta coerente, seguendo questa analisi, la presentazione dell'opera di Ricci nel 1966 sul numero di *Au Jour'd'hui* dedicato a “Espaces sculptés - Espaces architecturés” nel quale, attorno alla chiesa di San Giovanni Battista e a quella di San Marino di Michelucci – riconosciuti come progetti esemplari – vennero letti i lavori di Marco Dezzi Bardeschi, Vittorio Giorgini e Leonardo Savioli oltre a quelli – non realizzati e presentati grazie a modelli – di Ricci: un modello per l'ecclesia – definito come “Maquette pour un espace habitable”⁸⁴ e che sembra ricordare una scultura etrusca – e tre progetti di suoi studenti di Firenze relativi a un nuovo insediamento urbano megastrutturale.⁸⁵ Per comprendere la differenza di approccio sull'architettura-scultura che distingue l'opera di Bloc dall'interpretazione in chiave esistenziale espressa da Ricci, è forse utile riprendere quello che quest'ultimo scrive a proposito della chiesa di San Giovanni Battista: [fig. 20]

Ma interessante è domandarci: “questa forma a che categoria, tra le classificate, appartiene?” è cioè essa di ordine cubista od

81 Questa e la precedente da Frederick Kiesler, *Manifeste du Corréalisme*, 1949.

82 Cfr. Bottero, *Frederick Kiesler. Arte, architettura, ambiente*, 29.

83 *André Bloc* (Boulogne: *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, 1967), 55, 133. Rispetto all'abitare e al vivere uno spazio, ben esprime un'interpretazione opposta rispetto all'*Habitacle* di Bloc questa frase di Ricci: “l'architecture c'est une sculpture à vivre”. Vedi Ricci, “L'uomo Michelucci, dalla casa Valiani alla Chiesa dell'Autostrada del Sole,” 675.

84 Così definita in Gérald Gassiot-Talbot, “Les architectes de Florence,” *Aujourd'hui*, n. 53 (1966): 76. Nel numero erano ampiamente illustrate le opere di Finsterlin, Kiesler, Soleri, Hollein e Pichler. Due anni prima, nel 1964, il villaggio di Riesi era stato presentato su *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* come “architecture sculpture”. Vedi Leonardo Ricci, “Village pour une communauté nouvelle, Riesi, Sicilia,” *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 34, n. 115 (giu.-lug. 1964): 86-89.

85 Sul tema si veda Kepes, *The Man-Made Object*.

espressionista o neoplastica od organica? E la risposta è semplice: "non è classificabile o per lo meno dovremmo inventare una categoria nuova". Perché se è vero che fra quelle elencate certo la più vicina è la forma organica, è anche vero che la chiesa di Michelucci da esse si differenzia per l'intervento di alcuni coefficienti non presenti in essa. Prima di tutto il coefficiente latino della volontà dell'uomo di costruire e di misurarsi con la natura anziché divenirne soltanto partecipe. In secondo luogo una volontà di pensiero più precisa rispetto all'esistenza. In conclusione, una forma a contatto dell'uomo più che della natura soltanto. E poiché a me sta a cuore la parola esistenziale, in quanto essa permette una significazione più completa e relazionata all'uomo, mentre la parola organico potrebbe attribuirsi a qualsiasi architettura, fatta magari non dall'uomo e su un altro pianeta, poiché questa architettura di Michelucci partecipa proprio di questo moderno valore di relazione tra l'uomo e le cose, io definirei questa architettura e questa forma "esistenziali" e, secondo il mio modo di vedere le cose, è il massimo tributo che posso dare a Michelucci per questa opera.⁸⁶

Questa "categoria nuova" per una forma per sua natura inclassificabile, è la *forma esistenziale* che sembra accomunare l'opera di Ricci a quella di Kiesler e di Michelucci. Questa denominazione, che per Ricci sembra trovare riferimento anche nel pensiero di Enzo Paci tracciato nel suo *Dall'esistenzialismo al relazionismo* (1957) e nel *Diario fenomenologico* (1961) pubblicato appena prima dell'*Anonymous*, rifugge da ogni etichetta storiografica e da ogni ulteriore tentativo di precisazione e definizione univoca: è il frutto di un approccio personale che ambisce a tenere insieme l'eredità di questi maestri e quella dell'espressionismo – e di Finsterlin in particolare – e che si coagula in tre opere antesignane rispetto all'allestimento di Montréal: il progetto non realizzato per l'Ecclesia di Riesi (1962), l'allestimento della mostra sull'Espressionismo (1964) e lo Spazio vivibile per due persone allestito alla mostra La casa abitata (1965), entrambe tenutesi a palazzo Strozzi.

5. Contro la forma della civiltà meccanica

È in un testo di presentazione sul progetto per Riesi, pubblicato nel 1963 su *Domus*, che Ricci esprime il processo che lo ha portato a modellare queste "forme ancora insolite".⁸⁷ La preoccupazione principale dell'autore è quella di rifiutare ogni etichetta critica e di concepire uno spazio libero, modificabile, impreciso, vivo, alternativo a quelli prodotti dalla meccanizzazione del processo costruttivo: in questa dimensione utopica alternativa al determinismo della società del miracolo economico, Ricci ritrova l'identità

86 Ricci, "L'uomo Michelucci, dalla casa Valiani alla Chiesa dell'Autostrada del Sole," 676-677. Il rifiuto di un'etichetta "organica" a proposito della sua architettura era espresso anche dallo stesso Michelucci. Vedi *Giovanni Michelucci*, a cura di Franco Borsi (Firenze: LEF, 1966), 127-130.

87 Leonardo Ricci, "Nascita di un villaggio per una nuova comunità in Sicilia," in *Domus*, n. 409 (dic. 1963): 5.



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dell'uomo moderno. "Riguardo alla 'forma' architettonica," egli scrive "nessun problema speciale. Ho cercato di fare come sempre, un'architettura che stia su quella terra, non drogata ma essenziale, anche se spinta al massimo dell'avventura moderna dell'uomo":⁸⁸ "desideriamo", egli proseguiva, "che questa gente dimenticata dalla civiltà si incammini verso un altro tipo di civiltà, non quella attuale, meccanica, che sta distruggendo la nostra vita".⁸⁹ La tensione utopica – insieme al tema dell'organicità del cristallo – sembra richiamare quello dei progetti espressionisti che, nel corso di quei mesi, egli doveva avere sottomano progettando l'allestimento della mostra fiorentina. Se da un lato questa tensione venne declinato nel contesto specifico di Riesi, dall'altro diventerà tratto distintivo di molta sua architettura. [fig. 21]

Riguardo alle questioni legate alla modellazione dello spazio, l'insofferenza di Ricci ad ogni definizione è sempre riconoscibile. Nel testo, per esempio, si ritrovano richiami – che a ben leggere sembrano più prese di distanza – al lavoro di Bloc la cui definizione è per Ricci occasione di insoddisfazione: "Nella sommarietà e bellezze degli schizzi-idee, queste forme ancora insolite – che appaiono quasi 'sculture da abitare', e come tali risolte solo come un problema formale (anzi informale, come oggi si usa definire queste espressioni per non cercar di comprenderle)". Il rifiutare ogni definizione della sua

Fig. 21

Il modello dell'Ecclesia di Monte degli Ulivi fotografato con lo sfondo delle colline di Fiesole. Da *Edilizia moderna*, nos. 82-83 (1963).

Fig. 22

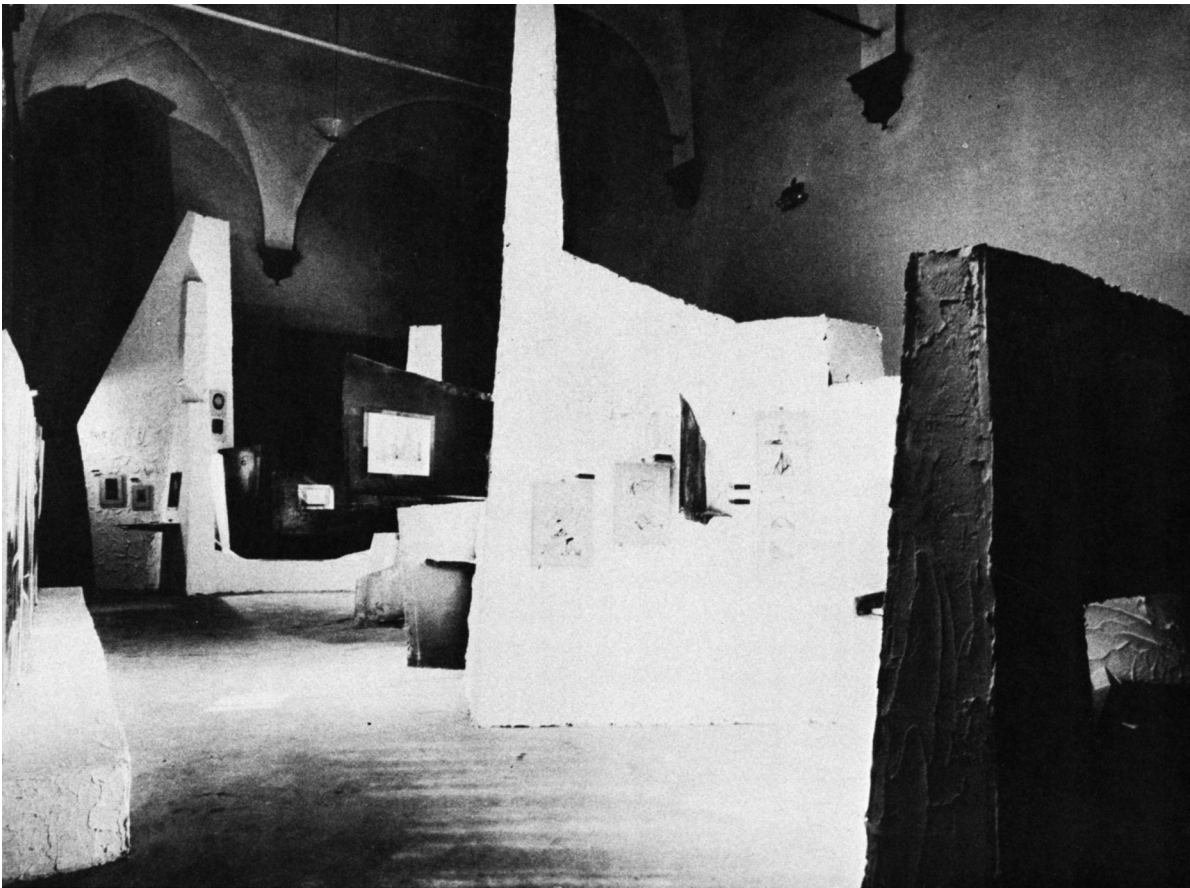
L'allestimento della mostra sull'Espressionismo tenutasi a palazzo Strozzi, 1964. Da *Marcatré 8-9-10* (1964).

Fig. 23

Lo "Spazio vivibile per due persone" realizzato in occasione della mostra "La casa abitata" tenutasi a palazzo Strozzi, 1965. Da *La casa abitata*, catalogo della mostra, 1965.

88 Leonardo Ricci, "Nascita di un villaggio per una nuova comunità": 6.

89 Leonardo Ricci, "Nascita di un villaggio per una nuova comunità": 10. Le stesse affermazioni verranno argomentate da Ricci a proposito del padiglione di Montréal. Vedi: Wanda Lattes, "Il padiglione italiano alla Expo di Montréal," *La Nazione*, 26 apr. 1967.



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– come dell'altrui – architettura, se non come “fatto d'arte spontaneo, libera da schemi prestabiliti, volta a suggerire un nuovo modo di vita” rende quasi impossibile qualsiasi forma di classificazione delle sue opere:

Già molti anni fa, da alcuni critici io fui catalogato come “brutalista”. Oggi l'unico architetto italiano “informale”. Poiché considero le correnti del brutalismo e dell'informale non solo conseguenti fra loro, ma anche le più vitali del nostro tempo, in fondo dovrei sentirmi soddisfatto. Ma non è così. È vero che brutalismo ed informale hanno rotto gli schemi accademici del razionalismo e dell'astrattismo geometrico, riportando l'artista sul piano del mistero, della libertà creativa, della fantasia, aprendo nuove possibilità espressive e linguistiche. Ma io avverto che la mia posizione umana, il mio impegno intellettuale sono diversi. Io non sono in posizione anarchica, talvolta confinante con l'arbitrario e gratuito ed antistorico di certi movimenti neo-dadaisti. Al contrario mi sento al servizio dell'uomo tanto da dare all'uomo possibilità di esistenza. La mia forma non si sviluppa al di fuori di un contenuto agendo in se stessa e di per se stessa, come ad esempio nella pittura di azione, di gesto. Ho distrutto, certo, e cerco di distruggere gli schemi, i moduli accademici, artificiali, non coerenti né con la materia né con il pensiero antiidealista dell'uomo d'oggi, che sono alla base di quasi tutta la architettura cosiddetta moderna. Ma questo solo per amore di verità e realtà. Non è certo il desiderio di ritorno a forme arcaiche, preistoriche, “incivili” come dice lo Zevi, che spinge, ma proprio il contrario. Sento che lo spazio in cui io e gli altri possiamo muoverci a nostro agio non è quello morto, statico, incapsulato dentro gli schemi formalistici dei moduli. Quello spazio è veramente antico. Appartiene ancora ad una terra bidimensionale che tenta la terza dimensione sempre con la bidimensionalità. Ma allora un tempio greco dovrebbe essere ancora il nostro ideale e la nostra aspirazione [...]. Una struttura nasce dalla terra ed assume la sua forma precisa in funzione della vita che noi vogliamo svolgere, dello spazio che permette quella vita, della materia che adoperiamo. Allora cosa è la forma? Non certo quella a priori, di facciate contenenti spazi non qualificati e non qualificabili, ancora concezione ottocentesca dell'oggetto visto come “taglio”, quadretto di paesaggio o facciata in prospettiva non fa differenza. La forma in architettura non può essere che la conseguenza naturale, logica, di un pensiero che si fa spazio, plasmato da una struttura coerente nel materiale. Non è una visione a priori, non una scelta volontaria, ma solo realtà diventata atto. Le forme che così nascono, certo sembrano naturali, quasi non fatte dall'uomo ma prodotte da se stesse. Ma tali forme non sono per niente casuali o gratuite. Tutto il contrario.⁹⁰

L'ambizione a realizzare una forma che scaturisce dalla natura e dalla realtà – e non a ricalcare un'operazione un po' superficiale e a *la page* come dirà Zevi

90 Questa e la precedente da Leonardo Ricci, “Nascita di un villaggio per una nuova comunità”: 6-8.

Fig. 24

Il modello dello Spazio vivibile per due persone realizzato in occasione della mostra “La casa abitata” tenutasi a palazzo Strozzi, 1965. Da *La casa abitata*, catalogo della mostra, 1965.

qualche anno dopo a proposito delle esperienze francesi promosse da *L'architecture d'Aujourd'hui*⁹¹ – definisce gli spazi del villaggio di Riesi planimetricamente sviluppati attorno a nuclei delimitati da curvi muri che, tridimensionalmente, si articolano nello spazio in altre *forme senza fine*; l'ambizione di generare una forma naturale è evidente nelle fotografie del modello pubblicate nell'articolo di *Domus* nelle quali i volumi bruni dell'architettura immaginata, quasi come fossero scaturiti dalla rocciosa superficie della sommità di un muro di pietra, si integrano con quelli delle verdi colline di Fiesole, in contrappunto con il profilo euclideo del convento di San Francesco.



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Se, almeno sotto un profilo formale e spaziale, l'esperienza di Riesi è iniziatrice di questa ricerca, il quasi contemporaneo lavoro per l'allestimento della mostra sull'Espressionismo ne fu una prima occasione di parziale realizzazione [fig. 22]. A Ricci e ai suoi collaboratori la mostra offrì l'opportunità di "diverti[rsi]" non nel senso del 'gusto', ma divertiti a vivere questa avventura espressionista come se fosse nostra, come se fossimo noi gli artisti che hanno fatto le opere e desiderano uno spazio adatto ad esse". Questa immedesimazione, frutto del desiderio di "vivere a contatto con l'opera" in una quotidianità nella quale l'opera d'arte veniva demitizzata e resa domestica e intesa come "opera dell'uomo e non di semidei" si riflette nella scelta delle forme e degli spazi dell'allestimento: "una specie di scultura continua dentro le stanze del palazzo, con spazio a sé stante ed autonomo, che possa veramente contenere il mondo espressionista. Una scultura che permette un viaggio attraverso l'espressionismo dove i singoli artisti possono raccontare la loro 'storia' personale e la loro storia collettiva"⁹² ovvero un'unica scultura espressionista composta da opere esposte e allestimento – una "scultura plurima"⁹³ secondo Zevi – capace di rendere viva e reale l'esperienza della visita. Al di là delle modalità con le quali in quegli anni si concepiva il tema dell'allestimento museografico e delle critiche che quello di Firenze raccolse⁹⁴ – nel 1964, si ricorda, a titolo di esempio, che si tenne a Roma la Mostra critica delle opere michelangiottesche, molto distante da quella fiorentina come esito formale ma non altrettanto dalle temperie culturali che le provocarono – è importante notare come per Ricci questa immedesimazione

91 Bruno Zevi, "Sculpture à habiter. In Francia si torna alle caverne," *L'Espresso* (28 ago. 1966), rip. in Id., *Cronache di architettura*, vol. VI (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1970).

92 Questa e le precedenti da "Risponde Leonardo Ricci," *Marcatré* 2, n. 8-9-10 (1964): 55-56.

93 Bruno Zevi, "Mostra dell'espressionismo. Temporalità antilessicale e sdegno materico," *L'Espresso* (31 mag. 1964), rip. in Id., *Cronache di architettura*, vol. V (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1971).

94 Nello Ponente, "L'allestimento della mostra sull'espressionismo," *Marcatré* 2, n. 8-9-10 (1964): 53-55.



FEDERAL PHOTOS | 25



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Figg. 25-26
L'allestimento del settore del Costume progettato da Ricci nel padiglione italiano, 1967. Federal Photos. Casa Studio Ricci - Monterinaldi (FI).

con l'espressionismo corrispondesse, da un lato, alla sua ricerca autoriale e, dall'altro, al desiderio di intendere l'alterità e la comunità nella prospettiva di una nuova società fondata sulla "partecipazione universale".⁹⁵

Lo scabro e zigzagante sperone roccioso che attraversava le rinascimentali sale di palazzo Strozzi prelude allo Spazio vivibile per due persone realizzato in occasione della mostra, sempre tenutasi a Palazzo Strozzi, "La casa abitata" nel 1965 [figg. 23-24]. Anche in questa occasione, nella prospettiva di un "architettura 'continua' che si doveva svolgere alla scala dell'intera 'città terra' grazie a una 'formatività aperta'" che non doveva "provocare nessuna separazione fra gli atti delle nostre giornate"⁹⁶ e, anzi, doveva assecondare una nuova società nomade – qui, come in molti altri testi di Ricci di quegli anni sono fortissime le assonanze con quelli che di lì a pochi mesi inizieranno a scrivere gli architetti radicali fiorentini – veniva realizzato uno spazio domestico i cui caratteri affondavano le radici nella genealogia appena ripercorsa [figg. 25-26]. Mediante "uno spazio naturalistico-espressionista"⁹⁷ che proponeva una "alternativa"⁹⁸ all'interpretazione tecnica dell'architettura allora corrente basata su standards e calcoli, Ricci sembrava elaborare una spazialità concreta capace di tenere insieme il *mondo della vita* e l'architettura dalla scala della megastruttura a quella del più minuto allestimento: espressione di motivi, resa dall'occasione della realizzazione ancora più stridente rispetto alla pratica corrente, che si concretizzerà, dall'altro capo del mondo, pochi anni dopo, proprio nello spazio "esistenziale relazionale"⁹⁹ di Montréal, esito massimo di questa formatività, espressione di fantasia e di utopia.

95 Leonardo Ricci, "Confessione," *Architetti*, n. 3 (1950)

96 Questa e la precedente sono riportate in "La casa abitata. Arredamenti di quindici architetti italiani, in mostra a Firenze, Palazzo Strozzi, dal 6 marzo al 2 maggio," *Domus*, n. 426 (mag. 1965).

97 Lara Vinca Masini, "Mostra della casa abitata a Firenze," *Marcatré* 3, n. 16-17-18 (1965): 215.

98 Così viene definito da Zevi in "Monte degli Ulivi a Riesi. Il kibbutz nei feudi della mafia," *L'Espresso* (14 lug. 1963), rip. in Id., *Cronache di architettura*, vol. V (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1971).

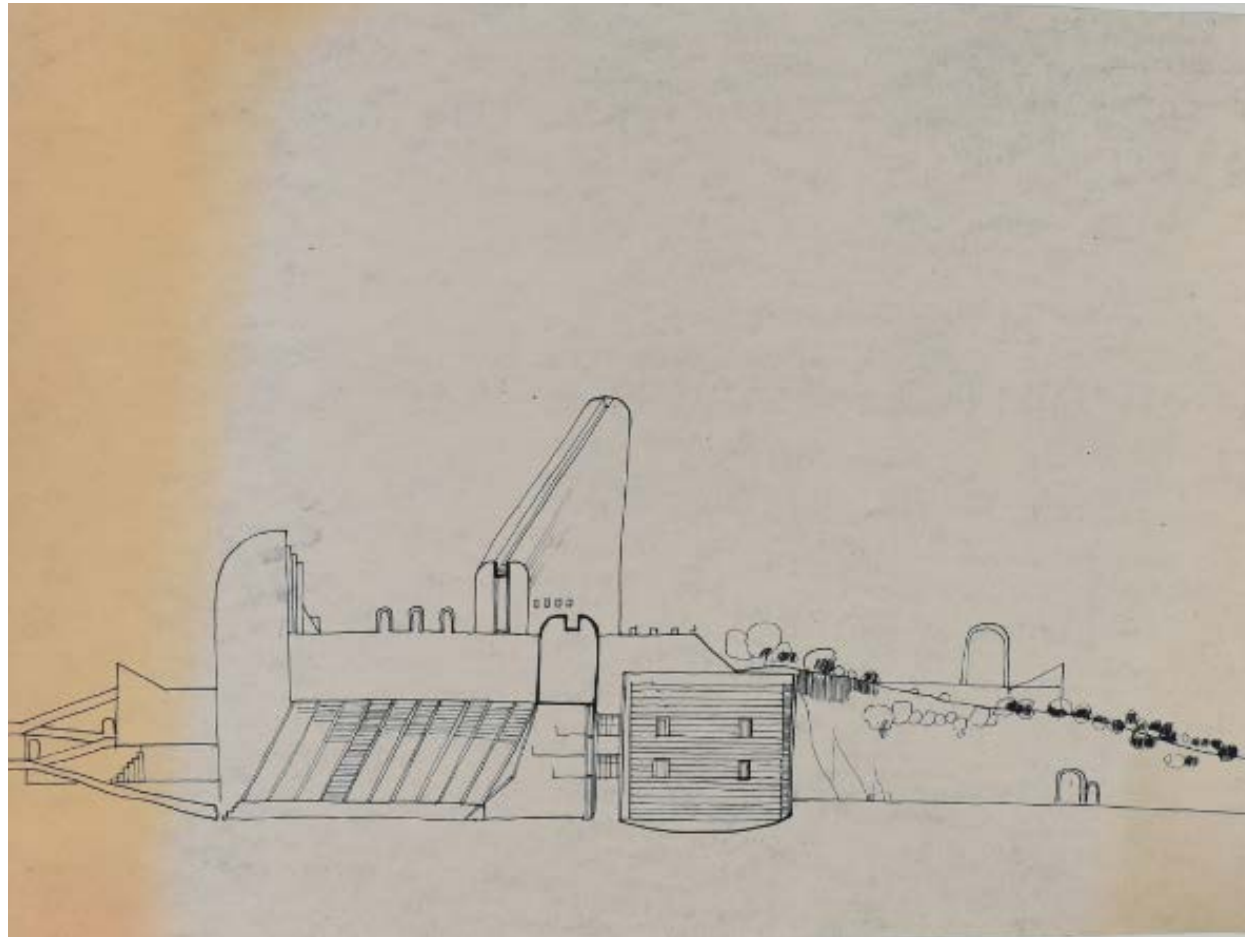
99 Ricci, "Progetto per il villaggio Monte degli Ulivi a Riesi, Sicilia," 118.

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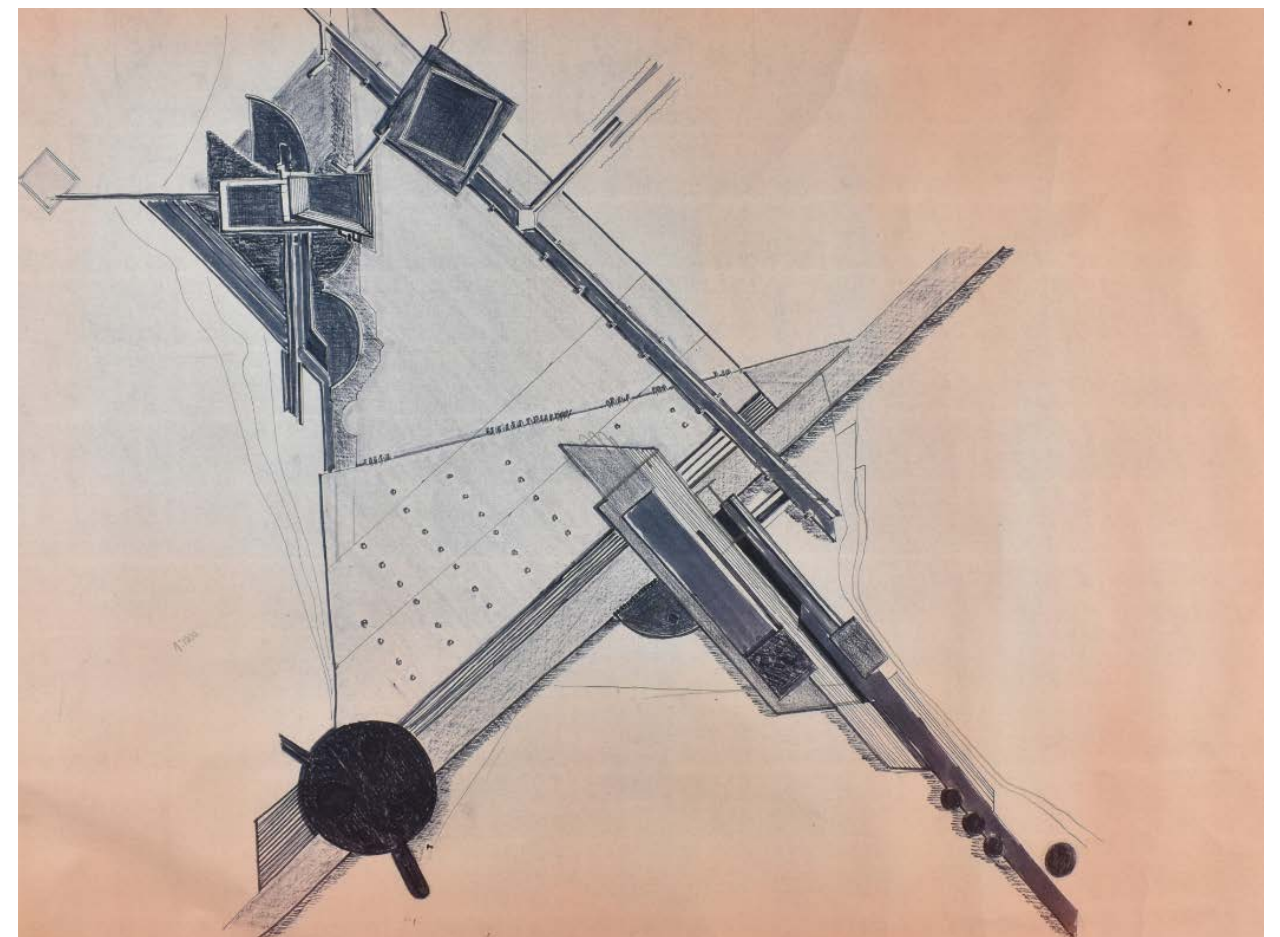
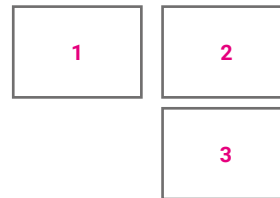
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Directional Center of Florence

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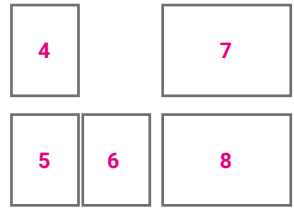
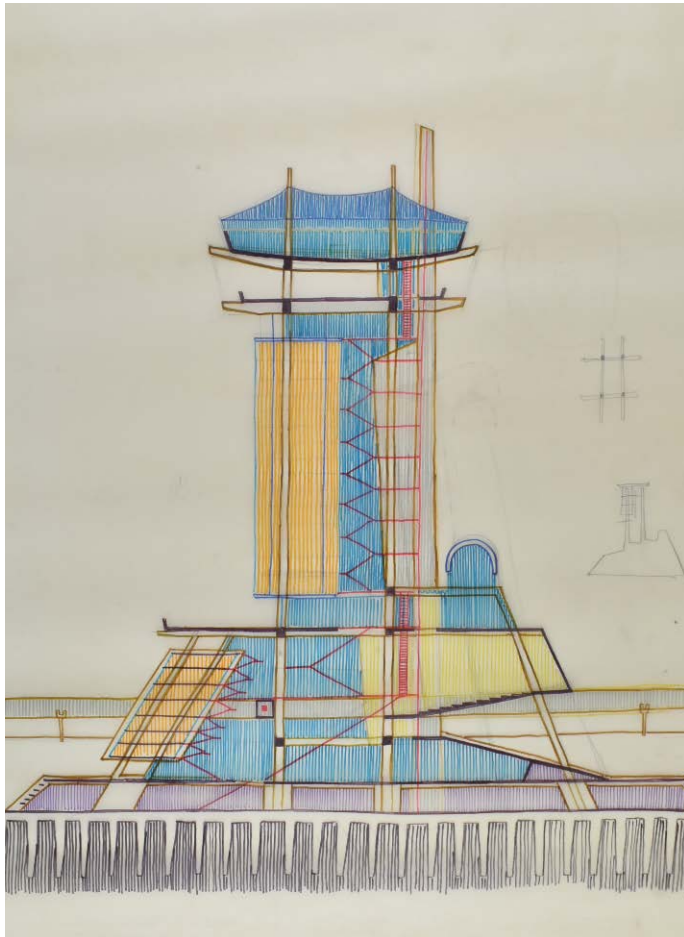
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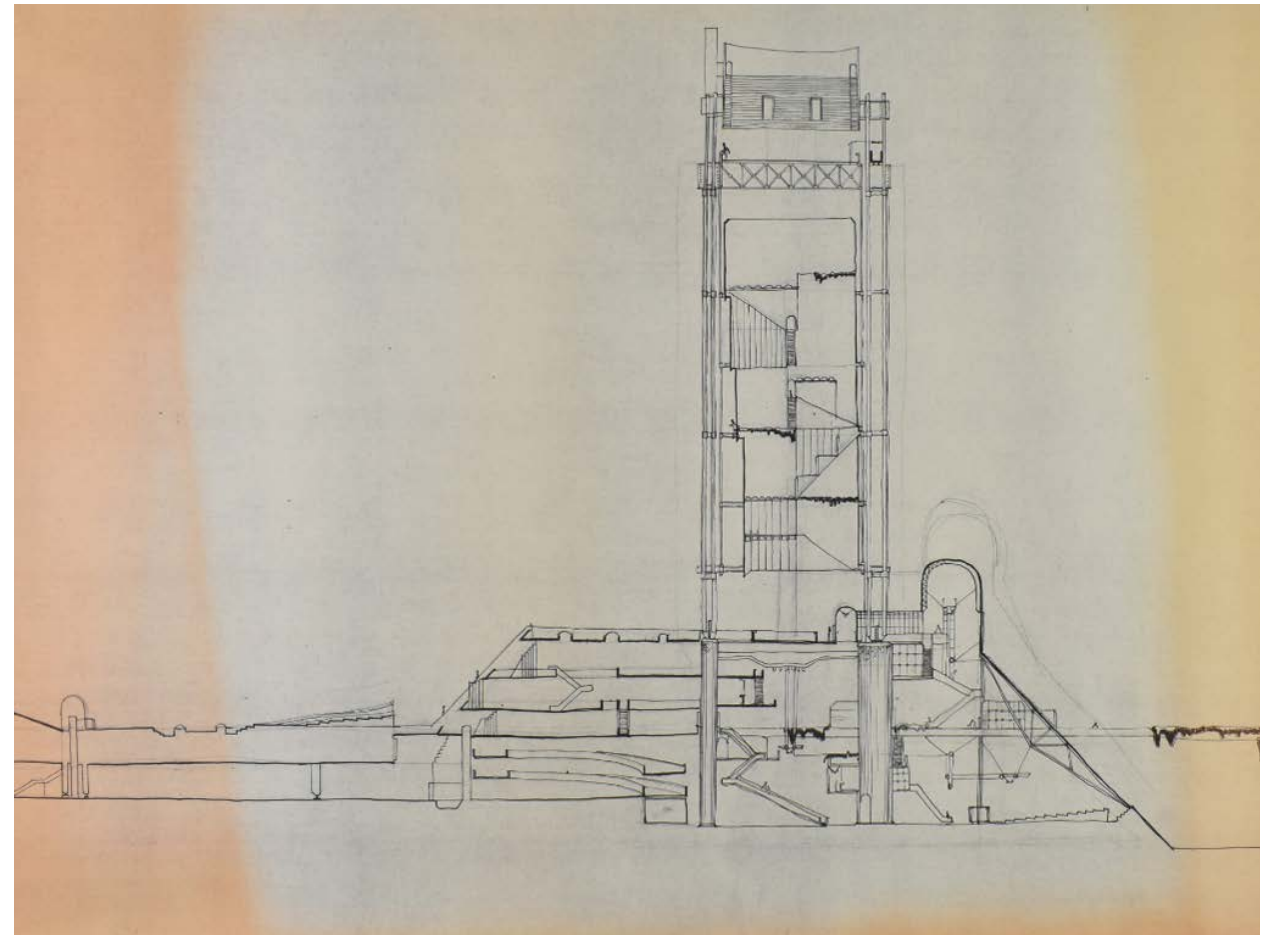
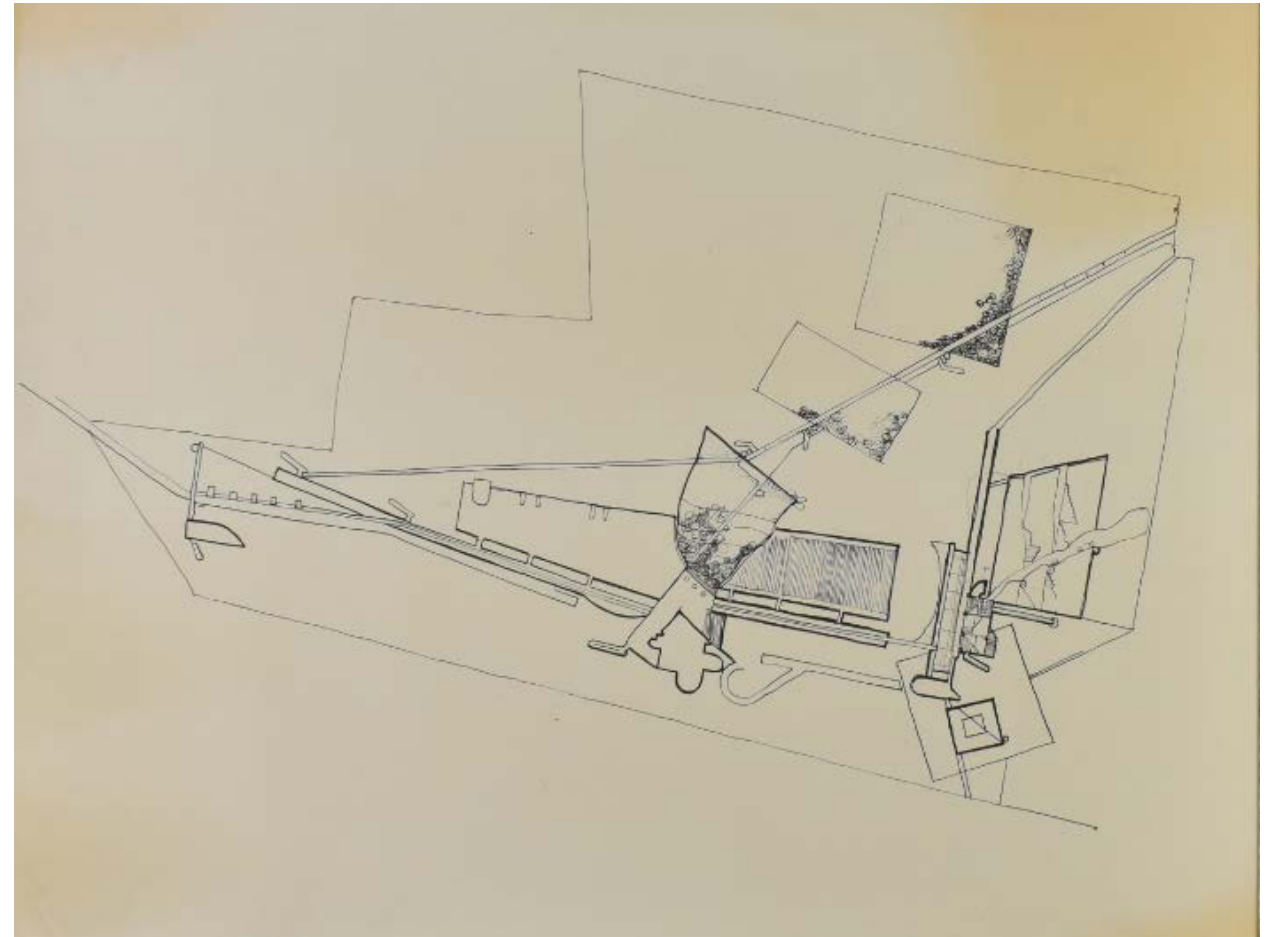
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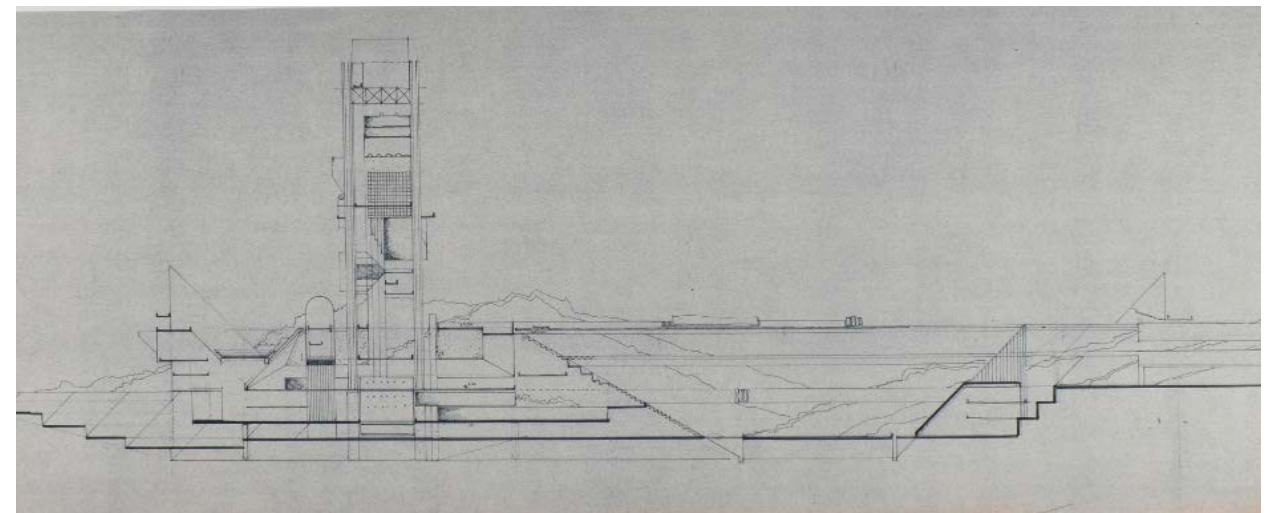
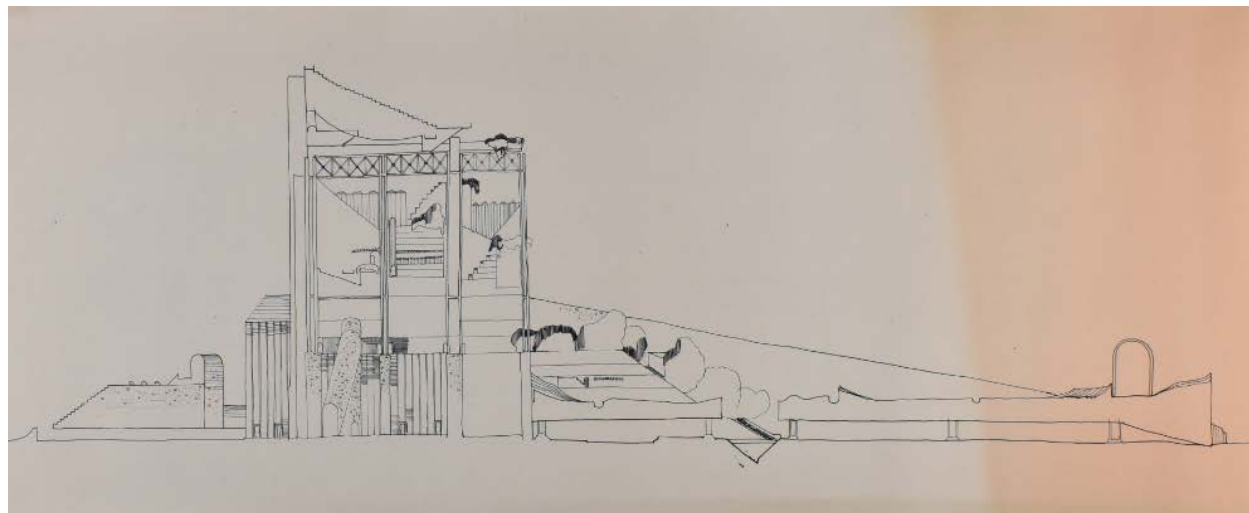
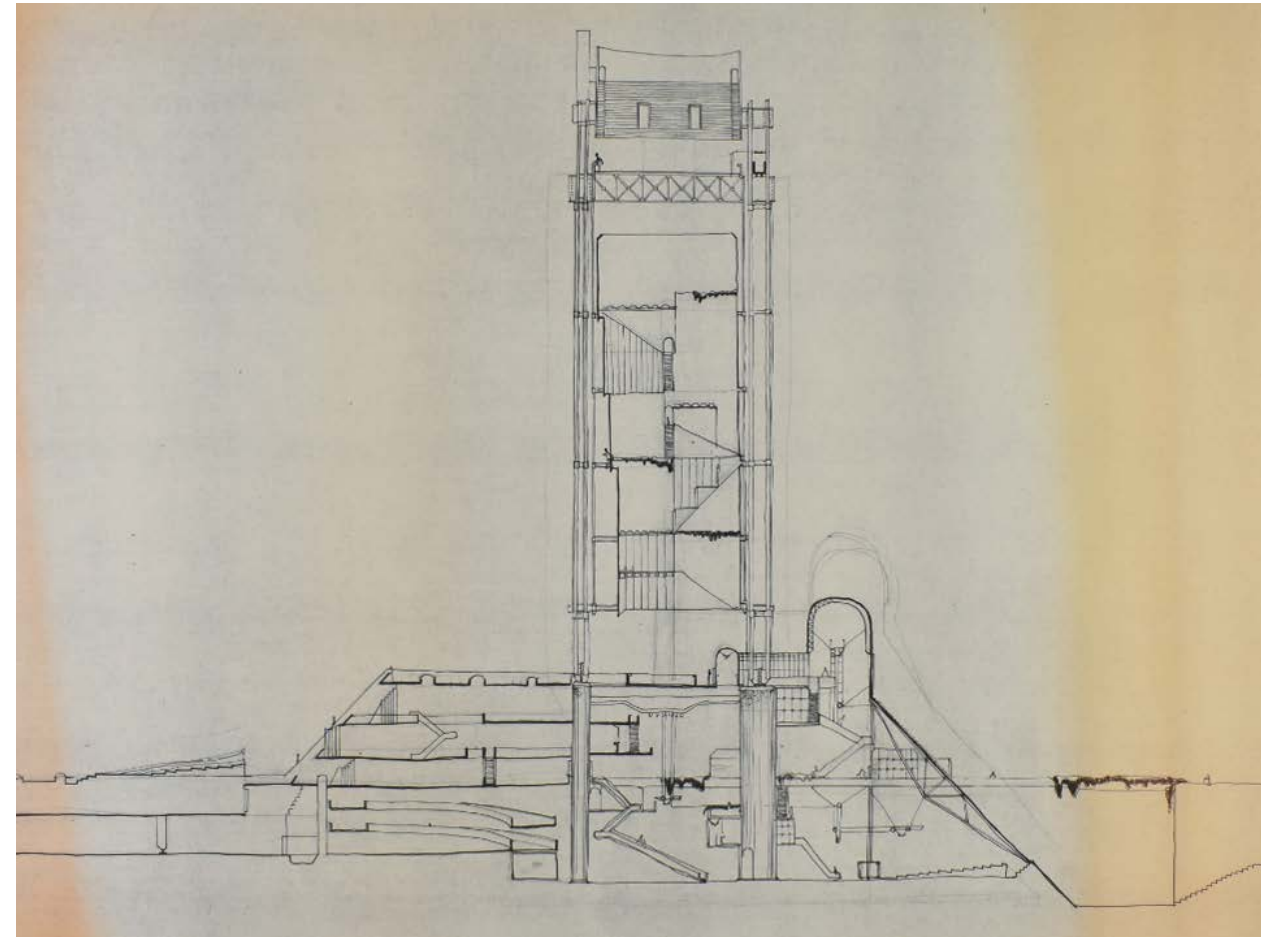
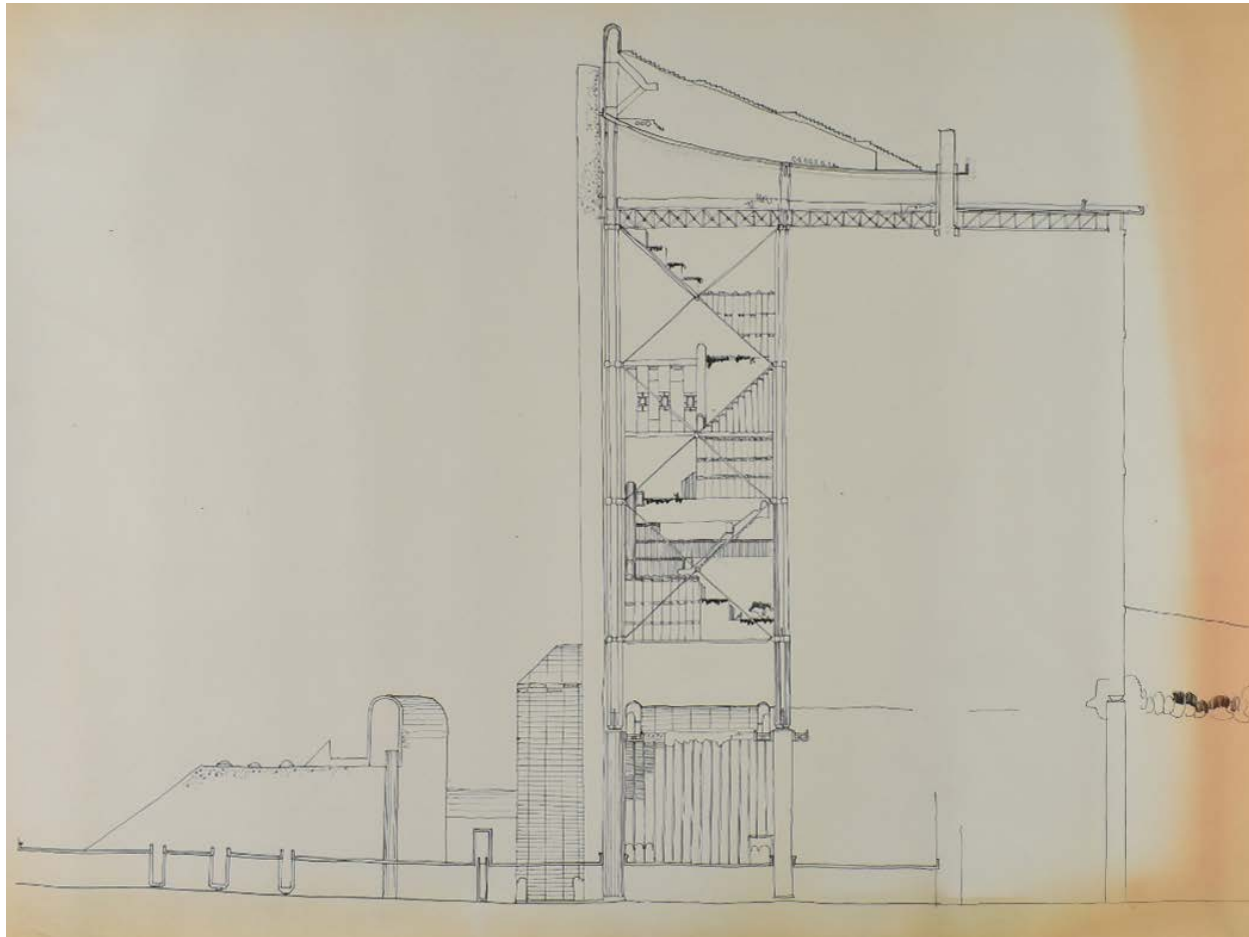
C. Vasić Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto "esistenzialista"* (Firenze: Edifir, 2005), 44; S. Berselli, "Fino al 26 Maggio a Firenze Una Mostra Presenta, Con Materiali in Gran Parte Inediti, Le Opere Dell'architetto Che Amava Definirsi Un 'Anonimo Del XX Secolo'", *Il Giornale Dell'Architettura*, April 24, 2019; M. C. Ghia, *La nostra città è tutta la Terra. Leonardo Ricci architetto (1918-1994)*, Wuppertal: Steinhauser Verlag, 2021, 250-253.

IMG.1: Project for the Directional Center of Florence, elevation, heliographic copy, CSR; IMG.2: sketch of the plan, watercolors, CSR; IMG.3: general plan, heliographic copy, CSR.



IMG.4-5-6: Project for the Directional Center of Florence, elevations, sketches, watercolors, CSR; IMG.7: scheme of the plan, heliographic copy, CSR; IMG.8: elevation, heliographic copy, CSR.





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IMG.9-10-11: Project Florence Directional Center, section-elevations, heliographic copies, CSR; IMG.12: road section, heliographic copy, CSR.

Leonardo Ricci's Palace of Justice in Florence. A Desolate Fragment of an Urban Ideal (1987-1994)

Leonardo Ricci, Palace of Justice, Novoli, Florence, Giovanni Michelucci

/Abstract

The paper traces the political and design events that led the city of Florence and FIAT to involve numerous architects in 1985 for the construction of a new district on the area owned by the car manufacturer. In addition to various office and commercial buildings, the city's Palace of Justice would also be built here. Coordinated by Lawrence Halprin and Bruno Zevi, the architects - Leonardo Ricci, Ralph Erskine, Roberto Gabetti and Aimaro Isola, Luigi Pellegrin, Aldo Loris Rossi, Richard Rogers, Walter Di Salvo, Iginio Cappai and Pietro Mainardis, Gunnar Birkerts and Piero Paoli - drew up an urban plan for the area during three workshops (1987-1988). Leonardo Ricci (initially accompanied by Giovanni Michelucci) is responsible for the design of the Palace of Justice, which will be the only building constructed in the district. Using unpublished documentation, the paper focuses on the purely political reasons why the neighbourhood could not be realised, leaving Ricci's building as a desolate fragment of an urban ideal.

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In Genoa, there are the *Lavatrici* (designed by Aldo Luigi Rizzo, 1980) and the *Biscione* (*Quartiere INA-Casa di Forte Quezzi*, designed by Luigi Daneri, 1956); in Bologna, there is the *Virgolone* (in the Pilastro neighbourhood suburb, 1975); in Turin, there is the *Fetta di Polenta*¹ (*Scaccabarozzi House*, by Alessandro Antonelli, 1840). The list may go on and on. There are some nicknames, which are not always affectionate, given by citizens to some of the buildings of their cities, which are fitting to the point of becoming their actual names, despite any institutional attempt to erase them. In Florence, there is *Gotham City* – that is, the Palace of Justice designed by Leonardo Ricci, and built after his death between 1999 and 2012, thanks to the collaboration of his wife Mariagrazia Dallerba and his son, Andrea Ricci.

In order to understand the origins of this particular building, which stands out from the plain of the Tuscan regional capital, it is necessary to retrace the political and urban events which led to the creation of the building on that site, and in that shape. The Palace of Justice is located in Novoli, in a northwest area of Florence's old town, which – after Leon Krier's urban plan and its following variations² – to this day, is still missing its author. Yet, the area has attractions that draw citizens from other areas of Florence – suffice to say that many university buildings can be found here – while, until the early 1990s, this was a still very peripheral area, with a strong industrial character and defined by low-quality constructions. This was due to the allotments of the 1960s and to a wide plot of land which belonged to Fiat (700 meters by about 400 meters), where they built a factory between 1938 and 1939.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Novoli was the hub of many urban plans which considered the expansion of Florence towards Prato and Pistoia; hence, towards the northeast. The urban planning councilor of the city of Florence from 1961 to 1965, Edoardo Detti, played a leading role in these proposals: at first, in 1951, with an outline sketch that never turned into an urban plan³; later on, in 1962, by drafting a town planning scheme, which was characterized by a long interchange that should have connected the eastern area of Florence to the western one, linking Fortezza da Basso with a new business area, called “the Harbour”, to Castello, to the north-west of Novoli⁴. This area had already been included in the previous general town development plan of 1958, drawn up by Giovanni Michelucci, which consisted in grouping a series of tertiary functions, with the aim of decentralizing some of these from Florence urban nucleus, and of creating a point of convergence between Florence and its western hinterland. Later on, because of several objections, Detti's plan faced many difficulties

1 Respectively: 'washing machines', 'big snake', 'big comma' and 'polenta slice'.

2 Comune di Firenze, Assessorato all'urbanistica, *Piano guida per il recupero urbano di Novoli* (Firenze: Comune di Firenze, 1994); “Novoli. La nuova architettura italiana a Firenze,” annexed to *Casabella*, no. 703 (2002): 3-13.

3 Detti worked on this urban planning study together with Lando Bartoli, Sirio Pastorini, Giuseppe Sagrestani e Leonardo Savioli. See Leonardo Savioli, “Il nuovo piano regolatore,” *Urbanistica*, no. 12 (1953): 81-96; Edoardo Detti, “Dilemma del futuro di Firenze,” *Critica d'Arte*, no. 2 (1954): 161-77; Mariella Zoppi, *Firenze e l'urbanistica: la ricerca del piano* (Roma: Edizioni delle autonomie, 1982), 29-37.

4 Federico Paolini, *Firenze 1946-2005. Una storia urbana e ambientale* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2014), 62-84. About the 1958 PRG, see also: Augusto Boggiano, Riccardo Foresi, Paolo Sica, and Mariella Zoppi, *Firenze: la questione urbanistica. Scritti e contributi 1945-1975* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1982), 216-255.

before it was approved (only in 1966) by the Ministry and, actually, it has never been put into practice⁵. However, a common thread followed up on the long-wished-for east-west interchange, the keystone of that plan, which links many of Florence urban enterprises of the 1960s and 1970s that were born from different political colors: first, the attempt to draw up a final inter-municipal Florentine plan (1971-1978)⁶ –an idea which was already present in Detti’s plan–, and, later on, the National Competition for the Business Area (1976), just north of Novoli⁷. Neither of the proposals was successful.

It was also the wish to act on the guidelines of the 1962 general town development plan which, in the early 1980s, pushed the city hall to contact Fiat with the purpose of proposing that they used a part of their thirty-two hectares in Novoli to build the Palace of Justice⁸. Florence did not have one, and for some years the various town councils had been looking for an area on which to construct a building that could gather together all the numerous court offices of the city, which had always been located unevenly in many different buildings of the old town. The new Palace of Justice operation began in 1984, after Italian cities had been granted public funds by a financial law that was approved by the Italian government in 1981. These funds were specifically destined for the reorganization of the spaces that were necessary for justice⁹. Led by republican mayor Lando Conti, the council, made up of five parties, commissioned a feasibility study to a private company, in order to examine the funding procedures and the consequent ways in which to apply them¹⁰. The council’s intention to build the Palace in Novoli was greatly welcomed by Fiat, who seized the favorable opportunity and articulated a reply in which their industrial reconversion and decentralization plans –at that same time, Fiat was interrupting the production activity in many other branches, such as the Lingotto¹¹– embraced the offer of the council and that of other property investments. Fiat would demolish their factories in Novoli to build a new one in a nearby town of the plain (Campi Bisenzio); they would sell the area destined for the Palace of Justice to the city, provided that on the remaining part of their thirty-two hectares the council would construct buildings which had the same

5 On the 1962 PRG, see: Edoardo Detti, “Il faticoso salvataggio di Firenze,” *Urbanistica*, no. 39 (1963): 75-86; Zoppi, *Firenze e l’urbanistica*, 79-111; Boggiano, Foresi, Sica and Zoppi, *Firenze: la questione urbanistica*, 257-347; Raimondo Innocenti, “Il piano regolatore di Firenze 1962,” in *Edoardo Detti. Architetto e urbanista 1913-1984*, ed. Caterina Lisini and Francesca Mugnai (Reggio Emilia: Diabasis, 2013), 74-9; Paolini, *Firenze 1946-2005*, 70-109.

6 Giuseppe De Luca, “Lo Schema strutturale per l’area metropolitana Firenze-Prato-Pistoia,” in *La ragione del piano. Giovanni Astengo e l’urbanistica italiana*, ed. Francesco Indovina (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 1991), 121-44.

7 For more details see: Francesco Bandini (ed.), *Progetti per l’area direzionale di Firenze: concorso nazionale per la progettazione planivolumetrica di un’area direzionale situata sul territorio fiorentino all’interno dell’area centrale metropolitana* (Firenze: Assessorato all’Urbanistica del Comune di Firenze, 1978).

8 From the beginning of the 1970s onwards, the debate on the area in which to locate the Palace of Justice was particularly heated. In February 1975, the area of the former slaughterhouses and the Centrale del Latte was identified, followed by the land occupied by the former San Salvi mental hospital, then Via Canova and, finally, Novoli. For specific details see: Stefano Lambardi, “Leonardo Ricci: il Palazzo di giustizia di Firenze” (PhD diss., University of Florence, 2006), 171-173.

9 Law No 119 of 30 March 1981, Art. 18, accessed November 27, 2021, https://www.rgs.mef.gov.it/_Documenti/VERSIONE-I/Attivit-i/Contabilit_e_finanza_pubblica/Archivio-d/Finanziari/1981/LF1981.pdf.

10 Archivio Storico Comunale di Firenze (ASCF), Register of council resolutions, session of 20 January 1984. Session no. 711/218. The Municipality of Florence assigns a feasibility study to the company Edilpro.

11 Francesca Castagneto, *Fiat-Lingotto a Torino: Renzo Piano* (Firenze: Alinea, 1999).

volume of their factories, and which would be destined for both private and public tertiary activities, as well as for their own sales office¹².

Recalling the concepts of Detti's general town development plan —specifically, the prevalence of tertiary activities in the western area of the city—, in order to facilitate the Fiat operation and accommodate the interests of the most important Florentine insurance company, La Fondiaria, which owned one hundred and eighty hectares in Castello (which also was an area to the west of the old town¹³), on the 26th of March 1985, the council adopted a variation of Detti's town development plan —that is, the variation of the town development plan to the north-western area for the realization of the new business area—, which would be realized through the drawing up of two detailed development plans, one for each area¹⁴. In this way, the town council and the two private titans exposed themselves to the criticism of both the citizens and politicians belonging to opposition parties, who viewed them as the 'cementers' of the city. However, the security linked to the continuation of the development line preconized by Detti minimized the impact of the complaints: no one could claim that the variation of Novoli (as well as that of Castello) was defying the 'sacred' indications of the general town development plan of 1962. It was in this way that the necessary conditions of the planning of a complete renovation of the Fiat and Novoli areas, and therefore the birth of the design for the Palace of Justice¹⁵, were achieved: from an industrial area to a region dedicated to public and private tertiary activities, to a business and residential area. In December 1984, the council appointed Bruno Zevi to supervise the detailed development plan for Novoli¹⁶. That was not the first time that Zevi had something to do with Florence: after the Second World War, thanks to his friendship with Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti, the Roman critic came very close to winning the post of history of architecture at Florence University and promoted the exhibition of Frank Lloyd Wright which was held in 1951 at Palazzo Strozzi¹⁷.

In the meantime, however, the preliminary design of the new general town development plan was being defined and presented at the city hall. It was the result of the work of a group of urban planners involved with the socialist and communist environment, who had been the council's consultants since 1982 —, among whom were Detti's dear friends, Giovanni Astengo and Giuseppe

12 Mario Lupano, "Firenze: un avvenire urbanettonico dietro le spalle," *Domus*, no. 695 (1988): 4.

13 In addition to Novoli, the variant also concerns the Castello area (two hundred hectares of green agricultural land, near Peretola airport), which Fondiaria Assicurazioni plans to transform into a residential district for about 14,000 inhabitants. For specific details see: Lupano, "Firenze: un avvenire urbanettonico dietro le spalle", 4; Raimondo Innocenti, "Il piano di recupero per l'area ex Fiat di Novoli a Firenze: il contributo di Leonardo Ricci," in *La figura e l'opera di Leonardo Ricci nel centenario della sua nascita*, ed. Paolo Caggiano and Corinna Vasić Vatovec (Pisa: ETS, 2020), 82.

14 ASCF, Register of council resolutions, session of 26 March 1985.

15 Giovanni Klaus Koenig, "Per una storia del progetto Fiat a Novoli, Firenze 1989", *Zodiac*, no. 5 (1991): 193.

16 ASCF, Register of council resolutions, session no. 8341 of 14 December 1984. Collaborating with Bruno Zevi: Luca Zevi and Sara Rossi.

17 Lorenzo Mingardi, *Contro l'analfabetismo architettonico. Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti nel dibattito culturale degli anni Cinquanta* (Lucca: Edizioni Fondazione Ragghianti, 2020), 40-41.

Campos Venuti¹⁸—, at a time when the Italian Socialist and Communist Parties (respectively PSI and PCI) still had a say in the matters of Palazzo Vecchio. Indeed, from 1983, the progressive wing of the city government had been wiped out by the ‘moral question’: the socialist president of the province of Florence, Renato Righi, was involved in the P2 Masonic lodge scandal and, in 1982, the PCI was involved in a case of suspected corruption which regarded the construction of the Sollicciano prison¹⁹.

The preliminary design of the new general town development plan defined the idea of building a business area between Novoli and Castello as obsolete²⁰. Furthermore, it formulated particularly severe predictions for the growth of the city. The town planners working on the plan intended to fight against the land rent and the uncontrolled growth in construction of the city²¹ which, starting from 1983, were by no means the first items on the agenda of a city government with such a strong Christian-democratic character. The predictions of the plan and those of the variation conflicted in many points, especially in the matter of the dimensioning and the interventions on the areas of Fiat and Fondiaria. The tensions were temporarily smoothed out when the mayoral elections of May 1985, after a long discussion between the parties, established the formation of a new left-wing council, led by socialist mayor Massimo Bogianckino, with Stefano Bassi as town planning councilor. Believing it possible to reduce the gap between the preliminary general town development plan and its variation, and viewing the proposals brought forward by the private companies (Fiat and Fondiaria) as a vital occasion, the council decided to carry out both approval procedures at the same time²².

“We will create a masterpiece”

In order to give the Novoli plan a unitary urban configuration, as suggested by Zevi, the council and Fiat thought of an ambitious project that consisted in inviting various nationally and internationally famous architects to draw up, all together and through three workshops, the architectural and urban plan of the new area. The Council and Cesare Romiti, Fiat CEO, immediately accepted Zevi’s proposal: on the other hand, the restoration of their image would certainly have a great impact and protect the car company from the accusations which, as mentioned above, had already been made by various parties, of getting an urban plan out of nowhere. What had happened a few years back (1982) in Naples was

18 The group is coordinated by architect Paolo Bettini. The members are: Marcello Berlincioni, Pierluigi Costa, Renzo Manetti, Luciano Piazza, Odoardo Reali. The general consultants are: Giovanni Astengo, Giuseppe Campos Venuti, Fernando Clemente, Paolo Maretti, Luciano Pontuale, Giuseppe Stancarelli. For specific details see: Paolini, *Firenze 1946-2005. Una storia urbana e ambientale*, 282.

19 Giorgio Morales, *Le scale consumate: politica e amministrazione a Firenze, 1965-1985* (Firenze: Ponte alle Grazie, 1989), 74-82; 96-99; 101-122.

20 Paolini, *Firenze 1946-2005. Una storia urbana e ambientale*, 282.

21 Giuseppe Campos Venuti, Pierluigi Costa, Luciano Piazza and Odoardo Reali, *Firenze. Per una urbanistica della qualità. Progetto preliminare di piano regolatore 1985* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1985), 42-43.

22 Paolini, *Firenze 1946-2005. Una storia urbana e ambientale*, 287-289.

still often discussed in the Italian debate on architectural culture: the project for the business area of Naples, designed by Kenzo Tange, had prompted the strong criticism of the public opinion, and this was due not exclusively to the fact that it was an intervention that decidedly de-semantized the character of the city²³.

The designers who would work on Novoli had not been chosen yet but, adopting Zevi's suggestion, Fiat, through its design society, Program, which was partly formed by architects and technicians of the city administration, appointed American landscape architect Lawrence Halprin to coordinate the activities of the workshop. Halprin had already been asked by Fiat to participate in the consultation for the restoration of Fiat Turin's factory, the Lingotto²⁴, two years before. Halprin's role was veritably crucial, as he did not just coordinate the design meetings but, even before choosing the architects, the city council had clearly expressed to Fiat and Zevi the necessity of the generating element of the project to be a park. This was not merely a formal choice, as it had specific political reasons. During the elections of the previous year, the Verdi (Green Party) had obtained an unhoped-for three percent of the votes and, by conquering two seats, they certainly had a stabilizing role within a council that was held together by a precarious balance and whose members had struggled before to agree on the name of the mayor and on those of the councilors. During a city council, the two Green councilors, supported by the Communists, clearly stated their wish to have a park realized in the Fiat area: "the green part of the Fiat project will have to find the immediate realization of one of its significant shares for the Novoli neighborhood".²⁵ The city council established that eighteen of the thirty-two available hectares would be destined to a public green area.²⁶ "In order to function as a real part of the city, Novoli needs greenery above all else"²⁷, confirmed Alberto Giordano, responsible for Fiat's institutional relations, after the administration's *diktat*.

As a way of introducing Halprin to Florence and allowing its citizens to get acquainted with his work, Fiat and the city hall, through the direction of the omnipresent Zevi, organized the exhibition *Changing Places. I luoghi che cambiano*²⁸ at Fortezza da Basso. On this occasion, the landscape architect showed to the scientific community and the people of Florence his first studies for Novoli, which were characterized by the presence of a 'picturesque' park in the middle

23 Giuseppe Furitano and Gian Aldo Della Rocca, *Il centro direzionale di Napoli: cronistoria tecnico-amministrativa* (Padova: Cedam, 1992).

24 Innocenti, "Il piano di recupero per l'area ex Fiat di Novoli a Firenze: il contributo di Leonardo Ricci", 83.

25 ASCF, Register of council resolutions, session of 23 September 1985. Intervention by Giovanni Bellini (PCI).

26 Lupano, "Firenze: un avvenire urbanettonico dietro le spalle", 4.

27 Intervention by Alberto Giordano (FIAT's Head of Institutional Relations). Silvia Del Pozzo, "Ti rifaccio Firenze", *Panorama*, 4 October 1987, 122.

28 Italo Castore (ed.), *Lawrence Halprin, i luoghi che cambiano, Exhibition catalogue, Florence, Fortezza da Basso, 10-21 December 1986* (Torino: ECO, 1986); Lawrence Halprin, "I luoghi che cambiano," *La Nuova Città*, no. 2 (1987): 7-11. On 10 December 1986, the Michelucci Foundation organized a debate at Palazzo dei Congressi on the theme of the recovery of the urban landscape, with particular reference to the problems of Florence's development. Michelucci and Halprin met for the first time on this occasion. See Lawrence Halprin, Giovanni Michelucci and Bruno Zevi, "Il recupero del paesaggio urbano," *La Nuova Città*, no. 2 (1987): 2-6.

of the Fiat area, with a stream that ran down from the north-west corner — where they had already decided that the Palace of Justice should be— and many ponds. It was, however, just a concept: Halprin was willing to rethink his studies together with the other architects who would be involved in the operation.

Starting from the summer of 1987, the Program society and Bruno Zevi had been choosing the names of the architects who would work in Novoli, and the dates of the three workshops, which would take place every three months from September 1987 to March 1988, were decided. Two names had already been agreed upon by the council more than a year before, as the architects who would work on the Palace of Justice: Leonardo Ricci and Giovanni Michelucci. Ricci was chosen because he had designed the Palace of Justice of Savona (1981), and therefore was familiar with the topic, as well as because not only he knew the area, as he had worked on Novoli during the preliminary analysis carried out to draw up Detti's Plan, but also because he had a very privileged relationship with Zevi²⁹. Michelucci was chosen because he was the '*maestro*' of modern Florentine architecture and could certainly be 'used' by the (public and private) clients as a defender of the operation. After some excellent rejections, such as Giancarlo De Carlo's, who was, by then, a veteran of 'collective' design — thanks to his experience in the school he founded, the ILAUD³⁰ — but he was reluctant to accept projects where he was not the absolute protagonist, in September 1987, the Program society sent the *lettera di incarico* (letter of appointment) to eleven architects³¹: Ricci, Michelucci (who, however, did not participate in any of the meetings), Ralph Erskine (who, after the second meeting, pulled himself out of the project), Roberto Gabetti and Aimaro Isola, Luigi Pellegrin, Aldo Loris Rossi, Richard Rogers, Walter Di Salvo, Iginio Cappai and Pietro Mainardis, Gunnar Birkerts, and, finally, Piero Paoli, who was Adalberto Libera's student and a professor of the Architecture Department at the Florence University. The participation of Florentine architects in the operation — especially of the professors of Architectural Composition of the architecture department— was useful to immediately suppress the localist jealousies of the designers, typical of a very provincial city like Florence.³² It was a homogeneous group of architects, whose attention to form was one of the fundamental points of their itinerary. Furthermore, all the architects were on great terms with Zevi, who doubtlessly was the *deus ex machina* of an operation which implied a very eloquent declaration of intent: it is through architecture, not urban planning, that a city is

29 Bruno Zevi, "Leonardo Ricci (1918-94), il migliore architetto italiano," *Architettura Cronache e Storia*, no. 470 (1994): 834-838.

30 Università IUAV di Venezia, Archivio Progetti (AP), Fondo Iginio Cappai e Pietro Mainardis, Progetto Firenze, Area Novoli, np 070086, Letter from Giancarlo De Carlo to Program and FIVI (Fiat Iniziative Valorizzazioni), 27 August 1987: "After the meeting in Turin on 30 July last, a careful examination of the materials I had been given, and an inspection in Florence to visit the area in question and the urban fabric surrounding it, I came to the conclusion that the proposed operation — in terms of design procedure, distribution of activities and above all building density— is not suited either to the character of the city or to promoting its more balanced development. I am therefore obliged to inform you that I cannot accept the assignment".

31 AP, Fondo Iginio Cappai e Pietro Mainardis, Progetto Firenze, Area Novoli, np 070086. Assignment letter dated 10 September 1987 from the Program to Cappai and Mainardis to be part of the Novoli operation. Each architectural firm is paid thirty-five million to participate in the workshops.

32 Koenig, "Per una storia del progetto Fiat a Novoli, Firenze," 194.

built. In the mid-1980s, the debate on disciplinary autonomies was still intense within the architectural cultural environment. This is not the place to retrace the heated diatribes which, especially in the early 1970s, had encouraged a separation between architectural and urban design. One only needs to think of IUAV's inner controversy on the foundation of an urbanism degree course.³³ "We will create a masterpiece", Zevi declared, "which will be the result of a clash of ideas on the goals we set. And we will start a methodological revolution which will place architecture before urbanism".³⁴ Zevi's words highlight the national weight of the Florentine project: it was not an event that would be confined to the local chronicles: it found its place in a framework that held a wide appeal for all of the Italian architectural culture.

Novoli would be designed through a summation of the individual buildings which would form the urban plan. "Urbanism, in the way in which we have viewed it so far", Giovanni Klaus Koeing writes, "has proved to be the wrong cure for a harmonious growth of the modern city. Our wonderful old towns, on the other hand, have grown in a people-oriented way with no need for plans and restrictions [...]. Should the skeleton of a detailed plan come out of these workshops, it will mean that we have found the right medicine to administer to other patients as well".³⁵ It was not by chance that the architects who participated in the project never believed in a clear separation between the two disciplines, starting with Ricci: "an urban plan which is born from the city and, at the same time, generates it and highlights the architecture of the buildings".³⁶ Such a declaration of intent regarding the superiority of architectural design — that is, an urban settlement which would be the summation of individual design matrices—, contributed to the arising of significant tensions with those who, on the contrary, blindly believed in the dogmatic strength of planning, like Astengo and Campos Venuti who, at that very time, were working on the new general town development plan for Florence. Besides, we will see how urban planners undoubtedly had an extremely relevant role in the final dropping of the operation, which was almost a vindication of the superiority of the discipline. What was strongly stated by the architects who participated in the workshops —that is, the superiority of architectural design over urban planning—, fed the wish to build a kind of new old town far from the old town. The Fiat area, which had the same extension of Florence's Roman nucleus of foundation, would become a "neighborhood restored in a modern style", Ricci writes, "in order to move some of the congesting tertiary functions away from the old town and grant a dormant

33 Leonardo Ciacci, "L'insegnamento dell'urbanistica in Italia. Ricucire lo strappo e ...andare oltre," *Planum Magazine*, no. 20 (2014), last accessed November 26, 2021, <http://www.planum.net/l-insegnamento-dell-urbanistica-in-italia-ricucire-lo-strappo-e-andare-oltre>; Alessandra Marin, "Una nuova scuola per un uomo nuovo. Il corso di laurea in urbanistica e il nuovo assetto dipartimentale," in *Officina Iuav, 1925-1980*, ed. Guido Zucconi and Martina Carraro (Venezia, Marsilio: 2011), 189-205.

34 "Il gran rifiuto di Michelucci. Perché non vuole progettare il nuovo palazzo di giustizia," *Il Corriere di Firenze* (20 dicembre 1987).

35 Del Pozzo, "Ti rifaccio Firenze," 125.

36 AP, Fondo Iginio Cappai e Pietro Mainardis, Progetto Firenze, Area Novoli, np 070086. Bruno Zevi, Sara Rossi and Luca Zevi, Amministrazione Comunale di Firenze. Assessorato all'Urbanistica. La prima fase di elaborazione del complesso polifunzionale di Novoli, report (1988): 15.

urban settlement those particular elements which can transform a suburb into a city".³⁷ In the 1980s, the dream of recreating the old town in the outskirts of the city was certainly not an innovation: to mention an example from the same century, we may think of the INA-Casa built-up areas (1949-1963) and of how the designers of those housing complexes insisted on the very same items of the Plan for Novoli. That experience – which had not produced neighborhoods that were integrated with the rest of the urban nucleus, but rather a series of islands unevenly located on the territory– should have sufficed, more than twenty years later, to prove how impossible it was to automatically create an urban tessuto by default. However, in the case of Novoli, there was, at the drawing table, a remarkable group of architects of great experience and vision as the project protagonists invited by Fiat. Ricci clarifies the aim to create the urban fabric out of nowhere by taking inspiration from the historic town: "it was almost about concentrating time, and it had happened throughout history, a building followed the previous one, with which it would be measured, compared and accented, thus achieving a rich, varied and harmonious general composition; and Florence did realize one of the greatest urban systems: Piazza della Signoria, Loggia dei Lanzi, Palazzo Vecchio, Uffizi, Corridoio Vasariano, Ponte Vecchio, Chiesa Santa Felicita, Palazzo Pitti, Belvedere".³⁸ Even the height of the buildings would have to be significant because:

Novoli is a neighborhood with no particular architectural emergencies, at least in the southern area, the one which was built in the 1960s. It presents itself as a compact housing mass, with a horrible, although impressive, plastic weight, where references to the city and territory are scarce. Yet, one only needs to climb up the Region buildings, near the Fiat area, to see the hills, Fiesole, the dome of the Duomo, Palazzo Vecchio and the other great urban and territorial landmarks of Florence, and it is easy to understand how the city, until Poggi's plan, essentially developed through poles, establishing structuring connections between these nodes [...]. Therefore, the intervention on the Fiat area may aim to the construction of a pole too and, particularly, the Palace of Justice, for its scared, civil and – above all – public relevance.³⁹

The workshops

Halprin was the master of ceremonies of the workshops. The American architect had experimented with this work method already but, while Halprin's American workshops were examples of participatory design, opened up to the population, the Florentine meetings were held in private spaces. They consisted

37 Casa Studio Ricci (CSR), Leonardo Ricci, Centro direzionale Firenze. Piano particolareggiato dell'area Fiat. Report [1989].

38 Casa Studio Ricci (CSR), Leonardo Ricci, Centro direzionale Firenze. Piano particolareggiato dell'area Fiat. Report [1989].

39 Paolo Baldeschi, "Leonardo Ricci e il progetto del Palazzo di Giustizia di Firenze," *Dossier di urbanistica e cultura del territorio*, no. 16 (1991): 7.

of “initiation rites and alchemies to extract urbanism from architecture, not the other way round”.⁴⁰ The first workshop (13-16 September 1987), in fact, was held at the isolated Villa La Sfacciata, on the hills of Scandicci not far from the Charterhouse of Galluzzo. Besides the architects and some city hall technicians, there was Giovanni Klaus Koenig, who was an architectural historian who, however, had a vocation for chronicles. In one of his detailed accounts, rich in anecdotes about the workshops, we read that “this was more an actual troupe than a team of architects, complete with technical support, simultaneous interpreters, photographers and a TV crew”.⁴¹ At the end of the three-day workshop, they had drawn up a sort of master plan (even though it was just a sketch) —*Declaration of intent drawing*—, establishing specific key points upon which all the participants agreed and which would not be changed again until the definitive version of the master plan. In order to create the ‘city-effect’, the new constructions had to respect the urban principles linked to density, thus forming an architectural *continuum*⁴²: “the buildings had to create a continuous line, not stand on their own on the area”, Halprin writes, “the maximum urban density must be continuous everywhere along the edges of the area”.⁴³ The interventions “must visually overlap or touch each other according to the Florentine tradition”.⁴⁴ Furthermore, it was decided that a diagonal line, between San Donato bridge and Bersanti road, continuing beyond Guidone boulevard, would be the structure matrix of the park, thus establishing a connection with the historic city, towards the Duomo-San Miniato axis. Following this line, the main elements of the drawing were inserted: the main entrance of the park with the information and documentation center, which consisted in an elevated square, pathways and ponds —to be used as important compositional factors—, and the Palace of Justice.

“I was afraid it would be a mess”⁴⁵, Ricci said in a worried tone, but it wasn’t. The second workshop was organized from the 8th to the 10th of December of that same year, which was to be held at the Fiat’s branch in Belfiore, in Florence. Each architect already had a clear idea of the area on which they had to work on and of the functions they had to turn into architectural spaces: the second

40 Lupano, “Firenze: un avvenire urbanistico dietro le spalle,” 4.

41 Koenig, “Per una storia del progetto Fiat a Novoli, Firenze,” 192. “The alternation of spatial compression - twenty people around a table - and decompression, with swimming in the pool and relaxing outdoors, was a kind of mental sauna, which should be followed by every group therapist who wants to get the most out of every brainstorming session”. Ricci also testifies to the many people present: “There were about fifty of us in a villa near Florence. To me, who is used to living alone in order to concentrate on my work, it seemed more like a social party than a business meeting when I arrived. I must confess, however, that the atmosphere was exhilarating. For the first time, what we had been hoping for years seemed to come true: a collaboration between public, private, intellectual, social and economic forces to produce a collective work for the benefit of the citizens of Florence”: CSR, Ricci, Centro direzionale Firenze. Piano particolareggiato dell’area Fiat. Report [1989].

42 AP, Fondo Iginio Cappai e Pietro Mainardis, Progetto Firenze, Area Novoli, np 070086. Aldo Loris Rossi, “Progetto Novoli ed idee (non richieste) per Firenze”.

43 AP, Fondo Iginio Cappai e Pietro Mainardis, Progetto Firenze, Area Novoli, np 070086. Lawrence Halprin, “Elementi per il masterplan”.

44 AP, Fondo Iginio Cappai e Pietro Mainardis, Progetto Firenze, Area Novoli, np 070086. Lawrence Halprin, “Elementi per il masterplan”.

45 Del Pozzo, “Ti rifaccio Firenze,” 125.

meeting aimed at systematizing a unitary plani-volumetric representation⁴⁶: “we meet at a great table” Ricci writes, “to draw a kind of *sinopite* and later move on to the fresco where each of us paints their subject [...] At the end of the second three-day workshop, we shouted ‘miracle!’ as a sketch had been created, which was not a drawing yet, but contained the seeds of a future life”.⁴⁷ In the final drawing, the buildings were placed around Halprin’s park, which looked like a sort of spiral, whose diagonal line was intersected by a circumference with a smaller diameter and which identified the civic square of the complex, with the Palace of Justice and the public offices designed by Cappai-Mainardis and Birkerts⁴⁸ looking out onto it.

Ricci and Michelucci

Michelucci did not participate in the two workshops because of his advanced age (he was ninety-six years old in 1987) and also because he had had doubts about Halprin and the idea of an artificial park right away.⁴⁹ Besides, he wrote: “Florence needs works that can comprehend its entirety, not a design for a small piece of it”.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Ricci and Michelucci set to work. We do not have drawings on which they worked together, four-handedly; however, we do have very important documents that have helped us define the genesis of the building. From January 1987, Michelucci started to study the Palace, for which he had drawn several sketches, where the megalithic scale of the intervention was, above all else, already evident. Furthermore, some of the *topoi*, which were recurrent in all his drawings, had already been expressed there and probably traced the guidelines shared by both of the designers: the highlighting of a central pathway that would be the backbone of the project, an abundance of paths, which had always shaped the work of the two architects, a big round square—which was the catalyst space of social life—, which welcomed the citizens before judging them.⁵¹ These essential aspects were always present, even in the project that Ricci designed by himself and that we can still admire today. Attentive to the requests of the clients, Ricci and Michelucci’s project was, right from the start, a unique building that could host a number of spaces devoted

46 “Dear colleagues, after workshop I we had the opportunity to meet individually with each of you and to enter into a creative debate that has advanced our planning for Novoli. [...] We have enclosed for your information a sort of collage of all the things we have developed together, a sort of “state of the art” at the present time. We hope that this information will help you to move forward in your thinking before the next workshop [...] Our hope for the next workshop is to synthesize all your projects, identify the elements that need a solution, and particularly to integrate the work of each team with the work of all the others also by means of a model”. AP, Fondo Iginio Cappai e Pietro Mainardis, Progetto Firenze, Area Novoli, np 070086. Letter from Program (Fiat design and consulting service) to Cappai and Mainardis’s firm, 25 November 1987.

47 CSR, Leonardo Ricci, Centro direzionale Firenze. Piano particolareggiato dell’area Fiat. Report [1989].

48 Innocenti, “Il piano di recupero per l’area ex Fiat di Novoli a Firenze: il contributo di Leonardo Ricci,” 85-6.

49 “Before I met you personally, I had the vague idea, not at all motivated, that you were a strict theoretician of some branch of architecture. When we met in my studio in Fiesole [...] an immediate sympathy was born in me for you. [...] At my age one can love nature profoundly, but not with the panic-stricken abandon with which you love it; I love it as a terrible imprint of God, not as a marvelous spectacle, which the more imposing it is, the more it cries out to me with its death cry: you will die”. Letter from Michelucci to Halprin, in Lambardi, “Leonardo Ricci: il Palazzo di giustizia di Firenze,” 68.

50 Renzo Cassigoli, “Se la Fiat ha fretta non posso seguirla,” *L’Unità*, 22 December 1987, 15.

51 Lambardi, “Leonardo Ricci: il Palazzo di giustizia di Firenze,” 19.

Venere 23 dicembre 88

Lavinio ad alto Giovanni,
ho ricevuto (ringraziami dagli Stati Uniti) una tua lettera
in risposta alla mia da Lexington dopo che sono andato
da Halpain a S. Francisco. Una lettera che mi ha fatto
e che mi fa molto soffrire. Una lettera che ^{non} comprende
né alla verità né a quella che tu credi la verità.

Una lettera impunita e crudele che debbo rifiutare.
È forse perché l'attuale i fatti direttivi ed incomparabili
possono essere più espliciti delle parole di amore (amore
che in questo momento tu rifiuti) e forse che io non ti
esprima, come è vero, quanto io ti amo, ma come sono
andati gli esiti.

Quando seppi dell'incarico del Palazzo di Giustizia
di Firenze insieme con te io, che ho ormai quasi
settant'anni, ero felice come un ragazzo. Con te avevo
iniziato e con te avevo voluto finire. Questo, lo giuro
è la verità.

Halpain aveva avuto dalla Fiat l'incarico di fare
il "master-plan" dell'area di Mosè. Tu fatti 2 piano
ad essere contrario.
Ci fu quest'estate il primo workshop. Tu non potesti

venire perché eri Marco. Ma non potessi non partecipare?
Dovetti venire a Firenze dagli Stati Uniti ma non potevo che,
Meliotta, non Marco anche io. Due anni fa Marco
per morire. Parlando delle molte opere che le man-
to con me lo parlo. E me ne dolco e cara sorella.
Come per te del resto. E mi angustio di nuovo. Minimo
con anni tu a dire qualche cosa parola risolto a me.
Io ho cercato in quel workshop di difendere la "visione"
propria e, se ricordi, non solo ti telefonai fin dal primo
piano per metterti al corrente di quello che Marco succedeva
me al terzo piano abbandonai gli altri (quando tu potesti
ricevermi) per impegnarti di tutto.

Poi ripartii per l'America. Prima di partire il Comune
(in persona l'assessore Barri ed il figlio di Zeni) mi propose
di andare a S. Francisco per vedere alcuni esiti
(tuo, mio e di altri) rispetto a quelli di Long.
Fu un incontro non facile ma credo che il risultato
fu buono. Poi questo ti ricordi. Solo mi metterti al
corrente.

Poi sono venuto per il secondo workshop al quale tu
avrei pensato di partecipare. Anche se, l'ipotesi che non
per dieci ore al piano. Tu non sei venuto di persona.

1a

not only to the legal functions, but also to other relational activities. The "city of justice" that Michelucci had imagined seemed to find a real application in the building.

However, on the margins of the second workshop, an event that had a remarkable relevance for the development of the project took place: Michelucci resigned his appointment. We do not know why. According to Michelucci "the Palace of Justice is a wrong architectural object. I propose a city of justice instead".⁵² Basically, he did not think it possible that a palace that contained in itself all the legal functions, built on a scrap of land in the outskirts of the city, could create a connection with it. What he had initially deemed to be an added value to the project, now wasn't⁵³.

"It is not quite exact to say that I am resigning" Michelucci declared after the second workshop, protesting, "I said that I am not able to design a palace of justice unless I can talk first to the justice operators themselves [...] The thing has been set in that way already. Everything has already been done in an incredibly short amount of time. The project was designed during the first two 'workshops'. If Fiat is in a hurry, I cannot follow them. I need to clarify the thought of justice in order to know exactly which spaces and shapes I have to create, the relationship between the judge and the judged, how to create a connection with the public and legal events: how can I think the courtrooms, then? Where do I place the judge? High up? Terrible. Or below, to bring him closer to the man? The

52 Giovanni Michelucci, *Dove si incontrano gli angeli. Pensieri fiabe e sogni* (Fiesole: Fondazione Giovanni Michelucci, 1997), 25.

53 Giovanni Michelucci, "Un Palazzo per la Giustizia?", *La Nuova Città*, no. 4-5 (1988): 2.

Non parli mai male - Parli di altri appartamenti. (3)
 Secondo me non impostandi - Me non giudico le tue scelte.
 In quel momento, se qualcuno ti ha rifiutato bene, io
 con Aldo Luis Ricci (ed a noi si sono opposti tutti gli altri)
 abbiamo invitato naturalmente l'impostazione californiana
 che era felice.
 Tornato a Venezia trovò la tua lettera. Dove ripotare i fatti
 ed ingiusti.
 Come se io volevo fare il "mio" progetto - quando invece
 avevo lavorato per alcuni mesi per preparare il "nostro" progetto.
 Hai preferito, nell'atto delle tue Vene d'arrivare fare
 il "tuo".
 A questo punto, amico Giovanni, non so più cosa dire.
 Tu che hai sempre parlato della "felicità dell'architetto"
 hai voluto dimostrare, in questa occasione, quella poca
 mia "felicità" di architetto. Perché la mia architettura
 è sempre nata dalle implicite. Dalla disposizione di
 vivere in un mondo che a me non piace ma al quale
 voglio dare per quel che posso, con le minime mie forze,
 un piccolo contributo alla vita.

Non alle "fiora" me ad un continuo dell'ordine. (4)
 Scusami Giovanni questa lettera addorata me
 necessaria. Tu Giovanni mi hai obbligato.
 Forse perché io ti amo veramente. Profondamente.
 Vincerò. Forse perché tu mi ami molto,
 molto, molto meno. Ti abbraccio.
 Buon Natale! Buon anno!
 1979

1b

architectural completeness of every building depends on what, as an institution, it represents for the city. In order to define Palazzo Vecchio or the Cathedral, I need to have a clear idea of what they stand for: the civic power and the religious power, the same goes for justice".⁵⁴

As always, in relationships between men, besides their ideas, and different design or formal orientations, character plays a major role. Despite the fact that Michelucci was Ricci's indisputable teacher (to which Ricci admitted himself)⁵⁵, the two often disagreed because their huge egos did not allow any dialogue. "I have seen ambitions run wild"⁵⁶, Michelucci declared, probably jealous of Ricci's position, who, in spite of his Venician residence, was certainly more at the center of the project than Michelucci, and worked well not only with Halprin, whom he also met in the USA,⁵⁷ but also with the other architects who participated in the project. Michelucci was not one of them and probably wished he had been given the protagonist role, not the co-protagonist one. Throughout 1988 and 1989, he would continue to draw numerous possible solutions for the building: a clear sign of a particular interest in the topic, on which he would continue to reflect for a long time. In this whirlwind of prosperous graphical production, it seemed that the architect from Pistoia had returned to 1945 —even though this was a very different context—, to those sketches for the restoration of the areas around Ponte Vecchio, which were both fascinating and completely solipsistic, as no

54 Cassigoli, "Se la Fiat ha fretta non posso seguirla," 15.

55 CSR, Curriculum vitae di Leonardo Ricci. Ricci graduated with Michelucci in 1941, with a thesis titled Teatro al chiuso, teatro all'aperto [Indoor theatre, outdoor theatre] on the Boboli Gardens.

56 Cassigoli, "Se la Fiat ha fretta non posso seguirla," 15.

57 AP, Fondo Iginio Cappai e Pietro Mainardis, Progetto Firenze, Area Novoli, np 070086. Letter from Italo Castore (Program) to Cappai and Mainardis's firm, 3 November 1987.

Fig. 1a, 1b

Letter from Leonardo Ricci to Giovanni Michelucci, Venice 23 December 1987. Fondazione Giovanni Michelucci, Archivio Giovanni Michelucci.

one had commissioned them. "I had worked for some months on the preparation of our project", Ricci wrote to him in December 1987, "you preferred, looking down on me from your ivory tower, to design yours"⁵⁸ [Fig. 1]. In Michelucci's graphic studies of 1988 and 1989, we can see a completely transformed building, which did not have the scale of a single object, as it reached the typical size and complexity of a city. After all, the concept of a miniature city is a trait that had inspired the fantasy of the architect from Pistoia since the 1930s.

Achille Occhetto's *diktat*

After the conclusions of the second workshop, during the first months of 1988, there was criticism from many cultural institutions, such as INU (National Institute of Urban Planning) and Italia Nostra, against the Fiat variation (including the aspect concerning the Fondiaria area). Furthermore, the Region of Tuscany imposed some limitations for the approval of the variation, specifically in regards to the dimensioning of the buildings, which led to the re-elaboration of the variation.⁵⁹

But the project went on. The third workshop took place in March 1988, once again at Villa La Sfacciata, where the drawing of the area was defined in a more detailed way. Each architect produced not only drawings, but also models of their intervention. The final plan clearly showed the methodological approach wanted by Zevi and Halprin—that is, "a harmony of dissonances"⁶⁰—, which was the result of individual architectural episodes that were very different from each other. The central space of the park welcomed the ways out of the buildings, which seemed conflicting: by looking at the final plani-volumetric representation, it almost feels like the single buildings could have been developed endlessly, far beyond the Fiat area in which they were 'confined'. The plan resembled a painting by one of the members of the De Stijl group, of whose formal instances Zevi and the other participating architects were particularly fond.

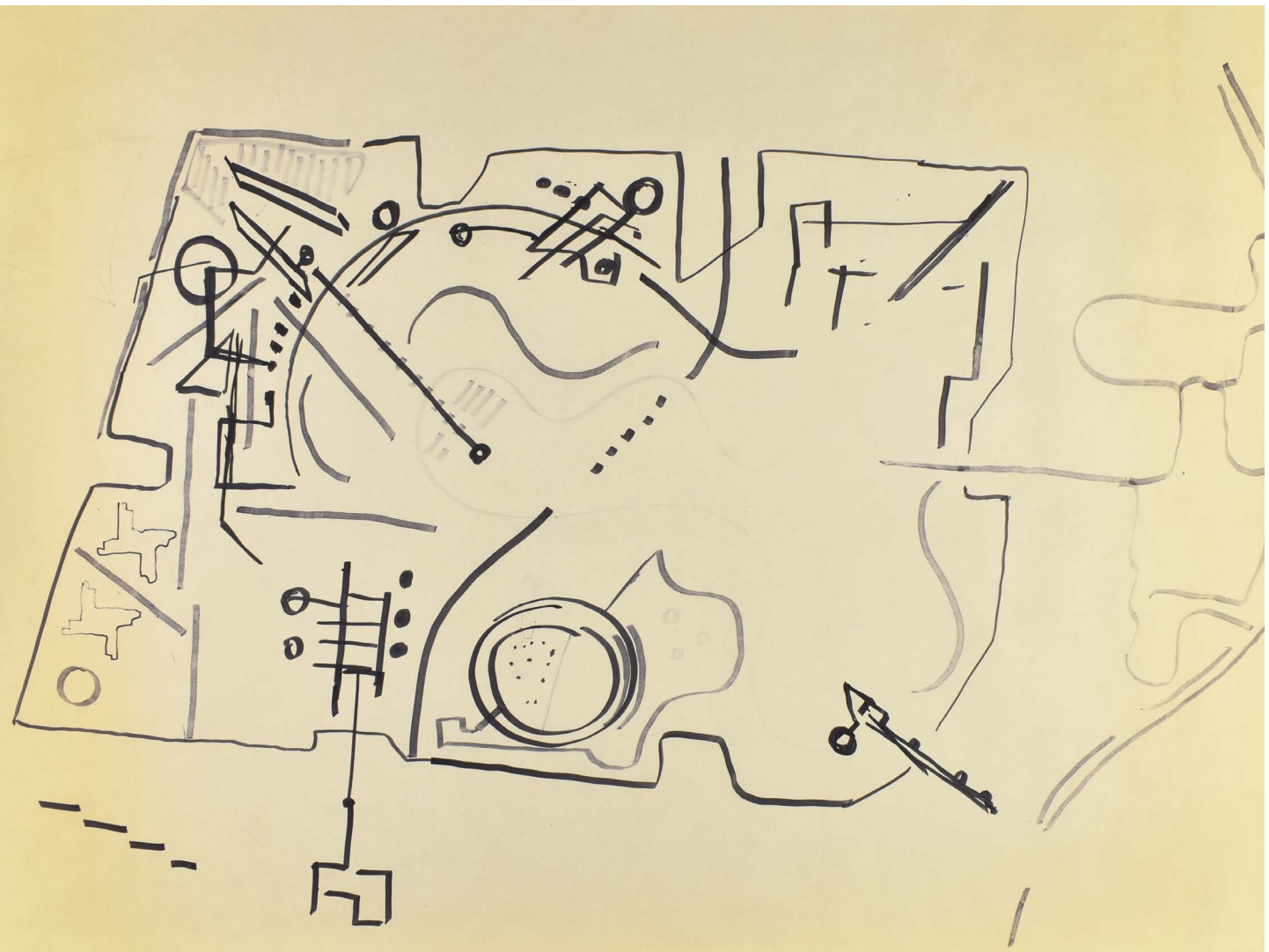
On the 22nd of April 1988, Florence mayor Massimo Bogianckino, Fiat CEO Cesare Romiti, Zevi and Halprin showed, at Palazzo Vecchio, during a press conference, the new Novoli project.⁶¹ Despite the mayor's triumphant tone, the realization of the project seemed arduous. There were serious political problems within the city administration: the precarious inner balance between the parties (PCI, PSI, PSDI, PLI), which initially allowed the formation of the council, was

58 Letter from Ricci to Michelucci, 23 December 1987. Included in Corinna Vasić Vatovec, "Leonardo Ricci e Giovanni Michelucci: confronti preliminari," *La Nuova Città*, no. 2 (2001): 119.

59 Innocenti, "Il piano di recupero per l'area ex Fiat di Novoli a Firenze: il contributo di Leonardo Ricci," 86.

60 Corinna Vasić Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci: architetto esistenzialista* (Firenze: Edifir, 2005), 93.

61 Lupano, "Firenze: un avvenire urbanistico dietro le spalle," 4.



2

now irremediably compromised.⁶² Clearly, this was not due solely to the urban events.⁶³

The city council, adopting Zevi's suggestion, appointed Ricci as the indisputable protagonist of the project. Councillor Bassi gave him the task of drawing up the final draft of the result of the three workshops, and that of handing in the detailed plan by June 1989⁶⁴ [Fig. 2]. The work of the other architects had ended with their participation in the third workshop. There should have been a second phase to their appointment, which would have led to the drawing up of the preliminary plan, but that never occurred.

62 Fondazione Zevi, Archivio Bruno Zevi, Comune di Firenze. Piano particolareggiato dell'area Fiat Novoli, 04.02/17 Telegram from Bogianckino to Zevi, April 1989: "Dear President, I am very worried about the Novoli area, stop the Region's prescriptions and very objectionable statements. Campos Venuti and Astengo compromise the forthcoming negotiations and I also believe that the impending rezoning and presumably also the subsequent executive plan of the municipal initiative will nullify the initial impetus. stop. Taking into account that the political situation in the east is not peaceful stop I would urgently like to be able to consult you and I believe it is opportune with Bassi. stop. do you have the opportunity to come to Florence?".

63 Paolini, *Firenze 1946-2005. Una storia urbana e ambientale*, 291-5.

64 CSR, Leonardo Ricci, Centro direzionale Firenze. Piano particolareggiato dell'area Fiat. Report [1989]: "The Master Plan will be the result of a synthesis of the architectural ideas that emerged during the work of the three workshops". See also: ASCR, Register of council resolutions, session of 17 May 1988. Council resolution 3559/2629 entrusted Ricci and Giorgio Santucci (engineer) with the task of drawing up the general plan for the Palazzo di Giustizia.

Fig. 2

Novoli plan designed by Leonardo Ricci [1988]. CSR.

As mentioned above, the preliminary project of the general town development plan had been ready since 1985, drawn up by a group of urban planners who followed the guidelines of Detti's plan; therefore, the north-western areas of Novoli and Castello were suitable for the development of the city, respectively for Fiat and Fondiaria. However, the consultants to the general town development plan believed Fiat's (and Fondiaria's) requests, in terms of the cubic meters to construct, to be unacceptable.⁶⁵ After all, the urban planners for the study of the new general plan had expressed, right from the beginning of the workshops experience, their dislike for the variation project, expressing their doubts to the city council in this regard.⁶⁶

The situation was paradoxical: the technicians of the general town development plan (Campos Venuti, Astengo, Fernando Clemente, Paolo Maretto, Luciano Pontuale, Giuseppe Stancanelli) were paid by Florence city hall, and yet they never missed the chance to undermine the design validity of the variation, which was required by the city council itself and, particularly, by the mayor and councilor Bassi. The favorable opportunity for urban planners, and those who had doubts about the Novoli plan, had arisen since the first months of 1988⁷ when, as mentioned above, the Region favorably greeted the project, although they contested its volumes. The most reformative and environmentalist wing of the Florentine communist party – which, in the years following the disaster of Chernobyl, had a considerable relevance within the faction⁶⁷ –, led by Tommaso Giovacchini and by the Youth Federation, who were overtly against the most conservative PCI wing, stubbornly focused on these aspects, sensitizing the public opinion to the presumed “cementification” of the Florentine outskirts.⁶⁸ This was obviously a pretext to attack the party from the inside, especially if we consider that the Novoli plan included the realization of an eighteen-hectare park and, therefore, satisfied the urban standards of public green areas. In 1989, the Florentine PCI was overtly divided between those in favor and those against the Fiat operation, while the other parties of the council supported the variation. The question ended up obtaining national resonance: in March 1989, during the PCI provincial conference, a motion presented by the Florentine Youth Federation for the zeroing of the variation was approved.⁶⁹ In the previous year, at a time when the future of the party was uncertain, Achille Occhetto, who became the final executioner of the Novoli plan, had been elected secretary of the party. “There's Occhetto on the phone”, said a functionary of the Florentine seat of the communist party, on the 28th of June 1989, to province secretary Paolo

65 Paolini, *Firenze 1946-2005. Una storia urbana e ambientale*, 291-5; Federico Oliva, ed., Campos Venuti, *Città senza cultura. Intervista sull'urbanistica* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2010), 92-93.

66 ASCR, Register of council resolutions, session of 4 May 1987. Intervention by Astengo: “We suggested that the variants be included in the PRG but that the volume be reduced and that 80% of both areas be handed over to the municipality free of charge”.

67 Aldo Agosti, *Storia del Partito comunista italiano 1921-1991* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1999), 68.

68 Paolini, *Firenze 1946-2005. Una storia urbana e ambientale*, 296.

69 Paolini, *Firenze 1946-2005. Una storia urbana e ambientale*, 296.

Cantelli.⁷⁰ “You should consider the possibility of suspending the new variation”, Occhetto told Cantelli; “we”, he continued, “cannot risk compromising the image of the new PCI; the opposition to your urban operation is growing stronger and, frankly, some of the environmentalists’ evaluations should be taken into serious consideration. Surely, you cannot vote for it”.⁷¹ Occhetto sent his emissaries, Fabio Mussi and Gavino Angius, to Florence, in order to manage the change of course. The council communists were, in actual fact, put under receivership, and the Novoli operation fell apart. The disavowal of the work of the Florentine PCI inevitably led to an administration crisis —all the members of the local secretariat of the party resigned—, which was solved on the 2nd of October 1989 with the election of a new city council led by socialist culture councilor Giorgio Morales, pending the 1990 mayoral elections, which confirmed Morales as mayor, with a new five-party council.

The Basilica

As mentioned above, while the detailed plan for the Fiat area was being drawn up (the final draft of the plans created during the workshops), Ricci was given the task of specifically drawing preliminary plans for the Palace of Justice, which he had presented at the city hall in July 1989.

The project that he presented on that occasion, after some relevant changes concerning space and materials, was more or less the building that we see today. However, due to the many complex political and administration-related events, which occurred between Ricci’s death (1994) and the inauguration of the building (2012),⁷² we shall examine the project that was presented at the city hall in 1989: when Ricci was still alive and the Novoli plan had not been obliterated because of the way in which it was conceived from the start and, therefore, when the architect was designing a building which should have established a connection with its architectural surroundings which does not exist today.

As in Savona,⁷³ together with Maria Grazia Dallerba and his son, Andres, Ricci designed a project that, despite its enormous size, diverged from the monumental models which had illustrious predecessors, during fascism in particular, and which continued to inspire the interventions that were contemporary to the Florentine one: one only needs to think of the Palace of Justice of Siena, designed by Pierluigi Spadolini and characterized by a wanted monumentality.⁷⁴

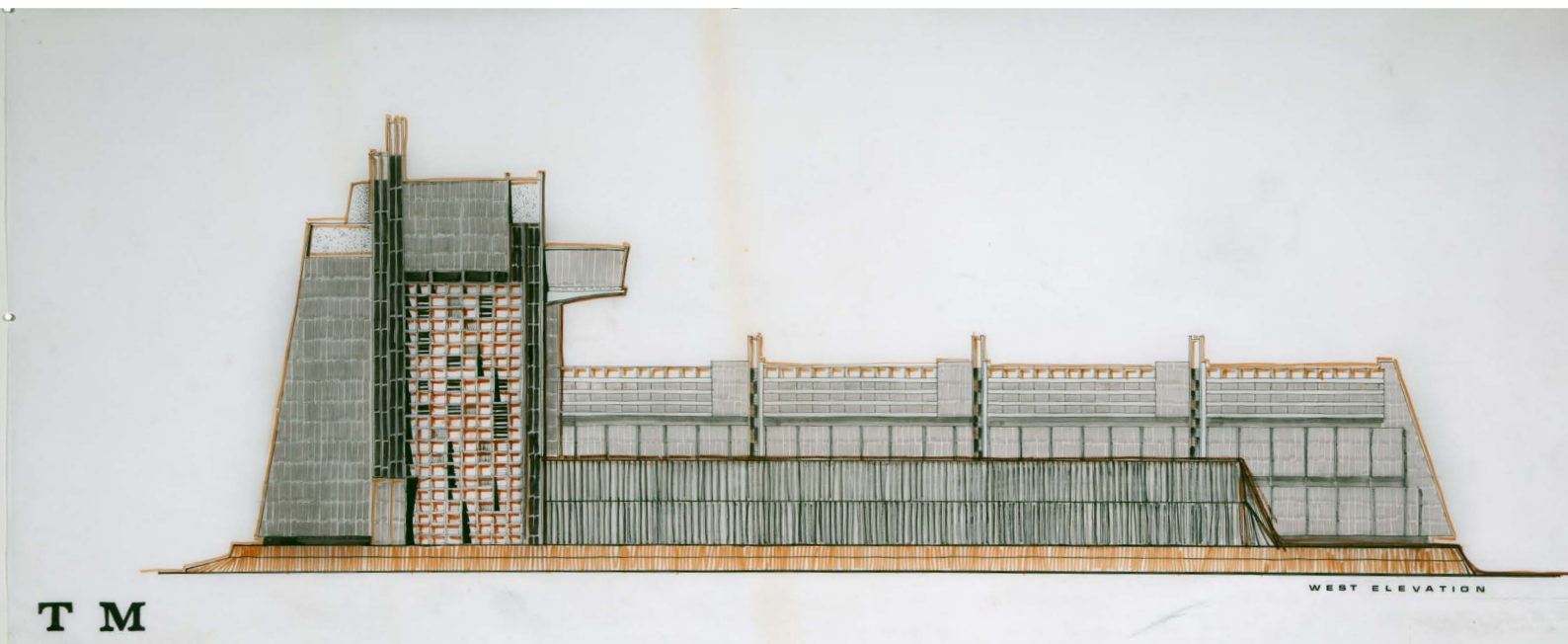
70 Reconstruction reported in Ibid. See also: Paolo Vagheggi, “Firenze, il PCI cambia rotta,” *La Repubblica*, 28 June 1989, last accessed November 27, 2021, <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/1989/06/28/firenze-il-pci-cambia-rotta.html>.

71 Reconstruction reported in Ibid. See also: Paolo Vagheggi, “Firenze, il PCI cambia rotta,” *La Repubblica*, 28 June 1989, last accessed November 27, 2021, <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/1989/06/28/firenze-il-pci-cambia-rotta.html>.

72 Innocenti, “Il piano di recupero per l’area ex Fiat di Novoli a Firenze: il contributo di Leonardo Ricci,” 89.

73 For an analysis of the project see: Vasić Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci: architetto “esistenzialista”*, 45-66; Bruno Zevi, “Strutture-Forma per un’idea sacrale della giustizia. Il palazzo di giustizia di Savona,” *L’architettura. Cronache e Storia*, no. 388 (1988): 86-115; Bruno Zevi, “Il palazzo di giustizia di Savona,” *L’Arca*, no. 16 (1988), 79-85.

74 Leonardo Ricci, “Progetto per il Palazzo di Giustizia sull’area Fiat a Novoli, Firenze,” *Zodiac*, no. 5 (1991): 203.



We do not know why exactly it happened that, from the second half of the 1970s, while he was moving from Florence to Venice, Ricci's architecture suddenly shifted towards volumes characterized by remarkable gigantism. Such change could not be ascribed to his new city of residence, nor to the influence of his new partners, like his wife Maria Grazia Dallerba, whom he had met long before in Florence. The project for the terrace of the Port Orange Competition in Florida (1973) was probably the first instance in which this tendency strongly emerged [Fig. 3]; and was consolidated later on through the project for the Florence Business Area competition (1977), designed with his friend Savioli. The signals of this shift to a bigger scale had always been present in Ricci's work —one only needs to think of certain episodes in the Sorgane neighborhood in Florence (1962)—; however, it was since the 1970s that this tendency had become a fixed trait. Approaching the 1980s, the gigantism was often accompanied by a certain isolation of the construction bodies, which did not occur in Ricci's previous megastructure projects, which aimed to the construction of a single unity, complicated by endless sequences of volumes: just like the assignments that Ricci would give to the students of his courses at the University of Florence, or at the American universities, where he was a visiting professor, or the competition project for the restoration of the Fortezza da Basso (1967).⁷⁵ "When [...] Portoghesi, Gregotti, Rossi met me, they told me: 'Ricci, you're an unusual architect, you create unique pieces when serial architecture is needed'. What about old cities, though? There are certain prototypes, like the palace, which had been serial until they were ruined by Neoclassicism, but there are unique pieces too, such as Pisa or Piazza del Campo in Siena, or Piazza San Marco in Venice. What's the harm in dreaming of unique pieces?"⁷⁶ Many examples of Ricci's architectures from the 1970s and 1980s 'suffered' from gigantism and isolation:

75 Vasić Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci: architetto "esistenzialista"*, 165-74; Maria Clara Ghia, *La nostra città è tutta la terra. Leonardo Ricci architetto (1918-1994)* (Wuppertal: LapisLocus, 2021), 207-209.

76 Raffaele Raja, "Un sogno in città," *Costruire*, no. 85 (1990): 177.

Fig. 3

Port Orange Competition
(1973). West elevation. CSR.

from the project for the Service Centre of Pistoia's industrial area (1980) to the competition for the reorganization of the Catena harbor in Mantua (1982) and the integrated Centre *La Terza Porta* at the parterre in Florence (1982). The palaces of justice of Savona and Florence also belong to this particular current.

In Novoli, Ricci was inspired by the construction style of Roman basilicas, by a kind of laic cathedral that stood out against the background to indicate the necessity of a social transformation of justice. Every single part of the building is located around the central space characterized by a trapezoidal diagram of the basilica, closed by a glass covering. The smaller base of the trapezoid is directed towards the Calavana hills of Prato, towards the extreme edge of the city, in the attempt to match its greater base which, instead, looks onto the park and, therefore, towards Florence city center. Such connection between the city and its edges certainly characterized the project that Ricci discussed with Michelucci, who had always been interested in that theme.⁷⁷ In Savona, as well as in Florence, Ricci designed the interiors of many public spaces. These areas have several uses: when the legal activities are interrupted, plays can be staged there, concerts and meetings can be held. "The public access [...] leads to a space which is typical of basilicas, on which all the public pathways look onto, both the ones for the courtrooms and those for the offices"⁷⁸; just like the old town squares⁷⁹, "we want citizens to be free to walk around within the building even when it is closed"⁸⁰, Ricci wrote in the project report. The wish for architecture to be experienced 24/7 had always been a crucial element in Ricci's work: the basilica merely consists of the internal transposition of the external circular square, which characterized the project designed with Michelucci. "The indoor square", Ricci wrote, "becomes a filtering element, opened on all four sides. Around the building and the square, a Reflecting Pool [...] grants safety as it reduces the entries".⁸¹ Ricci thought, maybe because he was inspired by his new Venetian house, of surrounding the entire building, with the exception of a few guarded passages, with a channel of water. Obviously, this solution was never adopted.

The structure bends towards the outside into various building bodies which, by fitting in the great central body, communicate their different destinations; the external façades are thus all different, as they reflect the complexity of the internal space [Fig. 4]. Throughout his production, Ricci had always betrayed symmetry. Indeed, two asymmetrical walls indicate the building entrance: on one side, a very high triangular face; on the other, the front leans on a 45-degree angle to the central axis of the "basilica". A recurrent element in Ricci's mid-1970s projects is

77 Giancarlo Paba, *La città e il limite: i confini della città* (Firenze: La casa Usher, 1990), 30-46.

78 CSR, Leonardo Ricci, Palazzo di giustizia. Relazione di progetto (1988). Also in Lambardi, "Leonardo Ricci: il Palazzo di giustizia di Firenze," 142.

79 Paolo Baldeschi, "Leonardo Ricci e il progetto del Palazzo di Giustizia di Firenze," 7.

80 CSR, Leonardo Ricci, Palazzo di giustizia. Relazione di progetto. Also in Lambardi, "Leonardo Ricci: il Palazzo di giustizia di Firenze," 142.

81 CSR, Leonardo Ricci, Palazzo di giustizia. Relazione di progetto. Also in Lambardi, "Leonardo Ricci: il Palazzo di giustizia di Firenze," 142.



the presence, on the facade, of big triangular surfaces, which he viewed as “fragments of city walls”⁸², the inclination of which is at times a simile of an escarped wall section; at other times –and this seems to be the case of the palace of justice of Florence–, of half a gabled facade, typical of Constantinian basilicas. We can also notice a circular element that recalls a rose window. Many are the transformations of architectural elements from different times in history that Ricci uses: after all, his work had been characterized, since its very start, by a wanted formalist display. Ricci’s design pattern is particularly noticeable here, in the facade in front of the park (towards Guidoni boulevard), characterized by a great “Crystal-Palace-like”⁸³ glass wall, similar to the one that had been built in Savona. The three cylindrical volumes in reinforced concrete fit in the inclined glass wall, representing the ‘ribs’ of the “basilica”. Rampant arches can also be found here and were modernized through the use of steel beams that define the rhythm of the facade. The building would have a “structure in reinforced concrete with iron and glass. Almost like a Crystal Palace fitting in a structure in reinforced concrete. External faces, as needed, would be more or less

82 Antonio Nardi, *Leonardo Ricci: testi, opere, sette progetti recenti di Leonardo Ricci* (Pistoia: Comune di Pistoia, 1990), 101.

83 CSR, Leonardo Ricci, Palazzo di giustizia. Relazione di progetto . Also in Lambardi, “Leonardo Ricci: il Palazzo di giustizia di Firenze,” 142.

Fig. 4

Palace of Justice in Florence. Main elevation study [1988]. CSR.

transparent and finished with marble of various colors (recalling the Florentine tradition, see Santa Maria Novella, San Miniato, Battistero, Fiancata del Duomo). Although expressed in a modern way".⁸⁴ The presumed continuity with the old town —which was completely imaginative, considering how very far the Palace is from Florence old town— was a desire which had already been voiced by Ricci since the first workshop; in fact, it is not by accident that the axis of the building is directed towards Santa Maria del Fiore [Fig. 5]. The diagonal line, which was a crucial element in both the diagram and the elevations of the entire project, as well as in others of Ricci's works since the beginning —one only needs to think of the buttresses of the Flower Market of Pescia (1949), designed with Savioli, Giuseppe Giorgio Gori ed Emilio Brizzi—, opens up to another evocative historicist reference which, however, is closer to our time: Futurism. The concise sketch that Ricci had drawn during the first workshop —which is at the Ricci archive of Monterinaldi, but also at Cappai and Mainardis' one, at the design archive of the IUAV University of Venice— clearly seemed to be a homage to Sant'Elia's works: not only because of graphic similarities (like the nature of the background on which the volumes of the building stand), but also because of the continuous search for the diagonal, of which Sant'Elia was also very fond.⁸⁵

Blindness

How should we, nowadays, judge Ricci's building? According to the idea behind its first draft, the Novoli operation was the preconization of many urban operations, which are currently very common: that is, the 'spectacularization' of contemporary architecture for tourist and economic purposes. "I don't think it would be arrogant of me", Ricci wrote, in fact, during the workshops, "to state that the quality of imagined architectures is so great, some of them actually are masterpieces, that they will draw, from the old town, a good portion of tourists who will be able to admire not only the past architectures, but ours too; just as it happens in other cities of the world which did not give in to the mummification of a past that has no hopes for the future".⁸⁶ The new Novoli should have been a modern and subsidiary center for Florence: "the character of the new city center that we want to achieve must refer to all of Florence, not just to its nearby suburbs".⁸⁷

However, history turned out to be very different from the expectations of those workshops. The failed realization of the plan was a bitter defeat not only for the 1980s architecture, but also for architecture *tout court*, as it was incapable of

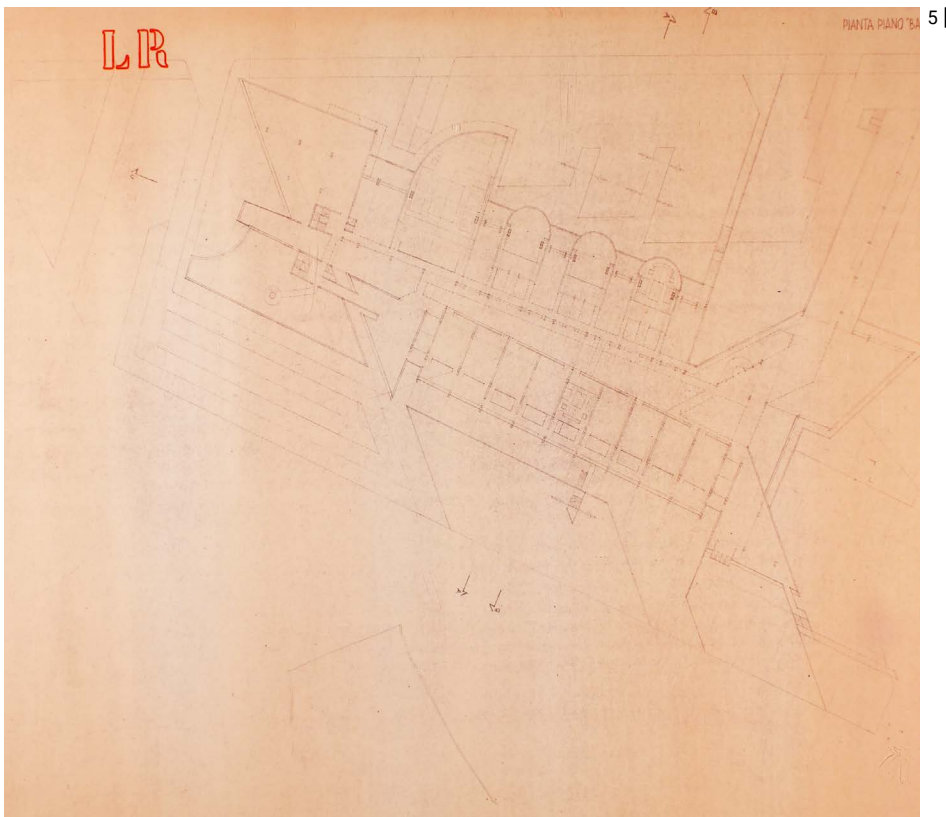
84 CSR, Leonardo Ricci, Palazzo di giustizia. Relazione di progetto. Also in Lambardi, "Leonardo Ricci: il Palazzo di giustizia di Firenze," 143.

85 Corinna Vasić Vatovec, "Una ricognizione, contestuale e specifica, sul rapporto di Leonardo Ricci con il Futurismo e con l'opera di Sant'Elia," in *Il manifesto dell'architettura futurista di Sant'Elia e la sua eredità*, ed. Milva Giacomelli, Ezio Godoli and Alessandra Pelosi (Mantova: Universitas Studiorum, 2014), 219.

86 CSR, Leonardo Ricci, Centro direzionale Firenze. Piano particolareggiato dell'area Fiat. Report [1989].

87 AP, Fondo Iginio Cappai e Pietro Mainardis, Progetto Firenze, Area Novoli, np 070086. Italo Castore and Lawrence Halprin, Elementi per il masterplan [Masterplan elements]. Appendix to the letter from Italo Castore and Lawrence Halprin (Program) to Cappai and Mainardi's firm, 25 November 1987.

overcoming mere local political idiosyncrasies. And now, when visiting Novoli and the park designed by Gabetti and Isola –two architects who had participated in the project right from the start and who, later on, in 1998, were appointed by the city council to draw up the *Novoli Recovery Plan*⁸⁸–, one stops to look at the Palace of Justice and can't help feeling great psychological distress, which is understandable: it is an object which has been completely de-semantized from the area on which it stands. This is not due to the fact that Ricci had died by the time the building was constructed and, therefore, altered in some ways from its original version. The explanation is that *Gotham City* was conceived to establish a connection with its peers –*virgoloni, lavatrici, biscioni*– which, in 1989, were completely obliterated by a myopic city politics. Thus, to paraphrase José Saramago, anyone who wished to express a critical judgment on the building would instantly turn into one of the protagonists of *Ensaio sobre a Cegueira* (*Blindness*) struck by blindness, because they would not be able to see what the former Fiat area should and could have been. The historian's task is that of mending the epistemological breach created by these events, and of repeating, as often as possible, that the Palace of Justice of Florence cannot be judged, as it is an isolated and desolate fragment of a far more detailed plan which was never realized.



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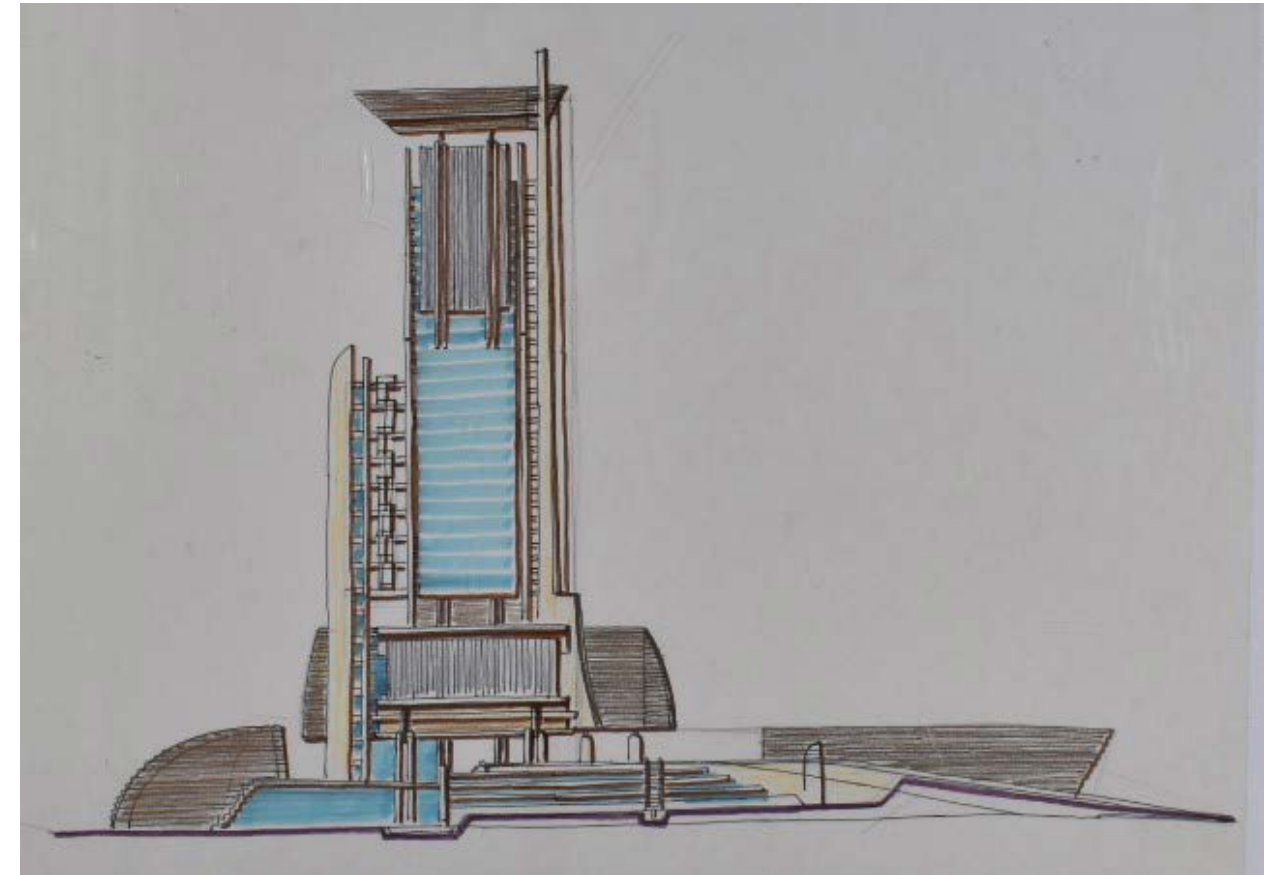
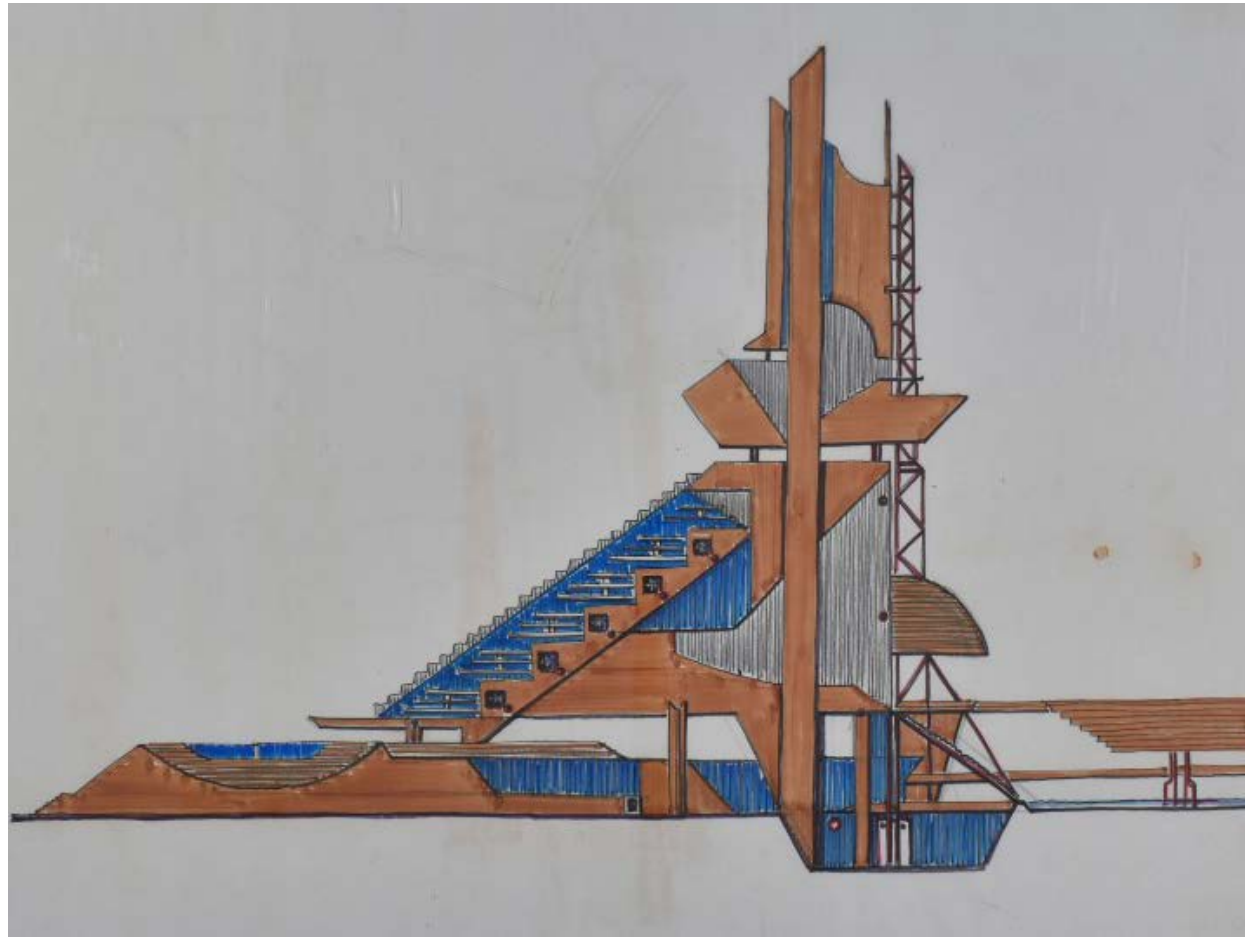
88 Pietro Giorgieri, Firenze. *Il progetto urbanistico: scritti e contributi, 1975-2010* (Firenze: Alinea, 2010), 250-201.

Fig. 5
Palace of Justice in Florence.
"Basilica" floor plan [1989].
CSR.

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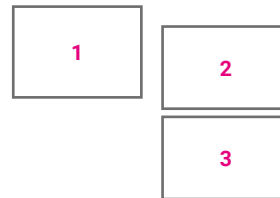
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Savona Palace of Justice

ARCHIVAL DATA

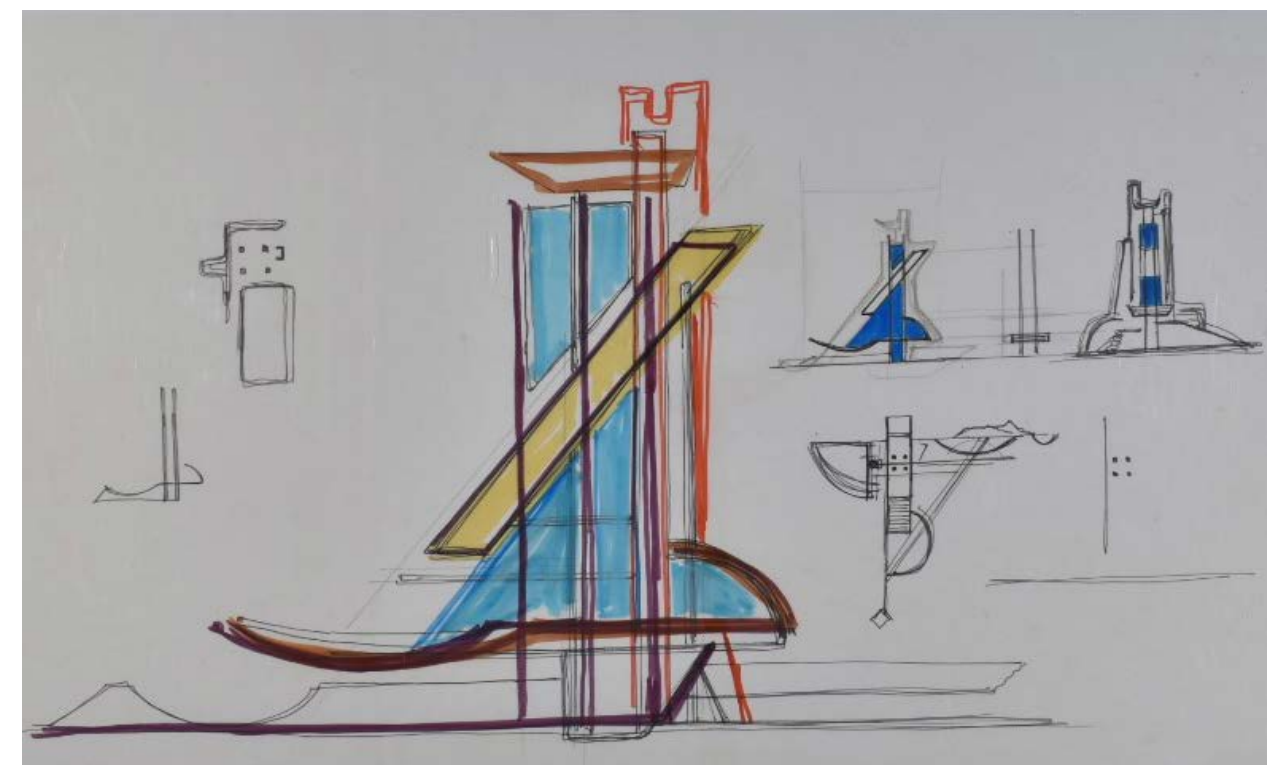
DATE	1981-1987 (design and realization)
PLACE/ADDRESS	Via Angelo Barile, 1, Savona
COLLABORATORS	Maria Grazia Dallerba Andrea Ricci, Pietro Porro, Cecilia Piccinini
CUSTOMER	Municipality of Savona
SOURCES	CSR

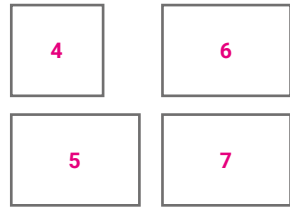
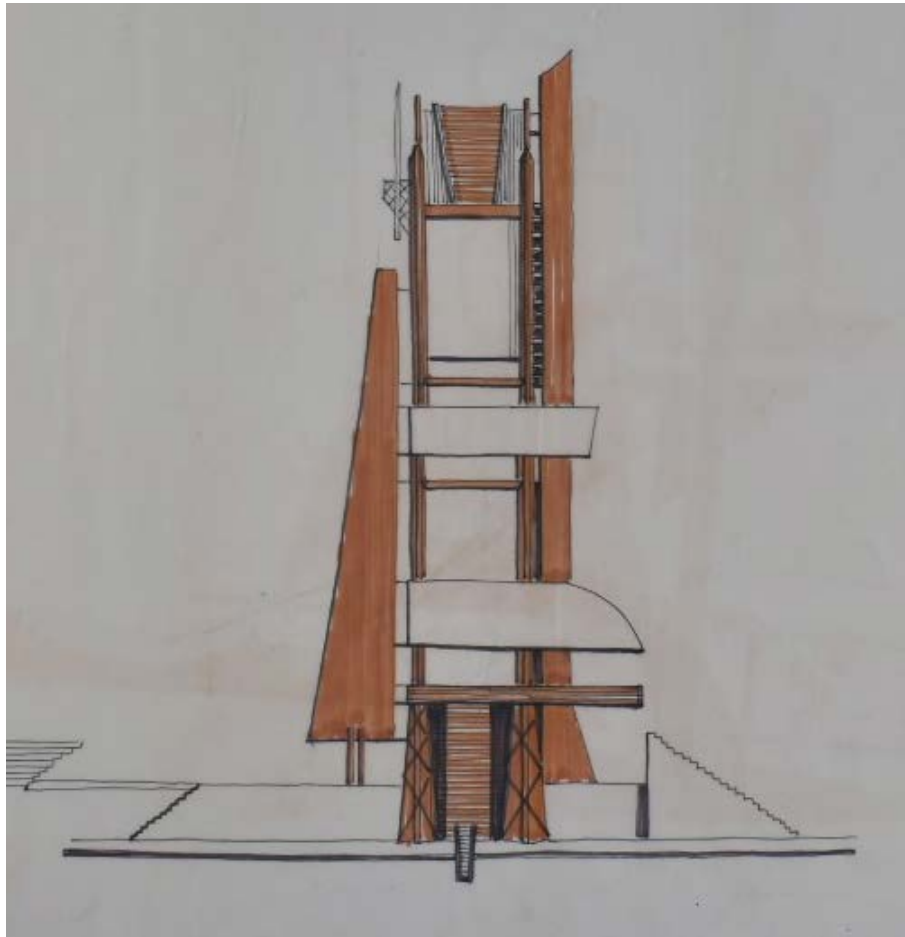


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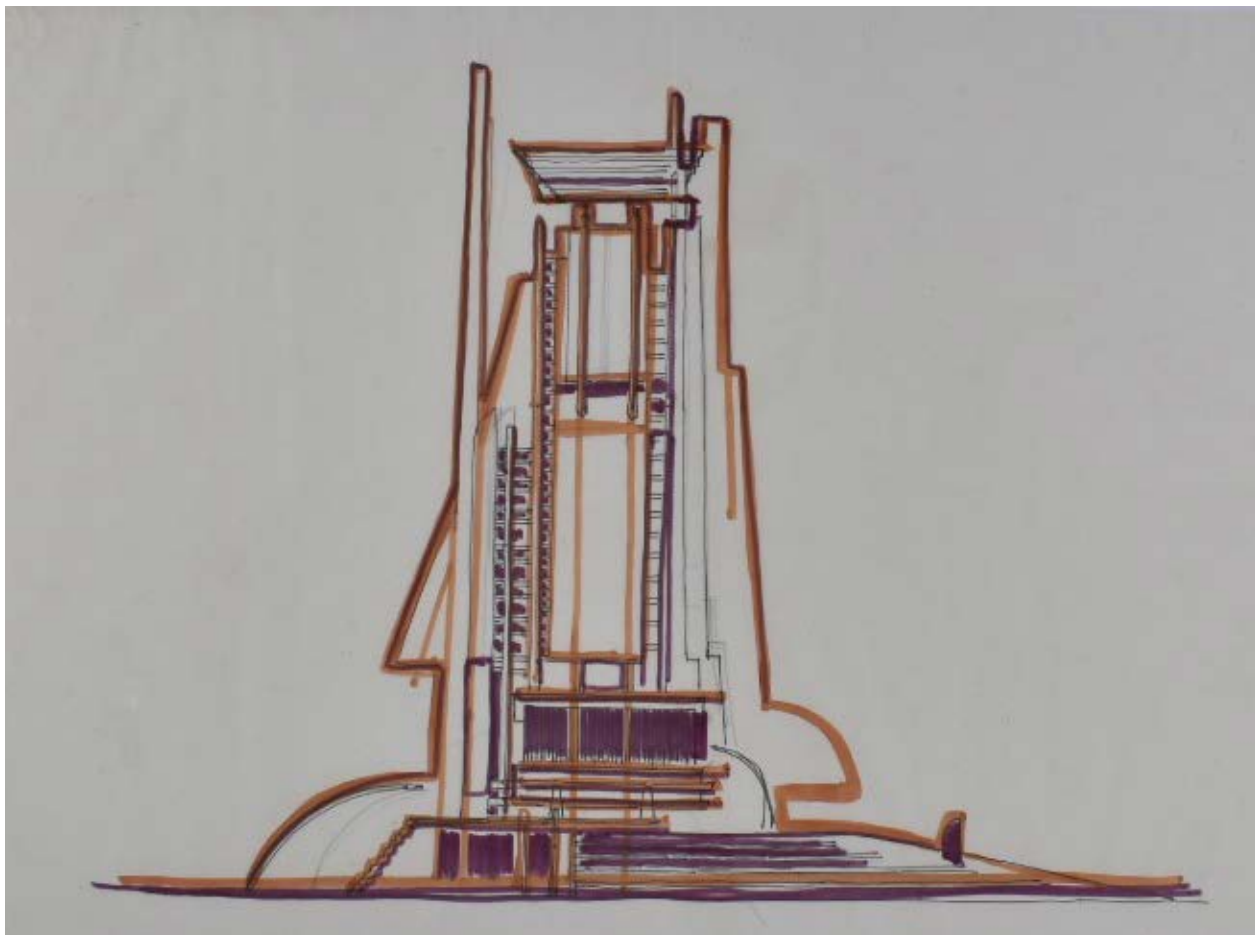
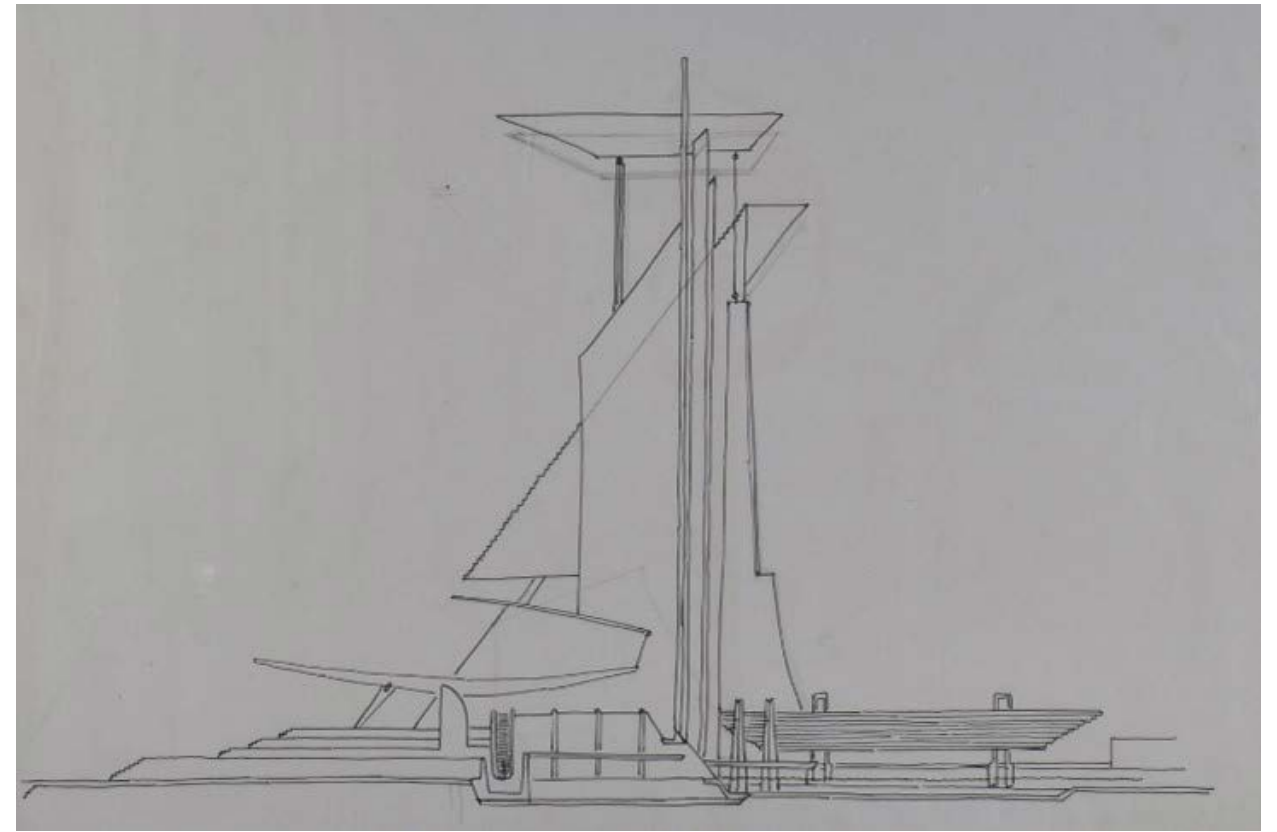
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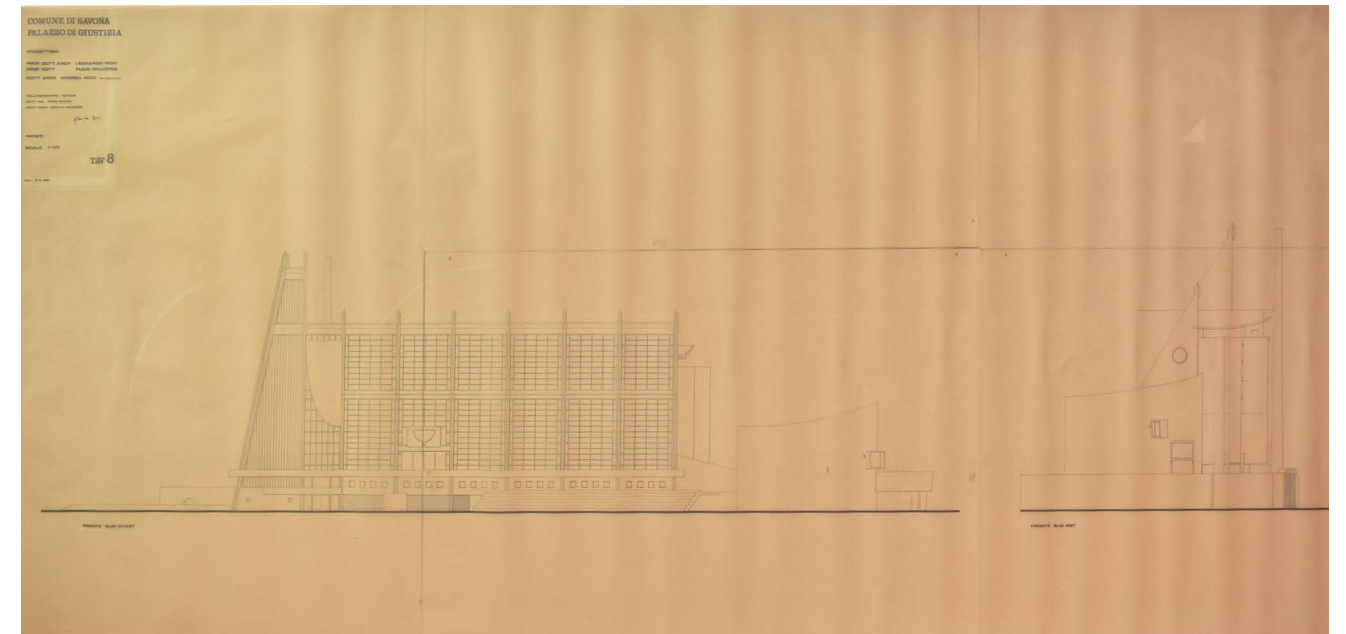
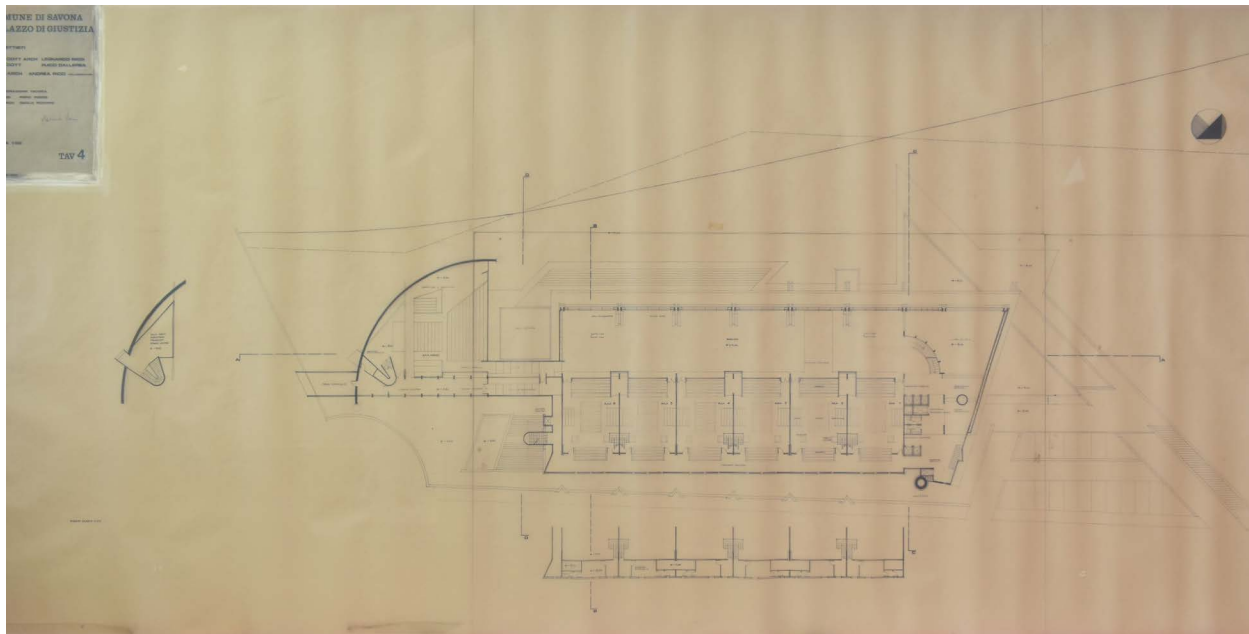
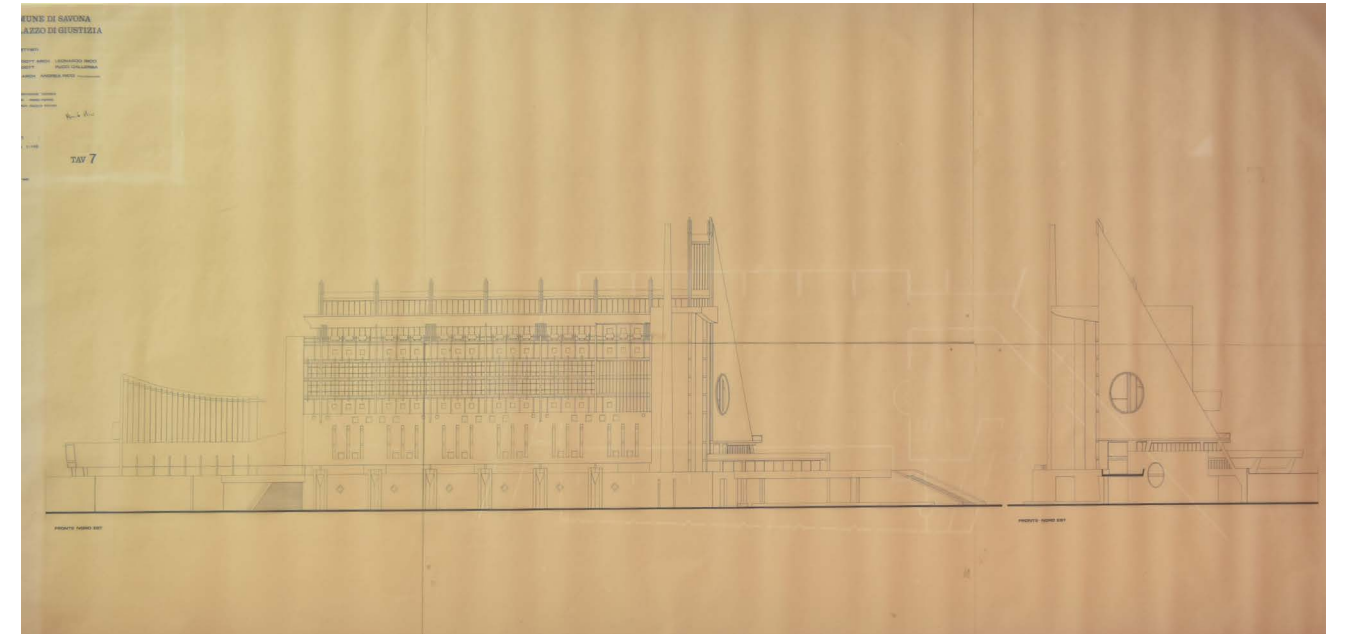
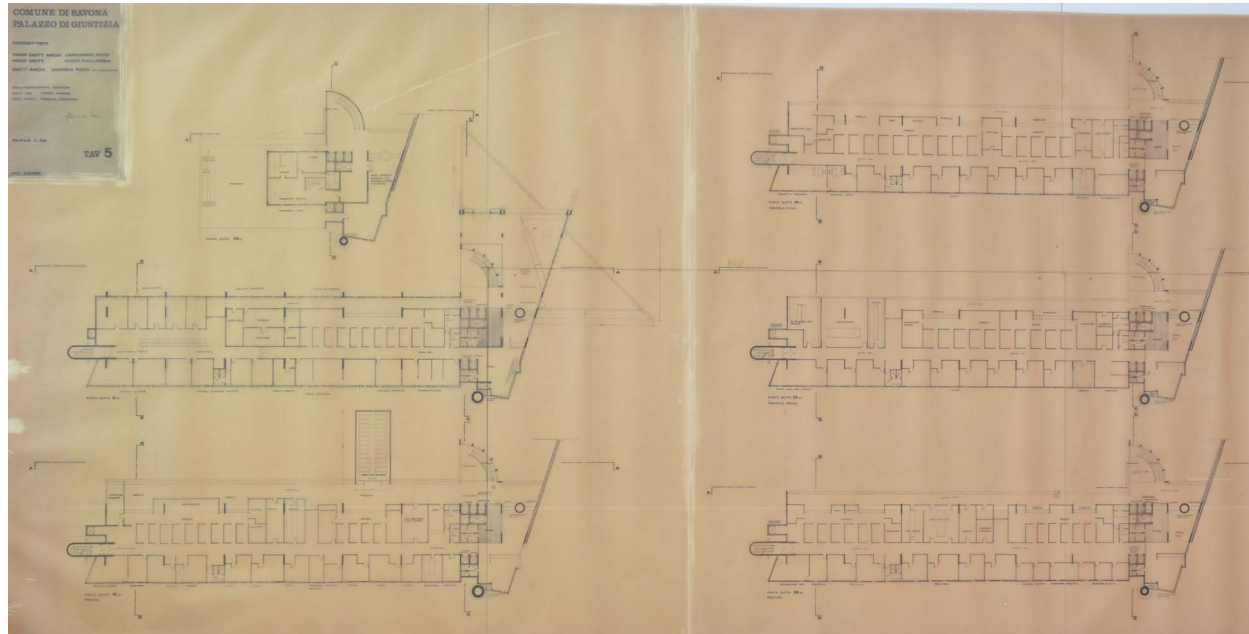
IMG.1-2-3: Savona Palace of Justice, study-sketches of the elevations, lapis and felt-tip on transparency, CSR.





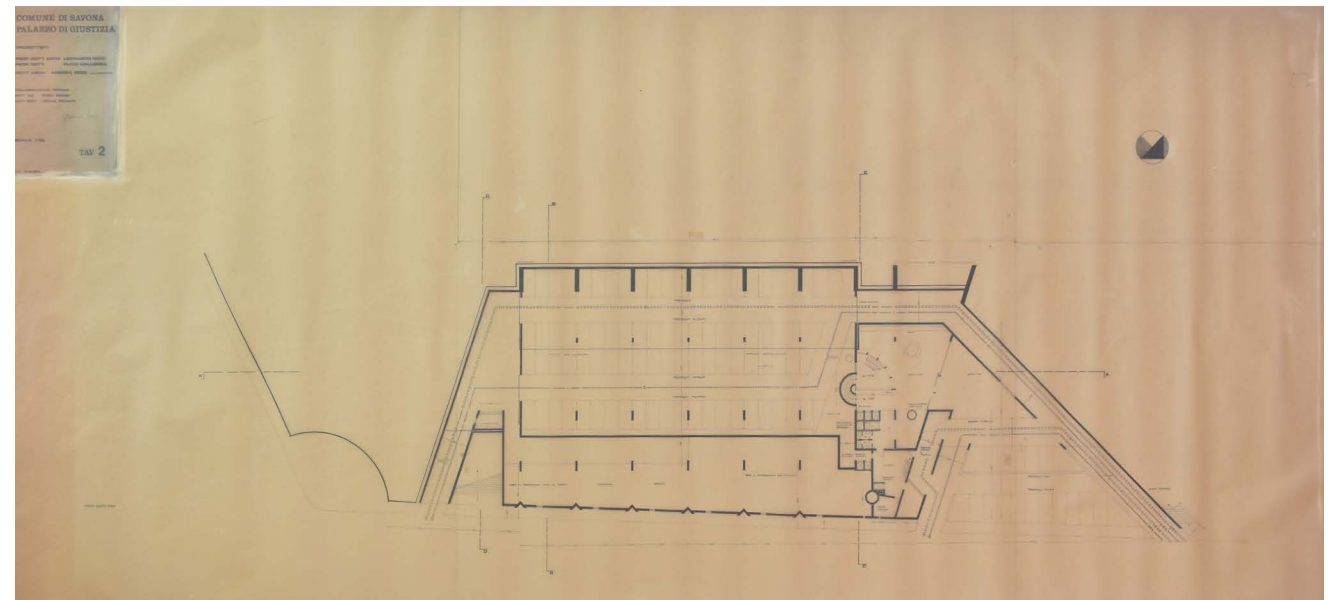
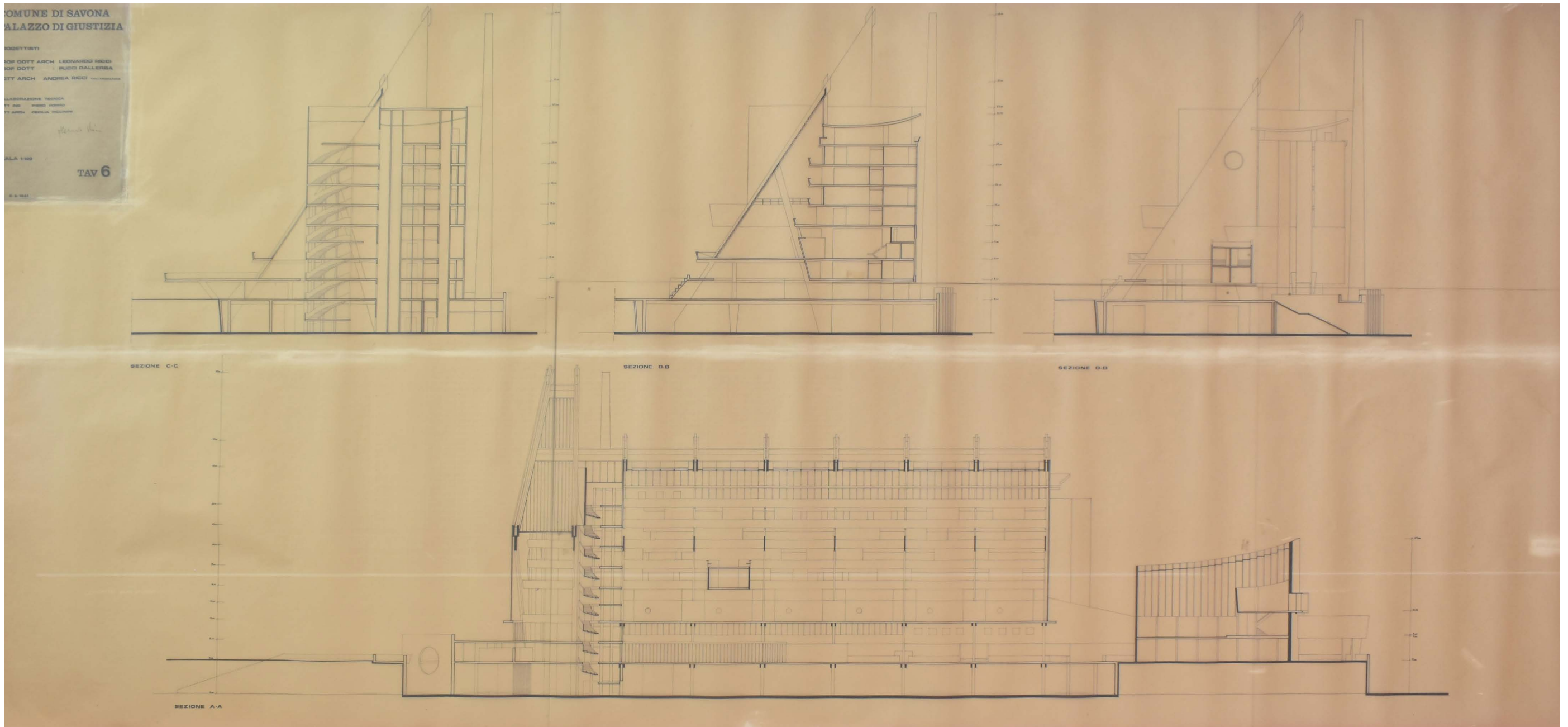
IMG.4-5-6-7: study-sketches of the elevations and sections, lapis and felt-tip on transparency, CSR.





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9	11

IMG.8: plans, scale 1:100, heliographic copies, CSR; IMG.9: plan at 11m, scale 1:100, heliographic copy, CSR; IMG.10: north-east elevation, scale 1:100, heliographic copy, CSR; IMG.11: south-west elevation, scale 1:100, heliographic copy, CSR.



IMG.12: sections AA, BB, CC, DD, scale 1:100, heliographic copies, CSR; IMG.13: general plan, scale 1:2000 and 1:500, heliographic copy, CSR; IMG. 14; plan at 0.50 m, scale 1:100, heliographic copy, CSR.

Too Good to Be True: the Savona Courthouse

Leonardo Ricci, Savona Courthouse, Savona, Project, City, Italian Architecture

/Abstract

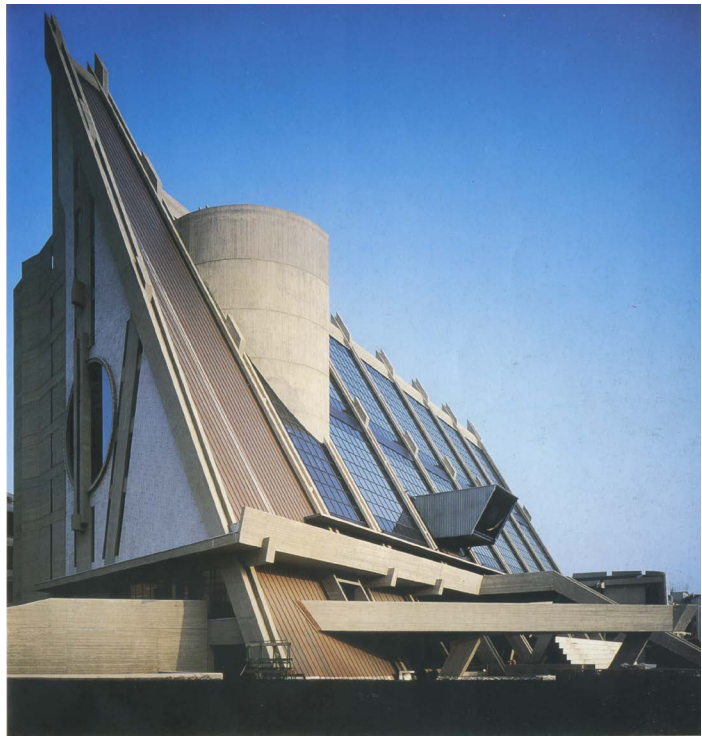
The article analyzes the Palace of Justice of Savona designed and built by Leonardo Ricci between 1972 and 1987, highlighting its aspirations and design motivations. In particular, the main aim is to trace the reasons why both the building and the area it occupies are now so degraded in the surrounding conditions of the project.

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The citizens of Savona see their city's Courthouse as a disheveled object of which they are ultimately somewhat ashamed. Many people know that it is an important work of contemporary architecture, but to everyone the state of disrepair in which the building and the area where it is located are evident. People often even go so far as to think that the courthouse is responsible for this degradation, and from time to time the city administration proposes to tear it down, thinking that it is thus interpreting a widespread desire in the citizenry. A paradoxical situation when one considers that Leonardo Ricci designed this intervention with the explicit purpose of revitalizing a long abandoned and neglected area of the city [Fig. 1].¹



3

From 1868 to 1977 Piazza del Popolo was the square of Savona's railway station [Fig. 2], that is, from the time Savona was reached by the railroad until the station was moved further west, where it still stands today. Thus for more than a hundred years the city developed around the urban axis that, starting from the old railway station, intercepts Piazza del Popolo (formerly Piazza Umberto I), Piazza Goffredo Mameli (formerly Piazza Pietro Paleocopa), and reaches as far as the Leon Placido Tower and the port, along the street named today after engineer Pietro Paleocopa, the minister of public works who brought the railroad to Savona. Since the station was moved, the city administration has never expressed a clear program for this area, despite the fact that it constitutes a nodal point of the nineteenth-century city. Thus one of the most urbanistically important places in the city has remained a giant underused square, occasionally occupied by fairs and markets, but most of the time used only as a parking lot. The need to solve this urban problem was evident as early as 1972, when Ricci began the project in the area once occupied by the freight yard, and it became overt when the building was finished in August 1987.

In conceiving the Savona Palace of Justice, Leonardo Ricci set himself not only the task, albeit a very ambitious one, of solving this complex urban planning situation: he also wanted to intervene in the society of his time, changing the way one of the places in which the state exercises its power over citizens is perceived. In the project report he states that he wants to rethink the spaces of the administration of justice in order to make them more transparent and less authoritarian. He analyzes past projects and identifies two ways of approaching

¹ The project for Savona immediately arouses controversy in the newspapers before even finding space in the more thoughtful publications cited below. On this subject see: Bruno Zevi, "Una specie d'incoscienza", *L'Espresso*, July 14, 1985; B. Zevi, "Giustizia è fatta", *L'Espresso*, December 27, 1987; Leonardo Ricci, "Per il Palazzo di Giustizia di Savona", *L'architettura cronache e storia*, no. 388, February 1988.

Fig. 1

Savona Palace of Justice, view from the northwest, 1987, image published in Leonardo Ricci, *Il Palazzo di Giustizia di Savona* (Florence: Centro Di, 1987).



2

the project; one he calls “rhetorical-repressive”², in which the building architecturally expresses the power of the state; and another he calls “Anglo-Saxon”³, in which the building is likened to an administrative office without expressing its centrality to civic life. Neither mode identified in the buildings of the past satisfies him, so he chooses a third way: that of constructing a series of “sacred”⁴ and monumental spaces capable of attributing dignity to the moments of public life dedicated to justice without, however, appearing as the unambiguous emanation of a power. Thus he assigns the name “basilica” to the large glazed volume through which the courtrooms are accessed [Fig. 3] and the large open space below the building is called the “covered plaza.” The building itself is not just a courthouse, but a “Palace of Justice.” A Palace for all the professionals associated with this social function, be they lawyers, policemen or magistrates; a place whose noble dignity is deemed essential to emphasize. The architecture, however, must avoid appearing as an empty and bombastic rhetorical amplification, and for this Ricci chooses to fragment the project into a multitude of occasions studied independently and treated, even formally, in a diverse manner. This explains why each facade is so different from the others, why each element also presents a multitude of variations within it, and why this need to diversify pervades all environments and invests even the most minute details⁵.

To these two ambitious goals Ricci also adds a third: that of changing and improving the entire civil society of his time.

After three years that the Palace of Justice in Savona is in operation [Ricci will state] I was able to have the verification of this new model: in

2 Leonardo Ricci, *Il Palazzo di Giustizia di Savona* (Florence: Centro Di, 1987), 13-17, 13.

3 Ricci, *Il Palazzo di Giustizia di Savona*, 13-17, 13.

4 Ricci, *Il Palazzo di Giustizia di Savona*, 13-17, 13.

5 This work of subdividing and identifying different parts in the same building has been a characteristic of Leonardo Ricci’s work since his earliest works. The fact that Umberto Eco dedicates “to Leonardo Ricci and the future city” his *Appunti per una semiologia delle comunicazioni visive* (Milan: Bompiani, 1967) which constitutes the first version of the volume that would later take the title *La struttura assente. La ricerca semiotica e il metodo strutturale*, must also be read in relation to this attitude.

Fig. 2

Letimbro Station in Savona, circa 1920, image published in Franco Rebagliati, and Mario Siri, *Savona Letimbro. Album della stazione 1868-1924*, II vol. (Turin: Alzani, 1997).



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the interior space [the large hall called the basilica] concerts are held and even in the square on which the palace rises children’s baby carriages circulate and, at night, couples in love⁶.

In a sense this project is not intended for the society in which Ricci lives, but for a possible but different future society where the place where justice is administered can come to be integrated into the cultural and leisure activities of the city⁷. This is the ambitious dream of a sacred building, conceived as a new civil church, as fragmented and plural as the secular and democratic institution it houses, capable of revolving around it all the vital moments of society: in a sense Ricci imagines in a single building all those complex relationships that characterize

⁶ Antonio Nardi, *Leonardo Ricci. Testi, opere, sette progetti recenti* (Florence: Alinea, 1990), 100. Giovanni Bartolozzi, *Leonardo Ricci. Lo spazio inseguito* (Roma: Testo & Immagine, 2004), 77-82, 82.

⁷ On this theme see also Emiliano Romagnoli, *Leonardo Ricci: un pensiero che si fa spazio* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2021), 41-55.

Fig. 3

Palace of Justice in Savona, view of the interior atrium called the “basilica,” 1987, image published in Leonardo Ricci, *Il Palazzo di Giustizia di Savona* (Florence: Centro Di, 1987).

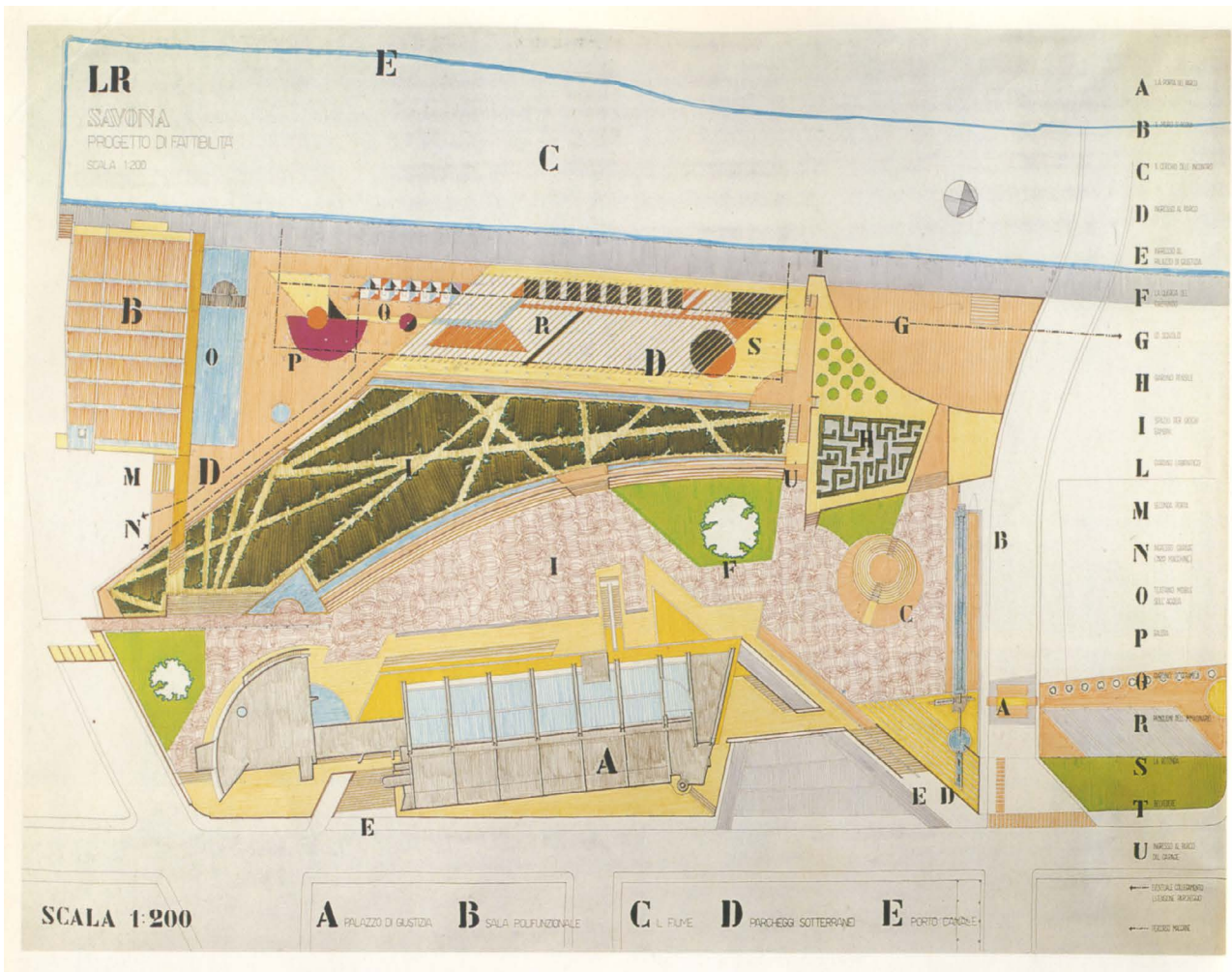
a city. Architecture itself then becomes the tool for transforming the present society into the future one, and urban spaces take on the maieutic force of a miraculous gesture capable of changing the lives of men, following in this the teaching of his master Giovanni Michelucci. It really seems that when a problem cannot be solved within the boundaries of the project assigned to him, Ricci chooses to expand those boundaries so that he can include in his project not only the urbanistic problems of this part of the city, or the symbolic problems related to an institutional building, but also the resolution of the difficult relationship between state and citizens and even the transformation of the present society into a more just, open and tolerant future one. Ricci's utopia is precisely evident in not accepting the conditions he is given to work. In the end, the good intentions behind this project turned out to be unsuccessful, not because the strategy put in place was wrong, but because the specific solutions were insufficient, because of excessive optimism about the future society, or more simply because what was imagined was too good to be true.

First and foremost, Ricci was aware that a good project needed to integrate with the city around it, and in order to resolve the complex urban planning situation around it he chose to place his project between the nineteenth-century city and a large urban park that in his intentions was to be built on the banks of the Letimbro stream: a park that was beyond his commission but that could have revitalized the riverfront that had long remained abandoned through landscaped gardens, fountains, a labyrinth, an underground parking lot, and even through a mobile theater on the river water [Fig. 4]. Placed between the nineteenth-century city and a merely imagined park, Ricci's project chooses to realize itself primarily with the latter: both the immense sloping glass window and the large covered plaza face this side. On the contrary it seems to turn its back on the pre-existing nineteenth-century city where it re-proposes the embankment of the pre-existing railroad and the closed curtain wall volumetry of the nineteenth-century city, and where in the more than 100 meters of its extension there is only one stairway opening that could have led toward the river. Ricci is aware that this choice may weaken the project, and in fact in his report he writes "the interruption of the cross streets, which do not find their natural outlet towards the river, creates a slight sense of discomfort"⁸, but immediately justifies this position by stating that such an inconvenience would be "immediately removed by the presence of the covered plaza"⁹, which was supposed to function as a junction between the city and the park. Thus the covered square takes upon itself a multitude of tasks central to the operation of the intervention, while the entire project entrusts its success more to the future city than to the existing one, the one that did not exist then and still does not exist today.

These lofty aspirations collide with the harsh Italian reality. The site where he had planned to build the large park on the Letimbro remains occupied by the warehouses of the State Railways' Rialzo Squad until 2008. The same regime of

8 Ricci, *Il Palazzo di Giustizia di Savona*, 29.

9 Ricci, *Il Palazzo di Giustizia di Savona*, 29.



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ownership of the areas changes several times, passing from public to investee company to ownership by private companies that intend to develop the land. Although the building has always been owned by the municipality, the land on which it stands had remained the property of the State Railways until the building was put in real estate registry in 2018. Many of the Courthouse's problems,⁶ and part of the perceived sense of degradation in the entire area, stem from the failure to create this urban park, yet they were also contributed to by certain design choices the architect paradoxically wanted to pursue to achieve a diametrically opposite effect.

The second difficulty that Ricci perfectly recognizes is that inherent in wanting to integrate the paths of a courthouse with those of the city, that is, in wanting to prevent such a building from becoming "a body in itself, defended and extraneous to the life of the community"¹⁰. In part, this position implies a different conception of the court in which control and oversight are not so central. This difficulty led him to raise the building off the ground so that he could multiply the paths through the building and increase the number of entrances. As many as seven entrances are still recognizable today, leading into at least five rooms of the building all located at different levels: three entrances along the north side, one to the south, one along XX Settembre Street, and two more on the west

10 Ricci, *Il Palazzo di Giustizia di Savona*, 15.

Fig. 4

The Palace of Justice within the design plan of the park along the Letimbro, image published in Leonardo Ricci, *Il Palazzo di Giustizia di Savona* (Florence: Centro Di, 1987).

side. The disproportionate number of entrances should have transformed the building into a junction between different urban routes and made it permeable to the community, while the absence of a main entrance should have ensured the existence of multiple entrances equivalent to each other. Instead, in spite of the best intentions of who had designed it, the courthouse was relegated to being an isolated foreign body within the city, the imagined pathways were closed because the urban park they led to was never realized, and for years people entered the courthouse from a crawl space. Similar problems were found throughout the building. For example, the maintenance of the sloping facade was planned through a trolley capable of sliding over the entire surface – a so innovative mechanism that it was not provided for in Italian regulations, which is why it was never possible to test it and put it in function. Thus without routine maintenance soon the sloping facade soon experienced water infiltration. Even the complex and fragmented interior spaces would have required great caution even during the most trivial plant or functional upgrades. Instead, the absence of the necessary care during the many interior interventions often ended up undermining the delicate architectural balance of the work.

Leonardo Ricci was well aware of a third constructive risk of a large, mono-functional building: he knew that functional specialization results in occasional and intermittent use of an urban area and sought to prevent this from happening. He had already recognized this drawback in many tertiary areas of modern metropolises and, as early as the mid-1960s, had addressed these issues in his “Research for a No-Alienated City”, which he also developed in university courses at the Pennsylvania State University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of Florida¹¹. To solve the problem he creates a space under the building that he calls a covered plaza where he places some functions independent of the courthouse such as a café, a bookstore, and a bank ATM, imagining that these activities, with the connection to the future park, could prevent the whole area from living “only during the hours when the courthouse is functioning”¹². He imagines this square being used by the citizenry on holidays or in the evenings, even during bad weather days, so as to bring “life to that area of the city that is now dead”¹³. The followed strategy could have worked, although the intended functions were perhaps few, but the ownership of these commercial spaces remained with the municipality resulting in a strange conflict of interest that led, after the first attempts to rent them out, to these places being left completely unused. In fact, those who should have rented them were the same entity that preferred to avoid any mixing of functions.

In fact, in the Palace of Justice in Savona Leonardo Ricci designed, though without succeeding in implementing it, that mixture of functional programs and uses that during the 1990s would become the banner of Dutch architecture and then an inescapable constant in all urban renewal operations. Even today,

11 Michele Costanzo, *Leonardo Ricci e l'idea di spazio comunitario* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2009), 69-74.

12 Ricci, *Il Palazzo di Giustizia di Savona*, 15.

13 Ricci, *Il Palazzo di Giustizia di Savona*, 15.

especially in operations aimed at increasing the commercial exploitation of an urban area, it remains unavoidable to resort to a plurality of functions that at least mimic that continuous and undifferentiated use of space proper to historic buildings. The Dutch experiences of the 1990s take up the idea of functional mixing from the research in megastructural architecture of the 1960s to which the Savona Courthouse refers and of which it is an example, albeit a late one. Ironically, all that remains today of this early attempt at urban regeneration through functional admixture is a dusty sign with the words “BAR” [Fig. 5].

Finally, it is true that the Savona Courthouse does not fulfill the ambitions it claims to achieve, but this is only because, if left alone, it is too small to fulfill them. In fact, despite its size, the task it takes on is far more immense by wanting to redefine the entire area from Via Sormano to Via Luigi Costi, and from Piazza del Popolo to the Letimbro stream. While setting itself much greater goals than those to which the project was called to respond, Ricci’s project turns out to be very generous with the future city because, by occupying the nineteenth-century blocks up to the continuation of Via Astengo, it doesn’t constrain the development of the western front of Piazza del Popolo. After all, it is precisely the absence of any project capable of continuing and completing the great aspirations expressed by the Palace of Justice that makes the difference between the future city dreamed by Ricci and the sloppiness of the current



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Fig. 5

Palace of Justice of Savona, covered square, 2017, picture by Vittorio Pizzigoni - photo VP 2017.

reality all the more evident.

This huge, utopian architecture of boundless ambitions trusts quite generously in future society to accomplish the lofty, perhaps too lofty, task it has set for itself. Despite its temporary failure, it nevertheless remains an example of the generosity with which it manages to trust in the future for its own completion, a generosity that truly leads one to liken this work to the great architectures of the past.

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Erratum: The Urban Imaginary in Doha, Qatar.

This erratum regards the following article: Chomowicz, P. (2021). The Urban Imaginary in Doha, Qatar. *Histories of Postwar Architecture*, 5(8), 120–146. <https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/11910>.

The correction concerns the addition of three lines of the article: a paragraph title and the first two lines of the same paragraph. They were wrongly crossed out during the layout procedures. The missing text is the following:

“Doha, a very brief history

Doha’s most widely circulated image of itself was until the 1970s the shimmering sea. Pearl divers, though locked in the ancient Indian Ocean slave trade”

The editorial team apologizes with the author and the readers for the inconvenience