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

edited by
Ilaria Cattabriga

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Lorenzo Mingardi
Keith Plymale
Stefano Setti**



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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 1967, Casa Studio Ricci.

In credit page:

Leonardo Ricci, Scuola Elementare, Villaggio "Monte degli Ulivi", Rieti, picture by C. Delemar, Casa Studio Ricci.



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Leonardo Ricci (1918-1994) Archives II

edited by
Ilaria Cattabriga

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Giovanni Michelucci

“Architecture is a Problem of Freedom”

The editorial of this thematic issue about Leonardo Ricci is an unpublished letter by Giovanni Michelucci addressed to Leonardo Ricci concerning the project for Sorgane. It implicitly describes a state of mind of Ricci's master and their difficult relationship. The text of the letter is kept in Casa Studio Ricci and was translated by the curator.

October 4, 1956

Dear Leo,

you didn't receive - because I didn't send them to you - three or four letters that I had begun to write you about particular moments, and which I left there, sleeping. And I didn't send them because they were “caresses,” as you call them, that might have come at unpropitious times - as it happens in professional life - and for which they would have lost their genuine meaning.

But now “Sorgane” offers itself not only so that those letters may be resumed and retain their deep and true sense of spiritual and human “caress” (need to feel a prompt and happy correspondence) but so that we may live together, responsibly, this exceptional adventure of shaping and witnessing the lives of ten thousand men not enslaved by mediocre regulations and dead theories.

(Dear Leo, how few people have understood that the problem of urban planning and architecture is a problem of freedom).

Fig. 1

Leonardo Ricci, picture of an untitled mosaic, folder “Mosaici e ceramiche”, Casa Studio Ricci.



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Last night you said things that comforted me: the modesty I consider grounding on operating is the condition for capturing those minimal vibrations (I think of the life of matter and want to treat it as the living element as such: and when I get in contact with life I become most humble) that almost everyone neglects, failing to capture them.

People say "Man, humanity"; but we must be interested in the secret or secrets (which they often do not know) of these men and humanity, about whom I know almost nothing. And how could I be proud? But if I can grasp a secret, then I "want" to translate it into a sublime and eternal form.

Your "good night" found me well; I hope the "good morning" I send you finds you full of faith.

Hug you,

Giovanni

“La Cava. International Outdoor Show of Plastic Arts” Exhibiting Art and Architecture in Monterinaldi, 1955*

Synthesis of the Arts, Exhibitions, André Bloc, Display Device, Sculpture and Architecture

/Abstract

“La Cava. International outdoor show of plastic arts” was an exhibition hosted at Leonardo Ricci’s studio-house in Monterinaldi in 1955 by the gallerist Fiamma Vigo and Ricci himself. According to the organizers, this event advocates for the search of a communion between the arts with architecture by presenting itself as an isolated experience within the Italian art scene. The aim of this in-depth study is to consider how this initiative was one of a kind by framing it within a larger context in order to understand the specific declination of the concept of the “synthesis of the arts” given by the organizers, the role of the studio-house architecture as a specific display device as well as the role of certain sculptures in relation to their placement within the villa.

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Stefano Setti, holds a PhD in Art History from Università Cattolica (Milan). He wrote his thesis in co-supervision with CUNY (New York City) on the Italian debate on the Synthesis of the Arts, 1933-1954. He collaborates with the courses of Contemporary Art (Università Cattolica, Milan) and Contemporary Architecture (Università di Bologna) and with the activity of CRA.IT (Research Center on Italian Abstract Art) where he’s carrying out research on the topic “Display Abstract Art”. His research focuses on relationships between art and architecture through the lens of criticism, politics, national identity, artistic process, materials, media and exhibitions.

August 29, 1955

Dear Fiamma Vigo, Dear Leonardo Ricci,

I have full faith in you and in your initiative. The unity of painting, sculpture and architecture is the most imperative need in the world of art today, which must be promoted not only in one but several ways. I am very pleased that you are the ones who settled the problem in your own way.

Best wishes for a certainly successful show.

As soon as I finish setting up the congress of art history I will come to visit you.

With love, yours,

Lionello Venturi¹

The initiative mentioned by the art historian Lionello Venturi is the international outdoor plastic-arts show named “La Cava” held at Leonardo Ricci’s studio-house in Monterinaldi in the hills just above Florence in the fall of 1955. We cannot know for sure if Venturi, who had a frantically busy schedule, actually visited the exhibition for which he shows deep recognition in his letter. Indeed, this event presents itself as an isolated experience within the Italian art scene that insistently advocates for the search for a communion between the arts. The aim of this in-depth study is to consider how this initiative was one of a kind by framing it within a larger context in order to understand the specific declination of the concept of the “synthesis of the arts” given by the organizers, the role of architecture as a specific display device as well as the role of certain sculptures in relation to their placement within the villa.²

Being a Painter to Direct Spaces

Despite his continuous, repeated and long stays in France since 1948, Leonardo Ricci firmly rejected the idea of moving to Paris and opted for staying based in Florence where he had a solid career as an architect. The French capital had enraptured him thanks to its artistic vibrancy but above all it had welcomed, and recognized him as a painter. This was an achievement he cherished since in Italy he was sharing this instinctive passion with a demanding professional activity that in those years received international acclaim as a result of the project of the Flower Market in Pescia he had brought into being with his (architect-painter) colleague, Leonardo Savioli. By contrast, in Paris he had inverted roles and was

* Thanks to: Sophie Kottmayer; Gerd Ingrid Olsson Ricci; Clementina Ricci; Ilaria Cattabriga; Annalisa Viatì Navone; Giovanna Uzzani; Dario Borruto; Nadia Verga and Ilaria Sgaravatto (Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro, Milano); Giovanni Cappello (Archivio Carmelo Cappello, Milano); Daniela Fattori (Archivio di Stato di Firenze); Elvia Redaelli (Triennale di Milano – Archivi); Henry Moore Foundation.
If not already in English, the original documents are translated by the author.

1 Letter by Lionello Venturi published in the *La Cava* exhibition catalog, special issue of *Numero*, 1955.

2 Giovanna Uzzani recently addressed this topic as well: Giovanna Uzzani, “Leonardo Ricci, gli artisti e la città. La mostra La Cava nel villaggio di Monterinaldi: un nuovo modello espositivo”, in Mirella Branca, Mauro Cozzi, eds., *Architettura, arti applicate e industrial design negli anni della Ricostruzione postbellica toscana (1944-1966)*, *Quaderni del Cedacot* no. 6 (Pisa: edizioni ETS, 2022): 93-106.

thus a painter first and an architect second. He participated in the “Salon de Mai” in 1950 and 1951, not to mention in a group show of Italian paintings at the Galerie la Boétie. In the French capital he encountered the art of Giacometti, Matisse, Picasso and met Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. As a consequence, his painting embraced the influences of abstract art through a particular declination that soon converted, also thanks to the interceptions just mentioned, into an archetypal and primordial figurativism where the subconscious wins over reason.³ Therefore, in the spring of 1950, he held a solo show at Galerie Pierre, the legendary studio on rue Bonaparte founded and directed by Pierre Loeb since 1924, who was a supporter of surrealism and its developments with abstract contaminations on an international level.⁴ Interestingly, Ricci’s exhibition was followed by a focus on the Cobra group (Appel, Balle, Corneille, Jacobsen, Jorn) and two solo shows on Maria Helena Vieira de Silva and Leonora Carrington among others. Ricci’s exhibition was not accompanied by a catalog, but during the vernissage, the painter-architect gave a lecture that was later published in the translated version in the Italian magazine “Architetti” with the title “Confession”.⁵ The talk was a cry of hope for the possibilities of painting as an instrument of knowledge and self-analysis: the “rectangle” of the canvas is a filter of the inner world within which one must condense the “acts” of life, the “truths” of the flesh and reality in all its forms. In Paris, the painter Leonardo Ricci gained first-rate positions, so much so that he is mentioned among modern Italian artists in an important monographic issue on Italian art, namely the magazine “Cahiers d’art” by Christian Zervos.⁶ Ricci appears alongside Burri, Cagli, Capogrossi, Consagra, Santomaso, Vedova, Prampolini and others, with a work of an ancestral character entitled “the couple” that was published in 1948 and accompanied by a brief biographical note specifying that he began painting at the age of 12. [Fig. 1]

Despite these premises and his skill in handling brushes, Ricci never abandoned architecture. He believed in the possibilities of painting as well as in the mission of architecture. Being forced to choose which art to devote himself to, was therefore an agonizing process he had to go through. Whoever was in two minds about which path to choose in those years could not but have Le Corbusier as mentor. Le Corbusier was a protagonist who better than anyone else had managed to juggle different arts (painting, sculpture and architecture) and who Ricci was lucky enough to meet in Paris. In his book, written “as an architect” in 1962 he recalls:

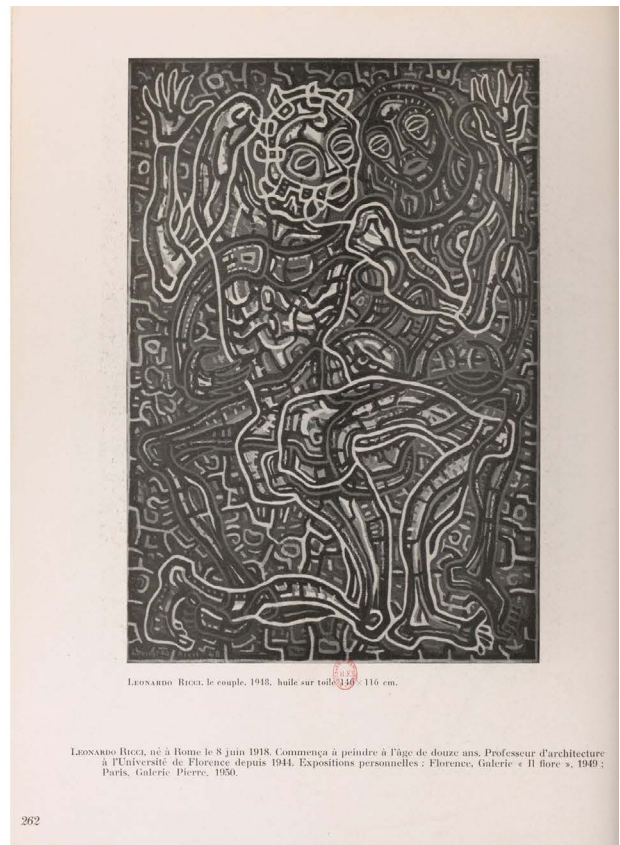
When I first met him [Le Corbusier] in his studio in Paris, I really believed and hoped that he was right. [...] In those years, the Unité d’habitation in Marseille was coming into being. In front of the drawings and maquettes illustrated in an enthusiastic and at the same time calm style, I was wait-

3 On Leonardo Ricci painter: Giovanna Uzzani, “Leonardo Ricci pittore” / “Leonardo Ricci painter”, in Maria Clara Ghia, Clementina Ricci, Ugo Dattilo, eds., *Leonardo Ricci 100. Scrittura, pittura e architettura. 100 note a margine dell’Anonimo del XX secolo* (Firenze: Didapress, 2019), 128-139/266-271.

4 Ricci’s exhibition took place from April 28 to June 12, 1950.

5 Leonardo Ricci, “Confessione”, *Architetti*, no. 3 (August 1950): 29-31.

6 *Cahiers d’Art*, no. 1 (1950).



1

ing in that house-neighborhood for a positive response of our existence. Everything was included in that building. Nothing neglected. The city was alive. The structure was alive. The material was alive. So were the problems of integration between architecture, sculpture, painting.⁷

According to Ricci (as it had been partially also in Le Corbusier's opinion), painting is a necessary tool for studying human beings and their living space: "then yes, it would be worthwhile to be architects and in this case 'painters,'" Ricci continues after deprecating the tragic working-class neighborhoods of Italian "neorealism" of the 1950s.⁸

However, Le Corbusier produced divergent effects: whereas the Roman painter Piero Dorazio, who was equally struggling to decide which path to take in that same period, decided to become a painter after meeting Le Corbusier, Leonardo Ricci decided to continue being an architect⁹. He later wrote: "After two or three years I was caught in a dilemma. If I had stayed in Paris, I would have had to give up architecture, and because it seemed to me that architecture had stronger social implications than painting, I went back to Florence. I started again with my house on the hill

7 Leonardo Ricci, *Anonymous (20th Century)* (New York: George Braziller, 1962), ed. it., *Anonimo del XX secolo* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1965), 89.

8 Ricci, *Anonimo del XX secolo*, 130.

9 When mentioning Piero Dorazio's "crisis", I refer to: Stefano Setti, *Cemento vs. colore. Il percorso di Piero Dorazio dall'architettura alla sintesi delle arti*, in Francesco Tedeschi, ed., *Piero Dorazio. Fantasia, colore, progetto* (Milano: Electa, 2021), 174-189.

Fig. 1
Cahiers d'Art, no. 1, Paris 1950.



2 |

project".¹⁰ In 1948, when he began his trips to the French capital, he bought a piece of land just outside Florence, where the following year he began to design his home studio with a living room space-atelier where he could paint for the following years to come. [Fig. 2] Between 1950 and 1953 he exhibited his works in Florence, held a solo show in Milan at the Bompiani Gallery (at the time directed by Guido Le Noci, a great supporter of international abstraction as well as future director of the Apollinaire Gallery) and at the Landau Gallery in Los Angeles.¹¹ Nevertheless, the need to unite these two disciplines persisted in Ricci's thoughts. It can be identified as a common pursuit that reflects a recurring topic of the 1950s. Indeed, the new international geopolitical arrangements had made it possible to rethink the figure of the artist and his social role regardless of specializations. It proved to be a relief for Ricci, who chose to remain an architect in the disguise of a painter.

The Theatre of the City: Art and Architecture in Florence

In 1942, Leonardo Ricci graduated in architecture under Giovanni Michelucci as his mentor, submitting a thesis entitled "Closed Theater and Open-Air

¹⁰ Ricci's quotation in Antonio Nardi, ed., *Leonardo Ricci: testi, opere, sette progetti recenti di Leonardo Ricci* (Pistoia: Edizioni del Comune di Pistoia, Italia Grafiche, 1984), 31.

¹¹ The various reviews of his activity as a painter are collected in the "Giornali di Bordo", Casa Studio Ricci. The so-called "Giornali di bordo", as Ricci called them, are albums-logbooks in which Leonardo Ricci's first wife Angela Poggi collected articles, photographs and documents about her husband's activities.

Fig. 2

Ricci's atelier in his Studio-house in Monterinaldi.

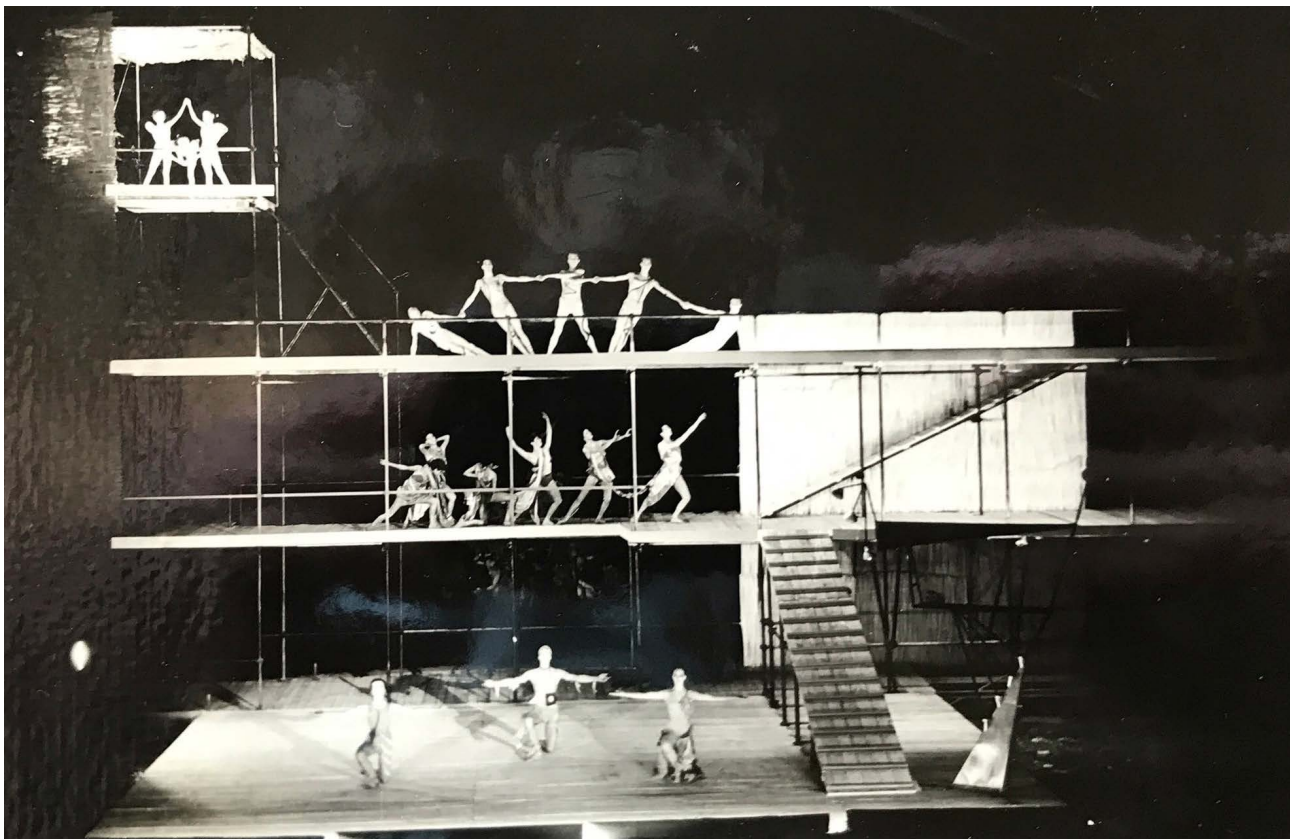


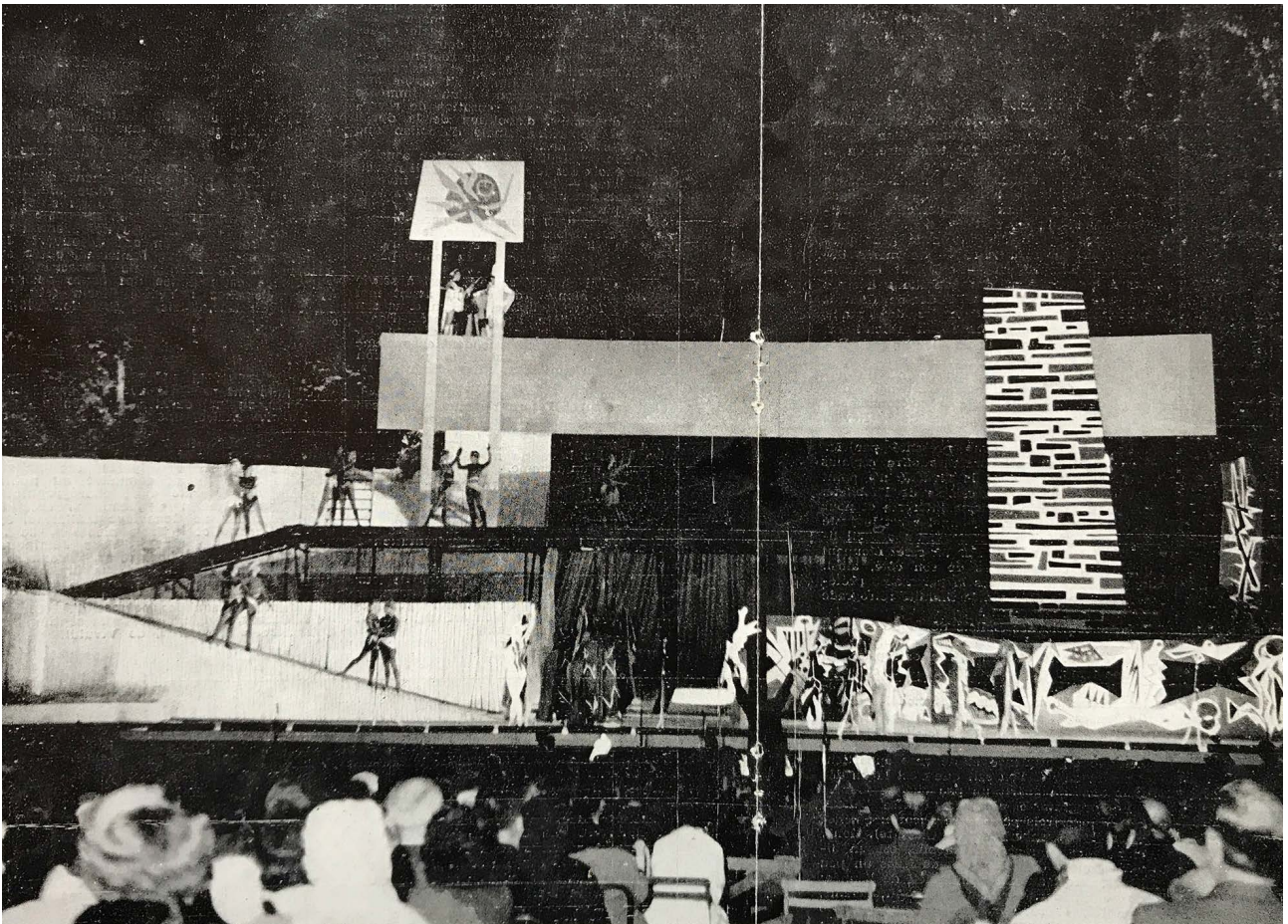
Fig. 3
Set design and costumes by Ricci for the ballet "Il filo errante", Giardini di Boboli, Firenze 1953. Casa Studio Ricci.

Theater", which was a subject of constant interest to both of them.¹² In 1953, he supervised the set design, costumes and lighting for the ballet "Il filo errante" staged for the VI Italian High Fashion Show at the Giardini di Boboli in Florence, with music by Luigi Dalla Piccola and choreography by Grant Muradoff. [Fig. 3] He wrote:

With the advantage of being in the open air, the stage becomes a living element inserted in nature and creates new dimensions in space. Moreover, the stage is built with superimposed elements, which give a greater impression of depth and width. Because of this, the actors can move on different levels making it possible for them to do away with the three-dimensional element of the ordinary stage and create a four dimensional atmosphere [...] I have tried to make a sketch of the lighting. What



12 The subject was familiar to Michelucci who, in 1942, saw his project of an "Open Air Theater" at E42 in Rome come to a halt: Claudia Conforti, *Teatro all'aperto per l'E42. Roma, 1938-42*, in Claudia Conforti, Roberto Dulio, Marzia Marandola, *Giovanni Michelucci 1891-1990* (Milano: Electa, 2006), 176-178.



4

I had in mind was something like pure music creating light effects in the space. I hold that with more appropriate means one could attain a keyboard from this elementary solution. Instead of sound, colored lights would come out of it.¹³

The structure is conceived as a “living element,” like a construction site with differentiated heights and dimensions not at least through the use of stairs to emphasize the “four-dimensional atmosphere” generated by the dancers’ movement.

Ricci curated the set design for Monteverdi’s “Orfeo” in Aix-les-Bains again in the summer of 1955. In France, as we can read in the press, he is remembered first as a painter and then as an architect, so he was invited as decorator and set designer for said occasion.¹⁴ [Fig. 4] For the journal “Le progrès”, Henry Planche interviewed Ricci in his house-studio in Monterinaldi that had been completed just a few years before. Planche was impressed by the absolute freedom of the place and wrote that the only present conformist element was the whiskey.¹⁵ Even the design of “Orfeo” is conceived on the movement of the actors within a space, set on planes placed at different heights that insist on horizontal and vertical directions - like the grammar of his house-studio - obtained through

13 From the event brochure in English now in “Giornali di Bordo”, Casa Studio Ricci.

14 The various reviews are collected in the “Giornali di Bordo”, Casa Studio Ricci.

15 Henry Planche, “Leonardo Ricci prepare le festival D’Aix-les-Bains”, in *Le Progrès* (June 4, 1955). Now in “Giornali di Bordo”, Casa Studio Ricci.

Fig. 4

Set design by Ricci for Monteverdi’s “Orfeo”, Aix-les-Bains 1955, Casa Studio Ricci.

decorations conceived and made by Ricci himself.

As already mentioned, in the early 1950s Ricci, as a painter, had the opportunity to exhibit in Florence and, among other shows, in 1951 he took part in a group exhibition within the Florentine space of the well-known gallerist-painter Fiamma Vigo.¹⁶ This *sui generis* gallery had the same name as the magazine that Vigo had founded with the architect Alberto Sartoris. They chose to name both “Numero”. Although directed by personalities from different cultures (Sartoris was a leading figure of European functionalism, while Vigo was an eclectic intellectual interested in different aspects of art), they both agreed on the promotion of abstract art and on the transversal potential of this language. They adopted a not obvious international openness and engaged with first-rate collaborators.¹⁷ Under the auspices of these precepts, “Numero” organized an international congress of “Avant-Garde Art in Contemporary Life” in December 1951 as an alliance of painters and architects in “defence of the achievements of the plastic arts and modern architecture,” as we read in the records.¹⁸ A mixed group participated including the architect Giovanni Michelucci and the painters Atanasio Soldati, Achille Perilli, Gualtiero Nativi, Mario Nigro, Piero Dorazio, and even Fiamma Vigo. [Fig.



5] The contributors transmit their vision based on the need to seek “plastic-aesthetic affinities between painters and sculptors following abstract and concrete tendencies”. In opposition to the law of 2% “residue of tradition and liberty style in Italian architecture”, they proposed for art and architecture alike investigations into color, form, and materials, thus decrying the lack of specialized events and publications that would welcome these new directions of plastic research. Yet

16 1ª Mostra d'Arte in vetrina del giornale Numero, edited by Unione Generale dei Commercianti di Firenze, Firenze, negozi di via Tornabuoni (May 7-12, 1951).

17 On the activities of the Magazine and Gallery “Numero”: Rosalia Manno Tolu, Maria Grazia Messina, eds., *Fiamma Vigo e “numero”. Una vita per l'arte* (Firenze: Centro Di, 2003). See also: Caterina Toschi, *La promozione di Fiamma Vigo: presenze e assenze toscane alla Biennale di Venezia (1951-1970)*, in Flavio Fergonzi, ed., *Presenze toscane alla Biennale Internazionale d'Arte di Venezia* (Milano: Skira, 2017), 105-131.

18 Piero Dorazio Archive, Milan: typescript of “Congresso di pittori e architetti”, Florence, December 28-29, 1951. Like all conferences devoted to the theme of the relationship between the arts, also this appointment highlights a great difficulty in dealing with the topic. A report of the various speeches is presented by Alberto Sartoris and Giusta Nicco Fasola in *Numero* (December 1951 – January 1952): 1-3.

Fig. 5
Poster for the international congress “Avant-Garde Art in Contemporary Life” organized by *Numero*, Florence, December 28-29, 1951. Poster design by Oreste Borri. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Fondo Fiamma Vigo.

in 1953, the magazine "Numero" organized a survey among Italian and French architects accompanied by a questionnaire asking how a new idea of synthesis of the arts could be conceived.¹⁹ Among others, the questioned architects are Giovanni Michelucci, Ludovico Quaroni, Ico and Luisa Parisi, Franco Albini, Figini and Pollini, André Sive, André Wogenscky, and Claude Parent. What could be deduced from the answers was how the "artificial" decoration was averted since the plastic elements of the architecture already constituted a whole sculptural and pictorial value. In these years, for several interpreters, maintaining specializations was the only solution to the dilemma of unity of the arts, which needed new spaces and no more walls. Ricci himself claimed the need to return to easel painting, which is emblematic of the bourgeois conception of the artist but "free" and autonomous from certain operative practices that are typical for the historical avant-garde orientedness on a hierarchy of the arts.

Although Ricci led a rather secluded intellectual life, the city of Florence was the scene of a new artistic "Renaissance" at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s, that had recently been recognized as a "Bauhaus on the banks of the Arno."²⁰ The Florentine abstractionists of the "Arte d'oggi" group (1947) and then of "Astrattismo classico" (1950), which included painters such as Vinicio Berti, Bruno Brunetti, Alvaro Monnini, Gualtiero Nativi and Mario Nuti among others, reinterpreted Marxist theories on the sociality of art through the preservation of the autonomy of their work. Thanks to the city's typical craft heritage, the art-life relationship took on a more concrete measurability. In addition to appearing on several occasions within the magazine, a good part of these artists gravitate around the "Numero" gallery, which in these years offers an intense and diversified exhibition activity. Fiamma Vigo established some important axes. On the one hand, we have the one from Florence to Rome, thanks to the contribution of the Roman artists of the Age d'Or group and on the other hand, there is the one between Florence, Milan and Paris, taking advantage of the expansionist aims of MAC (Movimento Arte Concreta), which had been twinned with the French Groupe Espace since 1954. The "Numero" Gallery was an outsider to the canonical rules of the market that distinguished the more prominent galleries. To meet the artists' needs who demanded to move out of the boundaries of their ateliers, Fiamma Vigo supported experimental actions that went beyond the gallery space. She promoted new ways of fruition in close relation to the social and urban context as an unprecedented artistic setting.

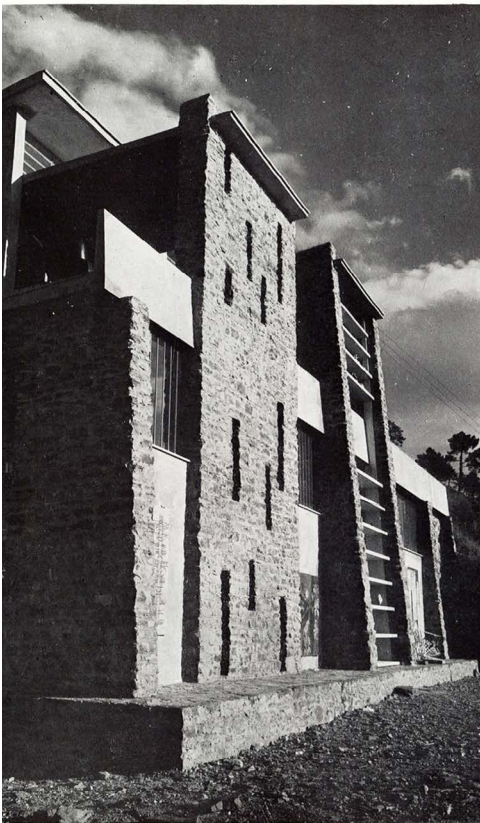
In 1953, the magazine "Numero" published a long contribution by Leonardo Ricci entitled "Painting as Language" in which some "instinctive" aspects of his creative process are emphasized. The text is accompanied by images of some of his sets, some of his paintings and architectures including the very recent house-studio in Monterinaldi that represents a perfect synthesis of his research.

19 "Un'inchiesta", in *Numero*, Special issue dedicated to Benedetto Croce and contemporary Italian and French architecture (January-March 1953): 15-25.

20 Kevin McManus, *Astrattismo Classico. Un'esperienza concretista a Firenze* (Milano: Electa, 2022), 140-186.

Habitation près de Florence

Leonardo Ricci, architecte.



Photos Talani

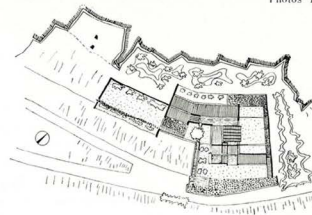
L'architecte a construit sa maison à partir de deux considérations de base :

— la manière de vivre de sa famille ;
— la situation même de la construction sur un terrain de roches et de carrières, dans un paysage merveilleux, sur l'une des collines qui, dominant Florence, permet de découvrir un très beau panorama sur la ville.

Le but était de créer un cadre pour qu'à la vie puisse se dérouler dans l'intimité des êtres et des choses, la maison s'intégrant aussi parfaitement que possible dans le paysage.

Ne pouvant concevoir qu'à certaines heures de la journée il y ait des « zones mortes » dans sa maison, l'architecte a créé un ensemble unique dans lequel les espaces, s'interpénétrant, sont conçus de façon à suggérer à chacun une fonction déterminée.

En ce qui concerne les matériaux, il a utilisé ceux qu'il pouvait avoir le plus facilement et les plus économiques : pierre, béton armé, fer et verre. Ricci pense, en effet, que l'expression moderne ne découle pas seulement de l'emploi de matériaux nouveaux et riches, mais de la manière dont on les utilise. D'autre part, se maintenir dans des limites de prix assez étroites lui paraît indispensable à notre époque.



Where do I begin? I start with the search for the other. I study the other. I try to get in touch with them directly and away from conventions. First of all, I am interested in women. They are the first 'other' for me. Then men, children, animals, the sun, the moon and so on. All those things that, despite everything, have remained at the foundation, the ones that had already been there when man appeared on earth.²¹

The Stage: the Home-Studio in Monterinaldi as an Artistic Device

Cohabitation, knowledge exchange and, above all, community integration are at the core of the design of the Monterinaldi village. The genesis of the neighborhood is long and complex. After buying part of the land, Ricci began designing his house-studio in 1949. [Fig. 6] This first establishment became

Fig. 6

"Habitation près de Florence" in *Aujourd'hui, art et architecture*, no. 5, 1955. Leonardo Ricci's Studio-house, Monterinaldi and detail of the quarry as an integral part of the architecture.

²¹ Leonardo Ricci, "La pittura come linguaggio" (from a lecture given at the Brooklyn University NY, in 1952), *Numero*, no. 6, (November-December 1953): 17-19.



7

the prototype for subsequent architectures and community services that would be built in the village.²² Until 1962, still under his supervision, the hill located along Via Bolognese Nuova, would in fact be “populated” by other single-family houses. [Fig. 7] Despite his efforts to create outdoor spaces without “boundaries” and separations to stimulate exchanges, as well as “living” architectures that could always be modified according to individual needs, the experiment did not have the desired outcome even though artists including the sculptor Pierluca degli Innocenti, the painter Romola Bellandi and the ceramist Marcello Fantoni chose to live there. Ricci intended for this neighborhood to become a sort of colony of artists and intellectuals like in Darmstadt.²³ The idea behind the German colony (1901), with buildings and houses designed by Joseph Maria Olbrich and Peter Behrens, was to elevate everyday life to an aesthetic experience: from painting to decoration, from decoration to object, from object to architecture, from architecture to environment and from environment to behavior. It was supposed to achieve the most complete result through the concept of the synthesis of the arts. The theory behind it is that the home represents the ideal place for the fusion between art

22 Ricci, *Anonimo del XX secolo*, 150. Concerning the copious secondary literature, I'd simply like to highlight: Chiara Baglione, “Leonardo Ricci: le case di Monterinaldi”, *Casabella*, no. 669 (July-August 1999): 47-61; Corinna Vasić Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto “esistenzialista”* (Firenze: Edifir, 2005), 97-116; Michele Costanzo, *Leonardo Ricci e l'idea di spazio comunitario* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2009), 25-28; Maria Clara Chia, *La nostra città è tutta la terra. Leonardo Ricci architetto (1918-1994)* (Wuppertal: Steinhäuser Verlag, 2021), 77-95.

23 Antonella Greco, *Riflessioni su Ricci, scrittore architetto artista*, in *Leonardo Ricci 100*, 15.

Fig. 7
Village of Monterinaldi, late
Fifties.

and life. It is thus the perfect “frame” for the success of the “Total Work of Art” that takes its starting point from theatrical and procedural premises in which interior and exterior spaces play a key role as they are shaped and designed starting from the movement of the inhabitants’ body and their expressive and sentimental needs.²⁴

In these terms, the parallel with Monterinaldi works perfectly with the substantial difference that Ricci does not aspire to connect to an aesthetic dimension. His idea of architecture starts from nature to meet the basic needs of the inhabitant, which are very simple and common to the savage, the modern man and the man of the future. In fact, the neighborhood has been renamed as “Village of the Martians”. “A ‘modern’ house is basically just a house that contains the whole history of man,” writes Ricci.²⁵ One could speak of “the beginning of architecture,” or “the beginning of art,” as Giedion would have preferred. In his book, “The eternal present”, Giedion speaks of the primitive cave precisely as an immeasurable and changeable space. In other words, it is a pre-architectural space par excellence shaped by nature itself.²⁶ It is not by chance that Ricci was convinced that Leonardo da Vinci, the protagonist of the Italian Renaissance who blended architecture and nature, had long been going to the hill of Monterinaldi.²⁷

The first establishment built is the house-studio that Ricci designed for himself and his family. It is a real organism that emerges and takes its impetus from two abandoned stone caves that have become an integral part of the architecture, both spatially and materially. [Fig. 6] The conformation of the architecture is totally unprecedented and courageous. Through the creation of hanging gardens, terraces, volumes at different heights, walls and slanted windows, there is no distinction between open and closed areas. The interior space responds to “existential” and not typological needs. As in an organism, every part of the house is “alive”, even if the distribution of rooms is not canonical. It is a dynamic, interchangeable, non-hierarchical space, corresponding to actions and not to cultural legacies. It is a space counteracting boredom, it is a space without doors. The house has a sort of “urban planimetry” that follows the steep hillside and is built on the highest point to enjoy a breathtaking view of the nearby village of Fiesole and the city of Florence. As Le Corbusier had noted during his dazzling Tuscan trip in 1907, viewing the city from an elevated lookout point allows for unusual points of intersection between nature, landscape and architecture: the Brunelleschi dome is a hill among hills. Conversely, if the viewpoint is reversed, i.e. from the city towards the hill, even

24 Marco De Michelis, *Il teatro della vita*, in Stefano Setti, eds., *Sintesi astratta. Espansioni e risonanze dell'arte astratta in Italia* (Milano: Electa, 2022), 19-25.

25 Leonardo Ricci, “A Monterinaldi presso Firenze”, in *Domus*, no. 337 (December 1957): 1-10.

26 Siegfried Giedion, *The Eternal Present. The Beginning of Art. A Contribution on Constancy and Change* (Washington D.C: The National Gallery of Art, 1962).

27 Ricci, *Anonimo del XX secolo*, 150.

the village of Monterinaldi seems to be molded directly into the mountain. "I wanted to use materials that were within my reach because one must work within certain limits and not create aprioristic concepts of matter. I wanted architecture to become a landscape and landscape to become architecture" Ricci wrote in his book "Anonymous to the 20th century", explaining better than anyone else the adopted process against trends and against styles. "It is not about beauty but about truth. Even if it sometimes rains from the roof".²⁸

The house-studio, and later the entire village, are immediately placed in the spotlight of national and international critics.²⁹ Most reviews grasp the novelty and quality, while others distance themselves from the "so-called" harmonious integration with nature. On the pages of "Zodiac", Giulia Veronesi tries to mitigate Wright's indirect contribution, which in those years was mistakenly overlapping with a Brutalist reading of the complex starting with the absence of forms that are typical of art brut.³⁰ Much of the criticism in fact concerns close reactions between Ricci's double activity as a painter and architect. In this regard, it is Ricci himself to clarify in what way the pictorial sensibility had remained present in his work. In a lecture given in 1952 at the University of Southern California entitled "Architecture in relationship to the other arts", Ricci explains that the relationship between the arts refers to the designer's ability to create complex spaces that can respond both to the needs of each art and to the different aspects of human sensibility: "To satisfy my woman's senses I became a musician, a painter, a sculptor, an architect and a poet," Ricci writes. These arts, he adds, are like "doors that open a passage between the external and internal worlds".³¹ The goal that architect Ricci sets for himself is to create spaces that are capable of responding to both, human needs and those of the different arts. Not self-referential spaces but backdrops, or "scenes," capable of catapulting us into unexpected dimensions, just as happens in theater and cinema.³²

In a later interview, Ricci said that the environments of the house must force us to "make movements as if we were different individuals."³³ Monterinaldi's studio house is in fact conformed from a precise rhythm dictated by the movement of the human body. The subdivision of the rooms is as if corresponding to theatrical acts separated from each other by precise intervals. In a well-known 1981 text entitled "Conscious Man. Art and Knowledge in Paleohistory", Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti identified theater, but especially dance, as the origin of

28 Ricci, *Anonimo del XX secolo*, 150.

29 The various reviews are collected in "Giornali di Bordo", Casa Studio Ricci.

30 Giulia Veronesi, "New look on the hills near Florence", *Zodiac*, no. 4 (1959): 11.

31 Leonardo Ricci, *Architecture in Relationship to the Other Arts*, Unpublished typescript now in: Ilaria Cattabriga, eds., "Leonardo Ricci (1918-1994). Archives I", *Histories of Postwar Architecture*, no. 9, 2021, 97-110, <https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/v4-n9-2021>.

32 In reference to some environments in the home-studio, Ugo Dattilo mentions the filmic space: Ugo Dattilo, *La casa teorica. Ricerca continua di un nuovo spazio architettonico*, in *Leonardo Ricci 100*, 64, <https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2611-0075/v4-n9-2021>.

33 From an unpublished interview that can now be found in: Costanzo, *Leonardo Ricci*, 13.

architecture: the result of projections and geometric-three-dimensional extensions of the human body in action.³⁴ The human body, Ragghianti continued, determines a rhythm, tectonics, a volume and especially that vertical-horizontal relationship that is typical for the architectural elevation and plan. Ricci himself carefully studied the relationship of these two spatial diagrams (as a paradigm of being alive) for a “theoretical house” that was never realized but that he would have liked to build in Monterinaldi.³⁵

The embryonic architecture of the house-studio seems to have theatrical prerogatives that Ricci measured with the actions of the human body, but also with the possibilities offered by different arts. In order to verify this latter hypothetical aspect, he decided to stage a plastic show of sculptures and paintings in this house together with the gallerist Fiamma Vigo in 1955 as an unprecedented and original, or for him natural, declination of the concept of “synthesis of the arts”.

“La Cava”: The Show

Leonardo Ricci endorsed the interest of gallery owner Fiamma Vigo in seeking alternative spaces for new expressions of contemporary art capable of establishing unusual dialogues with the public and with architecture. Vigo had a versatile team of artists to draw on and Ricci had recently completed the construction of his home-studio under the auspices of a new “vital” relationship between user, space and landscape. It was a perfect match that led to staging an exceptional exhibition.

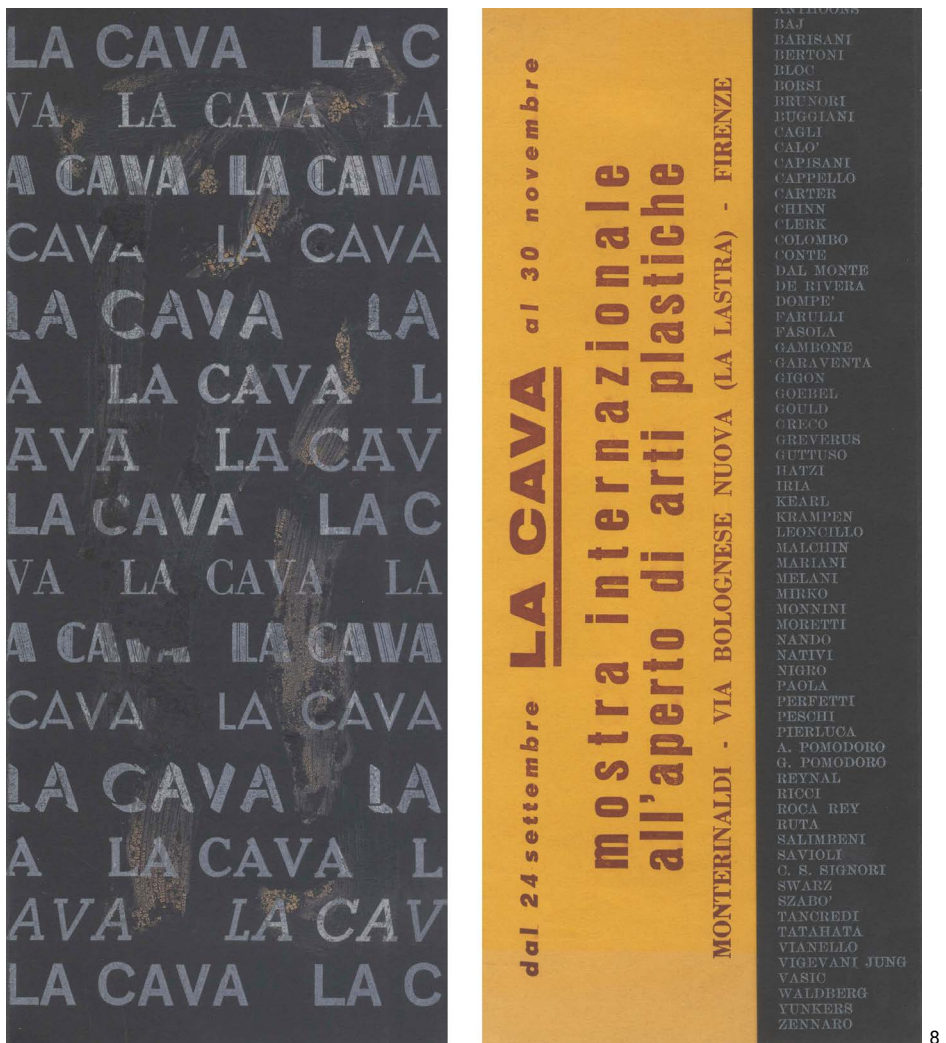
On September 24th, 1955 the show “La Cava. International outdoor show of plastic arts” was inaugurated. It was organized by “Numero” with the collaboration of architect Leonardo Ricci, who offered the outdoor spaces of his house-studio in Monterinaldi.³⁶ The chosen title recalls the place while the subtitle refers to the singularity of the event that intends to liberate the arts from the most canonical set-up constraints to facilitate the freedom of the viewer. The invitation and the catalog, published for the occasion as a special issue of the magazine “Numero”, list the presence of around sixty international artists including painters and sculptors. [Fig. 8-9]

The heterogeneity of the selection immediately stands out. Some of the exhibitors participating in the show were part of the Milanese nuclear movement (Enrico Baj and Joe Colombo) and amongst these were names like: Willy Anthoons, Paris; Renato Barisani, Naples; Andrè Bloc, Paris; Corrado Cagli, Rome; Carmelo Cappello, Milan; Guido Gambone, Florence; Gigon, Lausanne; David Gould, New York; Will Greverus, Marburg; Renato Guttuso, Rome; Leoncillo, Rome; Mirko, Rome; Arnaldo and Giò Pomodoro, Milan; Yuen Yuey

34 Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti, *L'uomo cosciente. Arte e conoscenza nella paleostoria* (Bologna: Calderini, 1981), 62-80. See also: Tommaso Casini, Annamaria Ducci, Fabio Martini, eds., *ART before ART. L'uomo cosciente e l'arte delle origini: con e dopo Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti*, Lucca: Edizioni Fondazione Ragghianti Studi sull'arte, 2022.

35 Dattilo, *La casa teorica*, 60-67.

36 *La Cava. Mostra internazionale all'aperto di arti plastiche*, Monterinaldi, September 24 – November 30, 1955.



Chinn, Canton-China. Along with the former, the show also saw participating the Florentine abstract artists Nigro, Monnini, Nativi and Ricci himself with a mosaic entitled “shadows”.³⁷ These presences reflect Vigo’s eclecticism, which was evidently a piece of interest, along with Ricci, in testing the tightness of the works in context rather than finding conformity between very distant languages.³⁸ However, with the exclusion of a few authors, such as the figurative Emilio Greco, Renato Guttuso and the “classical” abstract artists, upon more careful observation, it is possible to notice a certain unity among the works. Many of these even in terms of material and technique choices, present organic-primitive or automatic-surreal research, which categorise them in direct dialogue with the cave-architecture. In some cases it seems that the earth gave birth to those works, paraphrasing what Ricci wrote about his home.³⁹ With a few

37 Unfortunately, it is impossible to verify everyone’s actual participation due to the limited documenting material and the lack of some reproductions in the catalog. *La Cava. Mostra internazionale all'aperto di arti plastiche*, exhibition catalogue, special issue of *Numero*, Fall 1955. In that same year *Domus* gives news of the show by listing all the artists and publishing the sculpture by Roberto Fasola: “Notiziario d’arte”, in *Domus*, no 312 (November, 1955): 60; 64. This report appears along with news of another outdoor sculpture show on the terrace of a Milanese apartment, organized by Galleria Montenapoleone.

38 In 1955, Vigo’s gallery in Florence hosted, among others, shows by Madi Art Group from Argentina; paintings by Bice Lazzari; prints of Adja Yunkers presented by Piero Dorazio and “Proiezioni dirette” by Bruno Munari. For a complete timeline of the shows: *Fiamma Vigo e “numero”*, 253-264.

39 Ricci, *Anonimo del XX secolo*, 150-152.

Fig. 8
Invitation for the exhibition “La Cava”, Monterinaldi 1955.

24 SETTEMBRE - 30 NOVEMBRE 1955

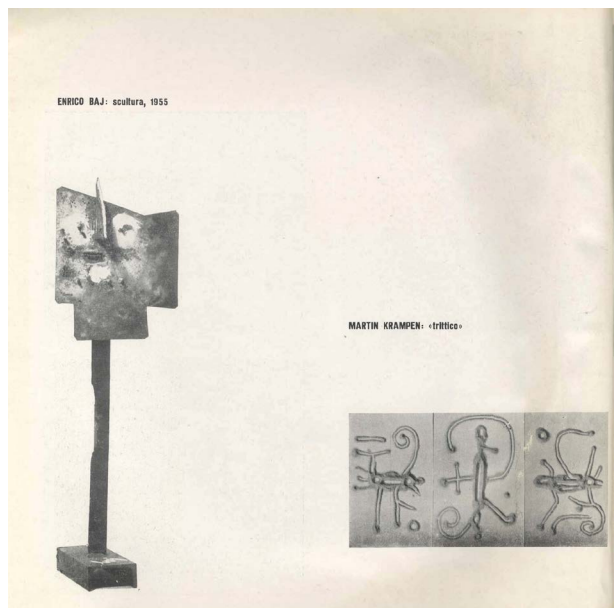
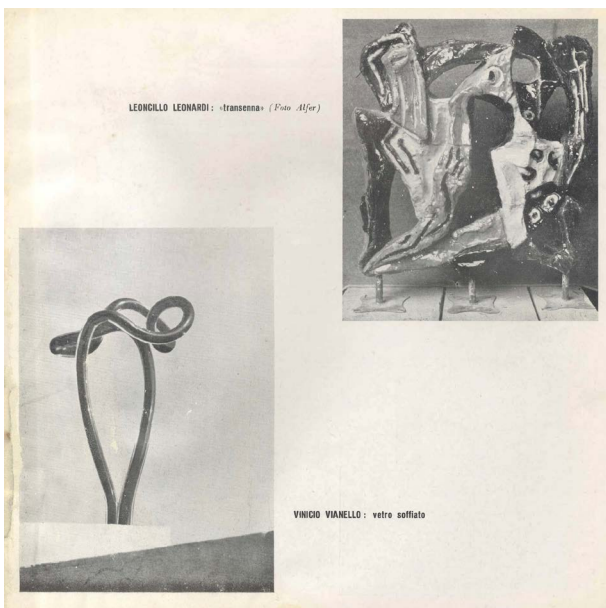
numero

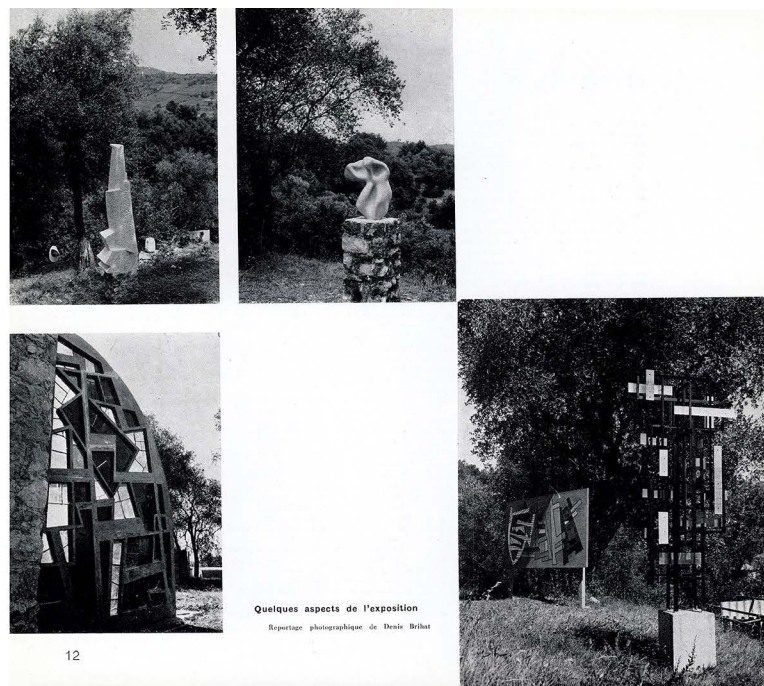
LA CAVA

mostra internazionale
all'aperto di arti plastiche

MONTERINALDI - VIA BOLOGNESE NUOVA (LA LASTRA) - FIRENZE

Fig. 9
Catalogue for the exhibition
"La Cava", Monterinaldi, 1955,
Cover and some pages.





exceptions, many of the creations were made with techniques and materials so as to enhance the plasticity of the forms also through the use of craft practices such as blowtorch, terracotta, stained glass and mosaic. Indeed, abstract and organic researches had given the opportunity to all three arts (painting, sculpture and architecture) to independently achieve the same “plastic” results through processes inherent in the language of each medium. This was one of the purposes of the show whose real novelty, however, consisted in the open-air setting. On the first pages of the catalog, Pierre Guéguen, a French critic close to André Bloc’s newspapers (“Art d’aujourd’hui” and then “Aujourd’hui. Art et architecture”), emphasizes this aspect and speaks of “laboratories” of forms for a new idea of synthesis.⁴⁰

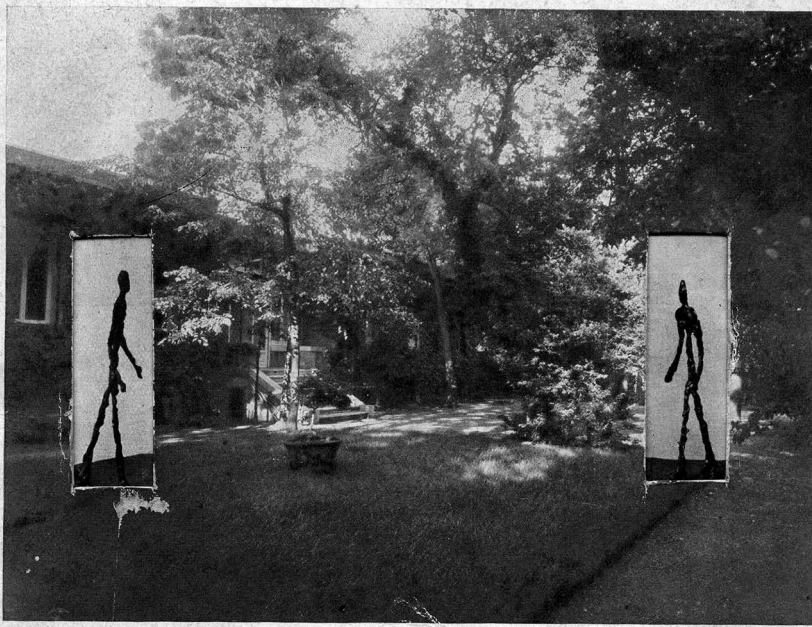
“All art must have a confrontation with space and not be condensed as decorations on architectural surfaces”. A similar experiment, he continues, “had been proposed the previous year in Biot, Côte d’Azur, where artist members of the Groupe Espace from all over Europe had presented their achievements in direct contact with nature for the show ‘Espace Architecture Formes Couleur’.”⁴¹ [Fig. 10] The purpose of said exhibition was in line with the mission of Groupe Espace, which was founded in 1951 at the behest of the artist-architect-editor André Bloc and the painter Félix Del Marle, who advocated an increasingly incisive social involvement of abstract art in everyday life. We no longer speak of “integration des arts plastiques,” but “integration des arts plastiques dans la vie”, as Bloc wrote.⁴²

40 Paul Guéguen, *Coexistence des arts plastiques*, in *La Cava*, no page numbers.

41 *Espace. Architecture Formes Couleur*, Biot, July 10 – September 10, 1954.

42 André Bloc, *Intégration des arts plastiques dans la vie*, in *Espace Architecture Formes Couleur* (Exhibition catalogue, Paris 1954), 4-5. See also: Paul Guéguen, *André Bloc et la réintégration de la plastique dans la vie* (Boulogne sur Seine: Editions de l’Architecture d’aujourd’hui, 1954). More recent study in: Diana Gay, ed., *L’été 1954 à Biot: architecture, formes, couleur*, catalogue for the exhibition (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux-Grand Palais, 2016).

Fig. 10
Catalogue for the exhibition
*Espace Architecture Formes
Couleur*, Biot 1954.



GIARDINO DEL PALAZZO VENIER DEI LEONI

VENEZIA - S. GREGORIO 701

11 |

At the turn of the 1940s and 1950s, in line with the just mentioned propositions, the placement of sculptures in public places, as well as the choice of placing artworks in less affluent building complexes for temporary events or permanent projects, became imperative. According to the open-air dimension, the record belongs to the city of Varese in Italy, which starting in 1949 proposed international sculpture shows held in the park of Villa Mirabello (in which authors such as Arp, Moore, Fontana, Leoncillo and Hepworth would take part) to encourage a new public debate in a city that had been severely compromised by the fascist regime.⁴³ Regarding the relationship between sculptors and architects, the art-critic Argan, in the catalog of the first edition of the "Premio Varese", stresses the importance of formal conception and construction rather than the more "compromised" concepts of decoration or destination.⁴⁴

"La Cava," however, has some differences with both these latter exhibitions and the one in Biot mentioned in the catalog which, although their importance,

43 On these shows: Riccardo Prina, *Le due mostre di scultura all'aperto a Varese, 1949-1953*, in Fabrizio D'Amico, ed., *Quaderni di scultura contemporanea n. 3* (Roma, 2000): 123-149; Paola Torre, *Sculture nel verde. Le prime esposizioni all'aperto di scultura contemporanea: le esperienze italiane in relazione alla scena europea (1948-1957)*, *Rivista di linguistica Letteratura Cinema Teatro Arte. Annali online Sezione di Lettere*, XIII (Ferrara: Università degli Studi, 2018): 199-228.

<https://doi.org/10.15160/1826-803X/2094>.

44 Gulio Carlo Argan, ed., *Premio di scultura città di Varese* (Varese 1949), 4.

Fig. 11

Catalogue for the exhibition, *Mostra di scultura contemporanea*, Palazzo Venier dei Leoni (Peggy Guggenheim House), Venezia 1949.

“merely” place sculptures made elsewhere in a green space. Monterinaldi is not a public park but a private place where the architecture of the house-studio plays a primary role. Also Peggy Guggenheim hosted a show of contemporary sculpture between the interior and exterior of her Venetian residence in 1949. The extraordinary cover of the catalog conceived by the artist Sebastian Matta, features an interesting assembly of images in which two Giacometti figures, that are part of a larger sculpture, invade the garden as intruders through two cut-out “windows”. [Fig. 11] Despite this “opening”, the works were mostly read in continuity with the reflections of the water or the natural elements of the garden, and no particular displaying direction is evidenced in relation to the architecture of Palazzo Venier dei Leoni.⁴⁵

By contrast, Monterinaldi’s entire show is built around Ricci’s architecture like a “natural” setting, a filter with the landscape that works as a device of vision in the same way as some sculptures. Because of the various spatial interpenetrations and the play between interior and atmospheric voids, the house-studio itself has been read as a sculpture. It is more in line with Moore than with Wright, wrote the painter-architect Leonardo Savioli.⁴⁶

The catalog of “La Cava” also published a letter by Leonardo Ricci addressed to the authorities of his city, with the hope that an exhibition such as this may become a model to be promoted over time.⁴⁷ Ricci emphasizes how this show manages to touch the essence of some issues. Thanks to a set-up designed in a real-life context, the audience could indeed understand the spiritual and material utility of art. These are the same purposes that on an international level Sigfried Giedion invoked from the CIAM conferences about the need to bring art into the open space: “To work for the creation of a physical environment that will satisfy men’s emotional and material needs and stimulate his spiritual growth”.⁴⁸ Ricci even wanted this show to become a kind of “market show” and not one of pure contemplation. The first to understand this need, Ricci wrote, were the artists who agreed to participating by sending works at their own expense.

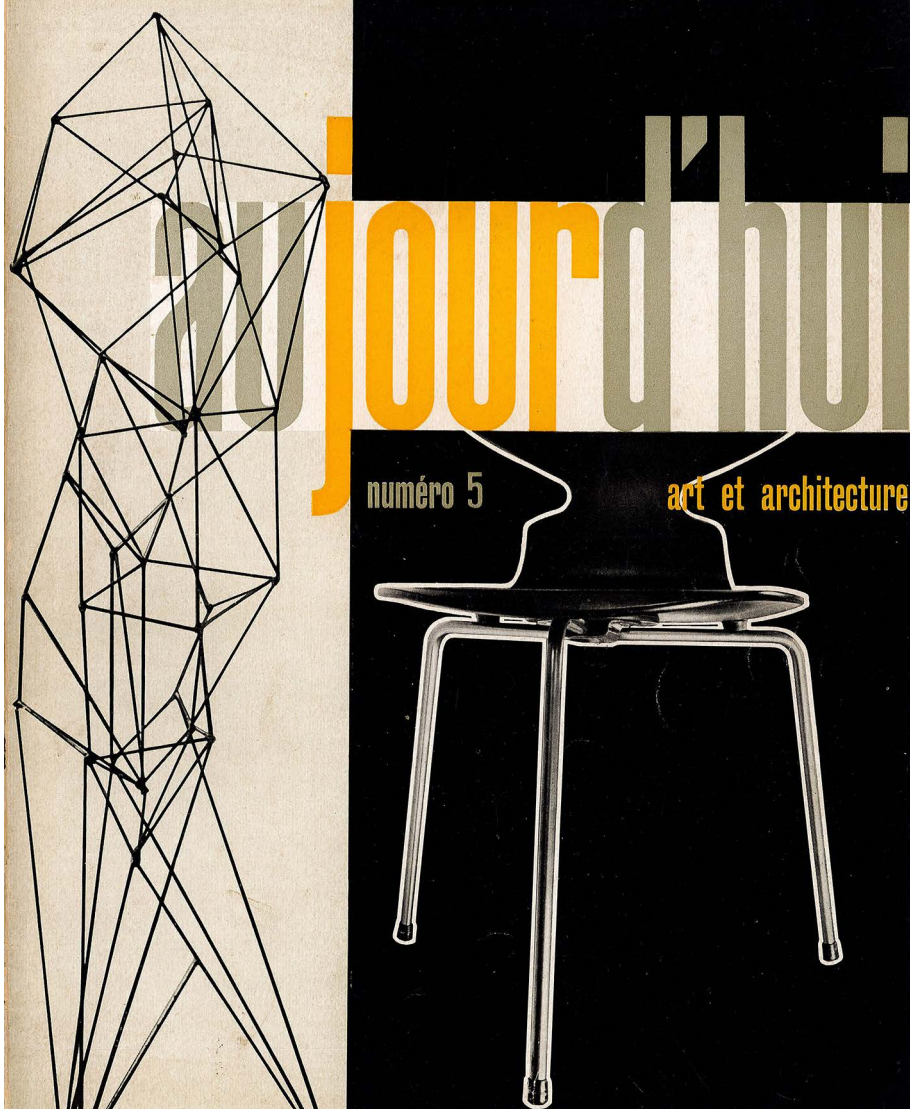
The surviving pictures captured the spirit of the exhibition neatly. Through careful placement, the sculptures are freely located in the garden without enclosures, to stimulate interaction with the view and with the body of the spectator. Many others, including the few works on the wall, were hung on the exterior walls of the house, emphasizing a kind of symbiosis with the building to highlight the importance of living the exterior as the interior and the need to live in close contact with works of art by following inclinations away from bourgeois prerogatives. This aspect was central in Ricci’s thought, who, like his mentor Michelucci, believed in the importance of design, furniture and craftsmanship as instruments for improving society.

45 Giuseppe Marchiori, ed., *Mostra di scultura contemporanea* (Venezia, 1949). The artists who took part in the show are: Arp, Brancusi, Calder, Consagra, Giacometti, Hare, Lipchitz, Marini, Mirko, Moore, Pevsner, Salvatore, Viani.

46 Leonardo Savioli, “Una casa sulla collina nord di Firenze”, *Architetti* (1952): 11-13. Now in “Giornali di bordo”, Casa Studio Ricci.

47 Leonardo Ricci, in *La Cava*, no page numbers. In the early 1900s, some art exhibitions were set inside private homes due to commercial reasons. Bruce Altshuler, ed., *Salon to Biennial: Exhibitions that Made Art History*, vol. 1, 1863-1959 (London-New York: Phaidon, 2008): 16-17.

48 This was the central node, “The Aim”, of the CIAM 6, Bridgwater 1947. See: Siegfried Giedion, *A Decade of New Architecture* (Zürich: Edition Girsberger, 1951), 17.

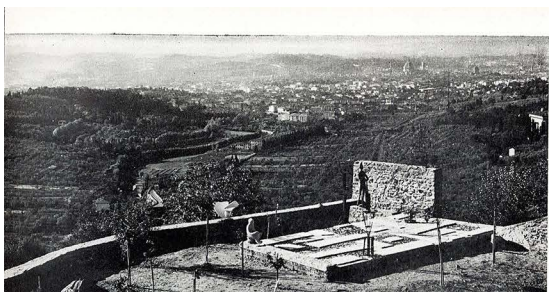


Aujourd'hui

numéro 5 art et architecture

Fig. 12

"Exposition internationale d'arts plastiques", *Aujourd'hui art et architecture*, no. 5 (1955). Cover with sculpture by Gould.



Habitation près de Florence

Exposition internationale d'arts plastiques "La Cava"

Organisée par la revue « Numéro ».

Peintre et architecte, j'ai médité depuis longtemps de présenter des œuvres picturales et sculpturales dans le cadre de l'architecture moderne. Mon projet se rattachait à des buts précis :

1° Voir si, de nos jours, peinture, sculpture et architecture sont plus ou moins liées entre elles au point de former un monde spécifique ;

2° Voir si ces trois arts, depuis longtemps séparés, au moins dans le sens de « cohabitation », ont des langages stylistiquement propres ou si la longue séparation a créé une confusion des moyens d'expression. C'est-à-dire voir si en architecture, sculpture, peinture, l'espace — pour prendre l'un des nombreux éléments qui composent l'œuvre d'art — a acquis un style particulier à chacun de ces arts ou si leurs moyens d'expression se confondent dans une certaine mesure ;

3° Voir si les artistes sont prêts à travailler en équipe sans qu'il y ait confusion des buts, pour un enrichissement réciproque et vital de chacune des œuvres sans qu'aucune d'elles ne soit soumise aux autres ou déformée par elles ;

4° Tester de soustraire la sculpture et la peinture à l'emprise des marchands et des galeries, méthode qui, à mon point de vue, va à l'encontre de l'histoire, car les opportunités de nos contemporains ;

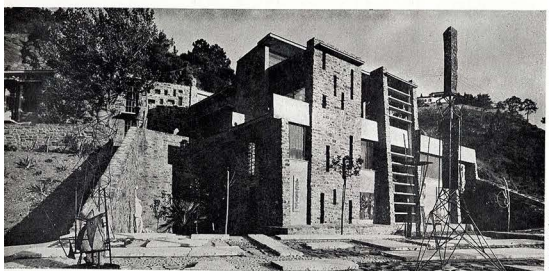
5° Voir si les sculpteurs et les peintres, mis à part la valeur des œuvres elles-mêmes, sont techniquement préparés à réaliser des œuvres qui, au lieu de se montrer dans les musées ou de pendre au murs des « salons bien », s'intègreraient dans la vie des hommes dans les cités nouvelles, dans la nouvelle architecture, deviendraient en somme des objets familiers avec lesquels s'établirait un colloque comme aux époques romane ou gothique ;

6° Voir si, avec cette méthode, la sculpture et la peinture peuvent reconquérir la rôle social qu'elles avaient, c'est-à-dire être acceptées par une majorité au lieu d'une minorité d'esthètes individualistes, ainsi qu'il est advenu pour l'architecture depuis quelque temps ;

7° Observer si le public, qui a maintenant accepté l'architecture moderne mais reste sceptique à l'égard de la sculpture et de la peinture, ne leur trouvera pas une signification et une justification nouvelles, lorsque, au lieu d'être dans les galeries et les musées, elles feront partie de la maison à l'intérieur comme à l'extérieur.

Nous pouvons d'abord affirmer qu'à travers les expériences, les écoles, les réussites les plus diverses, malgré quelques contradictions apparentes, on peut déjà parler d'un dénominateur commun entre les courants artistiques, aussi bien du point de vue social que du point de vue esthétique, la poursuite d'un objectif anonyme.

La recherche d'une réussite anonyme plus que de la réussite individuelle, un langage commun exprimant des valeurs for-



Photos Tallini

nelles telles qu'espace, temps, nature, la disparition de la tendance intimiste au profit d'une réalité éclatante, libérée de complexes, montrant que les lignes directrices des différents arts ont plus d'un point commun.

Il nous semble également que ces arts ont pu coexister sans se faire tort, sans entraver de déséquilibre, mais, au contraire, en se faisant valoir les uns les autres.

Par contre, en ce qui concerne la technique, nous constatons qu'il reste encore beaucoup à faire. Les artistes, habitués à la peinture de chevalet, ont peiné la plupart des qualités des artisans d'outre-mer. Leurs moyens ne conviennent généralement pas aux méthodes constructives de l'architecture et ils n'ont pas encore compris toutes les possibilités des matériaux nouveaux et des nouveaux rapports de couleurs, il faut une longue et patiente étude, une lente recherche d'ordre technique pour que les artistes puissent arriver à une pleine compréhension des matériaux à partir desquels ils pourront s'exprimer en toute liberté.

Pour le travail d'équipe lui-même, il est indispensable qu'architectes, peintres et sculpteurs s'ingénient à créer des liens étroits entre les recherches de leurs arts respectifs.

Il faut que les architectes, qui doivent leur formation esthétique à la peinture et à la sculpture contemporaines perdent le sentiment de médianité qu'ils ont en général pour les peintres et les sculpteurs qu'ils ne prennent pas au sérieux ou qu'ils tiennent tout au moins pour des hommes de laboratoires retranchés de la vie sociale de leur temps. De leur côté, peintres et sculpteurs doivent être mieux au courant de l'architecture nouvelle, nouvelles valeurs formelles de l'espace et du temps, nouvelles techniques et nouveaux matériaux.

Quant au public, nous avons pu constater que les œuvres qui gagnent en valeur et en signification lorsqu'elles font partie d'un tout perdent de leur intérêt une fois exposées dans une galerie. Si les artistes consentaient à se servir de techniques mieux adaptées aux réalités économiques, on verrait vite les œuvres d'art envahir les foyers, comme c'est déjà le cas pour les reproductions en couleurs.

La question des prix qui semblerait devoir rester étrangère aux problèmes artistiques me semble être, au contraire, d'une grande importance. Les architectes sont habitués à travailler sous une contrainte économique rigide. Il faut que les peintres et les sculpteurs s'y soumettent aussi afin d'arriver à participer à la vie sociale.

Pour conclure, je voudrais formuler le vœu que se réunisse un congrès des artistes des différents disciplines et des critiques afin d'examiner à fond ces problèmes. Cette prise de contact entre ceux qui s'adressent au public et ceux qui fixent les valeurs devrait faire naître une ambiance favorable où nul ne se sentirait isolé, où chacun prendrait conscience de faire partie intégrante d'une corporation.

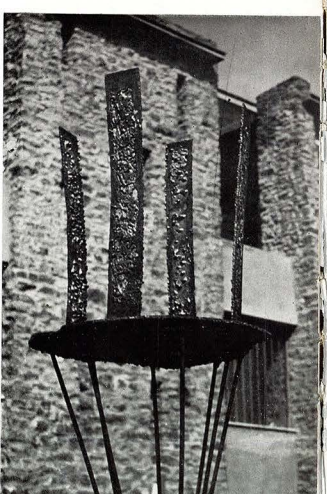
Comme on devait être au temps des « besoins de cathédrales ».

Ainsi des problèmes qui paraissent complexes ou ardues se précisaient. Chacun se sentait appuyé, mêlé spirituellement au travail de recherche des autres et l'œuvre d'art prendrait toute son « utilité ». C'est-à-dire qu'elle serait autant qu'un achèvement artistique, un élément fondamental d'une société qui ne serait plus théorique et utopique, mais efficace et concrète.

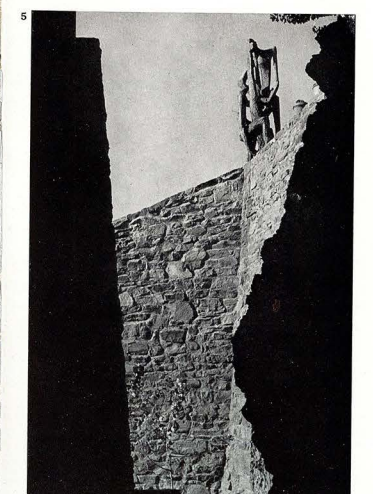
L. RICCI.



3



4



5



13 |

André Bloc's French magazine "Art d'aujourd'hui" devoted an in-depth article to the show and published a text by Ricci that was slightly different from the one in the catalog.⁴⁹ In this paper, Ricci stresses the need to experience art outside the commercial circuits of art-market and galleries, since painting and sculpture have a different aim. This is to be read as a sort of "anonymous" achievement for the whole society rather than an individual achievement typical of museum logics. A sculpture by David Gould exhibited at "La Cava" is on the magazine cover, while the article is accompanied by some overview shots. [Fig. 12] On the natural terrace facing the land slope, one can recognize the *figura seduta* (sitting figure) of Emilio Greco in the pictures of the magazine that takes on an almost metaphysical character in its dialogue with a white

49 "Exposition internationale d'arts plastiques", *Aujourd'hui art et architecture*, no. 5 (1955): 32-33. The article is introduced by a focus on the house in Monterinaldi, 31-31.

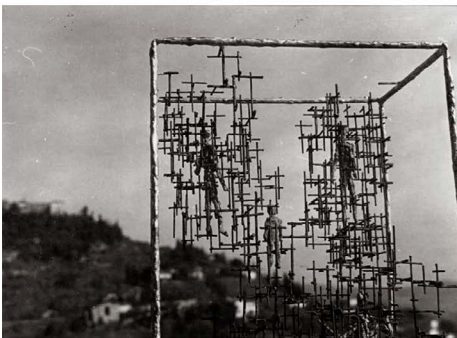
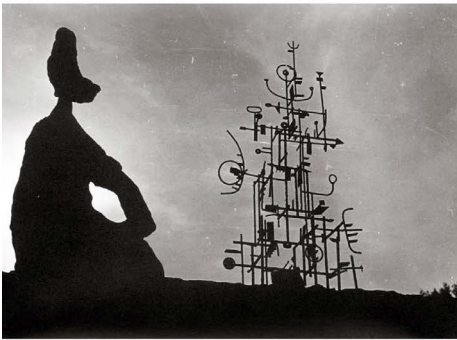
Fig. 13
 "La Cava", 1955. Mosaic "Rito nuziale" by Cagli on the wall, floating copper plaque by Mirko and sculpture "Vlupar" in white concrete by Grevus.



14 |

sheet metal sculpture placed on the parapet and with another iron sculpture presented by David Gould. In the garden facing the façade, instead of the water pool that was built later, there is a glimpse of a “forest” of iron, concrete and steel (weatherproof materials), while there are two-dimensional art pieces on the wall, including Cagli’s mosaic, Melani’s woods, Monnini’s hardstone inlay and Nigro and Nativi’s enamel paintings. [Fig. 13] On the right, we can distinguish Carmelo Cappello’s sculpture *Acrobati* (Acrobats) and not *L’uomo nello spazio* (Man in Space) published in the catalog. The best-known images catch some single works as is the case of Pierluca’s sculpture, Mirko’s copper plaque floating in space playing with light reflections, Arnaldo Pomodoro’s oneiric work, as well as the two “conflicting” sculptures by Bloc and Gigon placed as a dyptich at the end of the railing-free balcony overlooking the city of Florence. [Fig. 14] On a side note, it is interesting to observe that in his magazine, Bloc decides to publish only his sculpture in relation to the landscape, cutting out Gigon’s work. [Fig. 12 and 14]

Fig. 14
 “La Cava”, 1955. Sculptures by
 Bloc and Gigon on the terrace.
 Casa Studio Ricci.



15 |



16 |

Fig. 15
 "La Cava", 1955. Works by
 (from left to right): Pierluca;
 Mirko; Arnaldo Pomodoro; Bloc
 and Gigon; Swarz; Tatahata and
 others. Casa Studio Ricci.

Fig. 16
 "La Cava", 1955, Casa Studio
 Ricci.



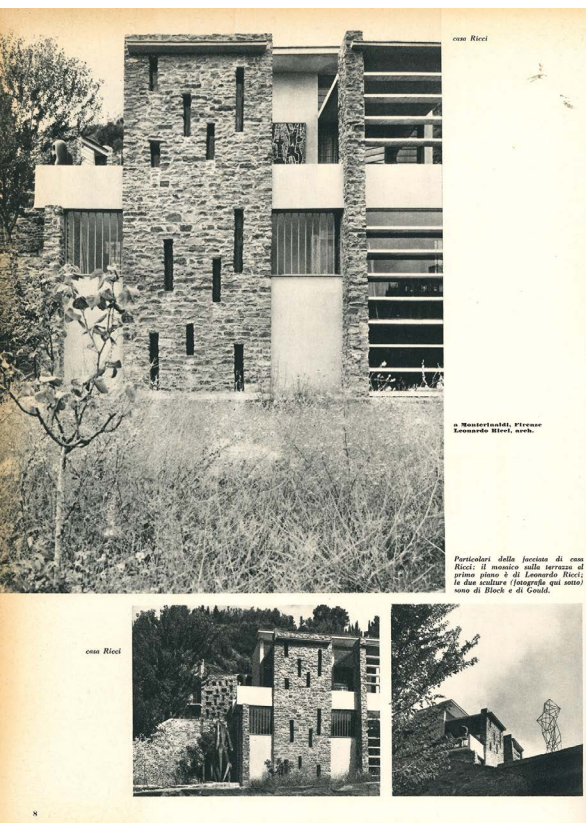
17 |

Finally, Lionello Venturi wrote a laudatory article about the show and the Italian artist-critic Gillo Dorfles, who had been on the front lines of the battle for the synthesis of the arts in those years, criticizes the formal result of the “deliberately barbaric” show but appreciates the intent on the pages of “Domus”, which urges to bring artists and architects together to engage in dialogue even through experiments like this one.⁵⁰ Although the exhibition was conceived on the basis of a renewed interaction with the public, unfortunately, there are unknown shots depicting this “dialogue.” On the other hand, even in the press, the works are framed as organic presences in continuity with the architecture and the place, sometimes even “burned” by the light contrasts. It seems that the sculptures are ready to come to life, much like background actors. [Fig. 15] Architecture plays a pivotal role and is always present in its ambiguity. With its textured nature, its volume, its openings, its unevenness, it is the protagonist of the spectacle but

50 Lionello Venturi, “Una vetrata per San Domenico”, *L'Espresso* (October 30, 1955); Gillo Dorfles, “Una mostra all’aperto di arti plastiche” *Domus*, no. 313 (December 1955): 61; 64. A lengthy article appears also in the local press and highlights those same difficulties described as “uncaring” in the selection of artists: Giovanni Colacicchi, “Arte all’aperto. L’originale iniziativa realizzata sulle terrazze e le verande di un architetto fiorentino. Opere di pittura e scultura astratta inserite nel paesaggio”, *La Nazione Italiana* (November 4, 1955). In “Giornali di bordo”, there is also an article from a German newspaper: J. Guadagna, “Palast im Steinbruch”, in *Der Standpunkt* (January 20, 1955).

Fig. 17

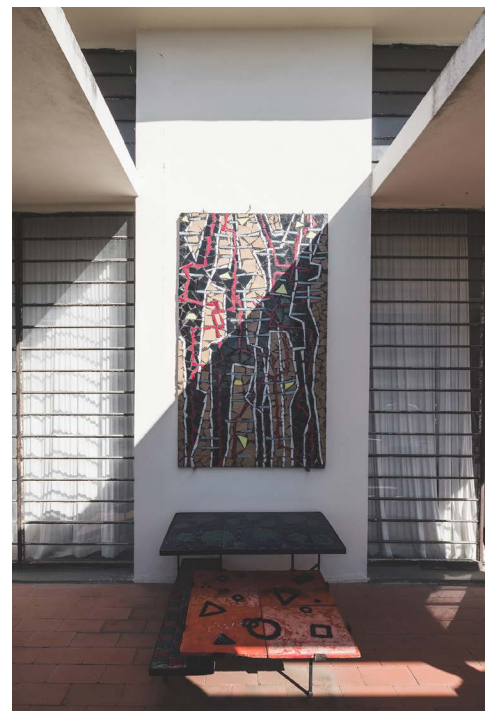
Henry Moore, “Large Square Form with Cut”, 1969-70, Forte del Belvedere, Firenze 1972. Reproduced by permission of The Henry Moore Foundation.



18a



18b



18c

at the same time a scenography for the works, as well as a device of vision to measure the tightness of these works in the landscape. The sequence architecture, work and landscape can be read well in the shots that frame André Bloc and André Gignón's art pieces. These sculptures, that are juxtaposed so as to enhance the contrast between organic and geometric shapes, are dynamic pivots for the space of our vision as they relate to two other works of art: the villa and the city of Florence. [Fig. 16] A game of representations that, beginning with the Renaissance frescoes, repeatedly involves the inevitable leading part of Florence, which will again become central more than a decade later when in 1972, Henry Moore, with his monumental sculpture-architectures, "designs" a new plastic spectacle once again in relation to the city.⁵¹ [Fig. 17]

Final Act

The mosaic executed by Ricci and the sculpture by Bloc has been standing on the balcony until this day. The sculpture was put in an elevated position immediately after the show. [Fig. 18] Unfortunately, the circumstances that led Bloc to exhibit at "La Cava" are not documented, yet we know that he tested the role of sculpture as a visual pivot of a whole architectural narration on that occasion.⁵² This work became

51 On this event: Alessandra Acocella, Beatrice Mazzanti, "Un'architettura medicea per la città contemporanea. Il recupero del Forte Belvedere e l'antologica di Henry Moore, 1955-1972", in *Critica d'Arte*, no. 3-4 (2019): 79-92; D. Nobili, *Mass Sculpture. Henry Moore and Sculpture in città in the 1970s*, in Giovanni Carandente. *Una vita per l'arte* (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana editoriale, 2021): 68-74.

52 Most probably Bloc arrived in Florence through the interception of Giovanni Michelucci or Fiamma Vigo herself, who was a regular of the Parisian milieu as Ricci himself.

Fig. 18a

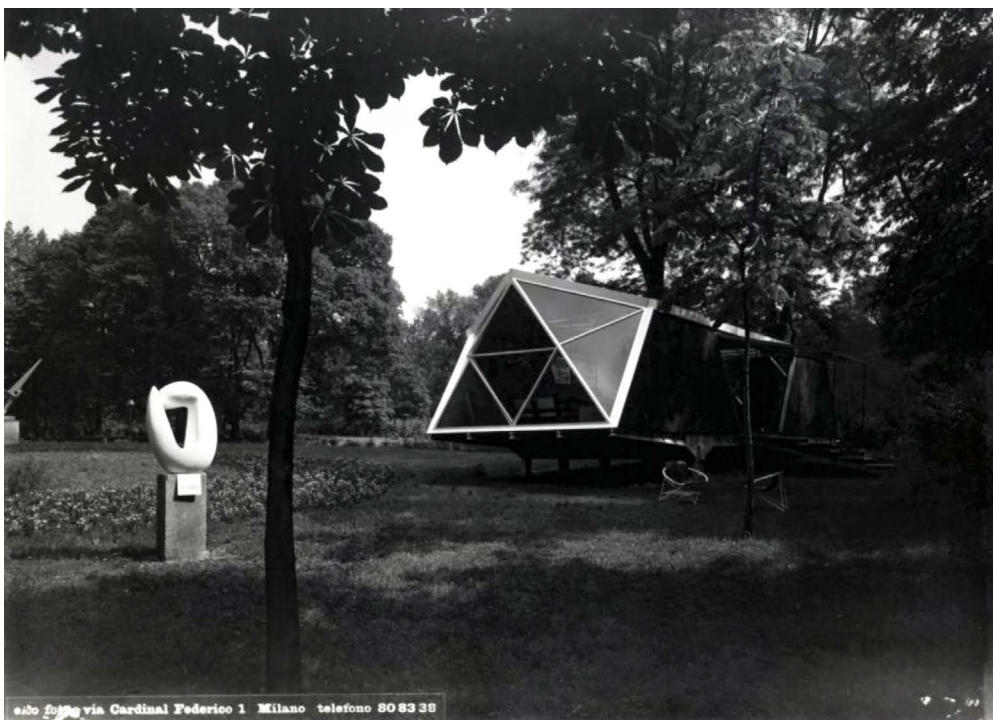
Ricci's Studio-house. Above: a shot taken after the show where we can take a glimpse at Ricci's mosaic and Bloc's sculpture (already in elevated position) that is still on the terrace. Below: a shot from the show with Gould's sculpture in the foreground.

Fig. 18b, 18c

Terrace of Leonardo Ricci's Studio-house in present day with Ricci's mosaic and Bloc's sculpture. Foto Dario Borruto.

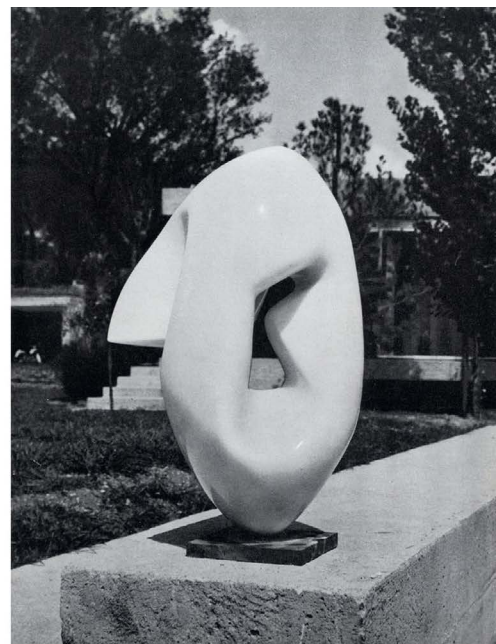
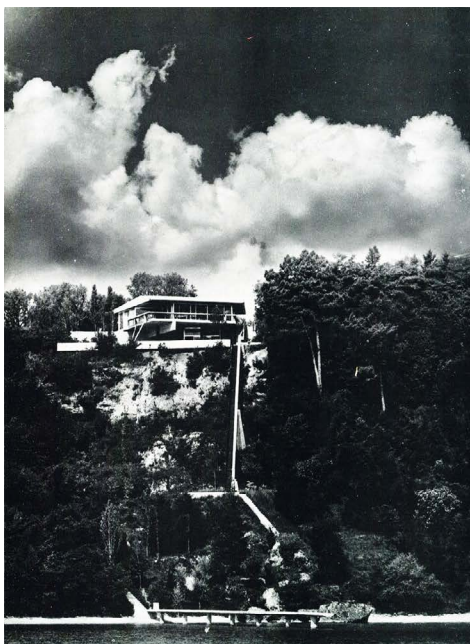
a sign: it is a major landmark from the outside when climbing the stairs and is also an eye-catching sight when seen from inside the house and silhouetted against the landscape. The dynamic role of sculpture becomes the paradigm of an open trajectory of architectural space that, in Ricci's vision, rejects predetermined forms.

The previous year, Bloc had presented a similar work in white Carrara marble in the park of the 10th Milan Triennale, set up by painter Luigi Veronesi. The sculpture, placed on a solid base, was the centerpiece of a "visual telescope" that started from the stereometrically glazed façade of the prefabricated "Casa sperimentale" (experimental house) made by studio B24, to conclude itself in the organic form of the sculpture immersed in nature.⁵³ [Fig. 19]



19

After "La Cava," it's again a marble sculpture of the same shapes to become the protagonist of a well-known architecture designed between 1953 and 1958 by Milanese architect Vittoriano Viganò as Bloc's vacation home on Lake Garda in northern Italy. Villa "La Scala" has similar characteristics to Ricci's house-studio. Both control and encompass the landscape, both are built on the dynamism and instability of viewpoints, on the contradiction of internal and external concepts of space and on the material and structural strength of horizontal and vertical axes. Also in villa "La Scala" the role of some of Bloc's sculptures is primary as is the case with *Portese*, first placed in the park and then positioned inside the villa as a visual pivot and metaphor for the elliptical path of the dwelling.⁵⁴ [Fig. 20]



20

A similar test had been carried out by architect Ico Parisi in an equally well-known villa built in Monte Olimpino, Como, in 1953. In Italy, Casa

Fig. 19

André Bloc's sculpture next to the B24 experimental house, X Triennale di Milano, 1954 Archivio della Triennale di Milano. Courtesy © Triennale Milano – Archivi.

Fig. 20

André Bloc, "Portese" 1957 in the garden of "Villa La Scala" Portese del Garda, late Fifties.

53 *Casa sperimentale*, in *Decima Triennale* (exhibition catalogue, Milano: S.A.M.E, 1954): 452-54.

54 A. Viati Navone, "Maison escalier de Vittoriano Viganò pour André Bloc, Portese del Garda (1953-1958): de l'instabilité perceptive à la 'fonction oblique'", in *FabricA. Travaux d'histoire culturelle et sociale de l'architecture et de ses territoires*, no. 8 (2014): 125-149.



21 |

Bini has become a symbol of the postwar concept of the synthesis or integration of the arts. Through a calculated articulation, its conception simultaneously exalts and transforms both the decorative designs of fascist propaganda and some dogmas of rationalism.⁵⁵ Once again, as the photographs well describe, the pivot of the vision is a white concrete sculpture created in 1950 by the young sculptor Francesco Somaini, a friend of Bloc, with the meaningful title *Dancer*. The work's kinetics contrasts with both the white box on the back and with Mario Radice's abstract-geometric mosaics, making the above-mentioned contradictions clear, but at the same time announcing the axis of the internal spiral development. [Fig. 21] What is interesting to emphasize in these examples is how on the one hand architecture becomes a vehicle for looking at and framing art without imitating its plastic forms, and on the other hand how some sculptures when correctly displayed, are able to reveal to us something more than a mere commentary or formal integration to the building.

The aim of the "La Cava" show was not to integrate architecture through the use of other arts. As was effectively highlighted by Penelope Curtis, when architecture and sculpture start from the same formal and material premises, they require autonomy and not integration.⁵⁶ Indeed, the relationship between the arts with architecture becomes exciting when useful divergences emerge to connote space in new ways and when this relationship functions as a

55 Flaminio Gualdoni, *Ico Parisi, La casa* (Milano: Electa, 1999).

56 Penelope Curtis, *Patio and pavilion. The place of Sculpture in Modern Architecture* (London – Los Angeles: Ridinghouse – The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008).

Fig. 21

Francesco Somaini's "Danzatrice" in front of Casa Bini by Ico Parisi with mosaics by Mario Radice, Monteolimpino – Como, 1953 Archivio fotografico Parisi, Pinacoteca Civica di Como.

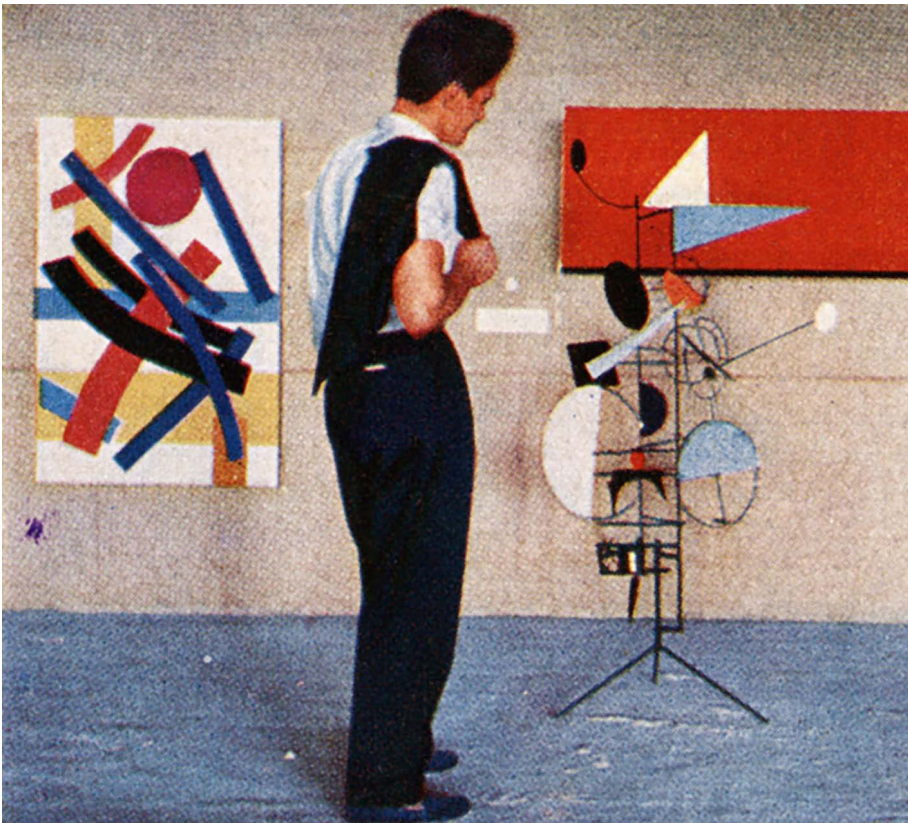
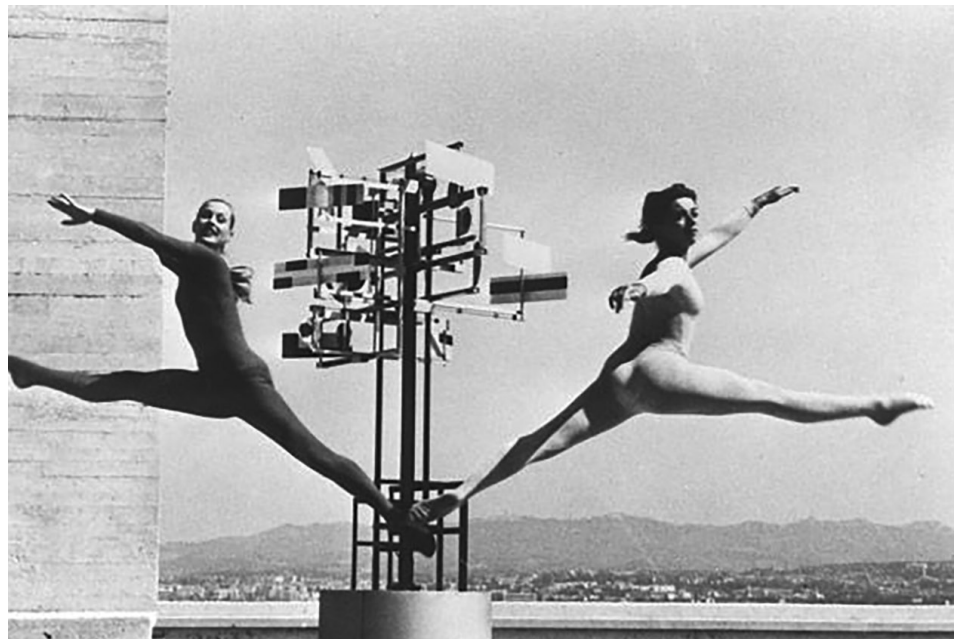


Fig. 22
Festival de l'Art d'Avant-Garde
in Le Corbusier's Unité d'habi-
tation (Marseille 1956). Interior
view and performance on the
roof among the sculpture by
Schöffer.

vehicle for new experiences and not as a finished result.⁵⁷ In the same period, namely between 1953 and 1956, even Le Corbusier was verifying these premises. His Unité d'Habitation in Marseille became a scenic device to mediate the presence of performances and works of art together with the public, who was called to experience this architectural icon in a completely new way. In 1956 the Unités hosted the first Festival of Art d'Avant-Garde curated by Jacques Polieri with exhibitions of abstract and kinetic works (Agam, Fautrier, Klein, César, Soulages, Tinguely among others) between the interior and exterior of the building and electronic installations, sculptures, music and dance performances among the architectural elements of the roof-stage.⁵⁸ [Fig. 22]



57 "Ricci, the architect who is also a very good painter and who knows precisely for this reason where the limit of architecture and painting lies, does not confuse these. All the same, he hugely makes use of all those spatial achievements that architecture has arrived at only through the critical lesson of painting, but he does not 'apply' it to his building." Leonardo Savioli, *Una casa sulla collina nord di Firenze*.

58 Anna Rosellini, *Unité d'Habitation in Marseille, experimental artistic device*, in R. Baumeister, eds., *What Moves us? Le Corbusier and Asger Jorn in Art and Architecture* (Zürich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2015): 38-45.

The "La Cava" show does not have such explosive prerogatives but, like the Unités in Marseille, it offers to the other arts a connoted architectural context - to be read and interpreted - capable of concurring and directing the success of an experience that cannot be confined to the more schematic and harmonious relationship between painting sculpture and architecture. The analysis of this exhibition adds to a very rich scenario of temporary "museographic" practices held in contexts considered alien such as homes, bookstores, and stores. In a country that at this time does not yet have spaces deputed and designed to host contemporary art, these venues help to establish a different relationship with the viewer who has an integrative and performative function. Here the proximity to the performance is to be considered as a new and improvised model of the synthesis of the arts. "La Cava" is a show-manifesto that seeks to reflect on the role that different arts can play in everyday life within the domestic setting to surprise and perturb the inhabitants, anticipating a disciplinary contamination that in the following decade will feature the overlap of artwork and design. "La Cava" is a show in which, as in the best scripts, it is not clear who has the main role.

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Not Existentialist, but Existential. Leonardo Ricci and the Philosophical Thought of Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and Enzo Paci

Existentialism, Enzo Paci, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Aesthetic

/Abstract

Was Ricci actually an 'existentialist architect'? And if so, was he existentialist 'in the manner of whom'? Was his thinking influenced by the phenomenological approach? And in particular, how and why his research dealt with the key theme of the 'architectural form'? This essay focuses specifically on Ricci's theoretical attitude, with the aim to contextualize it in its contemporary philosophical currents. His writings are compared with some of the most important texts of French existentialism, that influenced him during his stay in Paris in the early fifties, in particular those of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, especially focusing on his idea of 'the absurd'. In addition, a particular consideration is given to the affinities between the thought of Ricci and that of Enzo Paci, the Italian philosopher who, perhaps more than any other at that moment, dealt with the themes of architecture in his articles published on the magazine *Casabella-Continuità*: Paci's 'positive existentialism' develops concepts such as 'relationality of experience', 'permanence and emergence of forms' and considers architecture as a 'relational field' continuously mutable in a temporal evolvment. Those ideas are particularly relevant if confronted with Ricci's way of looking at the architectural form as a consequence of the 'potential for vitality' inherent within the object designed, that should respond to the basic needs, or acts, of the users, which must be re-examined case by case to understand the 'existential' reasons of the project. The analysis of those theoretic themes, if considered in addition to the exceptional results of Ricci's architectural practice, seem to give other compelling grounds for his reinstatement as a central figure in the architectural context after Second World War, and precisely in the present moment, when a re-foundation of the architectural discipline is needed as a consequence of environmental and social urgency.

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Existentialist in the Manner of Whom?

It is common knowledge that Leonardo Ricci was an 'existentialist architect'. The term existentialist has been used several times to describe his theoretical approach and in particular the themes dealt with in his book *Anonymous (20th Century)*.¹

Precisely for this reason, in a moment in which the studies on Ricci are finally deepening and intensifying, it appears necessary to re-examine the effective link of his thought with existentialist philosophy, to avoid the risk of sticking the term 'existentialist' as a 'label' next to his name, perhaps to simply make the reasoning about his work more captivating.

Was Ricci actually an existentialist thinker? And above all, being known that this great 'river' of existentialism that crosses the twentieth century is formed through the confluence of different 'tributaries', that is, through the contribution of the thought of different philosophers,² we cannot help but inquire: existentialist in the manner of whom?

Of course, during his travels to Paris at the beginning of the fifties, while exhibiting his paintings alongside those of Alberto Giacometti, Henri Matisse, and Pablo Picasso, Ricci met Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre. We can therefore begin by examining how close his thought was to that of the two philosophers.

In the spring of 1950 Ricci had inaugurated a solo exhibition of his work at the Galerie Pierre in rue des Beaux-Arts. The text accompanying his works, entitled *Confession*, was partly a poetic meditation and partly an artistic Manifesto, and it was published in Italian in the magazine *Architetti*. Here he wrote that, in an historical moment of confusion, disorder and decay, he felt the need to "make a point on human being" and seek, if possible, a "minimum common denominator on which some men can agree in order to be able to start a new process, to find on this earth a meaning and a justification for life, without which it is not possible to build something valid and of a certain duration."³ "Make a point on human being": the reference to Sartre's conference *Existentialism is a humanism* is implied in this focus.⁴

Sartre's existentialism, or atheistic humanism, puts the concepts of freedom and responsibility at the center of our lives. Nevertheless, our freedom is seen as a sort of condemnation, since we did not choose to create ourselves and, once we are thrown into the world, we have responsibility for every act we perform, an idea that certainly resonates with Ricci's ethics. Also, the aspects of Sartre's

1 Leonardo Ricci, *Anonymous (20th Century)* (New York: Braziller, 1962).

The topics covered in this essay have been partly and marginally examined by the author in other publications, in particular: Maria Clara Ghia, *Architecture as a living act* (San Francisco: Oro Editions, 2022); id., *La nostra città è tutta la terra. Leonardo Ricci architetto (1918-1994)* (Wuppertal: Steinhäuser Verlag, 2021); id., *Basta Esistere. Leonardo Ricci, il pensiero e i progetti per le comunità* (Roma: Fondazione Bruno Zevi, 2012).

2 Even though we are aware of Ricci's disinclination in referring to any Master, he had inevitable influential cultural references, especially those related to the thinking of the philosophers he met in person.

3 Leonardo Ricci, "Confessione," *Architetti*, no. 3 (1950), 29.

4 Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'existentialisme est un humanisme* (Paris: Les Editions Nagel, 1946), English Edition: *Existentialism is a humanism* (London: Melthuen & co. 1948).

thought concerning relationships between body, object and space - which are directly linked to the phenomenological approach - are particularly pertinent to Ricci's artistic activity. In *L'être et le néant* Sartre describes the body as being "extended" through the tools it uses - the chair, the room and the house - and as constituting our "adaptation" to these tools and objects: "My body is everywhere: the bomb which destroys my house also damages my body insofar as the house was already an indication of my body."⁵

Exactly in the same way Ricci theorizes a conception of space as an *Umwelt* in which the notions of distance and proximity cannot be restrained or controlled by geometric measures, but instead they belong to the realm of experienced sensations. It is a reality in which the boundaries between the body and physical things are merely differences of status: "There is no longer an inside of the body and an outside of the body, there is no longer an outside and an inside of oneself, but an entire reality in which a man moves. Physically and metaphysically he proceeds as if he were breathing: an inspiration and an exhalation of being, to the point of no longer being able to measure space with geometric dimensions."⁶

Also, in *La nausée* by Sartre, the protagonist, Antoine Roquentin, is affected by the Nausea for the first time when he holds a stone pebble in his hand. He considers that objects 'should not *touch*', since they are not alive, they are merely useful. But he insists: "they touch me, it is unbearable. I am afraid of being in contact with them as though they were living beasts", and again: "I was going to throw that pebble, I looked at it and then it all began: I felt that it *existed*. Then after that there were other Nauseas; from time to time objects start existing in your hand."⁷ In much the same way Ricci seeks a primordial, authentic condition of contact with objects. In the *Anonymous (20th Century)*, he imagines "the savage of ten thousand years ago, and the savage of today" crouching with a stone in his hand, who suddenly gets up and "hurls the stone into the sea."⁸ In this way he realizes the existence of the stone, as if it were an extension of his hand.

Rediscovering the direct existential relationship of harmonious unity between subject and object, man and stone, the architect and his work, was Ricci's quest. The quest for an 'anonymous' renewal in his relationship with things to finally create "that kind of existential relation between two realities [...] the relationship, I should like to call it, of Anonymous (20th Century)."⁹ But Ricci found himself facing an impasse, since language, and certainly also architectural language, imposes a pre-constituted structure and order upon us: the possibility of having a purely physical and tactile relationship with the objects he designed

5 Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'être et le néant. Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), English Edition: *Being and Nothingness. An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 325.

6 Ricci, Leonardo, "Space in architecture." *Journal of the University of Manchester Architectural and Planning Society*, no. 224 (1956), 7-10.

7 Jean-Paul Sartre, *La nausée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938), English Edition *Nausea* (New York: New Direction Publishing Corporation, 1964), 123.

8 Ricci, *Anonymous*, 51.

9 Id., 52.

disappeared when the pure act of designing inevitably turned into a specific architectural 'form'.¹⁰

In that respect, what he writes in the *Anonymous (20th Century)* can be connected with another fundamental concept: that of 'the absurd' theorized by Albert Camus. While Ricci was in Paris, Camus was working on *L'homme révolté*,¹¹ an essay which presents genuine insurgency as the promotion of human values in antithesis with past and present revolutionary movements.¹² Camus sees the rebellion of art as being in opposition to the metaphysical revolt that denies God and the historical revolt that nullifies the value of the individual man by sacrificing him to the importance of history, and that thus ends up favouring totalitarianism:¹³ "What is a man in revolt? A man who says no. But if he refuses, he does not give up: he is also a man who says yes from the very first move. A slave who has received orders all his life, suddenly finds a new command unacceptable."¹⁴

The activity of the artist is pervaded by a radical contradiction. He works 'for no reason' and, one might add, 'anonymously', but in the act of creation his awareness is awakened and he testifies to this by producing images of the world. According to Camus, creating means giving form a destiny of its own, and in this effort the artist discovers the discipline that will give him the will and the strength to go on living. He who creates is therefore an 'absurd' being par excellence:

What, in fact, is the absurd man? He who, without negating it, does nothing for the eternal. Not that nostalgia is foreign to him. But he prefers his courage and his reasoning [...]. Assured of his temporally limited freedom, of his revolt devoid of future, and of his mortal consciousness, he lives out his adventure within the span of his lifetime. That is his field, that is his action, which he shields from any judgment but his own.¹⁵

Camus develops the theme further in his fundamental work *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Sisyphus is the master of his own destiny and responds to the temptation of suicide with the decision to embrace the absurd. The existence of nihilism, together with the need to take positive action when confronted with it, was the central problem of the age for western civilization. It was a question of understanding whether man, without the aid either of eternal revealed truths or of rationalist thought, could create his own values for himself.

10 The concept of 'architectural form' in Ricci's thinking will be examined later in this essay.

11 Albert Camus, *L'Homme révolté* (Paris: Gallimard, 1951), English Edition *The Rebel* (New York: Knopf, 1954).

12 This essay led to a bitter controversy between Camus and the press of the far left. Camus criticized Sartre's pro-Soviet attitude, causing a rift in the intellectual avant-garde of the time. When Sartre vehemently attacked Camus in the magazine *Les Temps modernes*, they broke off relations.

13 For Camus this applies equally to Bolshevism and National Socialism, although the results of the latter are worse, due to its more irrational content. In his novel *The Plague*, written during the Nazi occupation of France, the plague bacillus is a metaphor for the way Nazi-Fascism worms its way into society. Albert Camus, *La peste* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), English Edition *The plague* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1948).

14 Camus, *The Rebel*, 13.

15 Albert Camus, *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1942), English Edition *The Myth of Sisyphus* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1955), 19.

In his *Anonymous (20th Century)*, Ricci explains that 'the absurd', together with 'the myth' and 'the logical', are the three categories by means of which human beings try to understand the world.¹⁶ Living in a world that one has come to see as absurd means surrendering to the fact that it is senseless, that one's own existence is worthless, that every commitment is ultimately to no avail. At this point resorting to drugs or narcosis may seem the only palliative available, for gaining access to another world that appears satisfactory, but that is inevitably false and vacuous.¹⁷ Therefore, the theme of the absurd is tackled by Ricci in a negative key, as Ricci purifies his thought of any nihilistic nuance.¹⁸ There must be another way, he keeps searching for it, and he finds it in his own existential-phenomenological approach. Ricci pursues his incessant desire for clarity and truth, which is vitally important also for his friend Albert Camus, but in opposition to the 'absurd', Ricci introduces the concept of 'the logical'. He exclaims: "How marvelous, this possibility: to have stepped out of the myth, to have overcome the absurd, to be happy within the logic of this world!"¹⁹

Ricci sees the 'logical' world as organic, natural and necessary, and he states that in this world "It is enough to exist", it is enough to find the relationships among the things that exist and then to create new ones."²⁰

It is interesting to note that, while Ricci uses the terms 'logical' and 'existential' very often to describe his approach to life and work, the term 'existentialist' appears in the book only once. And Ricci uses it precisely to distance himself from a strictly existentialist position.

The sentence is of crucial importance:

In their attempts to survive, self-styled modern men have found a thousand justifications or non-justifications. None of them is acceptable to me. Thus I have set out to find my own justification, my own *raison d'être*. It is somewhere along the existentialist line; but from existentialist it has become plain existential. To put it succinctly: I am happy to be alive, and I know why. Even more than that: I know that this, my being happy and knowing why, is in no way a personal circumstance. On the contrary, it is something that is in the air, and many people find themselves in the same situation or are about to enter it. Since the ideas are clear, I feel it my duty to try to define and express them, and since my profession is that of architect and painter, in expressing them I shall naturally emphasize this particular aspect of human life.²¹

16 Ricci, *Anonymous*, 13.

17 Id., 14-15.

18 At least, this can be said for Ricci's writings up to the seventies. The professional failures and the progressive withdrawal from the Italian architectural scene lead him to a disillusionment with the society that assumes more and more harsh tones of defeat in the last period of his life.

19 Ricci, *Anonymous*, 40.

20 Id., 19.

21 Id., 13.

Other words present in this sentence are not easily found in Camus's essays. For example, Ricci claims to 'be happy' and his mission on earth as an architect is an attempt to share this happiness with others, explicitly declaring his conception of architecture as a community practice.

Even more explicitly, in other pages, Ricci states that architecture is a pure 'act of love', consisting in two moments: receiving and giving back. First comes the moment of receiving: "This is the phase in which the architect is only a human being, not yet a specialized operator. The richer the humanity of this human being, the more complete will be the architect."²² The architect is like a lover who must understand the object of his love 'in its existential reality'. He must comprehend the object, not as he would like or may think it to be, abstractly, but the way it exists.

Presenting his project for Monterinaldi on *Domus* magazine in 1957, Ricci wrote in so many words: "It is necessary to be, not existentialist, but existential, or to recognize as fundamental only acts that arise from the existential truths of human beings, and not from futile reasons of taste."²³

Ricci is not interested in philosophical abstraction, he cares about keeping things as simple as they are, we might say. And specifically in this phase of receiving, the architect is listening and absorbing, he still 'does not use the pencil'. It is, as Giovanni Leoni pointed out, the "non-specialized dimension of architecture": a conception that arises from a "dispersion of the individual personality among things and in the singular individualities of the "clients", to found an action planning based on questioning and not on affirmation, an unattainable condition in the age of individualism."²⁴

Then, the phase of giving back arises, and it is more difficult to explain and describe. Ricci does not want to address any specific technical or formal issue in his book. But inevitably architecture has to deal with these kind of questions. His theoretical refusal to make a priori stylistic decisions clashes with the impossibility of escaping the concrete technical answers that design requires, and the definitive architectural form that the project must assume.

Ricci, as his master Giovanni Michelucci, stresses that the formal aspects of his work are an outcome, and that the architectural creation should come into existence over time, as the consequence of a series of actions and reactions that are not rationally predictable, but are mysterious, in much the same way as the phenomena of nature. However, their work inevitably leads to completed forms, which cannot express the same degree of unpredictability, movement and becoming as their words or their design sketches. Michelucci's tormented, fine but woolly lines and the gestural impetuousness, or Ricci's decisive,

22 Id., 235.

23 Leonardo Ricci Leonardo Ricci quoted in Gillo Dorfles, "A Monterinaldi presso Firenze," *Domus*, no. 337 (December 1957), 1-12.

24 Giovanni Leoni, *Il tema dell'Anonimo*, in Maria Clara Ghia, Clementina Ricci, Ugo Dattilo, *Leonardo Ricci 100. Scrittura, pittura, architettura. 100 note a margine dell'Anonimo del XX Secolo* (Catalogue for the exhibition at the refectory of Santa Maria Novella, April 12–May 26, 2019, Florence: Dida Press, 2019), 24.

peremptory marks and strokes, are thus transformed into concrete lexical decisions oriented towards their preferred currents and directions. Although they both try to evade any kind of formalistic complacency, they have a profound sensibility and awareness of the formal values of architecture.

Relational Fields

Alongside the main themes of existentialism, another crucial question in Ricci's thought arises, namely the inquiry on the concept of 'form' in architecture: how does Ricci conceive and describe it? His idea finds parallels in the predominant contemporary philosophical movements?

In 1963, Ricci published some drawings of the project for the Waldensian village of Monte degli Ulivi in Sicily in the magazine *Edilizia Moderna*.²⁵ On the edge of the pages is quoted a sentence by Enzo Paci, which ends with the words: "The renewal of language does not consist in suffering disorder, but in making a new communication possible."²⁶

Perhaps at that moment Enzo Paci was the Italian philosopher who more attentively observed the phenomena taking place in the architectural world. A distinguished pupil of Antonio Banfi, he fought in Greece during second world war and was detained in the prison camp of Stanbostel and then in Wietzendorf, where he met Paul Ricœur. During their imprisonment, the two young philosophers found themselves reading together Edmund Husserl, particularly the 1913 essay *Deen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*,²⁷ that will affect them for the rest of their lives.

Back in Italy, Paci began his academic career teaching Theoretical Philosophy at the University of Pavia and then at the State University of Milan, and in 1951 he founded the magazine *Aut-aut*, whose title obviously recall the famous essay by Søren Kierkegaard, precursor of existentialism in its intention to welcome the irreducible paradox of existence.

Phenomenology and existentialism, therefore, are the currents of thought that he began to spread in Italy since the early 1950s, decisively influencing the cultural trends in the country, especially in the field of architecture. From 1957 to 1965 Paci was in fact also a member of the editorial board of *Casabella-Continuità*, directed by Ernesto Nathan Rogers.

In 1965, when the *Anonymous (20th Century)* was translated into Italian by Elisabeth Mann Borgese for the publisher Il Saggiatore, it issued as one of a

25 Leonardo Ricci, "Progetto per il villaggio Monte degli Ulivi a Riesi in Sicilia," *Edilizia Moderna*, no. 82-83 (1963), 116-118.

26 See Enzo Paci, "Entropia e informazione," *Aut aut*, no. 79-80 (1964), 104.

27 Edmund Husserl, *Deen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie* (Halle: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1913), English Edition: *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1982).

series of volumes entitled *La Cultura. Storia, critica, testi*.²⁸ The original publishing project was an initiative involving Giulio Carlo Argan, Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, Giacomo Debenedetti, Ernesto De Martino, as well as Enzo Paci.

Even if we do not have evidence of a direct acquaintance between Ricci and Paci, it is impossible not to notice how much Ricci's thought, especially with regard to this concept of the architectural form, is linked and at least coincident with that of the philosopher. If we read Paci through the lens of Ricci's idea of architectural design, some of Paci's sentences seems like warnings written for Ricci himself. For example, the lucid definition of the architect's work as a synthesis between the 'world of life' and the 'world of thought', a synthesis that philosophy investigates only theoretically and that the architect can put into practice:

The architect does not need such refined philosophical perspectives but he does not need them because, if he is an architect, he experiences and implements the synthesis between nature and formal order in his work. However, if the architect theorizes and wants to impose an abstract logical order on experience [...] considered as pre-established and inevitable, he must be warned that he can do neither the one thing nor the other, because his task is to experience things always and ever anew and to find, repeatedly and constantly, a new rationality.²⁹

In Paci's thought, philosophical work cannot be separated from cultural and social experiences, and this continuous conjunction is operated through two fundamental philosophical operators: the concepts of 'time' and 'relationship'. Those crucial notions are concretely declined with the idea of 'space': not the notion of abstract space investigated by science, but properly that particular conception of space, one could say 'physics', with which architecture is measured. Paci's approach to phenomenology is an investigation into the profound connections between the categorical world (the world of thought) and the pre-categorical world (the world of life). This method cannot be disciplinarily referred to the pure philosophical field, but involves a cultural overview, because it concerns the 'experience of living'. Paci's approach is defined as 'positive existentialism',³⁰ that also incorporates elements taken from the relationalism of Alfred North Whitehead and John Dewey, as well as Husserlian phenomenology. Its assumptions consist in three main recognitions: the impossibility of denying the dominance of technology in the contemporary age, the naturalistic accentuation of existential analysis and the refusal to take refuge in the spiritual interiority, not assuming the antithesis spirit-body as valid.

28 Leonardo Ricci, *Anonimo del XX Secolo* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1965). Unfortunately it has never been republished or reprinted to date.

29 Enzo Paci, "L'architettura e il mondo della vita," *Casabella-Continuità*, no. 217 (November-December 1957), 53-55.

30 The reference to the thought of Nicola Abbagnano is implicit: see *La struttura dell'esistenza*, (Turin: Paravia, 1939); *Esistenzialismo positivo* (Turin: Taylor, 1948); *Introduzione all'esistenzialismo* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1972). Paci's existentialism is influenced by Banfi's critical rationalism, and not by the tendencies of nihilism, which he harshly criticizes.

Paci replaces the centrality of the concept of 'existence' with that of 'relationality of experience'. If existence is finite, bounded by birth and death, if it is a moment of temporality, unstoppable and irreversible, if it is a present occasion, in one word it is an 'event'. Thus the event occurs as actuality in a process, as it is always in relation with other events in a constant state of fluctuation.

No event is self-sufficient: no event is a substance per se. The insubstantiality of the event implies the principle of universal interrelation between events. Thus, the possibility of being consists in transcending always towards someone or towards something: every being is made up of reciprocal relationships with other beings, these relationships compose the web of reality and human world. This web is dynamic and its characteristic is 'temporality': there is no experience without different spatial and temporal situations, just defined by the vibrant shape of their relational position in space and time. Relationships are not shapeless precisely because they are time-based: things are conditioned by the past process, of which the effects remain, and by the possibilities of development in future. Hence, the resolution of things in 'relational fields' gives rise to forms, open and always in mutation because they are determined by the process that constituted them and that continues to evolve, according to the developments chosen in the sphere of possibility. As regards to human beings, those 'relational fields' adjust according to their behavior, their projects, their results.

Particularly relevant for our discourse is this quote from an article published in *Casabella-Continuità* in 1956:

The fundamental structure of reality is considered as a process and a relationship. The process is, concretely, spatiotemporal and, as such, it is irreversibility, entropy, consumption that requires work, a need that demands satisfaction and openness to new relationships [...] therefore proceeding over time also means expanding into larger and more organic spatial structures: time, space, consumption and work are inseparable [...]. Architecture is both an economic and social reality that responds to concrete needs and an expression of new relationships and new forms. In the process, the forms are relatively permanent and emergent. Permanence is the *firmitas*, the duration of a building over time according to certain structures and a specific and relative balance; emergence is renewal, an openness to the future and new possibility.³¹

In these lines, one can find the core of a discourse on architecture that includes 'life' in the process of 'permanence' and 'emergence' of forms. The plot of life is consumed and regenerated, in a series of continuous changes which tie together the past and the future. This evolution of forms has the trend of a rhythm, "the enigma of a repetition that cannot reiterate itself and that seeks its own persistence in the future, beyond itself", a rhythm in which

31 Enzo Paci, "Problematica dell'architettura contemporanea," *Casabella-Continuità*, no. 209 (January-February 1956), republished in "Enzo Paci, architettura e filosofia," *Aut aut*, no. 333 (January-March 2007), 16.

“the past that cannot return always echoes itself in a new way, therefore proceeding towards the future.”³²

Of course, architectural forms are defined as ‘relational fields’ evolving in the flow of time not in a literal sense, as if architecture were to be transformed into an evolutionary metaphor, but in a substantive way, as a rhythmic relaunch of new possibilities of life that open up from past ones and unfold to future ones. Also, those ‘relational fields’ affect the real ‘case by case’, because the same notion of a field implies a weaving of cross-references with the forces at play in architecture, a sort of ‘game’ whose rules change at the same time as it is played.

In this sense, Paci’s thinking is entirely in line with Rogers’s: “it is impossible to establish any casuistry that would fatally reduce our operations within the sphere of an abstract typology. The formulation of a doctrine on the principle of the case by case is by no means agnostic but is rather the only guarantee of a constructive judgment, that can serve as a correction and guide against the errors or excesses of individuals.”³³

At this point, it is evident that Paci’s interpretation not only enables the investigation of such concepts as form, relationship, possibility in architecture, but also addresses another fundamental question, namely that of freedom and the resulting uncertainty. Because if the openness of possibility is a gasp of freedom, we have no a priori guarantee of successful outcomes for our free choices. The existential condition is expressed in all its risk and in its hope. In his quest the architect, as ‘creator of forms’ in the incessant flow of life, must try to respond to new and different conditions and relationship every time, pursuing “the most intimate reasons for his own freedom and his responsibility.”³⁴ Also in this case, one cannot fail to notice how much the feeling of this freedom and the awareness of this responsibility are vivid in Ricci’s thought: “Think what a responsibility! In the everyday world, if I steal a thousand lire from no matter whom, the cops can get after me and lock me up. For a thousand lire. But as an architect, I can build an ugly house, in which people live miserably like rats, yet the police cannot arrest me. This means that I may steal the possibility of existing without being condemned.”³⁵ And again: “The way of constant doubting is painful, often made of renounces, of isolation, of that apparent unfinishedness (which however) leads to a healthy and honest assessment of things even while risking personal failure.”³⁶

It is an almost unachievable task, not making a mistake in this process of becoming, putting oneself at the disposal and tuned, going-between different existential conditions each time. It is an overwhelming undertaking, not missing

32 Enzo Paci, “Il significato dell’irreversibile,” *Aut aut*, no. 1 (1951), 12.

33 Ernesto Nathan Rogers, *Esperienza dell’Architettura* (Turin: Einaudi, 1958).

34 Enzo Paci, “Umanesimo e tecnica,” *Aut aut*, no. 2 (1951), 150.

35 Ricci, *Anonymous*, 11.

36 Leonardo Ricci, “Michelucci attraverso un suo lavoro,” *Architetti*, no. 18-19 (1953), 13-18.

the step in this 'relational field' which is architecture: on the one hand the relationships that occur in the field prefigure the architectural form, as the outcome of the life that takes place within it. But the architectural project in turn should relaunch, as it preorders the event, as it prepares the life it generates and from which it is generated, in a continuous process of modification. If the relationships in the field prefigure the architectural forms, the architectural project in turn re-establishes a new field of possible relationships.

Ultimately, the architectural work 'configures' the life that takes place inside it, and life 'prefigures' the architectural work. And if from a historical point of view it is perhaps possible to establish a temporal precedence between the two moments of configuring/prefiguring, from a supra-historic point of view the two moments are contemporary, instantaneous, coincident. Because the architect not only designs a space [*Raumgestaltung*] in which life will take place, but also a time [*Zeitgestaltung*] during which life will take place. Venturing through successive configurations/prefigurations, we can imagine accessing the original condition, in which the individual thinks/dwells at the same time.

This is not about a nostalgic return to a past that is now all too obviously impractical, and not even an oblivion of the present and of its complexity. There is no pretense of being able to reverse the course of things, if anything, there is the will to support and revive their development.

Right on Cue

Ricci intended design as a constant inquiry on other values than those expressed, or imposed, by the society in which he lived, trying to favor new spatial, functional, existential relationships. It is the contrast considered by his friend and colleague Umberto Eco between the meaning of architecture as 'rhetoric', as a codification that does not establish generative possibilities but rather established patterns, and the feeling that architecture is something more:

Architecture seems to show itself as a persuasive and undoubtedly consolatory message that possess at the same time heuristic and inventive aspects. It starts from the premises of the society in which it lives to submit it to critique, and every true work of architecture brings something new not only when is a good living machine or it connotes an ideology of living, but when it critiques, with is bare subsisting, the ways of living and the ideologies of living that preceded it.³⁷

Acts and existential conditions must be re-examined in every project to understand the fundamental needs and give up the conventional and superimposed ones. The way of relentlessly questioning about human condition, brings Ricci to establish a constant dialogue between ethics and esthetics: the aesthetic demand has evidently to do with the configuration of the architectural form,

37 Umberto Eco, *La struttura assente* (Milan: Bompiani, 1968), 229.

while the ethical demand is the continuous impetus towards the needs of those who will have to live in the spaces which that form will pre-order. Undoubtedly in Ricci's writings the ethical demand prevails over the aesthetic one, the needs of life overcome the formal choices.³⁸ He writes in plain terms in his *Anonymous (20th Century)* that "The shape is a consequence of the potential for vitality inherent within the object that is about to be born" and he asks: "What sense is there in aesthetic when you set it face with ethics or with magic, let alone with the why of existence?"³⁹

Orazio Carpenzano, reasoning about Ricci's work, focuses on one central issue:

In rethinking architecture as a *living system*, the project can and must interpret space as a field that is, at the same time, relational and co-evolutionary: something that is generated, transformed, and dissolved, and that embraces and measures new impulses. Nothing unique and stable, but a continuous interaction between the individual, his community, and his environment, in which reciprocal *perturbations* induce changes in the balance and therefore modify what is allowed and foreseen by the free relationship of the parties in game.⁴⁰

For some time now, and for countless reasons that we do not have the possibility to deal with in this essay, we have been debating the need for a re-foundation of the architectural discipline, and we are looking for new directions that tackle the inflated and sometimes misunderstood theme of sustainability. But should these directions necessarily be 'new'? Can't we find traces of them in our past, and why not, in paths already followed by other architects before, certainly not to imitate their results but to convey to our present their demands that still seem relevant nowadays? Thus, more than the search for new directions, another theme should be central: go back to found the architectural research on supra-historic constants and on the analysis of the basic and authentic necessities of our contemporary society, by examining afresh existential acts in our way of living. In this sense, we could even conceive "the definitive disappearance of architecture as a specialized discipline, even more, of architecture as an activity separate from the ordinary and everyday life of everyone."⁴¹

In his *Foreword* to my monograph about Ricci's work, Anthony Vidler claims that his message combine to resonate with our present concerns, and that it is impelling "his reinstatement as a figure neither too early nor too late, but *timely*, precisely in this time of environmental and social urgency."⁴²

38 One could add to this consideration the analysis of how much this ethical intent actually reflects in his creations, or how much the component of aesthetic choices prevails, but it is not possible to further expand the se themes in this essay.

39 Ricci, *Anonymous*, 100.

40 Orazio Carpenzano, *Afterword*, in Maria Clara Ghia, *Architecture as a living act. Leonardo Ricci* (San Francisco: Oro Editions, 2022), 284-285.

41 Leoni, *Il tema dell'Anonimo*, 23.

42 Anthony Vidler, *Foreword*, in Ghia, *Architecture as a living act*, 10.

Turning the gaze back to the essential, we could re-evaluate the life needs that are actually fundamental in the present moment, which are so different even from the pre-pandemic ones. Learning again to think 'case by case', we could prevent repeating to the bitter end the same models that prove often-times inappropriate and immediately obsolete. If 'avoid wasting' must be one of the goals of current research, if not the essential, why not start again from the consideration of our simple acts of life and focus not only on the 'material waste' but also on the 'existential one', that Ricci himself called 'the waste of life', as a squandering that architecture can produce if it does not correspond to the actual needs of users?

Thus one can arrive at reasoning about the principles (*arché*) of architecture, the specific demands of living on Earth, listening to what the essence of the human being, always and still today, asks of architecture as an authentic and primary need, to conceive architectural design as a process that in turn 'needs the human being', without declaring abstract autonomies. In this sense, architecture demonstrates its intrinsically political nature.

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Leonardo Ricci

The Function of Art in Contemporary Life (1952)

Unpublished typescript of a lecture Ricci held in 1952, during his first stay in the United States, when he held a cycle of conferences about the synthesis of the arts. The conferences were addressed to the students and scholars of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Southern California and Brooklyn University in New York, and to the students and scholars of the Department of Philosophy of the Washington Catholic University.

In this text Ricci analyses the figure of the artist, in its existential dimension, and gives his definition of art. Ricci expresses the function of art in the life of contemporary men after having dealt with the relationship of men with God across time and different civilizations. The aims are to define the role of the artist and his relationship to the contemporary society as well as the relation of painting with architecture. The document belongs to the holdings kept in Casa Studio Ricci.

What has the painter told us from the origin until today?

It would be most interesting to follow the history of man through the history of painting, and to see step by step what men thought and expressed about the world. Others have tried to do this, still others will try to do it.

During this lecture, it will be enough to give you a rapid glance. The first men as we can see from the most ancient testimony, were very impressed by themselves. The imprints of their hands on the walls of the caves tell us something similar to our first impressions as children in front of the mirrors: astonishment. Not necessarily fear but necessarily wonder.

Then they were touched by movement. Running animals, men fighting beasts. Rather than expressing things in relation, they expressed outside life without any personal opinion. They looked at the facts and nothing else.

From the first evident observations, they passed to more complex ones: to be born, to die, to regenerate. And then, monsters of pregnant women, men with fallus, funereal masks.



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It is curious to observe (as we can still see in some savage art) that while the domination of the external form of nonhuman things was an easy and natural process to them, the human form led them to a more difficult problem; not because the human form is much more difficult to reproduce, but because the question of the reason for life was born in them. We have proof of this from the coloured prehistoric graphic designs.

Little by little, through the insistence of asking, they looked for answers.

Fleetingly, this is what they found.

The Indians said that the world is something complex and mysterious as is the jungle, that God is very strong and powerful, and almighty, that a woman's sex is something dark and in it is hidden the mystery of life. That men eat, stay together, and make children. That men have not only two arms and one face but many arms and many faces. This is not only due to research of movement, but to try and find, subconsciously, a fourth dimension. The world is dynamic and only from the contrast of the elements comes life, be it material or metaphysical.

The Chinese, more astute, tried to make a friend of God. They contemplated his beautiful robes; suns which rose and set, flowers and plants of paradise. The small relationship of men to the infinite. Graceful and harmonious relationships between men. As for evil, and the things which result from it, dragons and demons were their cause. From these they defended themselves by sorcery like from a taboo.

The Egyptians, more intellectual, living in a more deserted and absolute environment which is less animistic, speak to us of afterlife. That life is a function of death, so that we, the living, have to prepare for us, the dead. That men are nothing other than a predetermined movement with a pointed finger toward an end that we do not see but can sense. That cosmic rhythm and harmony reflects itself on man.

Other people, like the Hebrews, say that God is absolute and deppotent,¹ master, with whom we cannot compete, so that they abstain from representing him.

Others like the Arabs, created rhythm form and colours, but for analogous reasons, did not enter into the testimony of the consciousness of things through painting.

Others, like the Persians, nearer spiritually to the ancient lunar cults, told us of a more feminine life, one more concerned with fantasy.

Coming nearer to us there are the Greeks, wiser people and speculators, patronising God. They call him down from Olympus, sometimes on to the earth. Invite him to stay with the men, sleep with the women, besides generate.

Sometimes the men climb to Olympus. Consequently there is their man so armonious perfect and ideal, even if deprived of internal single preoccupation.

¹ This word does not exist in English. It could be "potent" here.

That would mean a determined man and not undetermined. A man with stomachache or without stomachache, which does not mean the same.

The Romans, more practical, similar in many ways to some modern men, made of God a figure of the State for the people "ludi et circenses" (that means "amuse and satiate yourselves") without worrying too much about metaphysics. But sometimes they stuck to things more human, and moving, and nearer to life, such as family portraits.

Afterwards Christianity came.

God escaped from the hands of men, hid himself in inaccessible altitudes but at the same time he became a man in natural contact with men. So that the first christian artists found themselves in an odd situation. On the one hand a world of forms marvellously organised and defined which gave to them the means of expression. On the other hand a world broken and abyssal, as much toward the sky as toward the earth, to be completely lost.

There was the problem of sadness, an other sadness, that of secret feelings, and over all the problem of charity.

How to express themselves?

There was a certain interruption. Afterwards the manifestations began.

The form was a new one.

The fact, for instance, that a Roman or Gothic statue have a form dynamic, broken, contorted, confronted to one Greek statue, composed, harmonic, static, does not mean that a new esthetic law, intellectually aprioristic, has inspired the first christian artists. But it means that their believing was changed and in consequence the forms had taken a new expression.

So that it makes me laugh that they who consider the ideal of beauty the Greek, or eventually the Renaissance. And also it makes me laugh that they who consider the Greek pagan and consequently as the only beauty the christian².

Indeed the form bears directly from its organic drive, such as the peartree assumes the form of a peartree and a pine the form of a pine and a figtree the form of a figtree. And it is stupid to say if it is more beautiful the form of a pine or the form of a figtree. The most I can say is, "now I love the pine because in this moment I love something which forces me to look into the sky, or, now I love a figtree because it is more near to the ground, more in contact with me. It is sufficient to raise my hand and I can taste its sweet fruits."

Also the christian period has had its different fruits, such as the other which I could not analyse. But for the reason that it is nearer to us as tradition I will try to put some firm points also to facilitate the understanding of modern movements.

² This periphrasis is not clear. It could be rephrased as follows: "So it makes me laugh that they consider the ideal of beauty the Greek, or eventually the Renaissance. And also it makes me laugh that they consider the Greek pagan and consequently as the only beauty the christian."

I have already mentioned the Roman and the Gothic and, making an extension, the Byzantine.

All three currents bear from this desire to break the limits of man, to project him beyond death, to put him in contact with God. If after one uses a means, another and another one, it is only a question of methodology, of quality and quantity but not of real and true direction.

There was then a world of fights between christians and pagans. The time of mysticism was not far away. Painting was the expression used by a man to dominate and to win his own body, to liberate his own soul beyond the clouds.

Already Giotto and then Masaccio, that is to say, those of the pre-Renaissance, say to themselves: "What is all this. After all Christ was not so different from us. And the Virgin neither. And the women are beings who generate. And the men people who work and earn their day's³ bread."

Certainly the form changes. Instead of arabesques, of vertical rhythms, of precious colours, simpler forms are used, more geometrical, which can contain hearts, lungs and entrails instead of fire which burns. More natural colours: blue sky, as the sky is generally seen, green trees and the earth the colour of the earth.

But who sees and speaks only of stylistic values is very far from understanding the language of painting, because he confuses the means with the end. Indeed in a man, after contemplating the work of art and after the disappearance of the object before the eyes, in last analysis only this has to remain: something richer or poorer, something which has become his own or which remains estranged, something which makes him understand life better or which is useless to him, something which permits him an easier contact with the others or which divides him and leaves no trace.

Proceeding, we can take other points.

In the Renaissance we see very different personalities. There a man revolts himself against his generic "brother" and looks for a precise "brother". Michelangelo, even if he works in the boundaries of a church, puts question after question. And his questions are stronger than his answers. Leonardo is the first human being who lives problematically. And in this connection I wish to open a parenthesis. This year I have heard many lectures about Leonardo. This year was in fact his fifth centenary. Lectures made by painters, critics and philosophers and so forth. I have heard speak of him in many ways. But I have never heard speak⁴ of him as to me seems more correct. Because Leonardo, contrary to what is normally said, that he is a universal genius, capable in every field, he is for me a man who is unaccomplished in everything. He discovered nothing exact. He was not a poet. He was not an architect. He was not a philosopher. Even in the field in which today he is most considered, in painting,

3 "Daily" would be the appropriate word here.

4 Here and above: "Speaking" would be the appropriate word.

we can speak of bankruptcy. There remain few paintings, most of which are incomplete. During his own life-time, confronted by other painters, he was not very esteemed. What then remains of him if not this extreme and gigantic failure? But is not this perhaps his greatest value? But is not perhaps this manner of living the first conscious effort to live problematically? I would even say in an existential manner? The critics say that Leonardo da Vinci has discovered the "sfumato" (which means infinitely graded light). But let's not kid ourselves. This is the reason he made the "sfumato": that when he walked over those same hills of Florence that Giotto and other Florentines had crossed, when he took into his hands a fossil seashell, it was not a mere stone for him, or a joke of nature or a curiosity, but to him it meant the sea. Do you understand? The sea. The sea on terra ferma⁵. Do you understand now, the why of his submarine light in his paintings? Do you understand why he adored that wet crepuscular light?

And now that I have mentioned Leonardo's name I want to place another milestone over him by saying that he is the man who brought into the open the crisis, the same crisis in which modern man finds himself and against which he tries to defend himself: that is if we wish to give an simple and uncomplicated meaning to the word crisis.

Indeed, if it is true that following Leonardo there were many painters like El Greco the Spaniard or Venetians like Tintoretto or Tiziano who worked already in the ambiente of Christianity, with an exact notion of the meaning of faith, it is also true that the research of the painters began to change direction. From the religious subjects we pass to those of a more human order. In reality, a more precise analysis of life began and men started to ask themselves about things which until then had been considered solved.

So that the confirmation that Kirkegarde⁶ makes in the "..."⁷ to be no more possible to men to have the faith of Abraham, had been long before defined by Leonardo also if the terms were different.

To go out from faith, to go out from an operant Christianity meant to look for other values, which found different formal expressions. Either Caravaggio found life in the life of the people or Rubens found life in erotism and sensuality, the fact is that little by little the artists searched artificial paradises to express. Also if these artificial paradises often belong to that world of rhetoric which we detest today. World of rhetoric which reached its culminating point in the 19th century and which determined the revolution of the impressionist artists.

There has been so much talk about this revolution that it seems useless to insist. Useless to find who were the first. If Monticelli or Turner were the forefathers, and so on.

The fact is that at a certain moment some artists had enough of everything.

5 "Mainland" would be the English word for terraferma.

6 "Kierkegaard" would be the appropriate word here.

7 Ricci leaves this void also in the original typescript.

They had enough of all kinds of rhetorics, of all kinds of believing of all kinds of morality, and approximatively they said: "Until today they have told us of all the sauces and until today we believed them. Now enough. We see the nature. We see the sun and the light of the sun. We see trees and rivers. We see objects and things. Life is made by these things and these things we express. If these things have poetry and justify our life, well, otherwise patience."

At last this big revolution was nothing else than to try and be more humble and true and simple, and instead of revolutionary painters we could talk of good people who tried to be nearer to the natural order of things.

But also this had a short time.

The world of apparent form does not satisfy men. What interests them is what is hidden behind the form, of which the form is only the megaphone. So that very soon this was no longer sufficient, and with Cezanne, Van Gogh and Gauguin a new period begins.

These three were the fundamental painters of the modern era. There were three victories and three failures.

There were three victories because all three revolted against society, searched a new religious position in life, which they manifested through new form. There were three failures because all three lived desperately and died desperately without achieving what they sought.

Their letters bear witness to this, and we could look into some fundamental points which would however, at this point, carry us too far.

There is nothing under the sun which is definite and new. The steps which man marks on earth are slow and difficult to achieve. So that, basically, the three painters did not invent a new world, but rather put a more profound accent on certain aspects and rendered them more tangible.

For Cezanne the problem was this: to see the world built harmoniously and mathematically through geometric construction in a somewhat Pythagoric way. However, he did this directly and not through a process of reflection.

For Van Gogh the problem was this: to see the world as a manifestation of charity, in which all objects are living things, in direct communication with one another. He was the nearest to the Christian reality expressed by St. Paul: "The whole creation is waiting".

For Gauguin the problem was: to see the world free of all bourgeois concepts, more savage and animal, bound closer to the sacredness of each act of life, even if in the last analysis he was bound to take refuge in a myth.

The first of these three lived alone. Married, with children, but alone as a dog. The second, after a desperate life, killed himself with a revolver. The third died syphilitic in Tahiti.

As you see they paid dearly for their revolt; we cannot say for certain that their life was organic.

After them, things became more complicated. They opened such large roads - from the most romantic and the most expressionistic visions of life to the more classical and formalistic - that the painters who succeeded them had a very large field for research.

Modigliani, Soutine, Raoult, Chagall, Picasso, Braque, Matisse, Kandinsky, Mondrian, Klee...

Fauvism, cubism, expressionism, futurism, surrealism, abstractism, neoplasticism...

Isms. All isms. It is very true that many isms are not radical but many are. So that each of these movements has an approximate date of birth, parents, and an evolution which it is not possible for me to examine now. The problem remains fundamentally the same: What do these painters say to us? What do the painters of recent past generations say to us, and those still alive today, not to speak of the younger ones, for whom it is best to let some time pass to have a better perspective.

Since I am not a systematic man, nor a philosopher, nor a critic, but only an artist, I would like to express myself by reading part of a letter which I wrote to a very well-known critic whose name I prefer not to mention for reasons of discretion, and whom I may call a friend:

"What do the painters of today fundamentally say to me? It is not easy to judge, to express, and above all to be brief. But I shall try to put it in a letter.

There are those who say to me that the world is made of monsters, that it is an absurdity and a madness.

There are those that say that the world is made of little coloured points.

Those who say that the reality of man is only found in escape, such as in morphine or opium.

There are those who say there is colour, rhythm, form.

There are those who say the world is a publicity poster.

The more honest say to me that the world is a problem. Still others say they understand nothing of the world. For some it is a game, for others a trick, and so on.

Cries, tears, vomiting, horror, madness, in short everything which is a part of life stops on the canvases of painters who more or less honestly try to fix the reality of man in relation to today and today's life.

The conclusion is that we live in a period of transition, confusion and crisis.

Crisis, crisis, crisis!

And I don't know one honest painter who, underneath whims, apparent

tricks, big words, does not feel himself in a crisis. I? Also I, after having passed the dilettante⁸ and youthful period, I have been swept along with the current. Also I have painted the world in small points, in rectangles, in circles. Also I have done almost the same as the others.

Swept by the current, yes, but I wanted to know why. Ask me: But then, what do you think, what do you want to express? You know my paintings.

What I was able to express is there; I cannot judge. But I would like to say this:

“That man is born, lives, and dies.”

“That life is important because death exists.”

“That life is useful because death does not interrupt the reality of a man.”

“That all we do is part of a final aim which we do not know but of which we can intuitively sense the reality.”

“That on the earth there are women men children animals trees flowers mountains seas rivers.”

“That in the sky there are stars, sun and moon.”

“That all this is only apparent because it will die, but through this we can perceive what will remain.”

Practically:

That we have to learn to know, understand and love.

That suffering exists because we surpass our limits and do not realise the living reality of the one next to us.

That man and woman must study one another, understand one another, be integrated with each other. Finally, that life is organic and we have to live it.

How can I express this through paintings?...?..?

The letter goes on in this way, but I shall stop here.

I perfectly realise that I am before an audience, and above all an audience accustomed to logic. What I said may seem more or less poetical, more or less metaphysical, or more or less built of air. I dont think so, I think on the contrary it is good to have put you in the presence of an artist whose interest is life and nothing else.

I will try, in conclusion, to give you some more technical and exact elements.

I will not enter into the present problem of society, the relation of the artist to this society, the relation of painting with architecture, other urgent problems for the artist which I cannot analyse now.

I will only stress some points.

8 “Dabbler” would be the English word for “dilettante”.

In so far as the contents are concerned, my position is this. I live. I sleep. I am awake.

When I sleep the world is temporarily away from me. Also, if the intimate and secret life goes on, I am however not aware of it.

When I am awake, I am in the world. I see the things made by nature, and those made by man. I can become aware of them. Let me see what is of interest to me and what I am interested in expressing.

I don't care to express the world as it appears. I know well that to a fly which has other eyes from mine the world looks entirely different. I don't care about expressing this apparent world whether it is naturalistic, impressionistic, or truistic⁹.

I don't care to say that the sun is red or that the shadows from things are coloured.

I don't want to make politics through art nor preach morals.

I don't care to say that the poor suffer, that there are rich bourgeois. Generally, I don't care to narrate chronical facts such as that Christ died on the cross or that Napoleon wins a battle or what the effects of an atom bomb are on a city. I don't care to make literature or, worse, philosophy in art, not to speak of mathematics or science.

I don't care to extract abstract formal games from the external world.

I don't care to arouse neurotic reactions of testimony as if I were a sismograph or an automaton.

I don't care, therefore, in relation to the present painting and its trends:

to be a truist¹⁰, because the truth is only a temporary appearance. To be a realist, because the man who eats, the sick man, the fisherman in his boat I can see without needing the artist's eye.

To be a surrealist, because each gratuitous evasion, instead of entering into the cosmic rhythm determines an exit.

To be an abstract of whatever type it may be, apart from the formal value, is a gratuitous¹¹ construction of the world.

In conclusion, I am not interested in what is expressed by any of the paintings, as to the method of its expression. Even if, on the contrary as far as the research of formal values goes, I have a great deal of esteem and admiration for several artists of no matter what trend.

This is what interests me:

In the world, not the man-made world but the world including man, and the things created by man despite the love and respect I have for him, there is not one

9 "True" would be the English word for "dilettante".

10 "To be a follower of truth" would be the correct expression here.

11 "Groundless" would be the appropriate word here.

that satisfies me because in all of them I see a mistake. This applies not only in art but it applies¹² to all human manifestations. If I return to the origin, I say to myself that I think until today men have looked for ways of living but they have not lived. (To live signifies for me living with a complete harmony and participation of the being with others and with things).

The fact that today man, despite his critical intelligence and spiritual maturity is not capable of avoiding wars, revolutions and all the other horrors of modern life, is sufficient evidence.

The things which men do today give me personally much commotion, be it atomic energy research or ways of reaching the moon or a new method of buttoning one's trousers. But despite this emotion, I still do not know a single being, man or woman, to whom I can say, with you I live as a man. There are errors. Let us try to start from scratch. The experience of the past has already become part of my flesh and works within me.

From where am I starting? I start with the search of the other. I study the other one. I try to put myself in touch with him outside the conventional, directly.

Above all, naturally, my interest is in women.

This is the first "other" for me. Then come the others: men, children, animals, the sun the moon etc... All these things, in other words, have stayed at the roots where they were when man was put on earth.

So I say to myself:

When the sun goes down, my being realises this. When there is a moon, my being realises this.

When I kiss a woman, my being realises this.

When I walk with a friend, my being realises this.

When I play with a child, my being realises this.

Finally, I realise that the things which I see and which are not disguised by errors, which in other words present themselves in their elementary form, have value only in a future reality, even if they take place in the present.

That is to say, man can be in contact with the reality of the universe by means of the visible world and he can, consequently, express this reality by the same means. That is to say, man can live religiously, if we want to use one more this old and abused term, without the need of an intervention of a third element, but directly, in direct contact with things.

This as far as the content goes.

Now we come to the form, or, if we prefer, the expressive language (means).

And here I must do homage to many modern painters, because, even if I did speak of crisis before, I cannot speak of a crisis of pictorial value.

12 "Involves" would be the appropriate word here and above.

In fact, never before in the history of art have the pictorial values been so profound or have we had such a rich language of expression.

Research of form. Property of language? Adhesion of the expressive value to the expression itself.

Here I should open a separate chapter.

The problem is such a delicate and complicated one that I am afraid to begin. On the other hand, I am speaking to an audience not of painters, to whom many of my affirmations may seem abstract.

I will only make an essential affirmation.

The problem of form in itself does not exist. Therefore I could theoretically affirm that if the artist were really in a state of grace (to use again the word of ambiguous significance) he would find the expressive form of what he wants to say without effort. Unfortunately, it is not like this. Each painting is for the artist a fight, until the final form is slowly born and defines itself, a final truth by means of a process of coarse errors, almost always with a laughable result in comparison with the effort expended¹³.

But this also because we artists are at the turning point of a civilization and if our predecessors have rightly disintegrated, it is up to us to re-integrate. And this work is more difficult, more tiring, more humble, if the result for the future is to be more fruitful.

I thank you.

13 "Done" would be the appropriate word here.

Leonardo Ricci

Form, the Tangible Expression of a Reality (1966)

This text was published in the Vision + Value Series edited by György Kepes that collected most of the research and contributions of Italian and foreign scholars who worked in the Center for Advanced Studies (CAVS) founded by Kepes in Cambridge at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The precise bibliographic reference of the text is: Leonardo Ricci, "Form, the Tangible Expression of a Reality," in The Man-Made Object, ed. György Kepes (New York: George Braziller, 1966), 108-119.

At MIT Pietro Belluschi's deanship ended in 1965 and, a couple of years later, in 1967, György Kepes founded there the CAVS by collecting a lot of work done by the Harvard-M.I.T. Joint Center for Urban Studies. Kepes arrived in the Visual Department of the Graduate Program at M.I.T. in 1946 and, between 1947 and 1956, he concentrated on the production of his publication The New Landscape in Art and Science. It was largely written in 1952 and took the form of an encyclopedic constellation of images describing the aesthetic qualities of scientific findings, as well as displaying the scientific origins of other aesthetic manifestations.

György Kepes restored the artistic and architectural production of Italian architects and artists achieving prominence right after the World War II. Some of them were Pierluigi Nervi, Ernesto Nathan Rogers and Harry Bertola. The book constituted a "radical visual academia" referred to a shared way of conceiving all visual disciplines: Design, Architecture, Town Planning, Art.

On the 'studio work' taught by Kepes at the MIT, thus on the influences among all the arts in the design process, combined with the study of the History of Art and Architecture, and on Kevin Lynch's new methodological approach based on the aesthetical study of the 'Form of the City', on spatial relations and perceptual elements, Ricci based his belief on morphological generations in architecture avoiding predetermined forms.

A short time before leaving Italy to Cambridge, Ricci and Giovanni Klaus Koenig wrote a report concerning the teaching of plastic formativity to architects following Kepes' example and wrote 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". After his first appointment at MIT, in Italy Ricci succeeded in turning the course name into Visual Design and its program tracing Kepes' one.

In the Sixties several Italian scholars contributed to Kepes' Vision+Value series published by George Braziller: Gillo Dorfles with an essay in the book The Nature and Art of Motion (1965), Mirko Basaldella in Education of Vision (1965), Pier Luigi Nervi in Structure in Art and Science (1965), and Ernesto Nathan Rogers in Sign, Image, Symbol (1966).



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The world appears to us. It appears to us above all through a form. The artist expresses himself. He expresses himself through a form. And thus arises the problem: is there an analogy between these “forms”? That is to say, is the form of a man, of a cat, of a stone, analogous to the forms produced by the artist?

I must confess that for some time now I no longer set myself problems of this kind in absolute terms, because I no longer believe in the possibility of “demonstrating” what form is. To be capable of this would mean to be capable of demonstrating what life is. Today, I am interested only in examining how a form is born, that is, how a reality becomes perceivable. Therefore, excluded the possibility of making an abstract contribution, the only possibility which remains to me is that of documenting an experience: my experience in painting and in architecture, my two professions.

Form in Painting

Anyone faced with the continuous variation in my mode of painting, that is, the variation of my form in painting, must be perplexed. Indeed, I have had periods so diverse that one might think that I have never had a precise concept of form. The truth is otherwise. I believe that my form has been diverse because the contents which this form has expressed have been diverse. Consequently, in opposition to the word *form*, there is the word *content*. We shall see at the end of this paper that these terms will disappear, at least as they have been used up until now.

But why so many and such diverse contents? ‘The answer is simple. Because ever since I was a boy the questions with which life presented me were many, and many were the answers and therefore many the forms. The problem of content and of form is bound to the problem of existence.

To exist means to be born, to live, and to die. Therefore, through my various forms everyone can read all that I have believed and all that I have been in my life. But the process by which form is achieved has always been the same: a reality which found its “form,” and not a form conceived a priori.

Now I can answer the question posed at the very beginning of this paper by saying: I do not find a difference in “process” between “natural” form and “artificial” form. The inner reality of the pine tree expresses itself through the form of the pine tree, that of the stone through the form of the stone, and thus that of the cat, thus that of the man. The universe bears its knowledge within itself and expresses itself in form. The honest artist does the same thing.

Today, having found my justification of existence, I believe that I shall not undergo any more earthquakes, either of content or of form.

What do I want to express? And what form is born of this? At this point, since I make notes for each painting, I believe the best thing is to give a documentation of two pictures which were written about as well as painted. It will become more obvious how form is born.

The death of my father. My father died several years ago. I do not even remember the year: perhaps it was nine or ten years ago. My father died in my arms. Death. Man dies. My father died.

What is a dead man in the arms of a living one?

You understand that if I believed in the hereafter, or more precisely, if I were a Christian, this dead body in my arms would be a body waiting for resurrection, for an eternal life. On the other hand, if I believed that nothing exists after death, this body would be only a thing which disintegrates forever in the earth, eaten by maggots.

But my father died and I was neither one nor the other. Facing death, facing my dead father, there was only a son watching the father who slipped away from him, certainly to be forever just as he was then. I could have sworn to nothing in that moment: neither that his soul would rise to heaven, nor that there would be nothing left of him. There was only the subjective recollection of me, his son, of my brothers, his sons, of my mother, who died several years afterwards, perhaps also of a few others.

My father was dead. I was neither desperate nor full of hope. My father was there as I try now to paint him, without bringing in myself and the others.

Before me there is a canvas. Perhaps it is three feet by four feet. Against the brown background of the canvas there is a greenish body: skin and bones, because my father had been ill for three years and he was very thin. A whitish line makes the contour.

It has already been several months since I stopped working on this painting. I did not have the courage to continue it because until this "moment" it was something spontaneous and natural and right "to draw" this body and to detach it slightly from the background by using two different tones. But now I know that it would be unwarranted to add or to take away.

It would be good to set up other canvases. Better still to vary, to change the support, to use wood because I feel more at ease with wood. I shall reproduce this drawing on the new support and try to get something which contains as much as possible of that unknown reality which existed in my presence. Both for me and for the others, because for me it represents my dead father, for the others only a dead man. But what most interests me is death itself.

I draw my father because, having loved him and loving him still in memory, I cannot do so with rhetoric and untruths. My father died in the ordinary bed of a hospital. He died during the night. At two or three o'clock in the morning. My mother, worn out by her vigil which had lasted for days, was sleeping, dressed as she was, in a nearby room.

My father's suffering had lasted for a long time, and for three days, at a sign of his hand or his eyes, I had turned his poor body first to one side, then to the other.

My father died on a white sheet. He was not naked but was covered by some

sort of pajama. Someone could therefore ask if I, by painting him nude and light upon a dark ground, am doing something arbitrary to idealize this death. The question is legitimate. I could ask it myself. The fact is that I remember my father like this, as if he were nude. Perhaps it is because I washed him myself when he was very sick. Perhaps it is because in turning him I felt neither sheet nor pajama but only the suffering body. Besides, when today I approximate as closely as possible that which I saw and lived through, I still do not know exactly what color my father's body will assume, nor that of the color of the plane on which it rests. Because color does not make sense unless it signifies a specific thing in a specific circumstance. Color by itself has no meaning other than as a decorative thing. Here it is a question of using form and color which express real things.

Much time has passed: three, four, ten months, I don't remember. That I don't is due to the fact that for me the days have again become long, as when I was a boy. They are no longer hurried and fleeting. The day once again belongs to time.

Now there are two paintings instead of one. The difference between the two is that in the first there is only the recollection of my dead father; the second is my father, but dead for everyone, dead even for others: a dead man.

Perhaps the painting is finished. Certainly this dead man is different from those previously painted, at least it seems so to me. There is no fear of death in it, nor hope of a paradise, nor affirmation of what is death. There is only that mystery which death carries with it. That expression of reality which the death of a man produces. That sense of expectation-no matter what expectation. That interruption of an unknown rhythm, that of life, to become part of another unknown, that of death.

That body will no longer breathe. It will no longer speak to me. It will no longer smile at me. All that there was of life is finished forever.

But that body is there to testify to a real contact which took place between me and my father when he was at the point of death, exactly at the moment when life "left" him. When everything, apparently absurd and without reason, silently testified to an inner logic such as I had never felt before. So much so that I can say that never in my life did I understand myself to be so bound by the vicissitudes of man, and not only of man but of the earth and of the whole universe. That is to say, I was thrust into the world without knowing why, nor caring why, and the more I became a part of it, the less I could detach myself to ask the question.

That dead body. So like all those already dead, those who at this moment are dying, those who will die.

My wife in childbirth: More exactly, my wife in the night which followed her giving birth, which had occurred at one o'clock in the morning, with the baby-or rather, the baby girl-beside her.

My wife gave birth in my house. She was asleep in the same room. She slept in the big bed, I in a little bed at her feet. It was night but there was some light

in the room. I am in the habit of leaving the windows uncovered because I love the light which the night gives. My wife and daughter slept. I heard two breaths in the room: that tired, and slow, and strong of my wife and that rapid, scarcely perceptible of my daughter. I did not hear my own. At least I was not aware of it. From time to time I got up to look at those two creatures in their sleep.

The picture which I am drawing and which already begins to take form, wants to be a testimonial to that night. The two bodies are nude while that night they were hidden in part by the covers. But I saw only their bodies and I remember coat my wife's hair, a chestnut-blond color, became so black in the nocturnal light that the visual focus was her pale face surrounded by the shadow of her hair. I watched them for a long time, attentive to each small movement, waiting for their call. A kind of adoration of my wife and of my daughter and of the miracle of maternity.

There are moments during the execution of a painting in which one shows the force and the character of he who is painting. These are the moments of transition in which a thing of "imagination" becomes "concrete."

I find myself in one of these moments. The night, the presence of the mother in the night, the child who has not yet achieved a precise form, her pretty little face still shows signs of birth, of a difficult birth. All these things are present on the wood. I could stop. It is all evanescent and full of wonder. But I remember how, despite the night, I saw the form clearly. Even the sunlight could not have defined it more sharply, such was the attention and the quietness and the care with which I observed each small detail. So that the image was strikingly exact, even in those things which the eye could not see. I was so very aware of that belly which earlier that day I had pressed with all my strength and hurt, because at the very moment of giving birth the mother's strength had died out and the baby, later my daughter, risked death with her little head suspended halfway, at the threshold between going out into life and remaining in the warmth of her mother's belly. Thus this belly swollen with the wound, and the blood, and those things inside a woman, placenta, umbilical cord, water, which were still present-even though it was now all over-present at least in me there observing these creatures asleep.

Certainly this is the moment of danger. I can ruin the picture. But I am fortunate. The picture in itself does not interest me. What does matter is to see if I am capable of defining that state of my existence and theirs. I want whoever looks at it to feel that I am not outside the rectangle of wood, even if I am not visible.

The mistake. Certainly the mistake. Better to make it evident, if it exists. Not to conceal it within the picture.

After two days of hard work the painting is all black again. I want to explain the reason, that is to say, the "moments" of this painting. There was a first phase during which the painting was extremely pictorial but lacked reality. Then I wanted to define the contour with more exactness and strength.

I cut into the wood with a pyrographic instrument. With the fire I felt that I could render the strength which maternity has. But the needles were small and the incision in the wood superficial. The fire gave strength, but the painting became brutal, whereas in the night I had felt strength, yes, but pervaded with a sweetness which the fire killed.

So this morning I repainted the picture with oil colors. Slow overlays of color. But the figures became slimy, "varnished," a little like all those oil paintings, even those by painters like Raphael or Titian. Beneath the "film" there is nothing. A theatrical pretense. That pretense which good sculptures-like some of those of Giovanni Pisano in the Baptistry at Pisa-often do not have, because the material remains material. But in a painting the problem changes, because the problem of the material changes. However much I try to enrich the nature of the material, the wood always remains without depth. The mistake in the painting. Because beneath the real skin there is blood and flesh and the brain and the heart. Beneath the skin of the painting there is nothing. And this is the tragedy: the feelings of the painter, who has seen and understood, are more tangible than the object itself, which is not really seen and understood, yet is real.

When I was a "painter" I would have been upset enough to die over this human impotence. Today no. I wait for something to happen, trying to understand what it is that passes between the real object and the represented one, what there is in the represented object, and how it can render that truth which the real object has but which flees from the inattentive observer.

For the present the painting is only a dirty, black thing, but it has mystery.

While I wait for the glues and oils of the painting to dry, I try to think which among the maternities represented in painting and sculpture have struck me most and which seem to me nearest to what I should like to express.

The sculptures. Above all, some in wood by African sculptors. Some Mexican ones in terra cotta. Some Indian ones in stone. Certainly wood-especially when time has removed its polished external skin, and revealed the antiquity of its fibers, that sense of the sap which has run through it for years, its organic strength, even if now spent-has helped the artist in his expression. But the phallic content and the endogenous forces of the mother are so strong that they obscure those other things one might see in a maternity, such as the subtle relationship which exists between a smile and the miracle. A miracle because it is so little understood and is, at least until now, impossible to achieve in the laboratory. For even those acts which precede maternity, and all those of maternity itself, are not important in themselves but for the fact that they bring man back to possibilities once considered to be of a metaphysical and spiritual order. Possibilities which today are not definable, but are certainly bound to that reality which pervades all things and makes life beautiful.

But as I think of those wooden sculptures, where is the awareness outside that of the event itself, that consciousness of the two people breathing, for example, and the presence of myself in that room, of myself as I was watching?

How to realize and represent the reality of my own presence in that maternity, I who did not see myself with my own eyes, but who nevertheless existed?

What could make my presence tangible without translating it into surrealistic and expressionistic terms? How to materialize the outline of myself which no one saw? That is, how to place myself within the space of this painting?

In this instance, as before, a certain amount of time has passed. I should have liked to have reported carefully all the "relations" between me and the painting that changed as the painting proceeded. More precisely, all the events that took place between me and the reality of that night.

Now I consider the painting finished. Not because I was able to achieve a perfect identity between myself today and myself that night. On the contrary, I feel that an infinite number of elements have escaped me and are not attested to. I consider it finished only because there is nothing arbitrary. Nothing that creates a false charm. Nothing which puts the observer before an insoluble problem. Many things are missing. But that which is there is enough for me to bear witness to a birth.

In the night the mother was alive and alive was the daughter. In the night the mother breathed and so breathed the daughter. In the night mother and daughter were bound by the umbilical cord which binds us all together in this terrestrial adventure. But in the painting all that is not possible and will never be possible. The painting will only serve as a remembrance, to focus more attention on what birth means. Because the whole secret of existence is only to know how to seize at each moment the marvelous possibility of existence.

Form in Architecture

Whoever follows my work as an architect will note fewer alternatives and changes than in my painting. The development of form here has a more regular and continuous progress. There are definite reasons for this. First of all because I began to design and build later. At twenty-six rather than at fourteen. At a more mature age. Besides, architecture is bound to more limited themes because it must solve problems which have not been chosen by the architect. Moreover, the logic of construction impedes gratuitous freedom of form. Finally, when I was in a state of crisis, I did not design. However, from a formal point of view, an evolution has occurred which I might express in these terms: architectural form has increasingly freed itself from theoretical presuppositions to be united with its content, that is, to be born from its content.

If the content of a picture seems more obvious to some, given that the rapport between the painter and the canvas is immediate, while the rapport between the architect and the building is modified by many components (client, cost, function, structure), this does not mean that architecture does not have content. The process of achieving form is not different from that of painting. I shall illustrate this, as I did for painting.

The birth of my house: I wanted to build a house for myself. More or less like everyone else, my wife and I set out to find some land which would be suitable for us. And since we no longer wanted to live in the old central part of the city, because it no longer suited us, we looked for some land on a hill. But not for example, Fiesole, or Bellosguardo, which still have a feeling of the old city. Rather, we looked for a virgin hill and especially one in a place where the vegetation was natural, not planted by man: broom and thicket on a rocky terrain.

We chose a place which, although it was without gentleness and humanity, permitted us to experiment with a new way of living, in regard to the relationship between a man and his own house.

The variety of a house and the process to the final form of a building can come about in a thousand ways. I shall describe mine.

My wife and I did not reason this way, for example: that we needed so many bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen, two baths, etc. We started from something different. We asked ourselves what it meant to awaken. How we would wish to open ourselves to the world each morning, to the life of a day. We asked ourselves what it meant to go to sleep, that is, to close our day. What it meant to eat, to be among ourselves or with friends. How to give the children their own private place to develop their own natures, and also a collective place so that they would learn to be with others, even if for now only among themselves.

In short, I did not seek to put a beautiful dress on conformist and a priori-accepted functions but on the contrary, to examine the acts of our own daily life in order to make them, through their contact with the architecture, more vital, more important. The act and then the consequent form. That is to say, I saw us getting up in the morning, my wife and myself and our children; I saw her go to get them ready for school: I saw the children chatting with their friends, we with ours, our being and living together and with others, our entering the house and leaving it to go into the countryside. And not only these things, which seem beautiful and poetic. I also saw the milkman bringing the milk, the vegetable vender the vegetables. That is to say, I tried to see our life in all its aspects.

So the space was born to contain us. The structure to materialize that space. The form is a consequence of all this. The reasons for the form, that is to say, are not born from aesthetic or hedonistic preoccupations.

A floor was put at a certain height to suspend us in the void. A wall was erected to protect us from the wind. Another to relate the hills in front with the centre of the house. A material to give concreteness to the force of gravity. "Style" was destroyed, and the form was not intellectual or conceptual. It was simply born.

For eleven years now we have lived there. We have not been bored; it has not grown old. It lives with us as a dog or a cat might, or better, a beloved person.

I have used my house as an example because for me it is the simplest, most familiar thing. But I could make the same kind of analysis for each type of structure. The problem is the same. It is a question of establishing whether the

architect chooses his form or whether he is forced to his form by necessity. I believe that the falseness and gratuitousness of the first attitude and the truth of the second are obvious. Arriving at an apparent paradox, I might say that the architect has absolutely no choice.

At the basis of the actual design various components exist: the client, the available funds, the land on which the building will rise, the environment, the system of construction, the materials. Then there is the architect, the architect with his own reality, with his personality, with his biology.

The more precise the analysis of all these elements, the more the architect will find himself in a position of not being able to choose. Faced with the reality of the starting point, the architect can only make these realities achieve their own nature and translate them into form. Not a dictator, therefore, but a servant, that is to say, in the service of man.

Someone might ask me: But poetry? But imagination? But beauty? What are these? I could answer that I do not believe any more in poetry, in imagination, in beauty. But I do not wish to be equivocal. I say: A flower, does it not perhaps contain poetry, imagination, beauty? And perhaps does not the marvelous face of a woman? Is not the poetry, the imagination, the beauty of a flower or the face of a woman the result of the reality intrinsic to the flower or to the woman? And why must it be different in architecture? Is man, in this case the architect, perhaps something different, detached from the internal logic of the world? Can the architect detach himself from this internal logic? And if the architect acts strictly in accordance with the content that is given him, is his architecture then perhaps nothing other than the product of this internal light?

I could continue at length about architecture. As for painting, I have examined the birth of two pictures, I could for architecture examine other of my designs: house, store, or factory. As I could also examine still others which I have not yet had the fortune to design: schools, hospitals, skyscraper offices. But even for these the analysis would not be different. Instead of the life of my family, I would examine the lives of children, of sick people, of clerks. I would examine the acts which they perform or which they will perform, these future inhabitants of future organisms. From these acts form arises naturally.

Thus, in architecture as in painting, form is only a result. In painting it arises as testimony to acts which have happened or which are happening; in architecture as the presence of acts which have happened or which are happening.

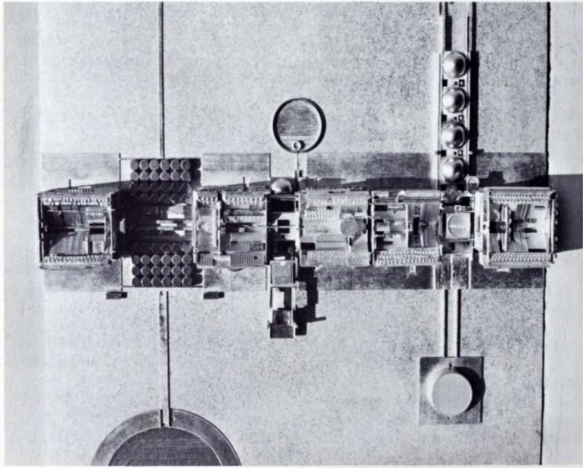
In conclusion I must say that for me form no longer presents itself as a problem. The contents that produce form no longer present themselves as problems. So that it is basically absurd to speak of content, and perhaps the very word "form" becomes so inappropriate as a semantic extension of the concept as to destroy the word form as a concept. In other words, I am fed up with all the intellectualisms and with all the preoccupations which are aesthetic or pseudo-aesthetic, literary or pseudo-literary, ethical or pseudo-ethical, in art and in form. And I say to myself, returning to the first question which was posed as a problem and is now

no longer a problem: The form of the cat is born because inside there is the cat, the form of the mountain because inside there is the mountain, that of the woman because inside there is the woman. The form of a house because inside there is that house. That of a painting because inside there is that painting.

I have said “inside” to make it understood that form is nothing but the visual experience of an internal reality. But even this word “inside” can become equivocal because it might seem that there is an inside and therefore an outside, thus a content and a form, but in reality one should not even speak of an inside. Form is nothing other than the tangible expression of a reality and when this truly coincides with reality it is in consequence true, it is in consequence beautiful.

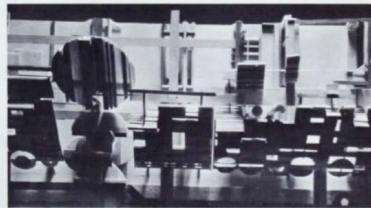
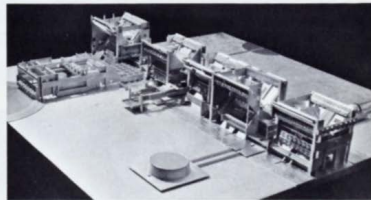
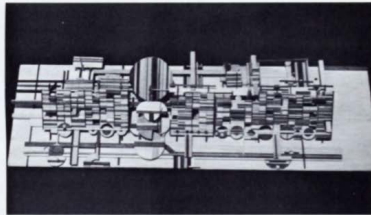
MODEL I

Organism studied in reinforced concrete. Megastructure in extruded pylons, with different types of beams according to specific needs. In the megastructure can be integrated at different times not only the communication system, but also secondary structures containing organisms of diverse functions.



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1 |

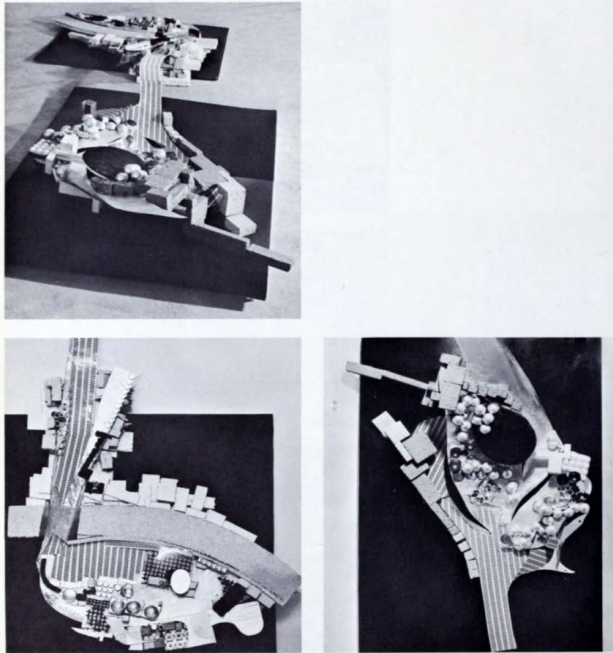


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2 |

MODEL II

Continuous organism which combines different industrialized structures and space according to their various needs and functions. The organism can grow in any direction and at any time.

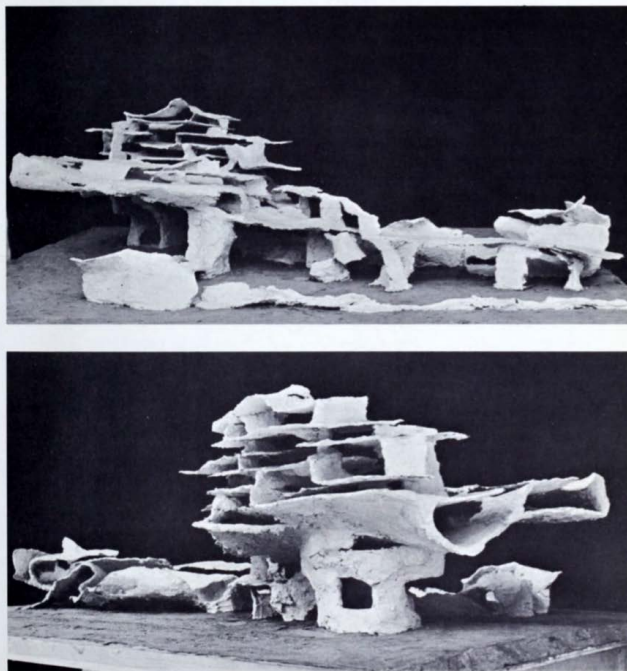


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3 |

MODEL III

Continuous organism constructed in a plastic material which permits the growth of space for different uses.



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4 |

Fig. 1-4

Images of models I, II, III, chosen by Leonardo Ricci for his text, "Form, the Tangible Expression of a Reality", published in *The Man-Made Object*, ed. Gyorgy Kepes (New York: George Braziller, 1966), 108-119. Original pictures of three models kept in Casa Studio Ricci, Monterinaldi, Florence, folder "USA".

Marco Dezzi Bardeschi

Kiesler, the Florentine School and the Curving of the World (1966)

The original Italian article titled "Kiesler, la scuola fiorentina e la curvatura del mondo" was published in 'ANAFKH, no. 14 (June 1996). The English translation was made by the HPA Editorial Team, whose heartfelt thanks go to Chiara Dezzi Bardeschi and the Editorial Board of Ananke for having agreed on the publication of the text.

It is exactly thirty years since Maria Bottero has been passionately and reasonably exploring the vertices of the singular triangle formed by three great Masters of the project, such as Louis Khan, Buckminster Fuller and Frederick Kiesler, all born within the Modern Movement but who, with their inexhaustible research, have extraordinarily dilated the conformist boundaries of the Tradition of the New. Out of this impassioned trilateration now comes Kiesler's exemplary "biography," conceived as a compelling open book in which chapters of criticism alternate with shining fragments of micro-history: diary excerpts, interviews, testimonies of friend-enemies (frenemies). A biography, published by Electa, which formed the backbone of the fine exhibition with which the Triennale wished to bring attention back to the figure and cross-cutting work of the brilliant architect-sculptor born in Romania in 1890 but, after only two years spent in the effervescent Vienna of Loos' *Raumplan* (praised by Schoenberg), and immediately landed in New York (in 1925) where he permanently remained until his death (1965).



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Today Kiesler, paradoxically even for some of the same promoters of his quasi-contemporary (and independent) exhibitions in Milan and Paris, continues to be only a visionary “figure énigmatique et atypique” with a “trajectoire vagabonde et polymorphe” (Chantal Beret), an embarrassing “eclectic” (!) and “difficult to place” (Berté) character. In short, an artist “elusive, nuanced, impregnable, whom it is not possible to place in a historical-critical sense,” but who can at most intrigue a little precisely because of his being “different, far” from us (Nicolin), in short “an outsider repropounded by another outsider” (Botta). The truth frankly seems to me a little different.

Those who, like me, were educated between the 1950s and 1960s were able to become acquainted early on with his astonishing “galactic” research thanks to the timely interest shown to him by André Bloch in *Architecture d’Aujourd’hui*: his Manifest of correalism had already been published in 1949, and the *Endless House* experienced a sensitive series of design insights and developments. In the Florentine milieu in particular his dogged crusade for “an architecture as sculpture and as a mystical rebirth of the if,” an architecture freed (finally) from the asphyxiatingly Cartesian parameters.

of Rationalism (his Pseudo-Functionalism of Modern Architecture fought “against the functionalist dogmas of the ‘International Style’”) made inroads in those years: in 1959 Kiesler, at the end of his profound (and little understood) worldly parable, designed one of the last versions of the Endless House, and in that very same year in Florence Vittorio Giorgini, son of the “king of fashion” set up the “Quadrante” art gallery for his sister, transforming a dark, deep, traditional ground-floor loft on Lungarni into a stimulating cryptic architecture. “Some historical checks on the Baroque, on certain experiences of Gaudì and Van de Velde, up to the rediscovery of certain dominants of free structuring in the manifestos of Kiesler and Saarinen, up to the “work of Sidney, awakened my interest in this kind of research,” the author explicitly stated. The search for spaces freed from the rigid stereometric grid was directed toward the use of the membrane system and the technique of light mesh as reinforcement for the concrete casting, which continued two years later (1961) with the unique zoomorphic inhabited sculpture of the Saldarini house in the Gulf of Baratti, a “grotto” raised from the ground on informal feet resting on metal hinges and made entirely of mesh structure and shot concrete, in a later presentation-revocation of those experiences at the 1978 Venice Biennale, in a crowded, trendy exhibition with a meaningful title (*Topology and Morphogenesis*) curated by Lara Vinca Masini, Giorgini confirmed the role of prophet and guru played for him by Kiesler.

And this was not an isolated phenomenon. In fact, even Leonardo Ricci, another agitated enfant terrible of the Florentine School, after having – in the 1950s – vernacularized on the hill of Monterinaldi with a beautiful view of Florence many components (spatial and material) of Frank Lloyd Wright’s frontier architecture, was now taking up almost verbatim the model of the Endless House without fear of bordering on plagiarism to realize the archetypal Waldensian village of Monte degli Ulivi in Rieti. The comparison can leave no doubt: the Florentine

architects of the middle generation then most closely linked to American culture (such as Ricci and Giorgini, precisely) and most intolerant of the laces of the now worn-out Cartesian stereometry of the Modern Movement, regressed to an empty repetitive formula (the International Style), thus found in Kiesler's bio-typological research a referent of exceptional interest. The same restless Grand Old Man of the Tuscan School, Giovanni Michelucci, an exact contemporary of Kiesler's, beginning, from January 1960, his great adventure of the project (and then of the building site) of the Church of the Autostrada del Sole proposed (and realized) yet another radical turning point precisely in the name of freedom: "I believe--he wrote--that architecture as it has been conceived up to now belongs to a past that has nothing in common with the future. And the future will certainly be richer than the present: it may have deeper unhappiness and sorrows, but it will be a heady pursuit of knowledge and human contact in a spirit of freedom that has been unknown to us." Perhaps the houses have not quite gone, so far, as the optimistic Master hoped, but for that very reason it is good to remind ourselves, to hearten us a little and to renew, in spite of everything, our confidence in the near future, "what hopes and what choruses" stirred the most conscious and thoughtful architects at the beginning of the "fabulous sixties." While from a renewed and profound relationship with nature gradually materialized in his drawings "the living body" (May 1961) of this amazing path architecture, Michelucci received the commission for the project of the church of the "rocky" San Marino (the first drawings are from September 1961) with which he pushed his own desire to describe with drawings (and happily realize: it deserves a visit!) a decidedly anti-Cartesian spatiality that one makes no effort to define empathetically as Kieslerian, that is, "correalist" in the sense of total space and the incessant flow and vital continuity of the whole, where the perception of the process of development and the experience of fruition of the path is absolutely prioritized over that of Form.

Indeed, in those years Michelucci had been particularly shaken by the salutary whiplash imprinted on the European scene by the great LeCorbusierian adventure of the Church of Ronchamp, which he found himself hotly criticizing in no uncertain terms in his magazine (*La Nuova Città*), deeming it the fruit of an anachronistic and artificial (and therefore essentially academic) regression to a kind of pre-rational neo-primitivism. Nonetheless, Corbu's "punto e a capo" was profoundly assimilated as a lesson that at once freed itself from the dogmas of Modernism and for its profound references to the deepest archetypes themselves of a free project that returned to draw on the perennial "truth" of Nature: "A crab shell picked up on Long Island near New York in 1946 -- Le Corbusier had written about it -- stands on my drawing table. It will become the roof of the Chapel: two concrete membranes 6 centimeters thick and held together at a distance of 2.26 meters. The shell will rest on walls of old reclaimed stones." The suggestion of Ronchamp was enormous: and we can find an illuminating quotation from it precisely in the margin of one of the first drawings -- the 71/15 -- for the Autosole church. Thus Michelucci, who had always made the "praise

of Nature”, the critique of all stereotypes of Abstract Form and the exaltation of such fluid, pulsating, indescribable spaces (like life itself) his own constant point of reference for projecting himself into ever new experiments, was now returning to draw heavily on the great historical lesson of Expressionism -- from Mendelsohn to Taut -- assimilated in his formative years and which he now effectively combined with a strong focus on the “avant-garde” of the Informal (this is surely one of the rare echoes in architecture of Action painting).

Fact be it that André Bloch himself, during that trip to the East that was to be fatal to him, asked and easily obtained a visit from Michelucci to his studio in Fiesole: in that historic meeting, at which I was present, the real absent protagonist (he had died in December 1965) was Kiesler himself, whom Michelucci would have liked to know better. Was he a fantastic expressionist and irreducibly anti-rationalist à la Finsterlin? Or an organic one who proposed to return to the same primal essence of the inhabitant archetypes (the cave) pursuing goals similar to those that fascinated Henry Moore so much in sculpture? Or had he arrived by other means (and which ones) to reintroduce into the project - to give it more heroic emotional grounding - the ultimate, perennial theme of the fatal return to primal Mother Nature, a nature that ceaselessly generates, dies and is reborn and thus - this was the take-off point beyond the “certainties” of Modernity and all Modernisms - introjecting into the “work”, with that suffered birth, the same sublime and fatal rite of the dissolution of Form? These were in essence the questions that, referring precisely to Kiesler’s singular personal quest, were exchanged between Michelucci and Bloch, in beautiful consonance of affectionate confidences, in that liminal meets at sunset time on the Fiesole hill.

Thus inserting Kiesler dutifully at the very heart of the lively international debate on overcoming the Modern Movement underway at least since the end of the 1950s, it remains to be explained why a character who throughout his life forced himself to “bypass the institutional and professional world” which he rightly considered “incapable of grasping the expressive values that arise from everyday life,” an all-round artist who generously struggled to reject the flattening of the “professional” horizon (“efficiencyism and technicality, flaunted as imperatives of progress- writes Maria Bottero recalling his crusade against all conventions and conformisms of convenience, actually mark a short-sighted and alienated architectural practice, driven by market interests unrelated to the real welfare of the inhabitants as well as to dutiful considerations of environmental economy”), suddenly ceased to get its positive libertarian message across to the new generations active since the 1970s. A great responsibility in removing Kiesler from the history of contemporary research lies precisely with the more “professional” international journals. A fact-that of the disappearance from the world of glossy paper of Kiesler’s work, considered too “different” from the very limited goals of pragmatic building-the kind that pleases checkered-paper architects and the “trilithic” universe of builders-and was noted by such an attentive witness as Mario Botta who, precisely on the occasion of the presenta-

tion of Maria Bottero's book, lamented that he had to rediscover the enthralling power of Kiesler's architecture, which he too had already known (as well as the writer) in the exalted years of his education, after a long period of silence, when he was unexpectedly confronted, during a recent visit to Jerusalem, with that work-revelation that is the Shrine of the Book (1959).

In short, one comes to think of a conspiracy of silence to ward off the thought and disturbing "work in black" of the inconvenient Maître à penser, implemented by the embarrassed critique of the positivist functionalism of the Modern Movement. The fact is that Kiesler was (and for many still remains) a presence too irreducibly nonconformist and disturbing for the Grand Barnum Circus of glossy-paper magazine circuits...

Now that at last Maria Bottero's impassioned volume and the two exhibitions in Milan and Paris, exactly twenty years after his death, reintroduce this strong personality "so energetically dissipative," it is to be hoped that the event may constitute a kind of exemplary test to return to full dignity of content and adequate qualitative depth to the increasingly impoverished routine of the project of the new.

A transparent cosmological empathy binds Kiesler to Taut under the banner of a similar participation in the Grand Theater of the World. It is difficult to find among the great witnesses of our century's project as much attention to our cosmic destiny: all expressions of man's creative activity are closely linked to the "rustling of the celestial spheres." An awareness that our daily experiencing cannot forget the hidden umbilical cord that binds us, as parts of the whole, to the great magic machine of heaven. To indicate this fundamental instance of Kiesler Maria Bottero introduces a felicitous term: "By the expression curvature of the world I mean to signify openness to the multidimensionality of cosmic space and the perception of the substantial physical and psychological unity of what exists, the physical and geographical world, the world of life cycles, the world of the psyche, with a shift of interest from the individual to the collective, from the 'object to the 'environment.

Kiesler, like Taut and Scheerbart, i.e., his most vital Central European roots, overcomes the cogent, overly oppressive gravitational force of the Modern Movement by effecting a radical reversal of the observer's point of view with respect to his habitat, a reversal analogous to that of the cosmonaut observing the earth from an elliptical planetary orbit. But the new slant of the eye does not achieve an extrinsically scenic faraway gaze that remains outside the nature of the phenomena being analyzed. It is an active and profound aim that penetrates the substance of the constituent phenomena, and writes Bottero "an exercise analogous to that operated by Lévi Strauss' structural anthropology, which, overcoming the gravitational force of Western Eurocentric thinking, observes and compares the different peoples and cultures of the earth" in search of the semantic foundations of the collective imaginary. Here, then, cosmology, anthropology and architectural research are welded into an extraordinary unity

of cognitive engagement and design behavior. The discourse now focuses on the communicative power (in space and time) of the Project, on the meaning of sign and language, involving the indefinite universe of the “symbol,” the pillar of communication. “The symbols that language produces arise from the submerged world of the collective unconscious, and this world, not unlike the globe, has a curvature: (...) the Jungian theory of the collective unconscious proposes the unity of the submerged psychological world, which can be experienced from the extrasubjective psychic space. The exploration of this world demands not only the decentralization of the anthropologist from his cultural sphere, but also demands the decentralization of the creative subject from the sphere of the everyday and the conscious.”

“Both Fuller’s and Kiesler’s research,” Maria Bottero continues, “are driven by a strong ethical impulse: but while the outcome of the former and the equivalence of the project with the search for a new geometry and new structural systems, an ecological policy and a strategy for the use of the world’s resources, the outcome of the latter and the project as a tool for the rebirth of the self. In and with the project, the creativity of the individual, his ability to modify the outer and inner world, is brought into play. The cosmic galactic structure is reflected in the psychological one, and it is at the point of reversal that collective action intervenes.”

On the ideal watermark of the white sheet on which the act of designing is ignited and renewed each time, the invisible Fuller, Kahn, Kiesler triangle acts positively. The geodesic and tensegral structures of the former confirm that matter is discontinuous and “porous.” The new “monuments” of the latter exalt the creative role of memory and tend to trace back to the “prebabelic unity of language” enhancing the heroic and universal character of the archetype. The third’s (Kiesler’s) “ecological anathema” and dogged pursuit of a dynamic concave-convex spatiality exalt the flows and fields of forces, mobility, and bioenergetic process urging us to a continuous “interaction between socio-sphere, technosphere, and biosphere.” “In Kiesler, all human functions are but subordinate secondary manifestations of dwelling, and the interpretation of the dwelling function and the Endless House as a representation of the archetypal idea of the house-utero or cave or primitive shelter-that sends us back to the origin of dwelling. The Endless House (equivalent to the ‘Endless Theater’ where the drama of being is acted out) is proposed as an energy transformer, an active principle, a molding energy whirlpool for those who live in it, acted upon by the designer and with the power to act it out.”

Thus recovered from heretic-heretical periphery to the very centrality of the philosophy (and design) of living, I believe that, after this decisive testimony of the book edited by Maria Bottero and the exhibitions in Paris and Milan, it can no longer escape anyone how much, far beyond the ephemeral and transient systems of fashions (conjugated with the sensitive interpretation of the oscillations of taste and the struggle for the dominance of “cultural” markets - these yes - on a global scale) the great lesson of Kiesler in his continuous questioning may be

a truly valuable viaticum in these low years of the end of the century to restore full awareness and confidence in the great responsibility of the oldest and most betrayed profession of "world-builders."

The cosmonaut Kiesler, just as the pop art of the great Rauchenberg delivered him to us and to the new generations with happy act of synthesis, reminds us in the end that the project is an incessant search for "the other" a compelling journey beyond all forms of convention, a continuous creative challenge against all self-satisfying clichés to "attempt the unintended, imagine the unimaginable, say the unspeakable."

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

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

/Abstract

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

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She is involved in national and international conferences and she is currently adjunct professor of History of Architecture at Architecture-Engineering degree course (Bologna campus).

Introduction

Leonardo Ricci and Umberto Eco's collaboration at the Faculty of Architecture in Florence in the Sixties brought to the end of the student revolt in 1968 and to the publication of Eco's *La Struttura Assente. La ricerca semiotica e il metodo strutturale* (1968)¹. Eco dedicated the book, firstly titled *Appunti per una semiologia delle comunicazioni visive* to Ricci², it was released in 1968 and immediately entered the heart of the debate on Structuralism - the theory that most dominated the cultural climate of those years and that seemed to deliver the sense, the knowledge, and a cultural new destiny to the specificities of history.

More in detail, Ricci's work could be interpreted as a whole through the lens of the concept of "open work" in architecture³, traceable in Ricci's work and forged by Umberto Eco in his text "Il problema dell'opera aperta" (1958) published in the second part of the collection of essays *La Definizione dell'Arte. Dall'estetica medievale alle avanguardie, dall'opera aperta alla morte dell'arte*⁴ titled "Il concetto di forma nelle poetiche contemporanee" which encompassed Eco's writings about Art, Music, Photography, Aesthetics, and Theater and led to the completion of his *Opera Aperta* in 1962⁵, published in 1962 as the first edition of Ricci's *Anonymous (XX century)*⁶.

The purpose of this text is to explain to what extent Visual Design, and Urban Design, though perhaps to a minor degree, constituted the connection between Ricci and Eco's work, the core of their collaboration at the Faculty of Architecture in Florence, that showed a main affinity in the concept of "Open Work" derived from the "Open Formativity" firstly theorized by Benedetto Croce and then by Eco's master Luigi Pareyson⁷.

Despite no direct correspondence between Ricci and Eco is at present available⁸, it is possible to infer, through an exegesis of the texts they wrote and through their political action, that Ricci and Eco shared ideas on the notion of "open work" actually extended to the openness of Architecture and Urban

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Florentine Department and the Semiology of Architecture

The concept of "Open Work" is central to explain Leonardo Ricci's work, to which it is connected not only thanks to the direct contact with Umberto Eco and the science of communication, but also since the very beginning of his architectural activity thanks to Giovanni Michelucci's teaching on the potentiality of the city to host urban variability and human acts⁹.

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

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

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

Umberto Eco had already published *Opera Aperta* (1962) and *Apocalittici e Integrati* (1964) when he arrived in Florence after having taught at the Politecnico di Milano from 1961 to 1964. In Milan Eco had worked on the fields of television and architecture, there he found the contact with the phenomenologist Enzo Paci, who became a reference for Ricci as well¹⁰, and Eco's research found support in the friendship with Vittorio Gregotti¹¹. In those years of revolt, the course of Decoration, as it was set and structured for the students of the first two-years of Architecture, seemed increasingly anachronistic. Therefore, Gillo Dorfles was firstly called to actualize and manage it in content, then Umberto Eco¹² took over him from 1966 to 1969 and renamed the course "Semiologia delle Comunicazioni Visive". Eco's assistants of the course were Paolo Fabbri¹³ and Gianfranco Petrelli, one of the most influential scholars in Semiotics and Linguistics and an engineer, one of Ricci's collaborators for many projects.

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

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

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

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

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

14 Roland Barthes, "Éléments de Sémiologie" was originally published in the French review *Communications*, no. 4 (1964): 91–135. Then it was published in French by Editions du Seuil, Paris in 1964, translated in English by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith, published independently as a short book: Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), and also in Italian by Einaudi with the title *Elementi di Semiologia* (Torino: Einaudi, 1966). It was also published in Roland Barthes, "Sémiologie et urbanisme", *L'aventure Sémiologique 1967*, Paris, Du Seuil, 261-27, then in *Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 153 (December 1970-January 1971): 11-24.

Eco's pre-semiotic work, developed in Florence from 1966 to 1969 is quite ignored and it was criticized by historians of architecture. As Amit Wolf states Manfredo Tafuri and Cesare Brandi challenged Eco's studies and "the support lent by Eco's work to the architectural neo-avant-garde in pursuing its 'poetica dell'aleatorio' (Manfredo Tafuri, *Storia dell'architettura italiana: 1944-1985* (Torino: Einaudi, 1982), 116-117; Cesare Brandi, *Teoria generale della critica* (Torino: Einaudi, 1974), 267). A more positive view is found in Franco De Faveri's appendix to Pigafetta's *Architettura moderna e ragione storica* (Franco De Faveri, "Appendice: a proposito della 'Ragione Storica'", in Giorgio Pigafetta, ed., *Architettura moderna e ragione storica: la storiografia italiana sull'architettura moderna, 1928-1976*, 245-57 (Milano: Guerini Studio, 1993), where the relevance of Eco's *Opera aperta* of 1962 for Italian architectural history is clearly recognized. Amit Wolf, "Superurbefimero n. 7: Umberto Eco's Semiologia and the Architectural Rituals of the U.F.O.", *Escholarship*, no. 2 (2011).

the creation of Semiology, the very successful “*Éléments de sémiologie*” constituted the most decisive moment in this turn¹⁵.

In the archives of the Faculty of Architecture in Florence the documents confirm that Eco taught in Florence only from 1966 to 1969¹⁶. After 1969 he was convened at the New York University for the Autumn term to held a course on Semiotics and Visual Communications and, in a letter addressed to the Chancellor and to the Dean of the Faculty of Architecture of Florence, he asked to have the months of October, November and December 1969 free to move to the United States. If not possible, he would have stopped to teach in Florence from 1970 onwards¹⁷. After 1969 Eco temporarily regained his position at the Politecnico di Milano, to take up the first appointment as Professor of Semiotics in the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy at the University of Bologna in 1971. From 1970, after the publication of *La Struttura Assente*, Eco's studies had a strong impact abroad: in Europe he held lectures and conferences in Dublin, Bordeaux, Bruxelles and Paris. He took part in the constitution of the International Association for Semiotic Studies (Association Internationale de Sémiotique, IASS-AIS): the major world organisation of semioticians, established in 1969. Milan became an important reference for the International Association for Semiotic Studies, which had its counterparts in both North and South America, in Buenos Aires and New York. When founded, the members of the association included Algirdas Julien Greimas, Roman Jakobson, Julia Kristeva, Emile Benveniste, André Martinet, Roland Barthes, Juri Lotman, Thomas A. Sebeok, and Umberto Eco¹⁸.

When Eco arrived in Florence the teaching reform against the Traditional School was taking shape, then *Group 63*, of which Umberto Eco was also a member, was at work¹⁹, Italo Calvino was writing *Le città invisibili* (1967) after the 1967 Paris Youth Biennial, and visual poets (Lamberto Pignotti, Egidio Mucci) and influential contemporary art critics such as Lara Vinca Masini and Bonito Oliva were active. Eco was working on the notion of culture, as the mass culture was spreading, and understood architecture as a cultural, sign-like phenomenon, in three dimensions. He was the first to articulate the structuralist

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

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

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

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

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

thought in architecture²⁰ by working on the conception of culture and, relevant to it, the way to perceive, understand, and study it. This was the core of *Apocalittici e Integrati*, born as a collection of writings presented to take part in the first academic competition for the chair of “Psychology and Pedagogy of the mass communications” that had no winners but let Eco build a volume based on the treatise of hendyadis dedicated to the study of the mass culture that represented a new horizon to explore of profound interest²¹. Indeed, Eco explained in what the contrast between élite and mass culture consisted in the book preface:

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

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

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

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

ing theories of decadence, the integrated rarely theorize, and more easily operate, produce, and issue their messages daily at every level²²

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

Structuralism and Architecture as a "Sign Text"

The connection between communication system, mass culture and counterculture and the concept of "open work" in architecture lies in the relational value of its elements studied by Structuralism²³ which arose as an alternative epistemological paradigm to Positivism in the mathematical and natural sciences, based on the concept of structure, applied to sciences and humanities, derived from the research carried out in the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the next century in the fields of *Gestalt* Psychology and Linguistics.

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

22 The English translation was done by the author, the original Italian text is as follows: "Se la cultura è un fatto aristocratico, la gelosa coltivazione, assidua e solitaria, di una interiorità che si affina a si oppone alla volgarità della folla [], allora il solo pensiero di una cultura condivisa da tutti, prodotta in modo che si adatti a tutti, e elaborata sulla misura di tutti, è un mostruoso controsenso. La cultura di massa è l'anticultura. Ma siccome nasce nel momento in cui la presenza delle masse nella cultura associata diventa il fenomeno più evidente di un contesto storico, la "cultura di massa" non segna una aberrazione transitoria e limitata: diventa il segno di una caduta irrecuperabile, di fronte alla quale l'uomo di cultura (ultimo superstite della preistoria destinato a estinguersi) non può che dare una estrema testimonianza in termini di Apocalisse.

Di contro, la risposta ottimistica dell'integrato. Poiché la televisione, il giornale, la radio, il cinema e il fumetto, il romanzo popolare e il Reader's Digest mettono ormai i beni culturali a disposizione di tutti, rendendo amabile e leggero l'assorbimento delle nozioni e la ricezione di informazioni, stiamo vivendo in un'epoca di allargamento dell'area culturale in cui finalmente si attua ad ampio livello, col concorso dei migliori, la circolazione di un'arte e una cultura 'popolare'. Se questa cultura salga dal basso o sia confezionata dall'alto per consumatori indifesi, non è problema che l'integrato si ponga. Anche perché, se gli apocalittici sopravvivono proprio confezionando teorie sulla decadenza, gli integrati raramente teorizzano, e più facilmente operano, producono, emettono i loro messaggi quotidianamente ad ogni livello". Umberto Eco, *Apocalittici e Integrati* (Milano: Bompiani, 1964), prefazione, 3-4.

23 At the time, Structuralism, firstly developed by Lévi Strauss in Anthropology from Marcel Mauss' *Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques* (firstly published in France in 1923-1924, in *L'Année sociologique*, the essay is published in Italy by Einaudi with the title *Saggio sul dono. Forma e motivo dello scambio nelle società arcaiche* in Franco Zannino's translation, with an introduction by Marco Aime. In 2011 it also came out as a supplement to "Corriere della Sera," with a foreword by Giancarlo Provasi), also found its applications in other disciplines such as Linguistics and Psychology, even before architecture. In particular, linguistics, as applied to architecture, had become the field of inquiry of a more general "Sign Theory." Every sign, or architectural element, functional field in architecture and urbanism, going to combine with other signs, goes to constitute a code, decipherable in Linguistics as in Architecture. Architecture, the only constructed art, is thus made explicit as a culture in three dimensions). See also: Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Introduction à l'œuvre de Mauss", in Marcel Mauss, *Sociologie et Anthropologie* (Paris: PUF, 1950), translated in Italian: Marcel Mauss, *Teoria generale della magia e altri saggi* (Torino: Einaudi, 1965). To deepen Lévi Strauss' criticism towards Mauss see: Ugo Fabietti, ed., "Il 'silenzio' di Mauss", in *La costruzione della giovinezza e altri saggi di antropologia* (Milano: Guerini, 1992), 53-60.

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

Structuralism was therefore based on a fundamental basic distinction between invariant patterns, which represented the backbone of the system, and variable patterns, which constituted its historical component. Between invariants and variables there were relations, obtained from the interactions between the two levels, which Structuralism aimed to study²⁴. In the same way, the “open work” realization in art happened in the interaction between the producer of the work of art, the artist, and the user, actively and freely involved in the development of the artistic result as well as in its interpretation.

Precisely because of its systemic and relational vision, which analyzed the totality through laws, relations and internal processes of transformation, Structuralism found applications and possible interpretations in both sciences and humanities and pursued a double idea of scientificity and openness to the flexibility of concrete experience. In the second half of the twentieth century, therefore, Structuralism extended to a range of disciplines that did not feel adequately represented by either the methods of scientific knowledge or the tradition of the “spiritual sciences”: not only Linguistics, Psychology and Anthropology, the studies that had given rise to Structuralism, but also Sociology, Architecture, Political Theory, Aesthetics and Art History found new applications. Eco synthesized all interdisciplinary perspectives and different approaches in his *La Struttura Assente* by merging the double level architecture acted on: a level of a system of signs and a set of mass communication codes²⁵, thus recalling, as Massimiliano Savorra states²⁶, Renato De Fusco’s *Architettura come mass medium. Note per una semiologia architettonica* (1967)²⁷.

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

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

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

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

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

recognize themselves in a structuralist aesthetic: Kenzo Tange, Moshe Safdie, Lucien Kroll, Richard Rogers, Renzo Piano, and Giancarlo De Carlo are some of them. On a strictly theoretical level, these authors made explicit reference to the application to the history of architecture of the concept of “abstinance,” developed by Cesare Brandi, characterizing those artistic phenomena that manifest themselves as a set of relations and not as simple elements²⁸. The structuralist matrix in architectural thought existed as early as the late 1950s, when Structuralism helped to bring concrete social phenomena to the center of the debate on urban planning and the design of individual buildings always referring to the impulse coming from the studies of Claude Lévi-Strauss. In explicit polemic against the rationalist orientation, prevalent since the 1930s in international meetings such as CIAM (Congrès International d’Architecture Moderne), Dutch architects such as Aldo van Eyck (1918-1999) and John Habraken (1928 -) sought to restore value to the non-scientific elements of design. The structuralist vision offered the possibility to find an appropriate language and method and new theoretical references²⁹.

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

The “Discursive Power” of Architecture

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

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

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

the foundation of the journal *Op. Cit.* in 1964, with the publication of texts by Renato De Fusco and Maria Luisa Scalvini, while abroad Roland Barthes firstly understood Structuralism as the logic behind Urban Design and in Kevin Lynch's research. Indeed, Roland Barthes, in "Sémiologie et Urbanisme" dealt with the awareness that encountered and enabled the interrelationship of symbols and functions in urban space, understood as invariants and variables of a systemic totality³⁰.

On one side, even in the previous decades, in Italy the "discursive power" of architecture Roland Barthes also dealt with in "Sémiologie et Urbanisme" had been already noticed with respect to temporary exhibitions by Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti, who saw the exhibitions importance as mediators between public and museum, and as a response to the aesthetic education of the public thanks to their "discursive power". The exhibition was a device that allowed the work to express itself at its best thanks also to the combinations with other works that allowed it to be read as a system with the text of the history of art³¹. On the other side, the research on new possible readings of architecture through the structuralist semiotic methodological approach began at the end of the 1950s actually, with the contribution of some scholars as Sergio Bettini, Galvano della Volpe and Gillo Dorfles³², who suggested a structuralist idea of arts and architecture and introduced further Italian intellectuals' work such as that of Maria Luisa Scalvini, Emilio Garroni, Vittorio Gregotti and Renato De Fusco, who tried to refund the historiographical path of architecture through Semiotic, inevitably reconsidering the subject and its methodologies under the anthropological, philosophical, aesthetic, linguistic, psychological, sociological and semiological perspectives thus borrowing their interpretative tools. More in detail, in the Sixties the narrowing of Art History, in the figure of Cesare Brandi, and Semiotics, with Emilio Garroni and Umberto Eco, happened as an attempt to review the scientific analysis of cultural phenomena through communication and the science of signs which brought to the theoretical refoundation of Architecture among the arts. Therefore, Aesthetics and Linguistics were the most involved disciplines in the debate centred on the notion of "value" in Aesthetics, on the one hand, and the application of Linguistics to Architecture, by the science of signs, on the other. Massimiliano Savorra has proposed an interesting overview on the matter with a complete bibliography, on the influence of semiological studies and tools on the History of Architecture by focusing in detail on Maria Luisa Scalvini's work as

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

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

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

the most clarifying and leading in the “semiological criticism” of Architecture³³, with the aim to frame “the ways in which such semiotic themes were addressed, as “operative criticism”, toward the foundation of a theory of architecture, increasingly intertwined with the history of architecture”³⁴.

In those years in Florence, a group of scholars and architects who dedicated part of their studies to the connection between Architecture and Semiology existed and they could be treated as a “control group” for further investigation because they conducted an analysis of their creative activity based on symbolic-communicative elements in architecture, industrial design and advertisement³⁵. The conception and elaboration of semiology came through the work of the art critic Gillo Dorfles, appointed professor of “Decorazione” in 1959. The impact of linguistic theory on architecture is described in depth in his *Simbolo, comunicazione, consumo* (1960)³⁶. This work also afforded a clear examination of the Florentine debate in the early 1960s, before Eco’s arrival. It introduced additional protagonists to the Florentine discussion with three major concerns: the definition of a new curriculum centered on architectural composition: Italo Gamberini who was studying how architectural elements could be intended as “words” of the language of architecture³⁷ and Giovanni Klaus Koenig who had already published *Lezioni del corso di Plastica* (1959)³⁸ including two parts dedicated to the study of the relations between architecture and arts as well as to the analysis of drawings and models as texts, and a third part titled “Prolegomeni all’analisi del linguaggio architettonico”, then *Analisi del Linguaggio*

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

34 Savorra, “Structuralism and Communication Systems”, 214-227.

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

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

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

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

Architettonico (1964), which referred to Structuralism applied to architecture, taking Charles Morris' pragmatism³⁹ as its main reference, in order to reinterpret it as a founding moment of design method⁴⁰. Koenig was defining a historiographical direction reassessing Rationalist architecture, in support of a common vision of the mentioned authors whose ideas were conceived within the same institution, then published in *L'invecchiamento dell'architettura moderna ed altre dodici note*⁴¹. Finally Dorfles dealt with the use of linguistic theories in the nascent discipline of industrial design quoting Koenig's *Lezioni del corso di plastica* (1961)⁴² and Pierluigi Spadolini's *Lezioni del corso di progettazione artistica per industrie* (1960) that fitted into the debate with his studies between Industrial Design and Semiotics, which led to consider the relation between industrial design, arts and architecture as languages ruled by a grammar⁴³.

In that theoretical debate Eco found an interesting ideal context for the application field of the themes he had so far studied in Linguistics in Milan⁴⁴. Symbolic-communicative elements in architecture, industrial design and advertisement affected human life and creativity unless they were considered second rate disciplines if compared to "pure arts"⁴⁵. Gillo Dorfles found in Italo Gamberini, Giovanni Klaus Koenig and Pierluigi Spadolini's work some of the most significant trials, even not perfectly fitting with his theories, to apply to architecture some of his considerations on the topic he had previously published in *Il divenire delle arti* (1959)⁴⁶.

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

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

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

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

42 Koenig, *Lezioni del corso di plastica*.

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

44 Wolf, "Superurbefimero n. 7".

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

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

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

Visual Design and Visual Communication

For his course "Semiologia delle Comunicazioni Visive", Eco drafted "Appunti per una Semiologia delle Comunicazioni Visive" as an handout for students' use only sold at production cost, cyclostyled at Bompiani. It circulated in low print runs, it was later republished as part A, B, and C of *La Struttura assente*, while the last section of the text was reproduced in a somewhat shortened version as "Proposte per una semiologia dell'architettura"⁴⁸. In it Eco restarted and took up up the concept of the "open work", Eco's first attempt at systematizing his theory of cultural processes and at applying linguistic theories to mass produced visual objects – from comic strips to advertisement and television – while insisting on the central role of architecture. The magazine *Marcatré* and Eco's related publishing activities as editor of the Bompiani non-fiction division became the main stage for his reflections⁴⁹.

As Eco declared in the introduction to *La Struttura Assente*, most of the research it contained had been elaborated during three courses carried out in the Faculties of Architecture, in Milan, São Paulo and in Florence. The book was inspired and much owed to the students of architecture, because in them the author found the constant concern of «anchoring the universe of things to be communicated to the universe of things to be modified⁵⁰».

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

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

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

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

50 Eco, *La Struttura Assente*, 43.

György Kepes, he definitely based his belief on morphological generations avoiding *a priori* forms he had already expressed in his reflections on the Informal in painting and in the conferences held in 1952 at the Brooklyn University and at the University of South California⁵¹. Ricci strengthened his conviction that the design idea emerged from the artistic sign and not vice-versa. The influences among the arts in the design process, combined with the study of the History of Art and Architecture, gave birth to Urban Design, the discipline he would have taught at the PSU and University of Florida (UF) in the following years. Ricci's experience at MIT was a turning experience in teaching and design, not only because there he found new research fields and the roots of Urban Design, but also because he exported to Italy György Kepes' course of Visual Design.

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

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

51 During his stay in the United States, Ricci wanted to investigate on precise themes he specified in the typescript of the conferences kept in Casa Studio Ricci, in Monterinaldi: these concerned the right place for works of art, the re-integration of the artist in society, and the re-integration of the arts by means of town planning.

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

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

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

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

Even though Ricci would have figured out more precisely all Visual Design teaching methods and applications during his first experience at MIT, as he could really get into the discipline there, a typescript kept in Casa Studio Ricci unveils the existence of Ricci’s interest in Kepes’ Visual Design before his arrival at MIT: a purpose to turn the course of “Plastica ornamentale” into “Visual Design”. On October 16, 1959, a short time before leaving Italy to teach in Cambridge, Leonardo Ricci and Giovanni Klaus Koenig presented a report to the Dean of the Faculty of Architecture in Florence concerning the teaching of plastic formativity to architects following Kepes’ example and wrote a purpose for a new teaching program in that field⁵⁵.

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

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

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

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

steps in the ideation and understanding of a project. The rigid rationalist conception of architecture that refused any decorative element had prevented the material from intervening in any compositional and pre-compositional phase of the architectural project. At the end of the Fifties, a specific function in the formative process of architecture was attributed to plastic: no longer in the sense of "ornament" to a structure but in the sense of a structure that became plastic itself. The spatial configuration through the structure became form and «was enriched with three-dimensional and volumetric values born from the expressive possibilities offered by the structure and materials⁵⁶».

According to Ricci and Koenig, this kind of study on the plastic possibilities of materials was fundamental in architectural teaching and Kepes' Visual Design course, consisting in teaching the students all the possible meanings of lines, space, volumes, colors, dimensions of the elements and the way these combined, the properties of some materials, the ways to treat them, internationally recognized, should have been inserted in the program of the graduate studies reform urging in those years. Ricci and Koenig's purpose about a Visual Design course in the first two years aimed at offering education in plastic education to «creative plastic faculties through historical study and experimental analysis of the properties of forms⁵⁷» and it was divided into four parts: theoretical introduction to the world of forms, history of form teaching in the modern world, exercises on theoretical topics, exercises on materials. Each part retraced the theme of the refusal of predetermined forms and was a translation of what he learnt at MIT.

The first part implied the demonstration of two main thesis: the first general thesis that «each formed form ("Gestaltete Form") [was] not an a priori fact, but a direct consequence of the vision of the world of the creative personality, conditioned by society and in turn conditioning⁵⁸» and that «every particular conformative principle (Byzantine painting, Renaissance architecture, abstract art, advertising art, etc.) [was] the mirror of a particular way of life (custom, society) that [chose] that language of forms as the most suitable for communication than with it wants to carry out⁵⁹». The thesis would have been demonstrated through the historical study of the variations of figurative and architectural languages from the Middle Ages to the contemporary era. The second thesis dealt with the general tendency of art towards abstraction (with all the difficulties of the communicative process that this tendency brought within itself was a consequence of the conditions of the society) as direct consequence of the social conditions. It had to be demonstrated through the analysis of the relationships between contemporary architecture and non-figurative art, especially between Mies van der Rohe's work and Geometric Abstractionism (Mondrian, Van Doesburg), Wright and Phenomenology, Le Corbusier and Cubism, Gropius,

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

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

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

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

Breuer, and Organic Abstractionism (Kandinsky, Klee, Pollock), Aalto and Naturalistic Abstractionism (Wirkkala), the last tendencies and the Informal. Once these thesis were demonstrated and assumed that the creation of a form was the logical interpretation of the world, and not of the artist's will, education in the world of forms became a problem of education of the pupil's figurative and sociological world⁶⁰. The second part focused on the teaching of the last theorists of classical teaching as André Lurçart and Le Corbusier, on the first Psychology of form by the founders of the Gestaltheorie (Wohler, Wertheimer and Koffka), its five fundamental and its two general laws, on the attempts to work on psychological implications of forms (Gropius and the Bauhaus), and finally on Max Bill and György Kepes' teachings on plastic visual organization on the basis of the creative image, external forces, the visual and retinal fields, the dimensional field, the painting field, spatial forces, spatial forces fields, internal forces of the image, internal forces fields, the psychological field, the color balance, spatial tensions: dynamic balance, similarities and differences, continuity, interruptions, organization of the optical sequences, rhythms, organization of the spatial progression⁶¹. For the explanation of the third part of the program Leonardo Ricci and Giovanni Klaus Koenig's purpose directly quoted the American teaching methods as reference on which the exercises of the students had to be elaborated: the students had to compose lines, surfaces, colors, and masses to be guided by them and find the right consequent formal solutions. Therefore, Ricci transferred the MIT teachings methods to his courses in Florence. In the fourth part of the course the students had to exercise on the practical study of the expressive value of some chosen materials: iron, wood, concrete, glass, bricks, and stones. For some materials as wood the study was linked to the type of machine with which it was worked, and finally a study from life had to be carried out on the relationship between different materials such as wood and iron, or stone and brick in an experimental laboratory⁶².

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

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

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

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

cultural exchanges organized by Ricci among the students of PSU and the faculty of Architecture of Florence. They consisted in a series of polymetric models by applying an experimental approach, between architecture and art, and worked on the most famous "Model for an Integrated Town", also known as "MODEL I: Harbor-center with water-sea-earth communication routes", exhibited at the Montréal Expo of 1967, and required by the Centre Pompidou several years later for the exhibition "Vision Urbaines" (1992)⁶³. Furthermore, Ricci's academic exercises included the direction of Maria Grazia Dallerba's research project⁶⁴ titled "Aspetti antro-sociologici degli atti umani" ["Anthro-sociological aspects of human acts"] with the support of Professor Tullio Seppilli, anthropologist and director of the Institute of Cultural Anthropology in Perugia, Professor Fausto Antonini of the Philosophy Department in Rome, and Professor Donald Kent, Dean of the School of Sociology at Pennsylvania State University⁶⁵.

The research was conducted at PSU, from 1965 to 1967, it was centered on new models, and aimed at studying all the possible spatial configurations based on human acts and at avoiding the settlements models where the minor economic, administrative-political, cultural, and religious models produced alienation due to zonic. It presented a phenomenological-existential approach and wanted to single out the methods of investigation and verification that could have helped in isolating those factors causing social – collective and individual – alienation. It was conducted thanks to a parallel study of the drawing instruments applicable on the environment⁶⁶. The study was mainly based on the "alienation time" identified with the free time, one of the most important achievements of the mass society. It was intended as «one of the most conspicuous phenomena of the contemporary city, "spare time" - time alienated by definition, both as a result of our socio-economic system, and due to the inadequacy of urban and territorial structures⁶⁷». The analysis of spare time could have highlighted the paradoxes of the contemporary urban structures for contemporary times in function of consumption, physical and social mass mobility, and education⁶⁸.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Eco's introductory lectures on Visual Communication were centered on the concept of sign, on its generation and generative power as well as on the instances of Visual Design and Gestalt as they tried to outline the connection between object, sign and function, which revolved the questions about how architectural objects communicate or do not communicate, what they communicate and whether or not they were conceived to communicate, if they were designed to communicate. The analysis developed in the connection between object, sign and function some publications of the last Fifties and Sixties dealt with such as Cesare Brandi's *Eliante o Dell'Architettura* (1956), and *Segno e Immagine* (1960), the already quoted Gillo Dorfles' *Simbolo, comunicazione, consumo* (1960), Giovanni Klaus Koenig's *Analisi del linguaggio architettonico* (1964), and Cesare Brandi's *Struttura e Architettura* (1968) have sought such an answer and must be considered as they anticipated Eco's work⁷⁰.

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

One of the sectors in which Semiology was most challenged by the reality on which it tries to take hold is that of architecture⁷¹. For the Florentine Eco, Semiology was the science capable of studying all cultural phenomena as systems of signs and, among them, Architecture, despite the fact that what he calls the "objects" of architecture pose a challenge to Semiology since they apparently function but do not communicate. In his volume, Eco argues instead that this is only an appearance because architecture communicates and is definable as a fact of communication.

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

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

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

71 Eco, *La Struttura Assente*, 283.

element, both denotation and connotation are possible. The theory of denotation and connotation was recalled by Eco on the base of Barthes and Hjelmslev's studies⁷².

Denotation has an intensive character, as it works either if an architectural element directly fulfils a function or if it suggests its past or possible function. It determines the function to which a form immediately refers, the form of the object should make the function possible and denote it clearly enough to make it desirable and easy⁷³.

Connotation, on the other hand, is extensive; in this case, in addition to the "first" function it refers to multiple meanings (for the cave, for example, in addition to that of shelter also those of family, nucleus, security, fear...). The object of use is, under communicative species, the signifier of the exactly conventionally denoted meaning that is its function. Of a building the denotative function is dwelling, of a window making light. But the form of these windows, their number, their arrangement on the façade (portholes, louvers, curtain walls...) does not only denote a function; it refers to a certain conception of dwelling and use, that is, it connotes an overall ideology that has presided over the operation of architecture. For Eco, all architectural solutions can be labelled within denotative and connotative semiological cages; and even if an architect presented something formally or typologically unprecedented, this would not be comprehensible until it finds a comparable function and name that allows for its labelling. While denotations are almost immutable, connotations are unlimited and can always be added. Some take precedence even over denotation⁷⁴.

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

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

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

73 Eco, *La Struttura Assente*, 300.

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

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

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

This complex scaffolding generated a variety of reflections, such as that of Maria Luisa Scalvini collected in *Architecture as connotative semiotics*, and also criticism, especially on such a rigid distinction between denotative and connotative aspects, as that of Gillo Dorfles in *Op. Cit.* number 16 in which the author argued that, on the contrary to what is possible in verbal language, the denotative and connotative aspect of architecture were mixed and it was not possible or even convenient to try to distinguish them. Thus, Eco's proposal to distinguish a first (denotative) function and a second (connotative) function, which could coexist or survive each other as appropriate, was discussed, and opened the debate on its possible wholesome acceptance⁷⁶.

1968

1968 was the year that completely changed the world when revolutions tried to subvert the established order and threatened it to find new perspectives both in Italy and in the United States. The movement marked every aspect of the social, cultural, and artistic life in the western world⁷⁷. In architecture, the irrup-

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

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

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

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

Eco’s Semiology was being conceived during the contestation period of 1968, when architecture could not be seen as a mirroring device for society, but rather as a contestation tool bearer of change. Any scheme or form previously arranged could not be considered by Eco and Ricci, who were taking part in the revolt on the students’ side: they wanted to study open forms to satisfy past, present, and future needs⁷⁸. To Eco architecture as an art would have not only suggested a way of living, but also its possible innovations and radical changes, assuming the risks of all the possible implications⁷⁹. The architect could have accepted the social rules and worked at their service, elaborated and imposed new models of habitat for the same society, or re-designed the existing systems on a new technologically advanced and performing structure. The first attitude was passive against society, the third one was fearful and prudent, while the second one implied the conception of architecture as an art, for which the architect was a producer of history and change. The code to be used to fulfill this second attitude had to be renewed: designers had the words, but they had to formulate a new grammar, a new syntax. They could not do this alone, but with the help of Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, Politics, Economics and all the sciences dealing with human life. Only those disciplines could give architecture the right rules, because other (human) codes had to be considered, architecture could have not changed society with the help of its only rules, they were not enough. Language, painting, music could count on their rules, but architecture should have regulated a system of forms based on needs it did not have any power on. Therefore, the architect could have been considered the last humanistic figure of the contemporary time. He had to think of the collectivity in a total dimension. He had to think as a sociologist, anthropologist, politic, economist, etc.. Architecture’s difficulty to be translated into a code was related to the continuous changing reality of the cities and of the society that lived them, in a constant recall of history and with a narrow connection between signifier and meaning.

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

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

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

of perceiving knowing intellectually that brought to education⁸⁰. That moment inevitably affected the fruition of the work of art as well. The focus on the artistic reaction and the investigation on the moments when contemporary art tried to face disorder demonstrated the existence of a new positive attitude towards the breaking of the rules to conceive form.

Ricci lived that attitude both in painting and in architecture, but most of all the difficult condition of the architect in the contemporary world of the Sixties. He lived and suffered this condition and tried to explain it widely in his book *Anonymous (XX century)* from an existential point of view. In the book he declared a general pessimistic view about the architect's possibility to solve the urban crisis of the time but did not avoid applying the solution he had in his mind, leaving the theory of the "City of the Earth" as a testament in the last chapter⁸¹.

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

According to Eco a new hope and the solution for architecture could be found in the new perspective of the open work, which was affecting art in general⁸². Dealing with architecture, in *Opera Aperta* Eco wrote about Frank Lloyd Wright's approach and introduced it as an open work since it was perfectly inserted in a mutual and changing relation with the environment, able to create a lot of new perspectives and an integration between the human and the natural spaces. That architecture was trying to answer to the new problems of coexistence, to offer a new democratic opportunity to act and leave the old social structure for a new possible society. This happened because the matter was the way human beings lived their relationship with the world. Therefore, the way of shaping things was the real reflection of this process. We all could see the solution to the problem of finding the relationship with the environment in a practical result at the structural level⁸³.

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

80 Eco, *Opera Aperta*, 132.

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

82 Eco, *Opera Aperta*, 153.

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

poetica dell' 'opera aperta' in architettura" of 1962⁸⁴. For Ricci and Zevi the "open work" in architecture referred to the open to the continuous changing of life-flow and constantly changed by human experience at the same time⁸⁵. To Zevi, who saw in Expressionist architecture one of the results of the "open work" in architecture⁸⁶, Ricci's intervention's strength lied in overcoming the boundaries of the arts and in its being an informal work of art itself⁸⁷.

The "open work" could be read and lived out of any prescription on the "right way" to see, against any kind of structuralist vision, recalling Eco's opinion in *La Struttura Assente*. As Ricci's projects were open because they welcomed flexibility and were open to the users' intervention, Zevi focused on the same character as he «expanded the definition of function to include in it the ability of the users to enlarge their habitats according to their needs, so that the function became an important aspect of the "organic" process of the project⁸⁸». Zevi investigated the artistic reaction of contemporary art to face disorder and demonstrate the existence of a new positive attitude towards the breaking of the existing rules to conceive form. He was convinced of the importance of the semantic value of architecture and in the dominance of the spatial dimension in the decoding of a building: internal spatiality was what conveyed meaning instead of functionality, as the voids and hollows constituted the "signified" whereas the exterior the "signifier"⁸⁹. Furthermore, as for Ricci, who wanted to embody an open and unfinished, temporalized and constantly changing design, to Zevi the decoding of the language could happen in the space-time dimension⁹⁰ and was irreversibly connected to the interiors. The "operative criticism" that used the semiological approach was extensively confirming this theory.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

weeks inside the faculty of Architecture in Florence were consistent with Ricci's idea of collective work experience characterized by the sharing of thoughts and resources and with Eco's idea to be involved in a new type of culture that needed a new kind of intellectual. The revolt suggested the desire for a new lifestyle, so Ricci and Eco understood the students' claims which could have been easily translated into the need for a new design research as well, which could have substituted the obsolete design. Ricci had reflected on what was happening in the international scene as man, architect, artist and, most of all, as educator during his appointment at the UF. His reflections on the 1968 revolt are expressed in several typescript in English kept in Casa Studio Ricci titled "The Bourgeois in revolt against themselves. Cultural revolution in the United States", "The Possible Significance of the Student Revolt", "Cultural Revolution in the United States", "Appunti per un programma"⁹¹, in the answers for an interview Ricci sent to Alfred Friendly for an interview published on the *New York Times*⁹². They are extremely important for three main reasons: they tell us firstly his strong conviction about the importance of the university as the institution which would have been the headquarter for the discussion and the place where students and teachers would have found the solution. Secondly, because it demonstrated the need for the social change the discipline of architecture should have expressed in the following years to build the right environment for the new man⁹³. Thirdly because the support to the 1968 revolt and the intention to melt architecture and urban planning found Ricci and Eco's legacy in the view of the Radicals in Italy, who were students of the faculty of architecture of Florence attending Ricci's Urban Design courses and whose names appear among the designers of some analyzed polymateric models for the urban macrostructures⁹⁴.

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

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

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

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

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

the division into seminars and groups for the “general sector” or investigation field of architecture and urban planning. The Faculty Council approved the motion “Ricci-Eco” which interpreted, reformulated and accepted, and summarized, the main concepts. The Ricci-Eco Motion⁹⁵ was an important document embracing the Movimento Studentesco’s requests and accepted both by students and Faculty members only in Ricci and Eco’s formulation. The “Motion A” was also formulated by other scholars as Carmine Jannaco, Demore Quilghini and Domenico Cardini, Marcello Cini and Giovanni Bacciardi with Michelangelo Caponetto. Two purposes were object of the final assessment and approval: the “Quilghini-Cardini” and the “Ricci-Eco” motions. Even though at the beginning the first one, the so-called “full professors-motion” won with 15 votes against the 7 of the second one, the Ricci-Eco motion was finally accepted because the General Assembly recognized in it the correct formulation and intention of the assembly power. On the contrary, the “Quilghini-Cardini” motion was judged elusive with regard to the Student Movement requests⁹⁶.

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

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

Professors could have declared their consent or dissent with the general movement or with the single students’ purposes. The Faculty Committee would have suggested the possible changes of the Faculty structures and their consistency with the existing laws and, finally, a Technical Committee was appointed to study with the Faculty Committee the convocation mode and operational aspects of the General Assembly⁹⁷. Once approved the motion, the new teaching plan could begin and, on the part of the Faculty Council, it could no longer be refused that the Faculty Council was public, that the agenda of the Faculty Council did not include such topics as to involve, because of their importance, the political-cultural direction of the faculty without first discussing them in

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

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

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

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

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

The group was to appoint one out of every ten students, replaceable at any time, to form a permanent "active intermediate" of the faculty students, without any deliberative character, but with functions as a liaison between the Assembly and the groups and to support all activities of the student struggle, within the General Assembly⁹⁸.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

questions about the content addressed⁹⁹. In an Excerpt from the minutes of the June 12, 1968, Faculty of Architecture Council meeting, after the experimentation had begun, it is possible to read Ricci and Eco's close comments on the management and operation of the experimental teaching program initiated, which proposed a "self-monitoring" of each group on student attendance, which periodically had to communicate its composition and the number of students attending (Ricci) as well as the appointment of an instructor with the functions of coordination for each group (Eco). Eco insisted on in-depth research of the categories of information to be provided to students, while Ricci on the importance of the constant, present and high-profile commitment of the faculty. These, while on the one hand were not to be discriminated by students because of their political positions, on the other hand they were to offer the research groups a high teaching profile¹⁰⁰. The main difficulty was setting research topics on new bases, to be evaluated by traditional methods, a gap that the faculty asked the Ministry to fill, after making proposals on the matter¹⁰¹.

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

Ricci and Eco's intention to change university and society succeeded in the activation of a new program Ricci precisely described in "Appunti per un programma", in which he systematized possible interventions and requests from students, professors, workers and government forces. He thought of a total reorganization of the Italian society¹⁰², of a systematization of the existing forces for the mass society instead of the bourgeois one. The system was conceived in function of the political ideas: it was composed of the students and assistants that, as professors, belonged to different factions. Nonetheless, their ideas had to concur to the final asset of the faculty. Therefore, Ricci's purpose was to identify three reference figures inside the faculty to assist the dean: one professor for the external political issue, one for the internal, and one for the programs¹⁰³. Ricci suggested to elect mixed commissions of students, assistants, and professors to face each single problem by using all the existing forces, helped by an efficient secretary office for the administrative and legal procedures. All the universities should cooperate for the correct functioning of the society, so a further

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

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

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

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

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

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

The government should have allowed the dialogue with the university and fostered the contact between university and society, the main laboratory of university, and, most of all, of architectural or urban studies, where all architecture students and professor should have worked. The bureaucratic (political power), industry (economic power), and university (cultural power) could have worked together on the verifiable models mirroring the real society. Starting from this hypothesis, architecture students, assistants and Professors could have been considered workers of the society and nothing would have differentiated them from factory workers: university and factory workers were all workers, university would have found a dialogue with the workers class, and everyone could have been considered equally, men with the same needs, feelings and with a role in the society, by using Ricci's words, «to eliminate the difference between theory and practice¹⁰⁴». All would have become workers for a unique factory: Ricci wrote a program for the Tuscany Region, which could have been used as a model to be expanded to the entire society¹⁰⁵.

Ricci and Eco's ideas especially influenced the radical criticisms of the design of modern architecture by Archizoom, Superstudio, and UFO¹⁰⁶ founded by students of Ricci and Savioli's courses in contact with Claudio Greppi, a student of the faculty of Architecture of Florence and militant of the "working class" Florentine group. They would have elaborated their own visions of architecture within the debate on the relationship between capitalism and architecture and on the phenomenon of massification.

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

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

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

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

students during his tenure at the Florentine Faculty of Architecture. It was the last of the *Urboeffemeri*, a series of happenings performed regularly in Florence since the month of February¹⁰⁷.

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

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

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

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

107 Wolf, "Superurbefimero n. 7".

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

Therefore, also the concept of “open work” had a fundamental importance because it suggested the possibility to give different interpretations of the same concept or of a single experimentation in the architectural research, avoiding, firstly the imposition of a form, but accepting, on the contrary, that the starting point was the research around a problem to solve: the project consisted in the process to achieve the result and not in the result. As Giovanni Michelucci had suggested several years before, the form was in the research, the results in the different solutions, interpretations¹⁰⁹. Ricci’s projects for a “Theoretical House”, for the exhibitions “La Casa Abitata” and “Espressionismo: pittura scultura architettura”, for the Arno Valley, and for the Miami Model Cities Plan, designed for different scales of intervention, were perfect examples of this guiding principle¹¹⁰.

The question is indeed where the research aims and the final form is achieved. Semiology gives the answer, because it never admits the achievement of a final meaning and «in any cultural, or even psychological complex, we are faced with infinite metaphorical chains whose meaning is always deferred or becomes signifier itself¹¹¹». Therefore, as Ricci also maintained in the tenth chapter of the unpublished *Città della Terra* titled “Antico e nuovo”¹¹² or in his speech to the INU conference in Lucca ten years before¹¹³ and in several further occasions, the process is one and continuous in history. In it, different results according to the historical needs, are reached, and none of them is definitive. Therefore “filling the structure” was not the first goal of urban design, but rather to go along with the structure, because it had a longer life than the living units or facilities it had to host. The designed form had to fit the movement of the human fluxes across history.

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

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

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

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

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

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

In art the aim of informal painting was precisely to suggest more than one single interpretation of a painting, as novels that did not tell only one event or one plot. That was informal painting's purpose Ricci also explored to ground and give significance to his research: the informal in painting dealt with a communicative project to be embodied in one single form to be efficient and which had to be characterized by the most important feature: opening. This was the main feature of a proper work of art. There could be a plenty of forms realizing a value, but they could not be aesthetically understood, explained, and judged without referring to the initial value. This was the second grade of opening the contemporary art aimed at, it meant a multiplication of the possible meanings of a message and, by means of this, the implicit increasing of information¹¹⁴ which featured a possible total work of art made of collective contributions: the city.

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

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Keith Plymale

Leonardo Ricci. Model + Structure + Form. Recorded Lectures and Seminars with Students in Venezia, Italia, 1994.

Venezia Atelier, University of Kentucky, Arts and Architecture, Building Analysis, Model Structure Form

/Abstract

The proposed paper will be the first publication from a seminar series given by Leonardo Ricci to his American students from his home in Venice, Italy. The text will be an annotated transcript drawn from 14 weekly meetings that were recorded at Ricci's living room table between January and April 1994. Topics discussed by Ricci and his students range from architectural theory to analysis of specific buildings, and include Mies van der Rohe, Louis Kahn, Carlo Scarpa, Le Corbusier, Giovanni Michelucci, Alvar Aalto, and other architects. Ricci also discusses architectural education and his own buildings and paintings. As one of Ricci's former students, then his co-teacher in Venice, Ricci asked me to record these meetings for future transcription and publication. This paper, entitled *Model, Structure, Form*, will be the first installment for a book of annotated transcripts from the full 20 hours of recordings, accompanied by the unedited audio recordings of Ricci speaking, drawing, and answering questions during each seminar.

"Making plans on the Grand Canal is utopian, almost as though the topos did not exist. Even if, once, it was possible, one wonders how a modern building could coexist with one from the past. Thus I found myself in the world of artistic creation. It was as though I were the owner of the ruins which had become the house-museum, thanks to Peggy Guggenheim, and the mayor of Venice was ready to sign the construction permit. For many sleepless nights I saw the already constructed Ca' Venier, all of it, on the Grand Canal. A magic box. Platforms suspended in space suitable for single works. Pollock suspended in the void. Klee in precious urns. Giacometti projected into the sky. The exterior like Ca' D'Oro made of marble and white stone. The interior of slate to absorb the light and leave it alone with the colors of the paintings and sculptures. But anyone who knows how to read can read the drawings and the plastic. Even the uninitiated can."

Leonardo Ricci, *La Biennale di Venezia*, 1994

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Keith Plymale received a Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Kentucky in Lexington in 1986 and a Master of Science in Architecture and Building Design from the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at Columbia University in New York, NY in 1989. He has been a professor at the College of Environmental Design in the Faculty of Architecture at the University of California Berkeley since 2000 and he has been professionally licensed to practice by the Commonwealth of Kentucky since 1992, the State of California since 2001, and the State of Florida since 2021.

He is the founding architect of San Francisco-based Volume 21 Architecture. V21A is a research office that builds houses, makes speculative projects, and pursues international competitions. The architecture of Volume 21 design work pursues many interests including: built-in cabinetry, pre-fabrication, material technology, art, music, and the dwelling patterns of the 21st century. Research interests include: Architecture & building to anticipate California Fire, body, proportion and 'the modular', construction and material technology, earthwork art/architecture, Native American architecture, Italian modernism, and the work of architect Leonardo Ricci. Plymale worked with José Oubrière [atelier Wylde-Oubrière] for 10 years. Oubrière work as the lead architect with Le Corbusier at Atelier Rue de Sèvres 35. Plymale received an AIA honor award for his work with Oubrière on the Miller House located in Lexington Kentucky, which is published extensively. Professor Plymale served as an associate professor and director of undergraduate studies (Bachelor of Architecture program) at the University of Kentucky, where he was twice honored with the AIAS Outstanding Teacher of the Year award. He has taught graduate studios at The Ohio State University and California College of the Arts. He has led several ambitious travel programs through Italy, the U.S., and California and taught extensively in Venice, Italy.



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A painter and architect, Leonardo Ricci wrote, taught, and searched for new architectural models his entire life. Ricci believed in and lived for the brilliance of the human imagination. He said to his students: "If I could be remembered for one thing, I hope it would not be as an architect, a painter, a writer, a philosopher, an existentialist, or a professor. It would be as a man who found something novel in our society, new in our culture, and that I was able to communicate that to the world."

Born June 1918 in Rome, Leonardo Ricci grew up in both Rome and Venice. He moved to Paris as a young painter to engage in the active dialog of the moderns. He received his diploma of architecture from the University of Florence in 1942. After serving in the Italian engineering corps in World War II, Ricci began his teaching career in Florence in 1945.

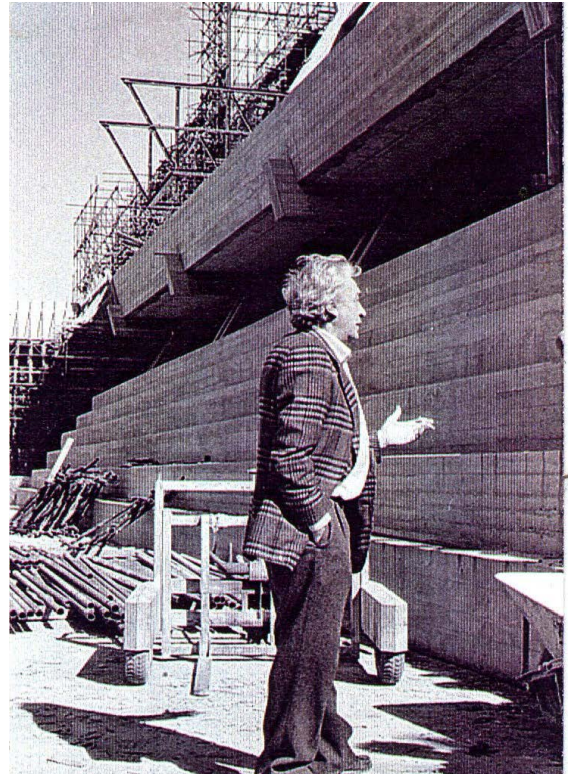
As a young architect, Ricci worked in the office of Italian modernist Giovanni Michelucci. He was one of Michelucci's primary assistants and project architect during the construction of La Chiesa Dell'Autostrada Del Sole, in Florence. In 1951 Ricci built his own house and founded the village of Monterinaldi overlooking Florence, where he eventually built 17 houses. His independent pursuits commenced a prodigious career as an architect and community visionary.

In 1961 Ricci wrote *Anonymous [20th Century]*. Through his writing, he expressed a unique understanding of life, form, structure, art, urbanism, politics and his ideology for making architecture.

Ricci first taught in the United States at MIT in 1960. From 1965 through the 1990s, Ricci taught in the United States and in Italy at Penn State University, the University of Florence (as the chair and a professor of Urbanism), the University of Florida in Gainesville, the Pratt Institute in New York, Virginia Tech University, the University of Miami, and the University of Kentucky.

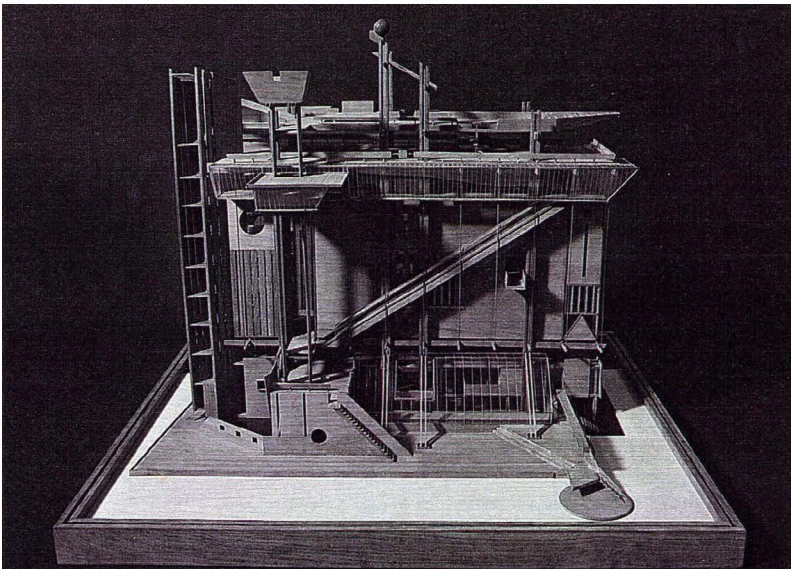
Ricci influenced the lives of thousands of his students and colleagues. Through transmission and mentorship, many of Ricci's students carry a heightened sense of awareness of the world and a belief that their architecture will improve people's lives; a testament to his life long ambition and vision.

As a member of Ricci's 1984-1985 studio, I was one of his eight team members who completed his entry to the 1985 Biennale di Venezia Terza Mostra (The Ca' Venier dei Leoni; Peggy Guggenheim Collection Venice, Italy). The open generosity and honest direct conversations that "Leo" shared with us while we worked gave us a deep sense of unity. We left the studio feeling we could change the world with our lives and work. It was ten years later I was invited to teach with Leonardo and Pucci Dallerba Ricci in Venezia. It was during those months in Venezia that Ricci created the fourteen-weeks seminar that is the core of this text. [Fig. 1, 2, 3].

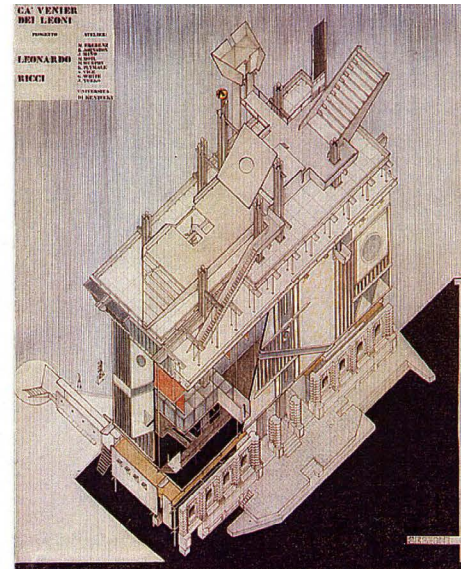


1

Fig. 1
Leonardo Ricci teaching on the
Palace of Justice construction
site, Savona, Italy, picture by
Keith Plymale.



2



3

What follows are samples of the transcribed audio, they were chosen by the author, are written in a sequence, the paragraphs of each sample are introduced by and end with high quotes, the author marked the end of each sample¹.

Model Structure Form: Seminar #1, Venezia, January 18, 1994

Leonardo Ricci is sitting at his living room table, burning cigarette in hand as the students arrive to meet him for the first time. Pucci Dallerba Ricci is next to him and has assembled and organised a collection of books, images, and other visual resources that are on the table before us. The room is an atmosphere, a life, a visual city within which one's mind can learn as it swims through the collection. Pucci is the first to speak and says, "You are looking at our garden, Leo's garden in fact. The paintings, books, art are our friends, and objects, an assembly of our time. Please relax and be free to wander and ask anything that comes to your mind as we talk." Shuffling around the room, the students arrange themselves in chairs, on a large L-shaped couch, and on the floor among a vast library of books, art, and found objects. Notebooks open, silence, and Ricci begins.

"I understand you visited Torcello this morning...Ah beautiful. That is the beginning, the foundation of Venezia. Torcello was built around the time of the Mayan temples of the Yucatan. It was a city of refuge to escape the invasions on the mainland.

Today we begin. At the beginning, I believe that a theoretical introduction is most important to understand the process of an architect.

In reality, civilization is in a moment of transition. When there is a moment of transition in civilization, there is also a transition in the definitions of architecture, or in fact, many of the human disciplines, there is a fast, a rapid change!

¹ The transcription of the oral lecture by Ricci into a written text implied the maintenance of some passages in their original form, even though they are not perfectly structured for a written text. Difficult passages or paragraphs were re-written by the editor of this text, when their comprehension was difficult, and inserted in the notes.

Fig. 2-3: Model and axonometric drawing for the Peggy Guggenheim Museum, La Biennale di Venezia 1994-95, picture by Keith Plymale.

Many people discuss our time as a moment of confusion in architecture. Perhaps in part that is true. At this moment there is confusion also in language. We as architects are engaged in a moment of research to carve a path through this confusion. That is what we are here to do.

Of course when there is a new research, there is confusion. This happens always when something changes like civilization. I prefer to be an optimist in a certain way. An optimist also because I see the strength of the desires of the young people.

Personally and objectively, I like to begin with three words, or three ideas: Model, Structure, Form. These three words in any language, English, Italian, French are used about with the same meaning. Indeed we can say: I model air, I structure space, I form wind. These three words can define certain phenomena, but they have completely different meanings in reality.

Model comes from Latin MODUS, which means type of life. Model means type of life, type of civilization, a type of desire a certain civilization has.

Structure, on the contrary comes from Latin STRUERE. That means to build. This is the second phase after the model is clear. We can give structure to our thinking, to our philosophy, to our desire for what can be as a new, future civilization.

Form comes from Greek FORME². Form means the visual aspect. The actual molding of a thing, the making of a space.”

“When we look at architecture, or the work of artists today, we should not relegate our thoughts to likes and dislikes. It is meaningless to say ‘I like this’ or ‘I dislike that.’ What is important is to understand the process of a person, of the architect who makes architecture, who has made certain buildings, how has the sequence of the model, of the structure, and of the form been followed. It is terrible if instead of going through this process we start from form. Simply beginning with form means nothing...or...if we do something that is arbitrary or we do something that is revival, because real forms, and not only in architecture, but in all arts and science are born when a new type of life was invented.

So that when you hear of Greeks, Romans or Christians and so on, we have to see a new typology, a new morphology. Not because some ‘crazy’ architect started to think that it is better now that we design with a fashion that you can simply change tomorrow.”

“There is a new desire in relation to a new type of life. What I look for when I admire an architect, first is the process. Because all the three [Model, Structure, Form] had a new vision of what will be the life, a new vision of course to make a new architecture.

Or on the contrary, it is clear that they belonged to Enlightenment philosophy so at a certain moment in which man believed that from the man was possible totally to create a new civilization.”

2 The author here refers to the Greek word μορφή [morphè].

"As demonstrated that it was a marvellous dream, the Enlightenment. In a certain way, the Enlightenment has brought us marvellous results. But it was not enough, the Enlightenment, unless you believe that the human genius are special sons of god, I do not think that one man or one woman can invent a city, a total city, that one person cannot invent...eh...a thing."

"So that after the war, practically when I was young, we tried to find out a new process, a new success, because I don't think now that one architect, the most great architect on the earth can say... "I know what is true, I know what we need in the future of the city. I know what will be the...[result]."

[End of Transcription Sample 1]

Model Structure Form: Seminar #3, Venezia, February 1, 1994

"Last time when we met, one of you asked me to do a lecture on colour and I accepted. But perhaps I should not do it because, when you do a seminar or a lecture, if you are an honest professor, you have a background of theory that you have developed the lecture on, and so it is direct and even easy... But I, for what concerns the colour, I never studied, philosophically, theoretical[ly], those problems.... So I hope that, that today, for you, it will not [be] a bad seminar. [laugh] I try to do my best and perhaps also to clarify, clarify to myself, in what way I started to paint before architecture.

So, tonight, it will be more a story of my memories in my life, doing the exercises of the painter rather than a theoretical lesson. Of course it will also be theoretical and conceptual because living among critics, painters, and so on, I have also contributions from what was happening around me. But in a certain way could be interesting for you if you are young... to see how a person developed himself...How I developed, starting from scratch, starting from nothing.

It is true that I came here to Venice very, very young. I was eleven years old, something like this. Perhaps the key to why I became an architect and painter, perhaps this path arrived, just from Venice, because of the environment. I think that is very important. Because it is clear that a boy [has] not yet the knowledge to understand certain phenomena. But in a certain way, in a subliminal [way], he can receive the information from the environment in which I lived in. So that practically living in Venice, going to San Marco, the Campo, the little things that go on. My father gave to me a boat, a little boat, to me, to my brother—he was older than me, four years—in the laguna. For sure, I think, that I received the information from the environment, the city type of life, the nature, and so on. A certain kind of information which produced in me something that I did not know for sure being a boy.

The love of painting happened very casually. I was something like twelve or thirteen years old, living in Venice and a friend of mine had a 'compleanno', a birthday, and he received a box of watercolours. And so he opened this water-colour box. I was not like many children, very good for design, who designs very

nicely little things. No, I was completely out from this, another, direction. But as soon as I saw the watercolour box, I asked of him if I could do something and so that he give me the set, and because with the box, he had an album in which you can work³.

I started to mix the colour. And for me was a revelation. Also in my book, I think I have written, or in a certain article for sure, I was asked how it was I started to paint. I understood, I had this impression of this miracle of colours. So that I remember that I started to invent. And I tried to organise the colours. Red, yellow, green, and so on. Automatically, I could say, to find the language. I remember like, like now [laughs], eh like, if you, I think, a child, still when very, very young, started to speak. Practically, I think one the greatest miracles is to see a boy when he is old enough to start to speak. If the man—later with the intelligence, the capacity to learn languages—everybody would be a genius because this speed of learning. So that practically, I had the impression that I could speak with the colours. I was learning another language. I could express myself in another language⁴.

I did a drawing, a watercolour. And I don't remember at all in what way it was done. I don't remember if it was flower or object. I really don't know. I could say that it was a kind of abstract painting. You know, a fantasy of colour. And because in the, in the box, was written that to send drawings which you did in these watercolours. And I sent this watercolour to them and I won the prize! [laughs] I won the prize, was not a prize of money. No. It was a prize that I received a nice box of good, not with watercolour, but oil colour. So that, that by myself absolutely, I started to work with the watercolour.

It was clear that in all the years I was painting in Paris, like intuition. Like instinct. I started to work with oil and I became really a lover of painting. It became the most important thing. In a way, starting with oil, honestly speaking, I have not a tendency. I started to do a portrait of my, my brothers, to do something of copies, objects, the house, flowers, and so on. There was not one direction. But I started so fast that when I was fourteen, fifteen years old, people said that I had incredible talent. Excuse me, but that is what I am saying. You know, because I was innocent! [laughs]

And so that I was invited to do a show. Quite important, also an international show⁵. I was fourteen or fifteen. So I found myself in that period, in that period, that was more or less... I was fifteen, so '33, '34, with really professional painters. Also at that time, a moment of transition of what was the culture of painting, I found myself in the middle of completely different painters, artists. There were Futurists, there were Cubists, there were Realists, and so on. So it was a salad of different tendencies.

³ The sentence could be rephrased as follows: "But as soon as I saw the watercolour box, I asked him if I could use it and so he gave me the set, because with the box he had an album".

⁴ The sentence could be rephrased as follows: "I remember it was like when a child, still when very, very young, starts to speak. I think one of the greatest miracles is to see how easily a boy starts to speak. If an adult enlived the same speed of learning in languages, it would be an expression of genius. So that in practice, I had the impression that I could speak with the colours. I was learning another language. I could express myself in another language".

⁵ Here the correct word would be "exhibition".

Honestly speaking, being so young, I had no critical preparation to understand what I understood or liked more and to choose one of these directions. Everything that I can say is that I love more the painters who were, who used very strong colours. This is the only sensation. Not important if they are Futurists or Abstract Painters or this or that. No. The colours for me, like I said before, were, the total.

So, I continue, of course, to paint. You could ask to me at that time, not of the painters. We are painting in that moment, but of the painting, of the ancient painting, what I like it more. And I can say that I liked much more the painting with the colours. I love it very much. For instance, Byzantine. Not because Byzantine, now I understand. Before I did not understand and yet, the colour use the language not like an imitation. You remember when I, last seminar, I said to how, for instance, the Chinese paint white the sky, the golden the sky Byzantine, Roman red, and so on? So that I was captured from the abstraction of the colour. Now, I understand, the golden air⁶.

But at that moment, I don't know also a great painter know. Like I don't know Tintoretto for instance. I say one who is a master and a, or I love the—perhaps because I lived in Venice—mosaic. For me, to go in the Church of San Marco and—now you have to pay the ticket and so on. Once it was free, I spent hours. You go up and you go around to watch the mosaics change. And I remember it well. Watching towers, the altar on the back, the two signification, the two manifestations of mosaic. One for the Paradise Christ and so on. And the other for the Devil. But not because I care that, that was the Devil's Inferno, that Christ Paradise. But because I was shocked at the difference of the colour between the two. After this. I could say that my direction, absolutely innocent, not a critical at all. I was captured. The language of the colours of which I did not know anything. [laughs]⁷

After this, I started continue to paint. I did not like to continue to study after, when I finished my school. I said to my father, I like to only be painter. And because I, I started to sell some paintings, my father said, on the contrary, said no, ok listen, ok, you see. You sell paintings, but certainly not to survive here. You have to go to a university.

I was 18 years old about. After I continued to paint, I had the interruption of the war and so on. And immediately, after the war, I came in Florence. Mrs. Guggenheim, she came to see me, and she was a strange person. Because she liked one of my painting. I understand that she liked to get as a gift, not to buy like the merchants do. An I say no.

6 A possible rephrasing of the paragraph could be as follows: "So, I continue painting. You could ask me of that time, not of the painters as we are painting in a moment: I like the ancient painting at most. And I can say that I liked much more the painting with the colours as the Byzantine ones. Not because of the Byzantine tradition, but for the use of the colour as a language, not as an imitation. Do you remember when, during the last seminar, I said how, for instance, the Chinese paint white the sky, the Byzantine a golden sky, the Roman a red one, and so on? I was captured from the abstraction of the colour. So, now I understand the meaning of the golden background".

7 A possible rephrasing of the paragraph could be as follows: "But in that moment, I didn't know any great painter as I don't know Tintoretto for instance, a mosaic master I love because I live in Venice. For me, to go to the Church of San Marco and spend hours there was important. Now you have to pay the ticket, once it was free. You go up and around to observe the mosaic changes. I remember well when I was looking at the towers, at the altar on the back, at the two manifestations of mosaic: one for the Paradise Christ and the other for the Devil. I was shocked at the difference of the colours between the two. This is my point of view, which is an innocent, not a critical perspective. I was captured by the language of the colours I did not know anything about".

I was this, this young guy—twenty-six, twenty-seven, twenty-eight years old—and so, I was invited to go to Paris. And one of the best gallery of Paris [...] did a contract with me. Give to me each month a certain amount of money, like the merchants do. So, it was nothing special, just to get some painting in a year.

I don't know if in America, you use the same word because there is a stock market for the painting like there is for the money, no? And each painting is valued so much each point. What it means, a point? It depends, I don't know if in English is the same. Means that there is three dimensions. One was called a figure, one was called a landscape, and the other one was called the marina. So, that it means a different size, no?—figure was vertical, but marina was very long, or each centimetre—I don't remember how much was considered 1 centimetre, 1 ½, I don't remember—but in any case, there was a certain point.

So, I went there and I stayed in Paris for three years. But in a moment, living with the other, a younger painter who became very famous later. And also, knowing the great painters, Picasso, Matisse, Chagall, Leger, [...]. Eh, there only finally I started to have a conscience to be conscious of what means direction. What means a language, personal for a painter? What means discipline, to achieve their goal and so on? At this moment, I can say that I can do. Also if it's not mine, in mine, an invention, this was something that Douglass; the critic, Douglass, theorised. He wrote a book, a very beautiful book, saying that in painting, we always speak of tendencies.

Douglass wrote: There are two roads to achieve. One is called the timbre and one value. This is about only the great, great painters, the greatest synthesis between the road of timbre and the road of values. And of course, in this book, there are beautiful examples, for instance, that for a time, painters—Michelangelo or Tinteretto, Leonardo da Vinci and so—they choose the road of the values. Indeed, the most important things for them, how to structure the composition of the painting. The colours were not important. For instance, Michelangelo like composition more than colour is not so important. And Leonardo da Vinci practically is black and white [laughs] and so on and so on. It was the value which, which was the, was the center of the painting.

On the contrary, there were painters, also like Tuscan, like Siena. For them, it was the timbre. Indeed, Sienese take more from Byzantine, take more of, also the mosaic, because it was the timbre for them that was important. Same thing you could say that, for instance, the Venetians. Byzantine was important also the timbre.

At the moment, so that I find myself in a, in a different situation with these painters. Because some were for the timbre. Also, I don't know if they were aware or not, if was it natural or not, if some on the contrary, for the values. I can say that all, about all the abstract painters were for the timbre. The painting without content, in a way, but only the content was the language. To put the colour together in a certain way, to paint a definition of structure, a definition with colours. [...]

[End of Transcription Sample 2]

Leonardo Ricci

The Possible Significance of the Student Revolt (1968)

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.

When, some days ago, I was asked to write this article, I accepted with enthusiasm.

It seemed easy and natural to be able to testify being present as the significant facts of the student revolt in Italy developed.

Knowing well, above all, what is happening in the United States, it seemed simple for me to frame the Italian phenomenon within the vaster context of the international student movement.

The days pass and I continually destroy what I have written.

Not because the elements escape me such that I am not able to determine the problem. I would say the opposite; for knowing too well the phenomenon; for my being too much inside it. Because emotion does not permit me the necessary separation. Because I hear with my ears the screams of the students in



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their many declarations. Because that magnificent tension that they have inside them is near exploding.

Why do I have their excited faces in my eyes? Perhaps I dread seeing one of them beaten or wounded because of too much blood seen in war when I was their age, absurd blood, insane that it is shed in the world today. Because in the many nights spent with them in these last months they reawakened in me the hope of a different world, of a new society.

Hope that I certainly haven't lost, because you cannot lose a thing that you have inside and for which you work.

But hope which you feel closer because finally something stirs, not any more on the individual level, in this sea of conformity and indifference.

Beside the fact that the most banal and convoluted, thinkers talk about, analyze, and compare the facts of these last times in Italy, and the world, it makes felt the nausea of words compared to that which occurs, which is much more beautiful and also cleaner, if it is at the same time confused.

If you try to compose these facts to channel them where they don't want to go confusion results, at times in a more disgraceful manner. Absurd intellectuals and journalists immediately obtain scholarly texts, citing them at random. To the classic names of the theories of Marxism, they add those of Althusser, Marcuse, Svezzy, making in good or bad faith, a frightening confusion. Instead, at this moment, one needs calm nerves; to be simple beings, humans.

Because these misunderstandings can give birth, they can also carry serious consequences. One doesn't need to throw gasoline on the fire, or water either. This internal fire of the young generation has to grow spontaneously to bear new fruits – to burn out of the existing structures all that is horrible, corrupt, and false – to open new ways to a new man no longer exploited, as he was up until today, not only at the economic level, but also and even more so at the psychological level. And perhaps it is in this word itself the key to what I would like to say.

Students are in revolt in various parts of the world. This is a state of fact. Such revolts happen in countries with diverse societies and economics. It is therefore certain that their significance cannot coincide. Those who generalize cannot be but superficial. The student in revolt in the United States cannot have the same motivation as that one in Czechoslovakia. The one in Algiers cannot have the same motivation as the French, Italian, or German student.

There is nonetheless¹ a minimum common denominator; a profound, existential uneasiness² that manifests itself in the desire to knock down existing structures and to open new horizons. That which it signifies is that idealologies³ of the past are obsolete, in all or in part, or at any rate no longer contain direction

1 Mistype: to be replaced with "nonetheless".

2 Mistype: to be replaced with "uneasiness".

3 Mistype: to be replaced with "ideologies".

for resolving the various problems of this historic moment. The gravest phenomena are manifesting themselves in the capitalist or neo-capitalist societies.

To say, therefore, that capitalists or neo-capitalists are in crisis, that they shatter their structures, that the forms of present democracy have shown their limits, their foundations must endure profound change, is only to repeat superficial slogans.

To say that in the socialist societies similar phenomena occur and that, therefore, the errors exist in the fact that the various revisionist forms carry a process of involution of socialism to the point where it takes the liberal form of a neo-capitalist society, is from another point of view, to repeat slogans even more superficial.

The sympathies of the students go to the youngest societies, young at least from the technological point of view.

The names of Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Che Guevara, Castro, are most recurrent⁴. There is in this some romanticism. The exploited, the oppressed, the damned of the earth, those who suffer hunger, they exist where the contradictions are strongest, where the class struggle does not exist or is newly born. All this is natural and logical. In these countries, the methods of traditional struggles have broader perspectives and more precise horizons. But it is perhaps important to investigate the phenomenon wherein the civilization of the machine has been the most advanced and is being substituted by automated⁵ civilization.

A civilization which always assumes more the visage of a scientific civilization would be able to appear objective, beyond ideologies. A wise civilization, not controversial, just in itself.

Meanwhile, inside this civilization which shows itself, there are greater dangers hidden for man.

The passage from a mechanistic civilization to an automatic one brings the consequence of serious alterations in the traditional rapport among classes. If we study in depth the problem of primary activities, secondary and tertiary, to use some classifications still in use, we see rapid changes. To be simpler, instead of speaking in abstract terms, we can make the phenomenon more evident by speaking in terms of class: farmers, workers, and managers.

Of two classes, that is, which produce "plusvalue"⁶ and of one which uses them to its own advantage.

If we hypothesize a rapid transformation from the mechanical to the automated civilization, we arrive at the conclusion, apparently⁷ paradoxical, that the primary and secondary activities and a good part of the tertiary activities,

4 The mistype was corrected by handwritten signs, specifically "recurrent" replaced "recurrant" that was on the typescript.

5 The mistype was corrected by handwritten signs, specifically "automated" replaced "automatic" that was on the typescript.

6 Mistype: to be replaced with "surplus value".

7 Mistype: to be replaced with "apparently".

those which administrate, will be totally absorbed by the machine and by the computers.

There would remain for man only the activity of diverse order that today might be categorized as managerial, intellectual, and creative.

It is that which, in a manner apparently abstract, signifies that the farm class, the workers ("plusvalue"⁸ producers) are today exploited and will be substituted by machines and electronic brains.

Since to exploit machines and mechanical brains does certainly not mean to exploit man, it would appear that we are close to a new harmonious society, bereaved of contradictions, without classes. This would be theoretically possible. But we must give attention to some very grave dangers that could bring irreparable⁹ consequences:

1- Some countries arrive with such strong anticipation of a technological- automatic civilization as to augment in a dangerous manner the existing difference, carrying the contradictions to a point always more explosive. The evils of economic imperialism, today already unbearable, will become monstrous. The very smallest minority in the world would be able to dominate an appalling manner the very large majority. Even Europe would be able, in the shortest time, to decline to the role of a country economically conquered, truly itself colonial, an undeveloped continent.

2 - In the same developed countries, given the most rapid possibility of technological transformation with respect to the possibility of mass education to carry them to the point knowingly and conscientiously necessary for an automated civilization, a profound split between the skilled and unskilled can occur, that is-, between a few people capable of inserting themselves into the new process and those masses thrown out to the fringe of society, lacking every power of diffusion, in the better cases maintained for false charity, obligated to consume the products which an absolute minority with machines and computers serves to them.

In synthesis, a society in which very few orders from far away—invisible¹⁰, impersonal orders transmitted across impersonal means of communication, such that it forces all the others to blindly obey. In certain parts of the world fattened like capons, with their roosterly attributes¹¹ removed. To remove these attributes in our case means to completely remove the conscience of existing. In other words, the possibility to exist, at the same time also the chance to be. Does it always increase psychological exploitation?

It is evident that affirmations this general will need to be substantiated with more precise examples. But it is also evident that he who engages in politics,

8 Mistype: to be replaced with "surplus value".

9 Mistype: to be replaced with "irreparable".

10 Mistype: to be replaced with "invisible".

11 The adverb "roosterly" does not exist. The periphrasis could be "rooster attributes".

and therefore governs the people, needs to be aware of certain phenomena that are taking place. He can not behave as often happens, and as is happening in Italy, ignorantly or as though he were ignorant of what is happening and of the grave dangers which they comprise.

There is therefore, a philosophic gap to fill—an existential void that we in the west, above all in Europe, have to fill up if we do not wish to renounce being participants in the evolution of man and to go under the tow of other countries.

I see in the revolts of the students in Europe and in our particular case in Italy, as¹² the attempt, at times desperate, to fill up this void.

Where will the student movements in Italy burst, as I found in the United States? It was an emotional experience when I had been able to listen to the news on American radio and television and to see images of what was happening in my own country.

It was also emotional because in the United States it is difficult to read or hear anything of Italy. It is spoken of, if you concede¹³ to me a little irony, only when the Pope moves. Three days in Rome and then in Florence. The College was occupied for many days. With obstinance, with determination, that refuted every compromise to didactic orders.

The word of the day was "General Assembly." Not thinking about that which could have happened, of the many dangers innate in that species of unleashed fury, for me as a man, for me as an ordinary professor, this two words¹⁴ give me internal joy.

Perhaps not¹⁵ until¹⁶ now these two words, it was mentioned what "General Assembly" signified, a counterposition¹⁷ to other forms of government.

Someone spoke with great precision of "Direct Democracy." For me the new fact consists in this itself: In these words the explanation of the student movement. In these words, the possibility of the liberation of man from exploitation at the economic level and at the psychological level.

General Assembly in technical terms can mean total decentralization of powers. Expressed in this way, it appears as one of many possible forms of government.

But translated into a lot of money, it signifies liberty, more directly. Finally, liberty for man. Because up until today even in the most open democracies man has been only able only to entrust his own decisional powers to others.

In fact, actual democracy permits us to cast a vote freely now and then, but among categories already fixed. Through the vote, we entrust to others the

12 The preposition "as" was added by following handwritten signs on the typescript.

13 Mistype: to be replaced with "concede".

14 "This two words" were added by following handwritten signs on the typescript, but it should be corrected with "These two words".

15 The adverb "not" was added by following handwritten signs on the typescript.

16 "now these two words" were erased by handwritten signs on the typescript.

17 Mistype: to be replaced with "counter position".

decisional power of our existence, even of our biological life. From that moment we are obligated to stir – even against our own conscience.

Certainly after Nazism and Fascism the word democracy rings as the unique possibility for liberty for every person. But the facts that transpired after the second World War brought us very near the threshold of a third atomic World War, events that include destruction, massacres, carnages which we are not able to define as barbaric, to us demonstrate that an advancement has to be made.

Only when man, in the gambit of the General Assembly will be able to find his space, not that which others want to give to him to express his own powers of decision at almost any level, to make his own choices, only then will we be considered free. There is a long road to be traversed if “General Assembly” is to be truly effective in bringing about a degree of elevated knowledge, of maturity, and considerable culture. Above all, of love; I should say a new love.

A free love¹⁸ free from fixed rules, dynamic and always self-renewing, which includes everyone relating to the same destiny, participates in the same adventure, in the same human condition.

Perhaps to implement the “General Assembly,” not only in the ambient of the university, where it is planned and produced, but in governments, in communities, in factories, will require many stages of development.

But the fact that the students aspire to this is the thing which each man of culture must not only like, but for this also must work with all his might, to take all the guaranteed opportunities.

Then, if it is thought that this necessity and this demand is actually born in the university, where it must be at the maximum cognitive and cultural level, any impulse which is too cautious signifies one of two things: either the caution masquerades¹⁹ the desire to maintain definite privileges for those who exercise it in an autocratic way, or it²⁰ hides a completely obsolete cultural and political level which is out of date.

Certainly the “General Assembly” is not a thing that is conquered. A certain process occurs. Therefore, it must be experimental. But what would it mean to permit experimentation in the university environment unless you experiment, above all, with²¹ a new conception of the operation of the university?

I desire now to express my thoughts on three points: the Italian²² student movement in relation to the Italian political scene, the student movement in the College of Architecture, and in particular in that of the University of Florence.

I write this article on the day in which we vote in Italy. Personally, I don't anticipate great changes which will completely alter the political axis. Perhaps a total

18 “free” was erased by handwritten signs on the typescript.

19 The mistype in the typescript was corrected by handwritten signs.

20 The pronoun “it ” was added by handwritten signs on the typescript.

21 The preposition “with” was erased by handwritten signs on the typescript.

22 The capital letter of the adjective “Italian” was added by handwritten signs on the typescript.

slight alteration toward the left of the electorate, a certain inclusive number of blank or voided ballots that stand to demonstrate the tension of protest in the new generation.

If my foresight is accurate, the Italian political scene is the following: absolutely improbable is an involution of the right which would run the danger of a coup d'état²³ of fascists or of the common public. Just having come out from under a dictatorship the Italian democratic conscience has already demonstrated that no possible attempt in this sense can possibly succeed.

Foreseeable then is a government of the center left which does not have the capacity for profound reform, immobile, in each case too²⁴ slow to²⁵ maintain a²⁶ pace equal to speed of technological transformation.

A Communist party, strong but incapable of effecting opposition therefore hopes to create a dialogue with the Catholics in order to be able to enter into the government, is stopped by a vein of revisionism, is suspended in the theoretical and practical sense from actual technological change.

What is²⁷ the outlook, when a social democracy that is able to carry an appearance of well-being largely diffused, dedicated more to technological progress itself than to a political desire, but in each case, is²⁸ incapable of eliminating or diminishing the basic contradictions that become more serious. Above all incapable of laying the base of a new society, because it is incapable of planning a new structural organization of humane activity.

What is the political sense, then, of another student movement, limited in number, as this one, still incapable of a direct and profound union with the working class?

To many it may seem an impulsive position. A gust of anarchic rebellion that, after the election, a turn of the screw can suffocate any trace. In any case, it is a movement without political perspective.

For many reasons I am not pessimistic. First of all, the student movement has collected together the leftist forces of all the parties. It remains significant that at least at the conscious level they can exercise on the parties critical action so as to introduce a new tension toward new objectives.

In the second place, the movement has gathered, is gathering at the present time and will gather itself those forces of²⁹ progressive intellectual forces³⁰ who have not had political opportunity and have been obliged to remain outside of the parties, in fearful solitude, obliged to utopia, not able to directly influence the

23 Mistype: to be replaced with "coup d'état".

24 The addition of the second vocal "o" was added by handwritten signs on the typescript.

25 The strikethrough of the second vocal "o" was added by handwritten signs on the typescript.

26 The article "a" replaced "the" of the typescript.

27 "What is" replaced the adverb "how" presented in the typescript.

28 The verb "is" was added by handwritten signs on the typescript.

29 "Forces of" was added by handwritten signs on the typescript.

30 The word "forces" was erased by handwritten signs on the typescript.

living flesh of society. Perhaps they will be able to unite amongst themselves to set forth a political-cultural action more concrete and effective.

In the third place, we must not forget that the great mass of students do not come from working class backgrounds, but from the bourgeois. At times students, whoever they are (and the reactionaries ironically calling these students "pseudo-revolutionaries")³¹ must pay for the revolution with allowances from home.

But they forget that these students that come from a privileged class and who revolt against this structure in a manner always increase³² and in a few years will comprise the ruling class.

A new ruling class, not exploiters³³, one with new objectives, new hopes, and above all, a new conscience and³⁴ political determination.

Life is³⁵ pushing the young to the limits of anarchy and to destruction for destruction sake; to violence for the sake of violence.

It must be asked, therefore, who claims this responsibility. Certainly it could be to assigned³⁶ to those who attempt to structure these new forces, with the mirage of powerful positions of different types, looking to corrupt and prostitute themselves. I don't believe it. It is certainly not My wish and not the wish of anyone. Living in the midst of this new generation, I realize that they are not the same as those already grown during previous³⁷ economic booms, easily structured in good or bad faith by various, false, and artificial paradises of the consumer society.

These generations have a tension that in one way or the other, according to the different historic circumstances, will find there a precise political and operative arrangement.

Of the rest other results are already notable if also indirect. It will suffice to think of the influence that they have exercised on the working class in Italy and above all in France. I would not be able to imagine certain forms of chain reaction³⁸ strikes as are developing today in France if the student movement had not ventured to oppose the actual existing structures, if it had not introduced in the working class, a new hope and also a new courage, if with their deeds they had not shown to the working men horizons more vast than the limited and narrow ones³⁹ at the economic-salary levels of⁴⁰ the corporate⁴¹ character.

31 Here Ricci erased the conjunction "that" with handwritten signs on the typescript.

32 The verb "increase" replaces "grow" that was in the typescript.

33 Mistype: to be replaced with "exploiters".

34 The conjunction "and" was added by handwritten signs on the typescript.

35 The verb "is" was added by handwritten signs on the typescript.

36 The verb tense was corrected by handwritten signs on the typescript.

37 The adjective "previous" replaced "various" in the typescript.

38 Here Ricci erased the words "Wild cat" between brackets on the typescript.

39 The pronoun "ones" was added by handwritten signs on the typescript.

40 The preposition "of" replaced "at" in the typescript.

41 The word "corporate" replaced "corporations" in the typescript.

I now attempt⁴² to put in relationship, the student movement with the university. The university in every part of the world is in crisis. The reasons are well known and useless to repeat.

Largely, the crisis of the university can be summed up in the following term.

The incapacity of the university structure to rise to the process of transformation from the university of the elite to a⁴³ university of the masses.

The incapacity of the university structure to pass from a teaching national-academic-worldly-passive to humanistic-idealistic characteristics of⁴⁴ teaching living, dynamic, active, adapted to a civilization in rapid technological transformation.

The incapacity to synthesize and to fuse the problems of culture with those of politics as if culture and politics are able to live in two zones, separate from each other; in two closed worlds without the possibility of osmosis.

The incapacity to divert the productive forces from the country to impede the forces of industry or bureaucracy structure the university and force upon it an academic role.

For each of these aspects, it would necessitate long and specific treatment. In the scope of this article, I am able to make only a few assertions of a general order.

A university must give the possibility of access for all. The direction of study suggests how urgent is the problem. A profound reform occurs in the long run in the elementary schools. A modern university must permit interdisciplinary activity. The concept of faculty is total surpassed. A new articulation will pervade⁴⁵ a minimal functional unity of specialization regrouped in departments. The university needs to be autonomous to permit the experimentation of new methods and new techniques. The university needs laboratories and a medium of scientific research. Finally, and above all, the university must be only a technocratic instrument, but it must permit open cultural-political debate.

For many reasons, the Faculty of Architecture problem is still more delicate. Given its young age with⁴⁶ respect to the others presents negative and positive aspects.

The negative consists above all in the structure which still resents in part the transformation of the "Academia" into the university, from this origin to a school too diverse⁴⁷, of enormous growth which has taken place in the recent years.

The positive aspects in the fact that the College of Architecture, is dealing with architectonic and urbanistic problems is culturally and politically engaged more

42 "I now attempt to" replaced "I do now to" in the typescript.

43 The article "a" was added by handwritten signs on the typescript.

44 The preposition "of" replaced "to a" in the typescript.

45 Mistype corrected by handwritten signs: "prevade" was replaced by "pervade".

46 The preposition "with" replaced "in" that was in the typescript.

47 The sentence partially replaced and corrected in the typescript was "from this origin of school too diverse".

strongly with the other colleges. The fact that in the College of Architecture, the student movements are more violent does not indicate only the necessity for reform in respect to other more consolidated colleges, as they wish to believe, but suggests a major politicalization⁴⁸, a major desire on the part of the students not to become only technocrats⁴⁹, easily manipulated by the technocratic society of consumers.

A profound and specific examination of the necessity to change College of Architecture is not possible within the scope of this article. I am able to say one thing. The image of the Architect is changing, and must always change. He can no longer⁵⁰ serve the dictates of a private client who manipulates him or is manipulated by him.

The image of the architect must be one that offers social service to the collective society and in view of which he must be prepared. But because this happens the structure must be completely changed. In our profession the theoretical research is limited to a small percentage. All the rest is⁵¹ applied research. And for applied research, laboratories are necessary for the possibility to experiment.

But our laboratories do not consist only of places that contain specific equipment⁵² and our experiences do not consist only⁵³ of testing new materials.

We have the need to create new alternative models at the urban scale and at the architectonic scale.

Therefore, we must replace an obsolete urban morphology and⁵⁴ architectonic method because they pertain to obsolete society with new models that permit a new way of life in a new society.

For this to happen it is necessary that the College of Architecture call for an increase of concrete activities in service to society.

At this level of projection, from territorial assets to that of habitat, the College of Architecture will be able to contribute to society at all levels, free from internal pressures, not structured.

In the meantime, the College of Architecture of Florence; through the scope of its experimentation, is in a sense a "General Assembly".

Certainly this year it will be difficult to arrive at precise results and effects such as to document advantages of the new structure. But if, as I hope, in the next legislature, the Reform University will not be understood in the narrow and limited sense of some irrelevant modification of didactic laws, but will give ample breath to the autonomy and to the liberty of experimentation, including that of

48 Mistype: to be replaced with "politicization".

49 Mistype: to be replaced with "technocrats".

50 Mistype: to be replaced with "no longer".

51 The verb "is" replaced "goes to" in the typescript.

52 The word "equipment" was added by handwritten signs, in the typescript "machines" appeared.

53 The verb "of testing new" was added by handwritten signs, in the typescript "to test" appeared.

54 The conjunction "and" was added by handwritten signs on the typescript.

the General Assembly as a self-governing body, will give the means, not only economic and structural, to be able to experiment in the⁵⁵ abstract, but to experiment in the concrete touching with social reality. Then we will be able truly to say the university is awakening⁵⁶ from its long academic dream and is becoming strongly alive and working for a new society.

55 The article "the" was added by handwritten signs on the typescript.

56 The verb "awakening" was added by handwritten signs, "developing" appeared in the typescript.

“Logbooks” (1938-1963)

Archival Collection, Casa Studio Ricci, Journals, Arts and Architecture, Logbooks

/Abstract

This contribution wants to introduce one of the most important archival sources currently kept in Casa Studio Ricci: the so-called “Logbooks”, a collection of six journals composed by Leonardo Ricci’s first wife, Angela Poggi. They cover a time span from 1938 to 1963 and give evidence of a quite complete overview on Ricci’s work. The heterogeneous materials were digitalized and made available for further research.

/Author

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ilaria.cattabriga3@unibo.it

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 concerned the figure of the Italian architect Leonardo Ricci focusing on his American transfer from 1952 to 1972, which is going to be published shortly with the title *Leonardo Ricci in the United States (1952-1972)* by LetteraVentidue. She has collaborated on architecture exhibitions in 2019 and 2020 about Leonardo Ricci as well as on national and international research projects: she was free researcher at UBA for the interdepartmental 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 and 2022. 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 adjunct professor of History of Architecture both at Architecture and Design degree courses (Bologna and Cesena campuses).

An Attached Reading of Leonardo Ricci's Work in Painting, Architecture, Scenography and Urban Design

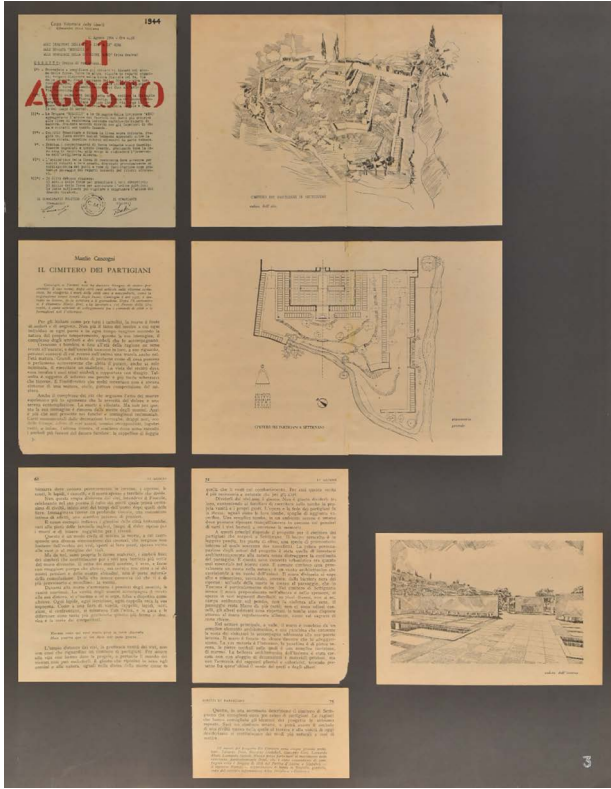
The "Logbooks" are a collection of six journals, at present kept in Casa Studio Ricci in Monterinaldi, curated and composed by Angela Poggi, Leonardo Ricci's first wife, who assembled and labelled an heterogeneous corpus of materials concerning the work of her beloved husband. The collected documents are journal articles, magazine articles, reproductions of drawings, postcards, exhibitions' cards, selected texts and pictures of models, paintings and realized buildings. The first four journals cover a span of time from 1938 to 1963 and fold a composite whole of documents chronologically ordered and accurately labelled: each glued paper is identified with a little tag with precise bibliographic references, in the case of journal or magazine articles, date and place, for cards, conference or exhibition invitations, or pictures. On the logbooks' cover Angela Poggi wrote the time span covered: 1938-1952; 1952-1956; 1956-1959; 1959-1963. Thanks to the complete and careful, meticulous work that accompanied the Log Books composition, as well as the incredible variety and quantity of materials, the collection is able fairly to depict Ricci's eclectic career, his multifaced work that reflected his personality.

The first folder (1938-1952) shows Ricci as a painter, with his pungent personality and his first works. The journal focuses on his painting career, displayed in magazines such as *Il Bò*, or in transliterated radio interviews. They also show his early success as an architect, thanks to the realized project of the Mercato dei

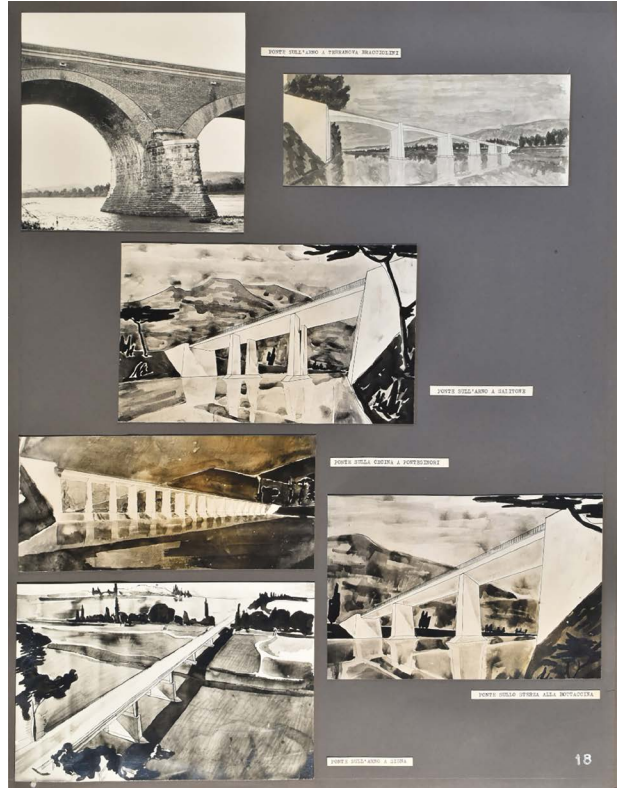
Fig. 1-6
 Lobook no. 1 (1938-1952),
 pages 3, 18, 26, 29, 37, 41, .



Fiori in Pescia and the project for bridges such as Ponte alle Grazie. Leonardo Ricci appears to be a young talent: his ambition and sincerity, typical of youth, are clearly visible and this particular trait starts to be acknowledged internationally as his works have the opportunity to be spread around the world.



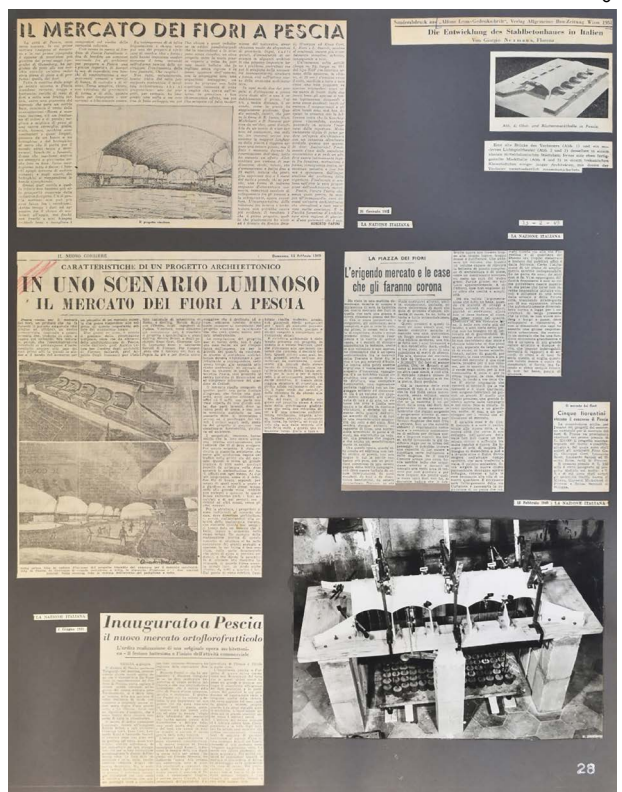
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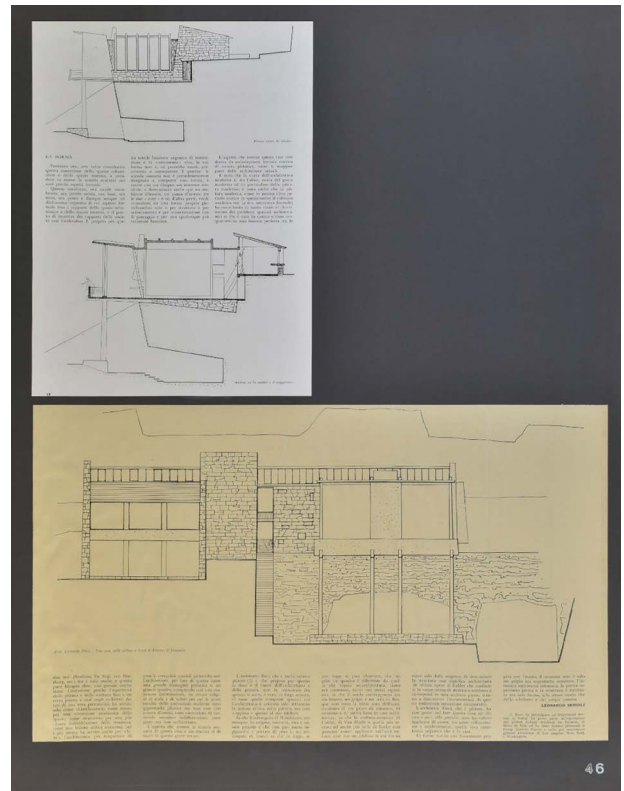
28

The second folder (1952-1956) features his ascent to popularity thanks to some of his most famous projects such as Centro Agàpe, Casa-Studio Ricci and the village in Monterinaldi. His passion for theatre is displayed as his work as scenographer of some plays as *The Wandering Thread* and *Orfeo* are also widely

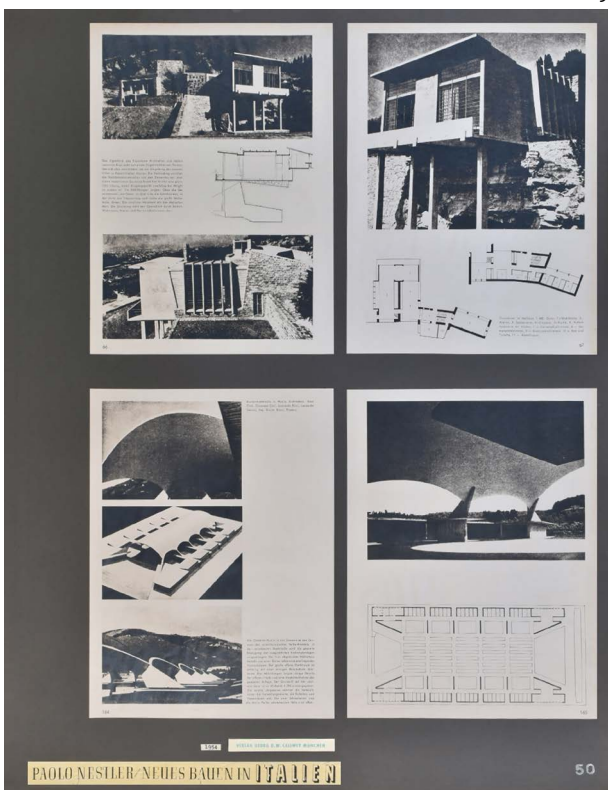
Fig. 7-16
 Lobook no. 2 (1952-1956),
 pages 43, 46, 50, 51, 59, 60, 61,
 67, 74, 80.



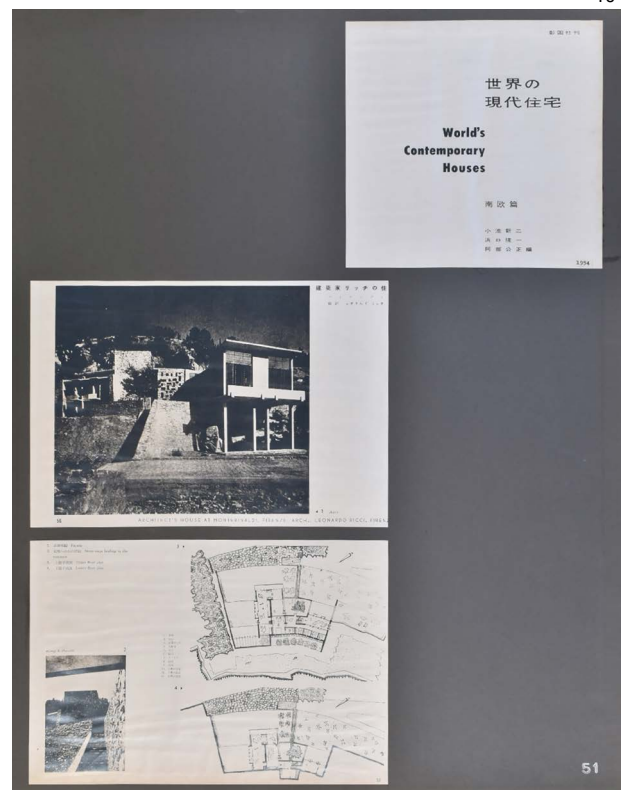
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51



CASA SCLERRI A MONTICINALDI - FIRENZE



CASA MASI A MONTICINALDI - FIRENZE



CASA PETRONI A MONTICINALDI - FIRENZE



CASA DE GIORGI A MONTICINALDI - FIRENZE



Mostre d'arte

RICCI

Leonardo Ricci, giovane pittore toscano che si mette fra i più giovani esponenti della nuova generazione e che dal proprio lavoro ha tratto una linea di tendenza che si estende all'intera avanguardia italiana. Il suo modo di dipingere è stato definito "pittura di segno". Il suo lavoro è stato definito "pittura di segno". Il suo lavoro è stato definito "pittura di segno". Il suo lavoro è stato definito "pittura di segno".

Il Museo dell'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Torino, il Museo di Palazzo Strozzi di Firenze, il Museo di Palazzo Pitti di Firenze, il Museo di Palazzo Vecchio di Firenze, il Museo di Palazzo Medici di Firenze, il Museo di Palazzo Rucellai di Firenze, il Museo di Palazzo Serristori di Firenze, il Museo di Palazzo Tornabuoni di Firenze, il Museo di Palazzo Vecchio di Firenze, il Museo di Palazzo Medici di Firenze, il Museo di Palazzo Rucellai di Firenze, il Museo di Palazzo Serristori di Firenze, il Museo di Palazzo Tornabuoni di Firenze.

15-28 aprile 1953

Maestre d'arte

LEONARDO RICCI

La mostra di Leonardo Ricci, che si tiene al Museo di Palazzo Strozzi di Firenze, è una delle più importanti dell'anno. Ricci, nato nel 1915, è un pittore toscano che si mette fra i più giovani esponenti della nuova generazione e che dal proprio lavoro ha tratto una linea di tendenza che si estende all'intera avanguardia italiana.

Il Museo dell'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Torino, il Museo di Palazzo Strozzi di Firenze, il Museo di Palazzo Pitti di Firenze, il Museo di Palazzo Vecchio di Firenze, il Museo di Palazzo Medici di Firenze, il Museo di Palazzo Rucellai di Firenze, il Museo di Palazzo Serristori di Firenze, il Museo di Palazzo Tornabuoni di Firenze.

15-28 aprile 1953

Tutte le tendenze pittoriche riunite quest'anno al 'Fiorino'

Significativi confronti tra i figurativi e gli astrattisti - La partecipazione dei toscani - Oggetti che non sono opere di pittura

Una mostra di grande interesse, per il suo valore culturale e per il suo valore artistico, si sta svolgendo al Museo di Palazzo Strozzi di Firenze. La mostra, intitolata "Tutte le tendenze pittoriche riunite quest'anno al 'Fiorino'", è una delle più importanti dell'anno. In questa mostra sono riunite tutte le tendenze pittoriche, dai figurativi agli astrattisti, e la partecipazione dei toscani è particolarmente significativa. La mostra è curata da una commissione di esperti e ha un alto livello scientifico e artistico.

La mostra è divisa in due sezioni: la prima, dedicata ai figurativi, e la seconda, dedicata agli astrattisti. In questa mostra sono riunite tutte le tendenze pittoriche, dai figurativi agli astrattisti, e la partecipazione dei toscani è particolarmente significativa. La mostra è curata da una commissione di esperti e ha un alto livello scientifico e artistico.

galleria vigina nuova
via delle Vigne 27/31 - Firenze

15-28 aprile 1953

collezione
n. 100 - 50
dal 15 aprile

pitture di
leonardo ricci

LEONARDO RICCI
Nato a Roma nel 1915. Risiede a Firenze.
Partecipò dal 1948 alle Mostre d'arte italiana d'arte.
Opera in Mostre d'arte moderna italiana e straniere.
Professione: insegnante alla Scuola di architettura di Firenze.



Tormento e ricerca
In questa seconda grande opera rappresentativa, il pittore toscano espone la sua ricerca pittorica, che si manifesta in una serie di opere di grande interesse. La mostra è curata da una commissione di esperti e ha un alto livello scientifico e artistico.

Desideriamo esprimere il nostro vivo apprezzamento agli artisti che con impegno e sacrificio personale hanno voluto e continuano a lavorare collettivamente alle serie di stampe d'arte dell'Associazione Amatori d'Arte. Dobbiamo alla loro comprensione per la biografia e i fini della nostra iniziativa se ci è stato possibile realizzare, e ora, dopo il successo ottenuto dalle prime serie finora allestite, possiamo continuare. La nostra fiducia negli artisti ha avuto la sua piena conferma, perciò lasciamo ad essi la scelta dell'opera che intendono mettere a nostra disposizione, invitando il nostro comitato di selezione degli artisti che ritengono debbano figurare in un panorama della migliore arte contemporanea italiana. L'opera di un collettivo diretto tra artisti e pubblico ricerca il terreno negli interessi fondamentali della nostra iniziativa.

LA COMMISSIONE

associazione amatori d'Arte

4

Novembre 1955

YOU ARE CORTEOUSLY INVITED

TO ATTEND THE PREVIEW OF AN EXHIBIT OF PAINTINGS BY

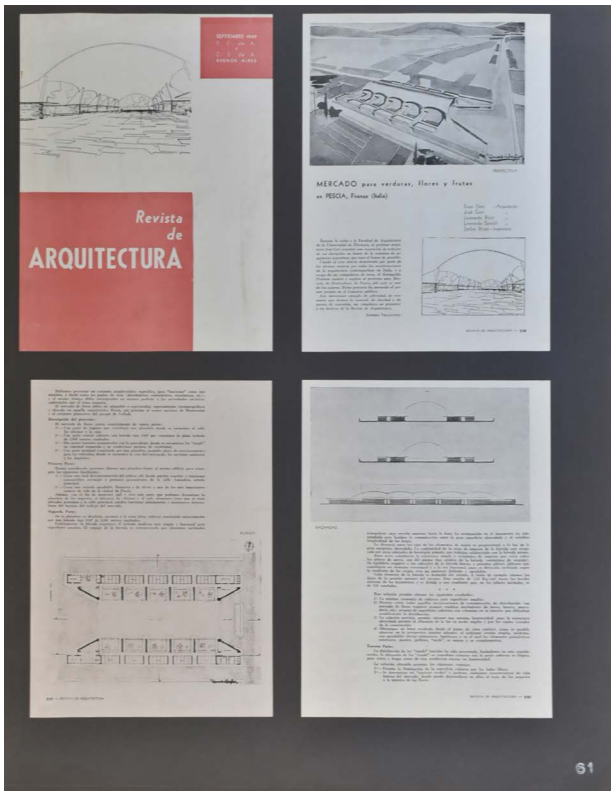
LEONARDO RICCI

AT THE LANDAU GALLERY
302 NORTH LA SALLE

MONDAY EVENING, JANUARY 10, 8-11 P.M.
EXHIBITION WILL CONTINUE THROUGH FEBRUARY 7, 1955

60

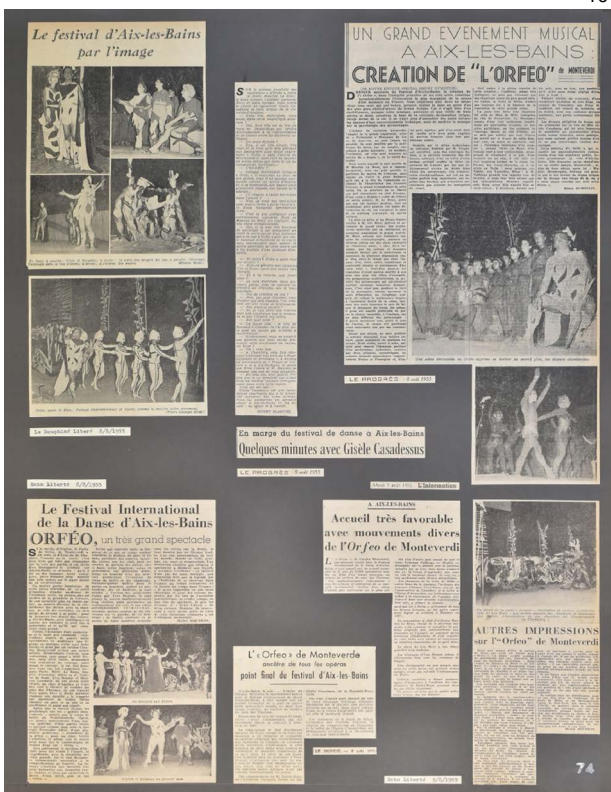
documented. In the second Log Book more space is devoted to the “La Cava. Mostra Internazionale di Arti Plastiche”, an international open-air art exhibition Ricci arranged in Monterinaldi and in his own house in 1955.



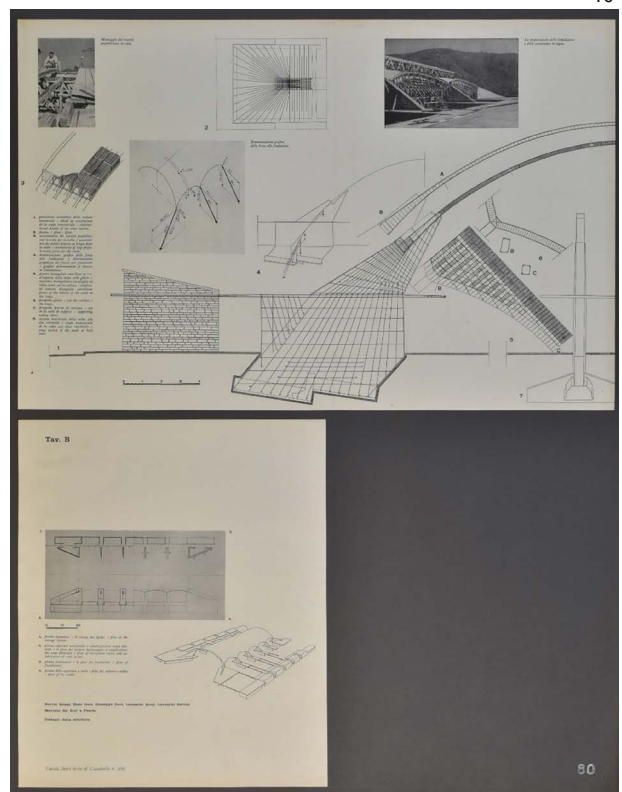
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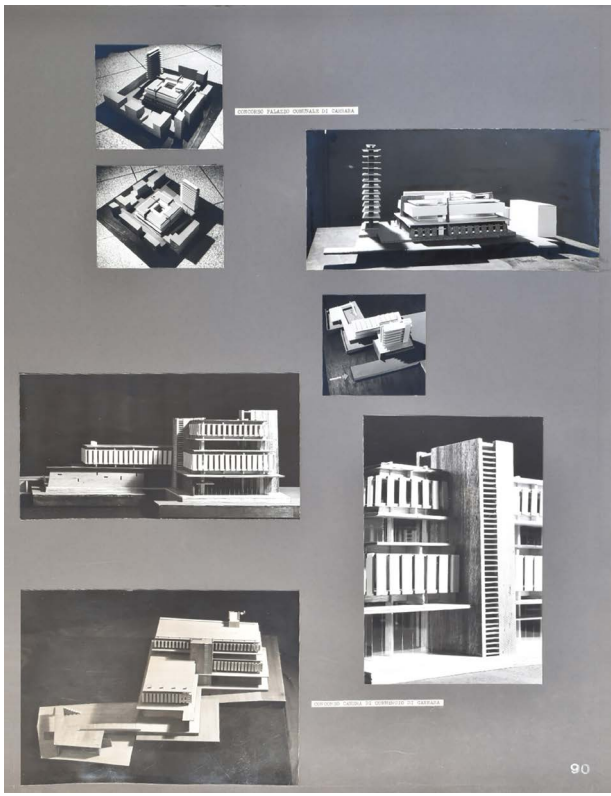
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16

The third folder (1956-1959) marks his presence in the international architectural scene, as he is involved in the *XI Triennale di Milano*. At the end of the 1950s Ricci took part in many painting exhibitions and gave birth to some of his

Fig. 17-26
 Lobook no. 3 (1956-1959),
 pages 90, 94, 95, 96, 98, 102,
 109, 115, 119, 121.



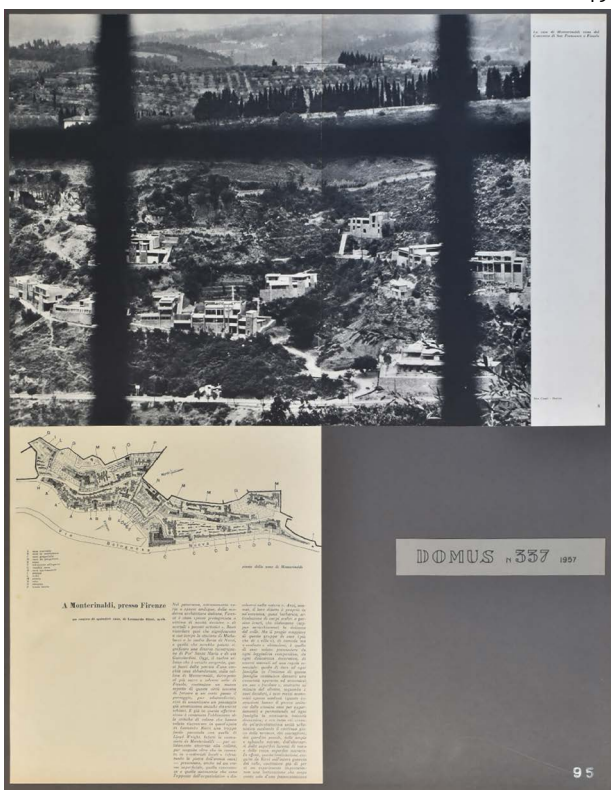
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case Pavelli e casa David



case Pavelli e casa David



case Mani e casa Ferroni (in alto casa Tassi)

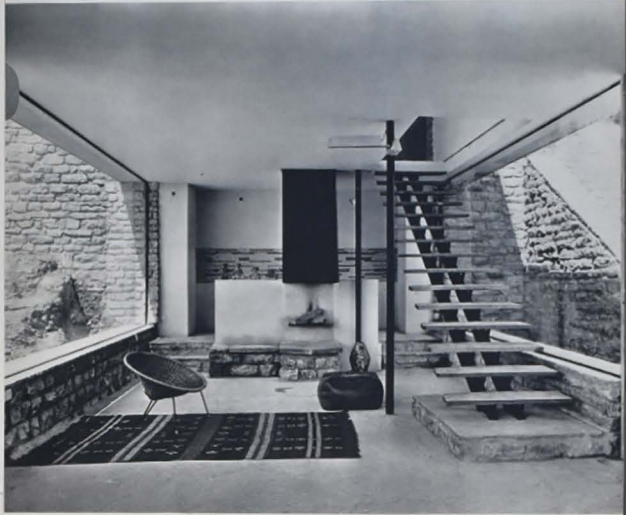


Qui sopra, casa Ferroni vista dal soggiorno di casa Mani (sotto, il soggiorno, con un tavolo in ceramica e un divano, prevede scalare di Susanna Ferroni Pavoni).

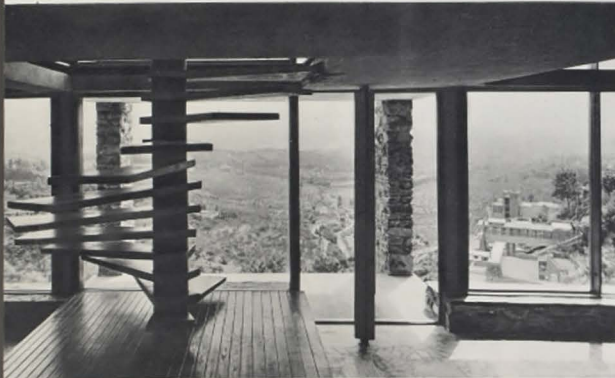


in Montecarlo, Firenze Riccardo Mater, arch.

Il soggiorno in casa Pavelli, presso la vecchia chiesa, il posto per un letto, un primo piano, il giardino e lo squallido in legno al suo disotto.



5



case Enzo



case De Giorgi



case Belloni

case, casa David, casa Belloni e casa Mani, tutte di notte.

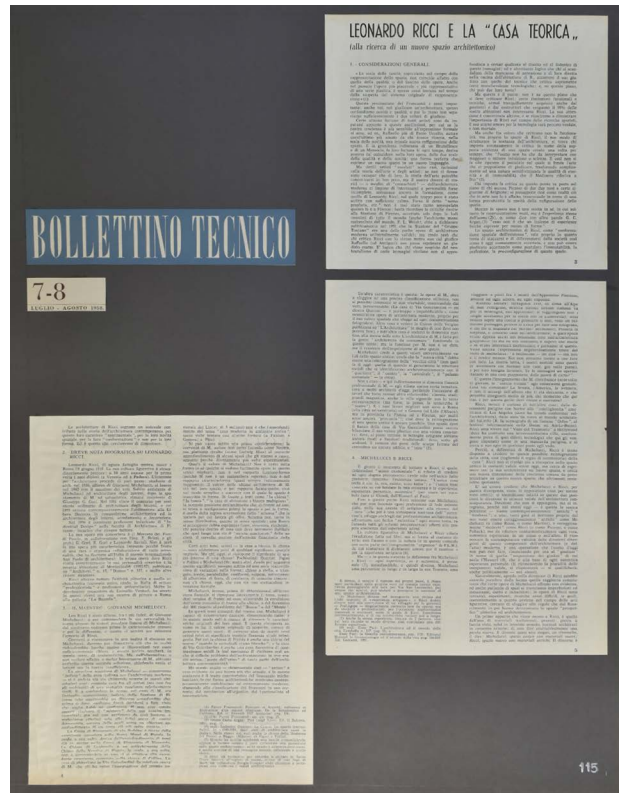
Foto Lucio Sanna



most famous, internationally known and recognized projects as Mann Borgese House (1958-1960), and urban planning projects, giving life back to forsaken neighbourhoods such as Sorgane and Albisola.



23



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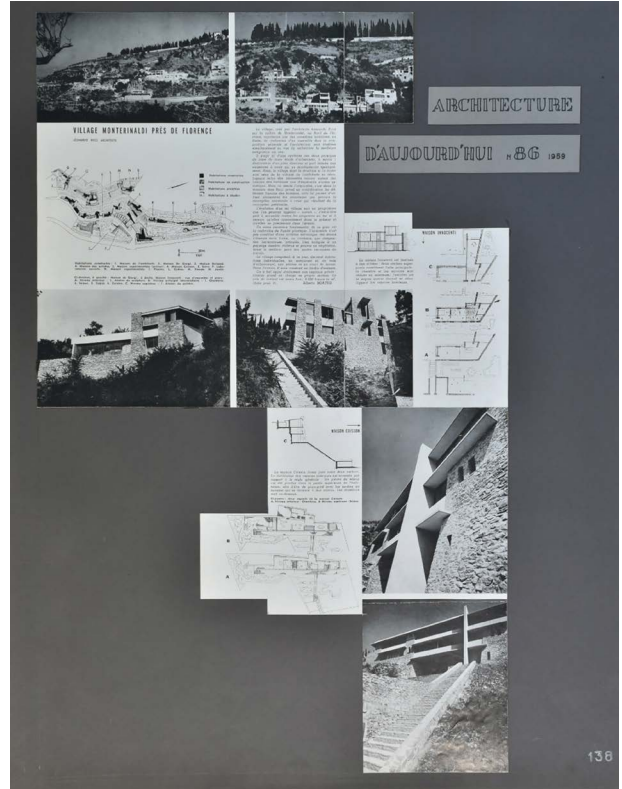
Most of the collected articles deal with Casa Studio Ricci and Ricci's paintings. The fourth, and last, folder (1959-1963) collects much of Ricci's work focused on private mansions for very well-known and international customers, such as Casa Balmain. Many articles written on past projects are also attached

Fig. 27-36
 Lobook no. 4 (1959-1963),
 pages 130, 136, 141, 142, 144,
 148, 150, 161, 164, 167.



130

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LEONARDO RICCI

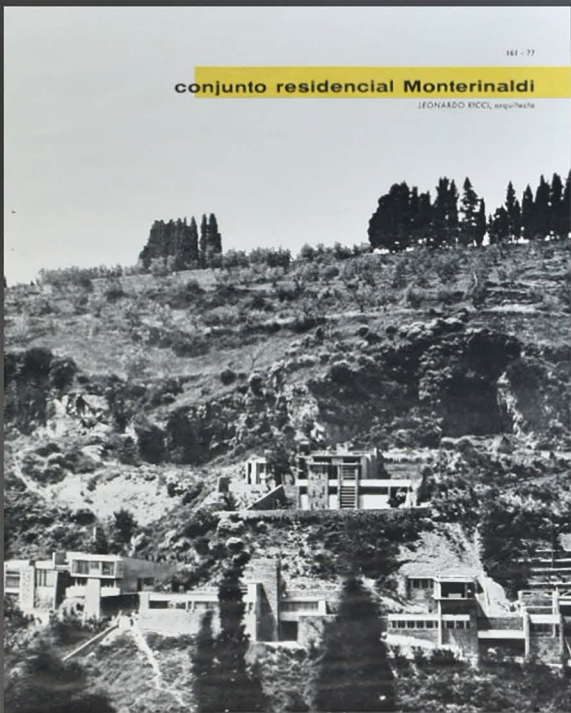
conjunto residencial Monterinaldi

Artículo publicado en el n.º 120 de la Revista Informes de la Construcción

Abril 1960

conjunto residencial Monterinaldi

LEONARDO RICCI, arquitecto



emplazamiento



superpuestos, alineándose según imperativos de las curvas de nivel, al objeto de evitar lo más cuidadosamente el terreno, permitir amplias vistas desde todos los puntos y realizar el menor movimiento de tierra posible...

La colonia actual de ocio y emergió directa, está compuesta por un edificio lineal de dos plantas, un estudio, dos platones, un restaurante, un ingeniero, un agente de ventas, un dentista, una tienda, local comercial, restaurante, piscina, estudios de alquiler...

ayudado
D. Juan José de la Torre, arquitecto colaborador, con el arquitecto
Leonardo Ricci, arquitecto jefe, y el ingeniero D. Carlos de la Torre, arquitecto colaborador.
D. F. de la Torre.

En una hermosa colina, situada a unos ocho kilómetros de Firenze, y con grandiosas vistas sobre la ciudad, se han distribuido un grupo de villas, con un criterio cobio de uniformidad formal y metódico acendado con la naturaleza circundante.

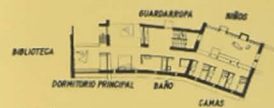
Las edificaciones se disponen a lo largo de dos caminos



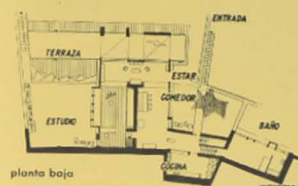
casa RICCI



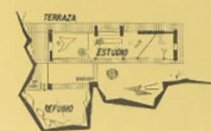
sección



planta de semisótano

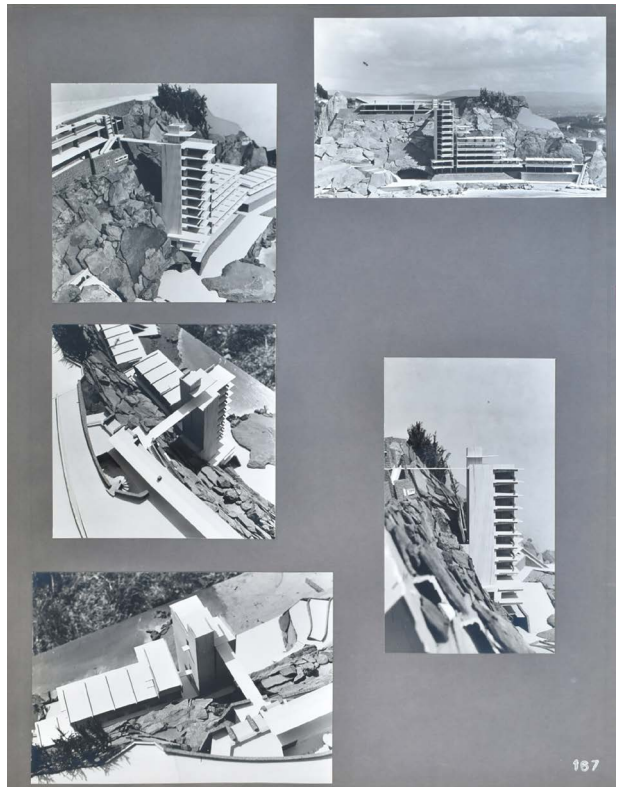
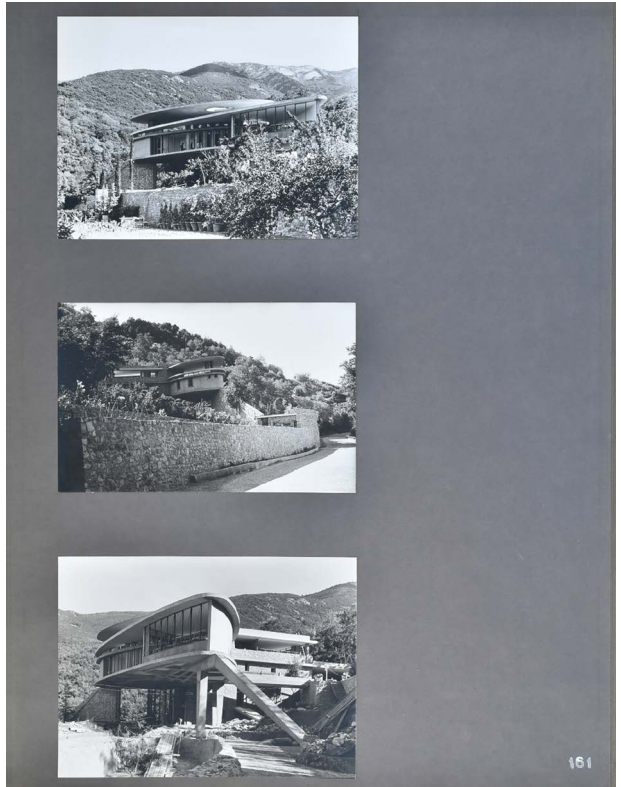
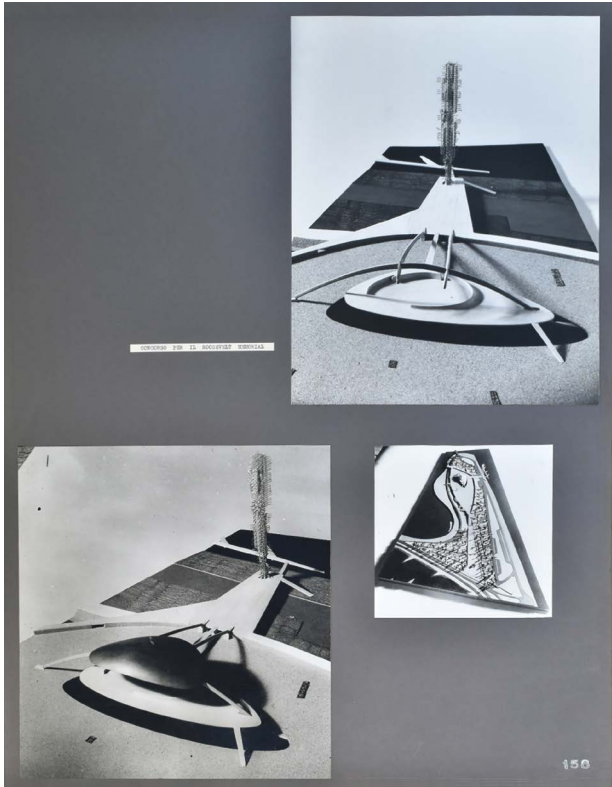


planta bajo



planta primera

El arquitecto ha desarrollado su idea, su concepto, su proyecto, con la absoluta libertad que proporciona ser el propietario. Asimismo, ha seleccionado a los ocupantes de las viviendas, para lo cual solía invitarles a pasar unos días en su propio hogar, compartidos así con ellos y haciéndoles gustar del lugar y de las cosas que serían semejantes. El primer paso consistió en que el cliente aceptase sin discusión la estructura y criterio estético exterior, lo que constituyó la base de un primer contrato. La segunda parte del contrato, la que se refiere a la distribución y detalles interiores, permite, no sólo la absoluta libertad del cliente, sino que se le aconseja y orienta hasta que fija con precisión sus ideas y sabe qué quiere.



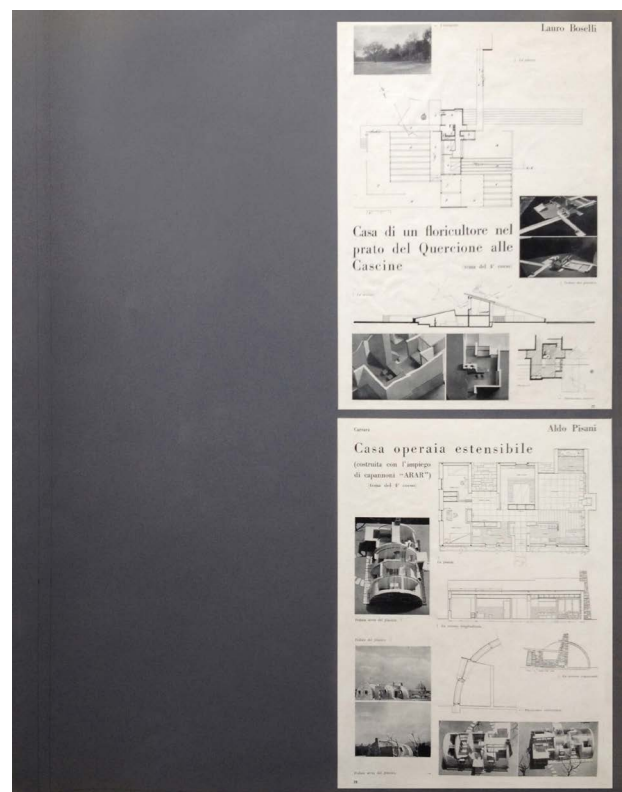
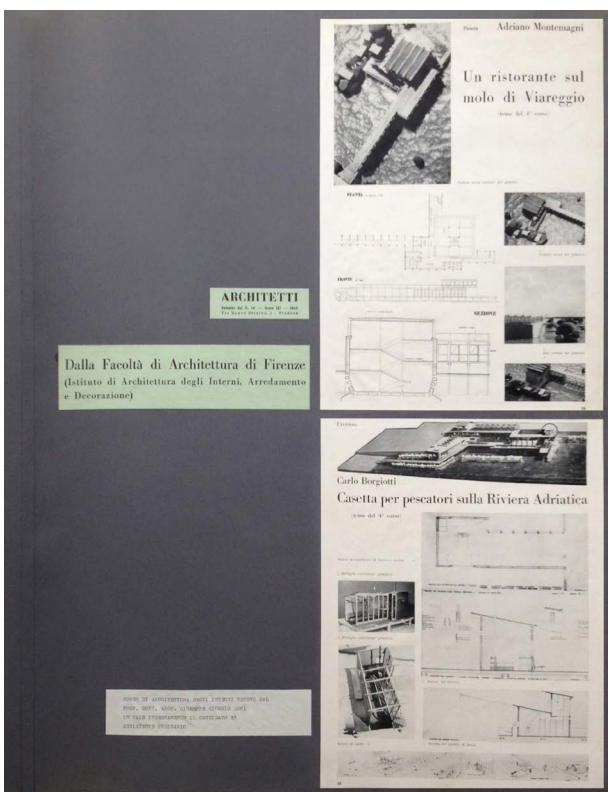
on these pages, highlighting Ricci's influence in the field. The fifth Log Book has a title on the cover, likely handily written by Ricci in Italian "Alcuni lavori degli allievi del quarto e quinto corso di Architettura Interni", which could be translated in English "Some works of the students of the fourth and fifth Interior Architecture courses". The Professor of the course was Giuseppe Giorgio Gori while Leonardo Ricci was the regular assistant. The journal collects drawings and photographs of some students' models that were published in an excerpt titled "Dalla Facoltà di Architettura di Firenze (Istituto di Architettura degli Interni, Arredamento e Decorazione)" in the issue 16 of *Architetti* in 1962 (year III).

The published projects covered very different architectural programs and were intended for different project areas: Adriano Montemagni's design for a restaurant on the Viareggio pier, Carlo Borgiotti's fishermen's cottage on the Adriatic Riviera, Lauro Boselli's house for a floriculturist in the Prato del Quercione alle Cascine, Aldo Pisani's extensible worker's house, the Advertising Truck on Fiat 680 "chassis" by Rosario Vernuccio, the interior arrangement of a yacht by Basil Hadjipanous, the interior arrangement of a railway car by Giampiero Vichi, and the folding armchair by Pier Luigi Spadolini.

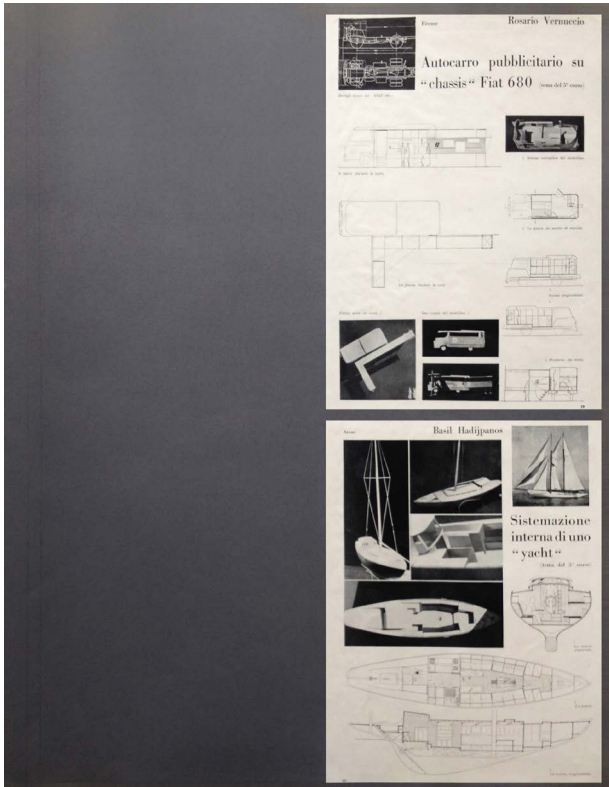
The first six projects belonged to students in the fourth course, while the last two belonged to students in the fifth course.

On the diary pages follow photographs of the plates and models of other projects, presumably not published in the Architects article, but equally worthy: the house for an art dealer by a student of the fourth course (year 1958-1959), the study for exhibition design panels with unified modular elements, a two-section kindergarten for the Sorgane neighborhood, then under

Fig. 37-43
 Lobook no. 5, titled "Alcuni lavori degli allievi del quarto e quinto corso di Architettura Interni".



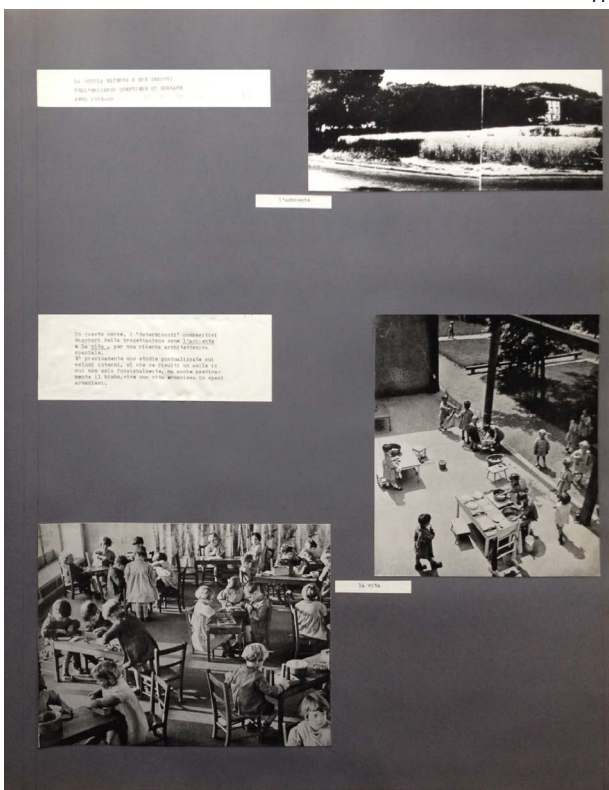
construction, also by a student of the fourth course but dated 1959-1960, the design by a student of the fifth course for a house for fifty architecture students of Florence, residents and non-residents, to be built on the right bank of the Arno river near the S. Niccolò bridge. The projects, as stated in a couple



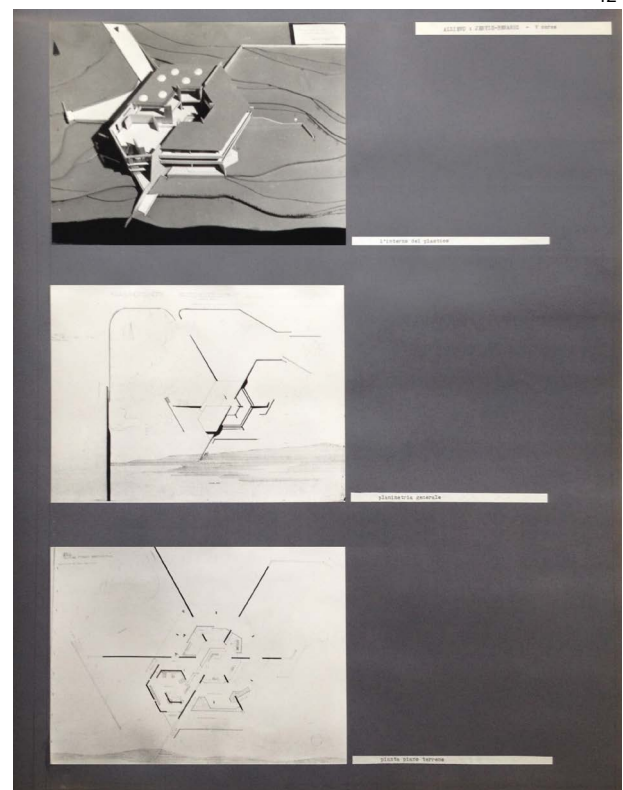
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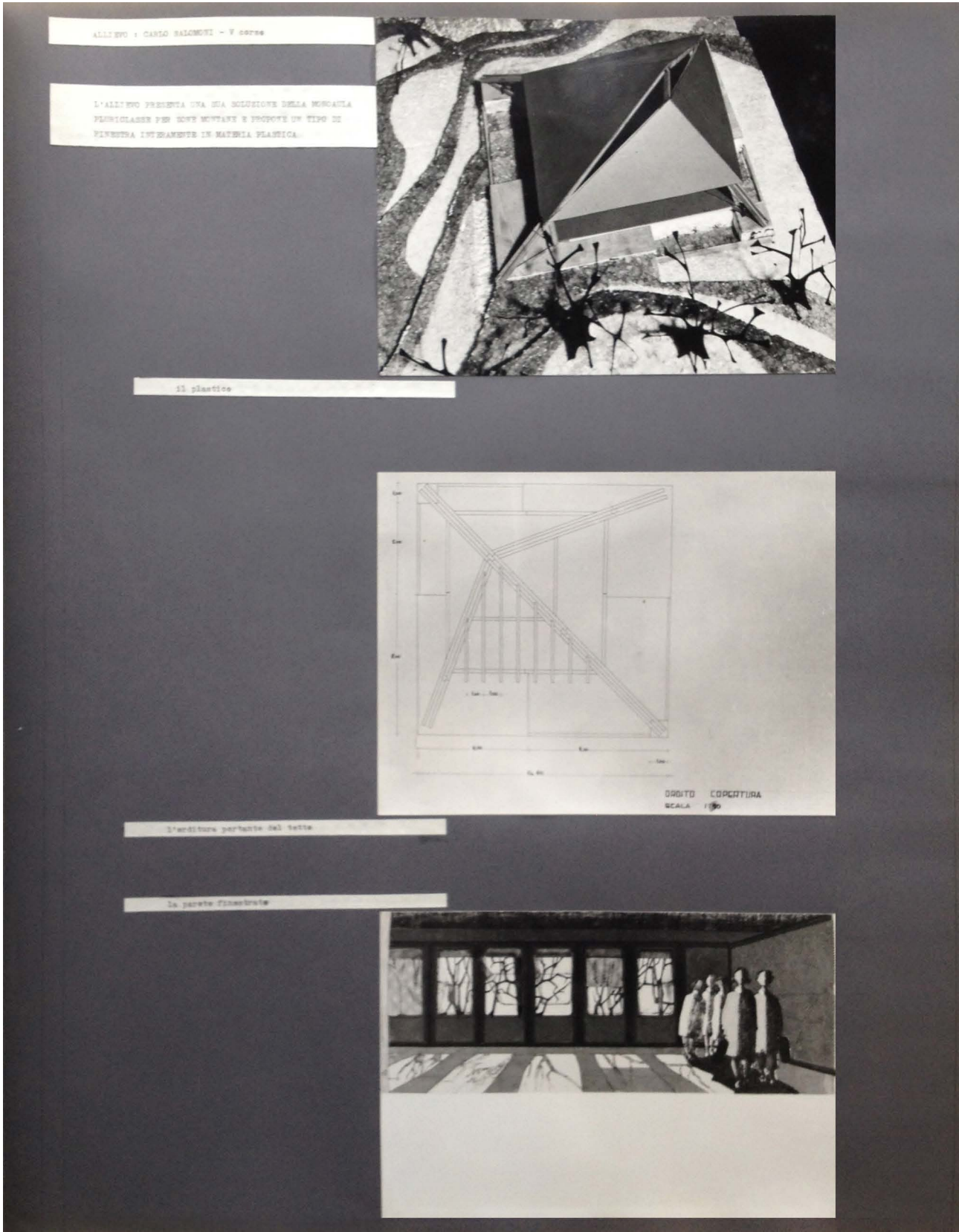


41



42

of notes pasted on the side of the boards, were to be elaborated by a group of students, each of whom would then develop a part of the project individually. The design themes proposed by Gori and Ricci were the environment and the unfolding of life. These were to be the starting points of further reflections of the students leading to the study of new spatial configurations.



A Student's Work for the XI Triennale di Milano

The XI Triennale di Milano. *Esposizione Internazionale delle Arti Decorative e Industriali Moderne e dell'Architettura Moderna* was held in Palazzo dell'Arte al Parco from July 27 to November 4, 1957.

The exhibition was ordered with the participation of the Industrial Design Associations: A.S.I.D. of New York, B.C.I.D of London, L.E.I of Paris, A.D.I of Milan¹.

It was titled *Ecllettismo e Formalismo* ["Eclecticism and Formalism"] and investigated the relations among arts, science, contemporary architecture, artistic productions, and industrial design. The exhibition opened to a more international scene and the countries involved were Belgium, Canada, Japan, Mexico, Austria, the Netherlands, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Yugoslavia, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

The purpose of the "Industrial Design" exhibition is to illustrate some criteria, considered by the Commission to be fundamental to the methodological clarification that this new activity places at the basis of the designer's action.

The exhibition points to the following topics: the productive and cultural environment in which the work of the designer is developed, a comparative reading of the design work methods among the different countries, the functional and environmental origins in which the object was born and how the objective roots of the products are displayed in its possible subjective expressions².

The two main sections of the exhibition, staged by Sergio Astio and Gianfranco Prattini, were preceded by an introductory exhibition which analyzed the origins and the action field of Industrial Design with a particular reference of the integration of Science, Art, Society in the contemporary productive world.

The first section consisted of the *Mostra Internazionale del Prodotto Industriale* ["International Exhibition of Industrial Product"], curated by Gillo Dorfles, Alberto Rosselli, Leonardo Ricci and Marco Zanuso. In this part studies, sketches, drawings, models, photos and statistical documents were exposed in order to exemplify the different work methods the most important designers applied all around the world.

The second part consisted of the *Mostra Internazionale di Architettura Moderna* ["International Exhibition of Modern Architecture"], coordinated by Agnoldomenico Pica and curated by high profile architects as Alvar Aalto, Giulio Carlo Argan and the historian Nikolaus Pevsner, with the collaboration of Angelo Tito Anselmi³.

It included a selection of objects chosen from production around the world over the past three years.

1 Further details about the XI Triennale di Milano found in "Undicesima Triennale. Mostra internazionale dell'Industrial design", 1957, leaflet, logbook no.3, Casa Studio Ricci, page 109.

2 The exhibition aims were specified in the "Undicesima Triennale" leaflet.

3 The names of Sergio Astio, Gianfranco Prattini, Leonardo Ricci, Angelo Tito Anselmi were specified in the "Undicesima Triennale"

Fig. 44-48
 Lobook no. 6, titled "Un
 esempio di lavoro di studenti'
 presentati alla XI Triennale di
 Milano".

CORSO DI "INDUSTRIAL DESIGN",
 Facoltà di Architettura di Firenze.
 Prof. Dott. Arch. Leonardo Ricci.

Tema: Frangimento dello spazio interno
 con elementi di serie per case di abita-
 zione a piano libero.

Elementi studiati:

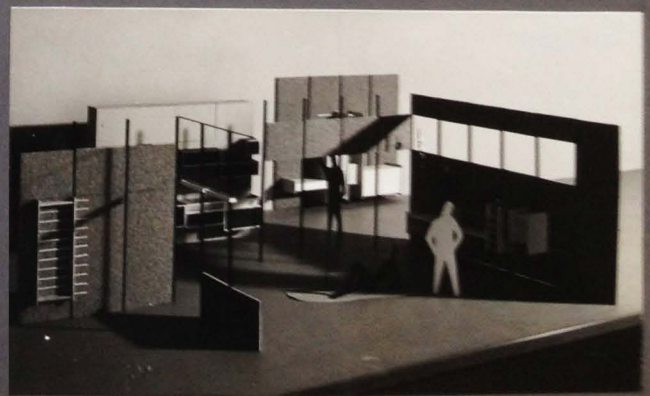
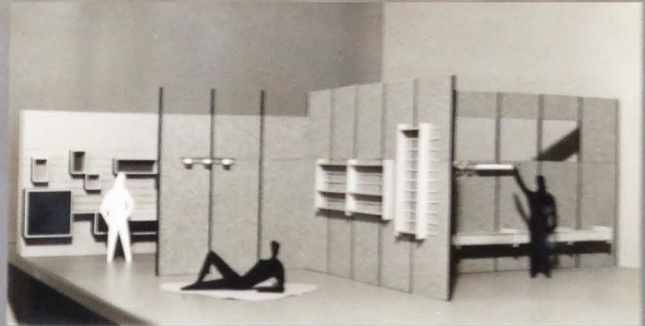
Ricerca del modulo. Modulo di Le Cor-
 busier trasformato: 315 195 120 75 45
 240 150 90 60 30.

Montanti e pannelli. Caratteristiche: va-
 riabilità rispetto all'altezza; variabili-
 tà rispetto alla lunghezza; variabilità
 rispetto all'angolazione reciproca dei
 pannelli.

Mobili componibili. Caratteristiche:
 1) variabilità rispetto all'altezza, lun-
 ghezza, larghezza; 2) possibilità di attac-
 co sui pannelli. Cucina. Caratteristiche:
 pezzi componibili.

Bagno. Caratteristiche: unico pezzo in
 Fiberglass stampato. Illuminazione. Carat-
 teristiche: 1) elementi puntiformi e li-
 neari componibili; 2) possibilità di at-
 tacco ai montanti dei pannelli.

Tavolo variabile. Lo studio è impostato
 criticamente sui seguenti principi:
 a) combattere il principio della fabri-
 cazione dei pezzi Standard, che porta al-
 l'anonimia e spersonalizzazione dei valo-
 ri umani; b) favorire il principio della
 fabbricazione di serie di elementi che
 servono alla composizione dei pezzi in mo-
 do da poter permettere la massima libertà
 compositiva secondo le esigenze più sva-
 riate. Come tutte le ricerche universita-
 rie si è tentato di dare una soluzione
 possibile, non la soluzione.



The objects were then examined and compared in order to analyze their meaning, not only from an aesthetic point of view, but considering the functional and environmental origins in which the object originated.

In addition, the surrounding park hosted a sculptor exhibition with work of sculpture masters of the late nineteenth century as Rodin, Renoir and Matisse next to contemporary sculptors as Brancusi, Picasso and Boccioni⁴. The exhibition spaces were bounded by walls about 2.40 meters high, arranged as a labyrinth, so as to successively guide the visitor through spaces that are related to each other, although differentiated, and this is intended to focus the visitor's attention on the various topics documented.

Leonardo Ricci worked on the seventh room⁵, set up by himself and the students of the industrial design course of the department of architecture of Florence, that dealt with the theme of interior space fractioning with standard elements for free-storey dwellings.

In the compartment were set up the various rooms of an apartment, reconstructed using a module derived from a variation of Le Corbusier's Modulor.

Elements such as uprights and panels were characterized by variability with respect to height, length and width. The modular kitchen cabinets, in addition to these features of variability, offered the possibility to assembly panels, as did the linear point elements that constituted the lighting.

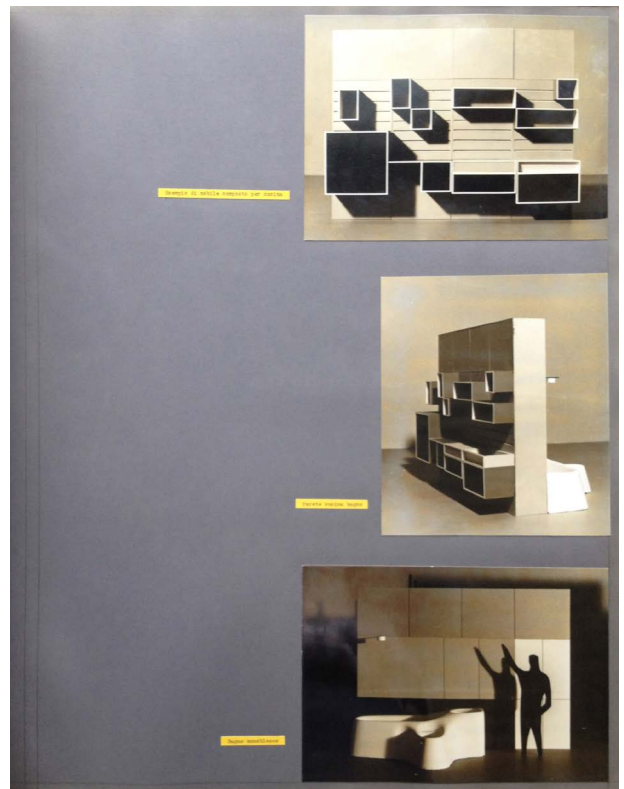
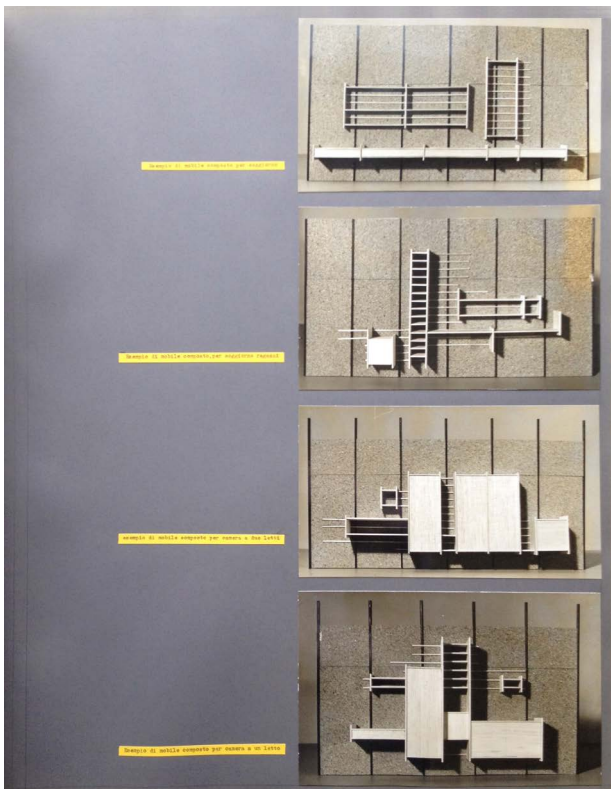
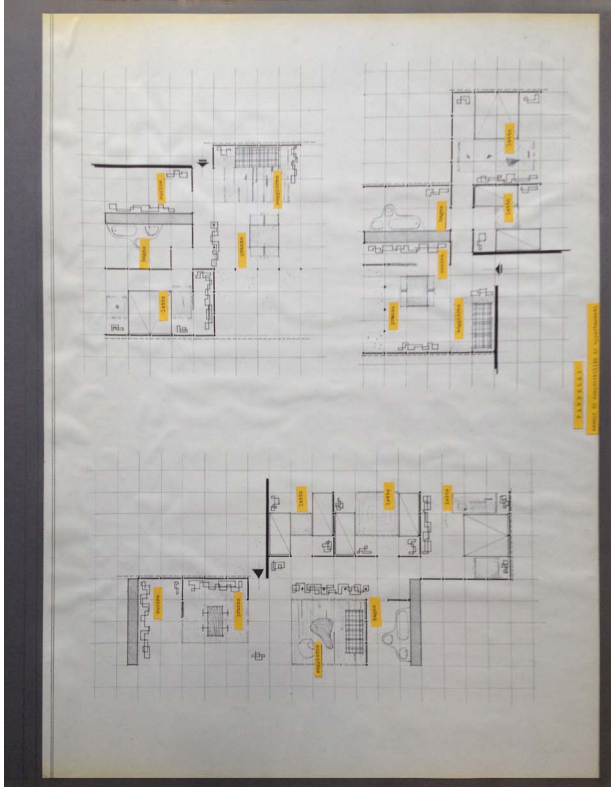
In contrast, the bathroom was the only element consisting of a single piece molded from Fiberglas.

The research aimed to combat the principle of manufacturing Standard pieces that leads to anonymity and depersonalization of human values, as well as favoring the principle of mass production of elements that serve the composition of pieces so that maximum freedom of composition can be allowed according to a wide variety of needs.

4 To deepen the Triennale di Milano see: Agnolodomenico Pica, *Storia della Triennale 1918-1957*, (Milan: Edizioni del Milione 1957); Anty Pansera, *Storia e cronaca della Triennale*, (Milan: Longanesi & C., 1978); Giovanni Muzio, *Il Palazzo dell'Arte*, edited by Leonardo Fiori e Maria Pia Belski (Milan: Editrice Abitare Segesta, 1982); Alessandro Rocca, *Atlante della Triennale di Milano*, (Milan: Ed. Triennale e Milano, 1999); Elena Del Drago, *La Triennale di Milano. Design, territorio, impresa* (Roma: Luca Sossella, 2004); Massimiliano Savorra, "Perfetti modelli di dimore: la casa alle Triennali", in *Le case nella Triennale. Dal parco alla QT8*, edited by Graziella Leyla Ciagà, Graziella Tonon, catalogue of the exhibition, (Milan: Triennale-Electa, 2005), 106-125; Massimiliano Savorra, "La X Triennale e le case prefabbricate", *Casa per tutti. Abitare la città globale*, edited by Fulvio Irace, catalogue of the exhibition (Milan: Triennale-Electa, 2008), 115-121; Massimiliano Savorra, "Ernesto Nathan Rogers e le Triennali di Milano negli anni Cinquanta", in *Continuità e crisi. Ernesto Nathan Rogers e la cultura architettonica italiana del secondo dopoguerra*, edited by Anna Giannetti, Luca Molinari, (Firenze: Alinea, 2010), 90-100; Paola Nicolini, *Castelli di carte. La XIV Triennale di Milano, 1968* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2011); Il Giornale dell'Architettura, "Triennale story: VIII edizione", 1947, 4 febbraio 2016.

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5 Further details about the seventh room found in "Undicesima Triennale"



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Leonardo Ricci and Leonardo Savioli. An Epistolary Novel. 1943-1944

Leonardo Savioli, Ideal City, Florence, Painting, World War II

/Abstract

Through unpublished letters written by Leonardo Ricci to his friend Leonardo Savioli in 1943 and 1944, the paper aims to trace the early period of the two architects' careers. The documents allow us to understand how the themes Ricci developed in both architecture and painting from the 1950s onward, and more fully in the 1960s, are present in his thinking as an artist and *homme des lettres* already from the years just prior to the projects for the reconstruction of the center of Florence. Moreover, the contribution highlights how Ricci also began, like Savioli, to design an "Ideal City" as early as 1943. His subsequent plans for new city pieces and his quest for the Integrated City are indebted to the feelings, aspirations and nightmares he experienced during the years of World War II.

/Author

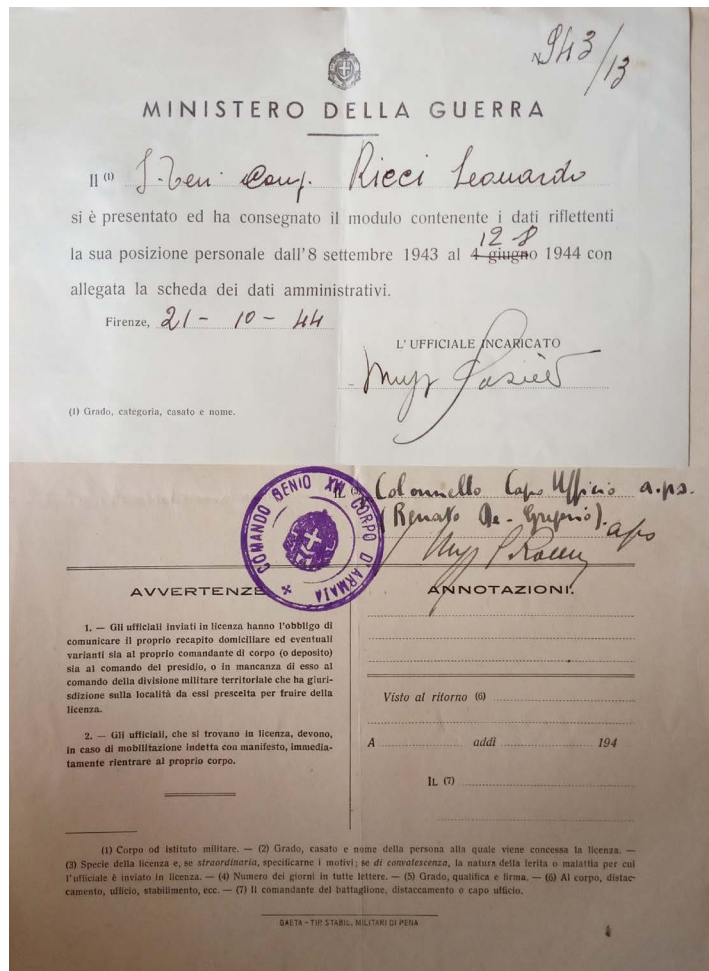
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Despite significant differences in their personalities, Leonardo Ricci (1918-1994) and Leonardo Savioli (1917-1982) maintained a fraternal relationship throughout their lives; they cared deeply for each other. They met and recognized each other during their university studies as painters and architects. They both graduated under the guidance of the same advisor, Giovanni Michelucci – Savioli in 1940 and Ricci in 1942 – from a Faculty of Architecture in Florence that was quite distinct, in terms of teachings and cultural directions, from what they would later experience as professors after the war¹. The curriculum still focused on ‘architectural styles’, and instructors had students design projects using the compositional precepts proposed by Jean Nicolas Louis Durand, which were imported into the Italian academy. Just look at the drawings Ricci produced for his dissertation².

Our account deals with the period in which the two “Leonardi” – as Bruno Zevi renamed them³ –, though physically distant – Savioli is in Florence and Ricci is enlisted in the army near Siena – were particularly linked by the hope of a better future than a present dominated by the tragedy of war. Numerous letters have come down to us – almost 40, written by Ricci to Savioli between January 1943 and November 1944⁴ – that make up a unified *corpus*, because the themes touched upon, such as the hope of building a better world after the war, the love of painting, are always repeated in all the letters.

The letters are unpublished and kept in the archives of Leonardo Savioli at the Archivio di Stato di Firenze. Although they refer to a short time span, what Ricci writes (and what we guess Savioli responds to) provides us with indispensable elements for understanding not only how the relationship between the two arose, but also allows us to know the genesis of many *topoi* of their later work. We are therefore talking about extraordinary documents that we will use as a guide to grasp the intimate thoughts of two protagonists of twentieth-century Italian architecture.



1

1 On the history of teaching at the Faculty of Architecture in Florence, see: Gabriele Corsani and Marco Bini, eds., *La Facoltà di Architettura di Firenze fra tradizione e cambiamento* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2007).

2 See pages 245-247 of the present issue.

3 Bruno Zevi, “Tra i due Leonardi fiorentini”. In *Leonardo Savioli: il segno generatore di forma-spazio*, eds. Rosalia Manno Tolu, Lara Vinca Masina, Alessandro Poli (Città di Castello: Edilmond, 1995), 42.

4 The letters are preserved in: Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASF), Fondo Leonardo Savioli (FS), *Corrispondenza, Lettere a L. Savioli* (C), 3.

Fig. 1

The Italian Ministry of War, Florence, 21st October 1944. The Certificate of discharge of soldier, Casa Studio Ricci.

The Painting as a Moment of Exchange of Feelings

They express, right from the first letter, an intense desire for closeness and sharing. Ricci's letters, like those of many other men far from home and in even worse conditions than those endured by the Florentine architect, serve as precious and enduring verbal records for us of pain, loneliness, desires, and fantasies dreamt amidst the bombs:

Yesterday I had to stop writing to you because there was a heavy bombing all around [...]. It's like this almost every day here, with planes hovering over the houses. Now, dear Leonardo, I won't write more, but I hope to write to you soon as I've been working so much⁵.

There is a strong affection between the two, which evidently was already well-established before Ricci's departure, and it solidified during their previous years as students:

Dear Leonardo – writes Ricci – I couldn't write to you sooner, as I lacked your address. I received your latest letter yesterday, which brought me much joy. Keep going, as you can, and work, work. Everything is fine, including the poem you sent me. It's very stylistically consistent, as well as a reflection of your painting. Work, Leonardo, even for me. So that when I return and can resume my activities (which unfortunately can't be done here), I'll see that nothing has ceased, nothing interrupted. And through your new accomplishments, I'll realize that human thought is progressing, even if mine in this moment... Dear Leonardo, write to me often and at length. Tell me a lot about yourself, about what you think, about what you do. It will truly please me, because down here, I need so much affection, and I value your affection. Also, let me know how you're doing, and remember that if you need anything, you know that I'm always at your disposal, just as I would turn to you for any of my needs. Many greetings and best wishes to you and your loved ones⁶.

Or even:

I have a great desire to write to you, or rather, to see you again. Right now, I really wish I had all my loved ones around me, to become spiritually stronger and to endure the same fate. You see, in certain moments, it would

Fig. 2

The Italian Ministry of War,
Siena, 9th September 1943.
The Certificate of leave of the
soldier, Casa Studio Ricci.

N. 298 del Catal.
(R. 1941 - Anno XX)

COMANDO GENIO XVII CORPO D'ARMATA
LETTERA DI LICENZA

(1) Comando Genio XVII C.A.

COMANDO GENIO XVII CORPO D'ARMATA Al (2) Stenente
Ricci Leonardo Lode

OGGETTO: Concessione di licenza

Vi ho concesso una licenza (3) speciale pecunia

di giorni (4) 15 + 8 con decorrenza da domani per recarvi
a Sienna, distretto militare di Sienna
A P.M. 19 addì 9 settembre 1943

Colonnello Capo Ufficio a.p.s.
Rinaldo De Gennaro
Mary Ricci

AVVERTENZE * **ANNOTAZIONI:**

1. — Gli ufficiali inviati in licenza hanno l'obbligo di comunicare il proprio recapito domiciliare ed eventuali varianti sia al proprio comandante di corpo (o depositato) sia al comando del presidio, o in mancanza di esso al comando della divisione militare territoriale che ha giurisdizione sulla località da essi prescelta per trarre della licenza.

2. — Gli ufficiali, che si trovano in licenza, devono, in caso di mobilitazione indetta con manifesto, immediatamente rientrare al proprio corpo.

Visto al ritorno (6)

A addì 194

IL (7)

(1) Corpo ed Istituto militare. — (2) Grado, cognome e nome della persona alla quale viene concessa la licenza. — (3) Specie della licenza e, se straordinaria, specificarne i motivi; se di convalescenza, la natura della ferita o malattia per cui l'ufficiale è inviato in licenza. — (4) Numero dei giorni in tutte lettere. — (5) Grado, qualifica e firma. — (6) Al corpo, distacco, ufficio, stabilimento, ecc. — (7) Il comandante del battaglione, distacco o capo ufficio.

GAETA - TIP. STABIL. MILITARI DI PERA

5 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, May 30, 1944.

6 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, January 3, 1943.

seem inconceivable to me that the world could have you and not me, or vice versa⁷.

In addition to seeking mutual comfort, what do the two discuss in these letters? They exchange thoughts about the city, but not about specific architectures or architects. They mainly discuss about painting and artists they feel connected to, both classical and contemporary: alongside Giotto, Piero della Francesca, Luca Signorelli, and Antonio del Pollaiuolo, Ricci recalls Paul Cézanne, Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh, Picasso, expressionism, and action painting⁸. Both conduct research across art and architecture, reflecting their own deep inquiry into existence. In the years under consideration, Ricci and Savioli have a much stronger focus on painting than architecture. Isolated in the midst of ongoing war, painting is an art suitable for escaping from reality and it represents a possibility to regain a semblance of sensory peace. Both Savioli and Ricci undergo their artistic training as painters during the years leading up to the immediate pre-war period. Their earliest works reveal a subtle engagement with the final adventures of artistic culture within painting during the Fascist era: the expressive intent is filtered through a veil of references to classical tradition. This is the same phenomenon we see in some of the buildings designed by Michelucci from this period. For example, the presence of classical statues on the façades of the Palazzo del Governo in Arezzo (1937) or the Palazzina Reale of Santa Maria Novella Station (1934).

I assure you Leonardo – Ricci writes – that when I see painting, architecture [...] is almost all useless [...] Painting [...] can arrive at the concretization of ‘mystery’. Like religion more than religion as a concrete realization (apart from the consequences on the people)⁹.

The pictorial composition is consistently at the forefront of Ricci’s thoughts. The two, almost self-taught, exchange many opinions on different techniques (oil, watercolor, fresco):

I have a composition that is nearly at the point where I can’t work on it anymore. And I’m quite disheartened yet also quite content. Disheartened because I’m far from what I wanted, content because if I were to repaint



3

7 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, December 3, 1943.

8 On Savioli’s painting see: Letizia Nieri, *L’esperienza pittorica nell’opera di Leonardo Savioli*. (Firenze: Edifir, 2012). On Ricci’s paintings see: Maria Clara Ghia. *La nostra città è tutta la terra. Leonardo Ricci architetto (1918-1994)*. (Wuppertal: Steinhäuser, 2021), 69-71.

9 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, March 29, 1943.

Fig. 3

The Italian Ministry of Defense, 30th July 1947. The Certificate of Military Honor of soldier, Casa Studio Ricci.

it, I'm sure something more beautiful would come out, and I've learned other things. First of all, using oil color for large compositions. This technique doesn't allow for composition (and by now I'm content with that because I'll soon be working on fresco as soon as I can). I will only paint with oil from life, in studies, etc., but I will never again create a large oil composition¹⁰.

Reading the letters today, we are struck by the strength with which Ricci is determined to progress in painting:

I would always like to work – he writes – work continuously, and yet I still can't manage an hour without interrupting the work due to a lack of vision, because it's fled, and because I'm tired. And sometimes I see colossal things, like last night for instance, when I saw, with wide eyes inside my mind, a foreshortened naked man¹¹.

He paints even when his refuge is under bombardment:

The war is making itself felt here – he writes – There have been two consecutive bombings (on the outskirts) and around, and an aerial battle. An aircraft crashed very close to us, but we'll wait and see. I am very calm and have worked on the composition even in this chaos¹².

Stick together by their love for painting, the two, however, exhibit different approaches to this art that fascinates them so much. Ricci doesn't like to outline the preparatory sketch of compositions or subjects with a pencil, fearing it might lead to academicism¹³. Often, he applies color directly onto the canvas or paper:

There is the joy of color, which is true, it often makes you suffer because it doesn't come out well... but sometimes when you put it down, it almost makes you want to shout with joy, it seems like a miracle, and it doesn't even feel like you put it there¹⁴.

On the contrary, following the Tuscan tradition and inspired by Michelucci, Savioli considers drawing essential for ensuring balance in composition¹⁵:

Before starting to paint – writes Ricci – it's necessary to meticulously study all the colors and tones... Once all this is done, one should quickly apply it to the painting (since everything is clear by now), almost as if it were a fresco: never struggle over the drawing, because that's academicism, not art, not joy and happiness, but effort and sadness¹⁶.

10 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, April 1, 1944.

11 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, April 1, 1944.

12 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, January 30, 1943.

13 Corinna Vasić Vatovec, interview by the author October 12, 2022.

14 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, February 25, 1943.

15 Nieri, *L'esperienza pittorica nell'opera di Leonardo Savioli*, 33.

16 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, January 11, 1943.

Furthermore, as recalled by Corinna Vasić Vatovec¹⁷ – daughter of Dušan Vasić, a friend and collaborator of Ricci – who knew both protagonists very well, while in architectural design, Ricci never has problems with compositional shyness, displaying a remarkable energy of form and gesture, the same does not hold true in painting¹⁸: for a long time, Ricci struggles to find his own identity, revealing the influences from which he has drawn. This applies to both Renaissance painting – he never fails to emphasize his love for Piero ('The idealization of forms in a Piero allows for greater enjoyment between form and color', he writes¹⁹) – and contemporary art. In his early phase as a painter, Ricci continually seeks confirmation and seeks numerous pieces of advice from Savioli, who, on the contrary, is still uncertain in architectural gesture compared to his painterly one:

My dear Leonardo – writes Ricci – painting drives everyone crazy. I tell you these things because you understand and because I care about you. Surely, sometimes it feels like I'm shipwrecked. I feel old and as if I haven't accomplished anything yet, and I won't be able to achieve anything of what I hope for. I try a thousand experiments. I search for different mixtures and ways of painting. Sometimes it seems like I've found everything and the style. Then the next time, I can't achieve what I had achieved before, but something else... that's not what I wanted. And I can't go on like this anymore²⁰

The Charm of Death

Of poetry, I love very little; the same goes for music, for architecture, and finally for painting... But what if nothing remains except loneliness and a shattered desire? Fortunately, I know this is a passing thing, and I'll be content again afterward, but it's been so long since I've felt enthusiastic²¹.

A common trait shared by both, which will intensely characterize their lives and stands out strongly in this *corpus* of letters, is the constant reflection on the human condition and a certain inclination toward depression that has accompanied them since a very young age²². Especially Ricci. We do not intend to forcibly align his work with that of writers and poets close to French Existentialism: Ricci's tendency to view the problematic nature of his projects and to label them as doomed to failure is an inherent disposition of his, as evidenced by these letters even before he came into contact, during his years in Paris starting from 1948, with Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, and other related poets and writers.

17 Corinna Vasić Vatovec is Associate Professor of History of Architecture at the University of Florence. She has published numerous contributions on the work of Leonardo Ricci.

18 Corinna Vasić Vatovec, interview by the author, October 12, 2022.

19 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, April 30, 1944.

20 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, January 11, 1943.

21 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, January 11, 1943.

22 Corinna Vasić Vatovec, interview by the author, October 12, 2022.

Ricci's solitude is not due to a factual condition like that of war; it is a penetrating and ever-present state of mind that he will further develop in his subsequent writings, such as the *Anonymous (Twentieth Century)*²³:

And now I'm beginning the transition – he writes – very slowly, falling back often, in complete solitude, I repeat in complete [...], your dearest letters that I often await with anxiety [...] and even Michelucci's, and even your marvelous drawings, do not at all alleviate this loneliness of mine²⁴.

Despite their different personalities, Savioli also experiences this condition: «There exists a pain – Savioli writes in 1944 – This pain must be expressed»²⁵.

«What deeply stick together [during the years of war] – Ricci will write in 1966 – was the sense of death, as the measure of all human endeavors»²⁶. In the letters, death and the sense of precariousness inherent in their human condition, beyond the war, are recurring themes that are never abandoned. Both Savioli and Ricci have a clear fascination with the mystery of the transition: depression is, we can say, an almost necessary condition for them to approach this secret as closely as possible. Ricci and Savioli are certainly not the first to formulate such reflections. This is a universal and profound theme that has fascinated and inspired artists from every era and culture. Through painting, sculpture, literature, music, and other artistic expressions, artists have always sought to capture the emotional and philosophical complexity linked to death, as both a moment of passage, transition, and transcendence. The physical and tangible expression of death, the corpse, is also a factor of great fascination and inspiration for Ricci and Savioli. Ricci is almost envious of Savioli's opportunity to have access to the mortuary of the Santa Maria Nuova Hospital in Florence and to be able to draw the lifeless human bodies from real life. This is both for the purpose of better understanding human anatomy for artistic representation and for the unique opportunity to get so close and for long hours to the mystery of the departure of the soul.

«I have a strong desire – writes Ricci in 1943 – to draw cadavers. It must be magnificent. To capture those lines crystallized by death»²⁷. «At that time – Ricci recalls in 1966 – I remember [Savioli] for his impressive drawings of corpses that he captured from real life, in the anatomical room, just after they were stripped of life. While I drew mannequins, as if waiting for a life to enter them [...] This sense of death, I believe, was present and open to a new hope, when together we planned and built»²⁸.

23 On the tangencies between Ricci and French existentialism see: Ghia, *La nostra città è tutta la terra. Leonardo Ricci architetto*, pp. 69-76; Corinna Vasić Vatovec, "Leonardo Ricci tra Giovanni Michelucci e Albert Camus esistenza/'esistenzialismo' versus organicismo", in *Salvaguardia del patrimonio del XX secolo*, eds. Paolo Caggiano and Fabiola Gorgeri (Firenze: Edifir, 2013), 33-55.

24 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, May 9, 1943.

25 Leonardo Savioli, *La città ideale* (Firenze: Il Ponte, 1984), 9.

26 Leonardo Ricci, no title. In *Leonardo Savioli*, ed. Giovanni Fanelli (Firenze: Centro Proposte, 1966), XXI.

27 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, May 9, 1943 and December 17, 1943.

28 Leonardo Ricci, *Leonardo Savioli*, XXI.

“Violence and Penetration”

If painting and the depressive condition constitute a strong bond in the intimate relationship between the two architects, at the same time, reading the *corpus* of letters allows us to understand the differences between them as well. These differences are traceable, in particular, in their personalities, which inevitably also reflect in their respective artistic and architectural productions. Like in a sort of theatrical work, Ricci will have a life filled with extraordinary relationships. While Savioli, as an intellectual and designer, remains strongly rooted in the Florentine context and resides in Florence for his entire life (except for a brief period in Venice), Ricci lives a largely wandering existence between Italy, France, and the United States²⁹. In 1989 – after having already left his teaching position at the University ten years earlier³⁰ – he will leave Florence for good, relocating to Venice. Numerous artists, architects, writers, and internationally renowned actors, especially of American nationality³¹, will visit his house in Monterinaldi over the years. Savioli, who was an extremely private man, will also take part in many of the evenings or events organized by Ricci, but he certainly never was, to use an euphemism, the life of those parties. Such differences can be read in filigree as early as the letters of the 1940s.

From a quick reading of their works in the following years, it is evident how a similar need to embrace the existential values of architecture can be fulfilled with different stylistic tools, through the most suitable instruments that each, based on their own sensibility, can better control. Ricci has a tumultuous, tireless, and passionate character. Every action he takes is gestural:

When you spoke to me about the angel’s head – Ricci writes about a particular composition he sends to Savioli – and you said there was violence and penetration, you were absolutely right [...]. Violence and penetration are enough for me. It’s enough that when I look at or think about that head, quickly, almost violently, I don’t see the sea, the moon, or anything else, not many deficiencies or other things, but I’m immediately brought into that state of intuition that is within me, and I feel myself completely³².

Savioli is a gentle and thoughtful person³³, not only in daily life but also in art, and he would never have reached the point of even destroying his own paintings:

You listen, Leonardo – Ricci writes – perhaps in a few days I will send some of my paintings to Florence and I will send them to Michelucci

29 Corinna Vasić Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto esistenzialista* (Firenze: Edifir 2005), 165-174; Ghia, *La nostra città è tutta la terra. Leonardo Ricci architetto, 226-244*; Ilaria Cattabriga, *Leonardo Ricci in the USA (1952-1972)* (Siracusa: Letteraventidue, 2023).

30 Leonardo Ricci, “Addio alla Facoltà di Architettura di Firenze”, in *La Facoltà di Architettura di Firenze fra tradizione e cambiamento*, 289-295.

31 Interview by the author with Corinna Vasić Vatovec (October 12, 2022).

32 Franco Borsi, “Savioli: un artista”, in *Leonardo Savioli: il segno generatore di forma-spazio*, eds. Rosalia Manno Tolu, Lara Vinca Masina, Alessandro Poli (Città di Castello: Edilmond, 1995), 73.

33 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, April 30, 1944.

because he asked me, and because [due to bombings] I prefer they are spread around a bit and there at least someone can save them [...] Not because I care about my paintings enormously, it's true that I often destroy old ones that I can't stand anymore³⁴.

Ricci employs the same *modus operandi* when it comes to architecture as well. For instance, his house in Monterinaldi (1949) will undergo a forceful restyling by the architect himself. Upon his return from one of his many trips to Paris – disappointed by Le Corbusier's architectural works³⁵ – he no longer finds the presence of pilotis on the façade acceptable. To him they seemed too geometric and deprived of sculptural strength. So, he will tear them down. Savioli would never have done that. Not just because, unlike his friend, he appreciates Le Corbusier's work, but also because he has a different mindset as an architect. The main front of the house he will build for himself in Galluzzo (1950) – near Florence – will not only maintain its configuration but also possess a measured design and classical harmony. While Ricci discovers the grounding strength of inclined cuts and seeks to bring the rebellion of informal painting into architecture, Savioli pursues a resting of form and a controlled, verifiable grammatical property. For Savioli, unlike Ricci, the experience of the informal holds significant weight without, however, finding an outcome in his architectural production. In his informal drawings, Savioli doesn't entirely abandon principles of iteration and rhythm, which end up organizing and ordering even the most unified magma. Therefore, his analytical will often blocks the sense of surrender to the image that would have been necessary for a full engagement with that culture³⁶. Savioli's graphic activity serves more to release tensions than to channel them into a renewed architectural vision³⁷. His works, particularly those from the 1950s, are investigations that poorly resonate with the filamentous entanglements seeking structural crystallizations, which were produced in the same period within the graphic field.

The moment of the blank sheet to be stained, transfigured through patches and nodes of nervously engraved marks that traverse the image like discharges, stands in dialectical opposition to that of the rational reconstruction of a space animated by cleavages and vibrations, yet still born from geometric hypotheses³⁸. Conversely, Ricci is consistently in search of vibrant volumes, and his gestural quality, which he expresses with varying success in painting, clearly emerges throughout his architectural production: from his early works to those co-signed with his second wife, Maria Grazia Dallerba³⁹.

34 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, February 25, 1943.

35 Corinna Vasić Vatovec, interview by the author, October 12, 2022.

36 Paolo Portoghesi. No title. In *Leonardo Savioli*, ed. Giovanni Fanelli (Firenze: Centro Proposte, 1966), XVII.

37 Portoghesi, No title, XVII.

38 Portoghesi, No title, XVII.

39 On Ricci's complete works see: Vasić Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto esistenzialista*; Ghia, *La nostra città è tutta la terra. Leonardo Ricci architetto (1918-1994)*; Maria Clara Ghia, Clemetina Ricci, 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); Paola Caggiano, Corinna Vasić Vatovec, eds., *La figura e l'opera di Leonardo Ricci nel centenario della sua nascita* (Pisa: ETS, 2020).

The Ideal Cities

«You See Leonardo, at bottom, the two of us are two very different natures, yet we tend towards the same thing»⁴⁰. Beyond painting and death, a recurring theme in their long dialogues during the war is undoubtedly the city. They set out to discuss from a city that resembles Florence, and that of the Ideal City: an unidentified place hybridized by numerous references to existing and invented cities. In the dialogues between Savioli and Ricci these two dimensions – real city and invented city – are constantly overlapping.

They discuss about Ideal Cities, just like the numerous philosophers, architects, and thinkers who have freely tackled this theme throughout the centuries, often without the input of a client. The two friends never write comments about buildings design by Italian or European architects, which they are surely informed about. Instead, they talk about the city, namely that place where people participate in a shared destiny. The city is the stage for this destiny, and more than just a backdrop, it is the place where they interact with each other and with what surrounds them.

One must build the ideal world – writes Savioli in 1945 – It is the prerequisite for the Ideal City. It's the framework of every person. Without it, the Ideal City doesn't exist. The act of love of every creature is like the Ideal City. For the former, objectification is nature, for the latter, it's the city⁴¹.

Starting from the early months of 1943, Savioli elaborates the *Ideal City*, a *corpus* of drawings and texts to which he entrusts the expression of his idea of the city⁴². The graphic and narrative dimensions are intimately linked and corroborate each other. His considerations originate from the observation of Florence enriched by the memory of many other places, such as the lungarni of Pisa and the cafes of Venice. He investigates the city through various scales: assessments of land use raise hypotheses about expansion and infrastructure, while descriptions of people's movements in urban space induce reflections on their perceptions⁴³. Through a rigorous method and by drawing on seventeenth-cen-

644 21/3/43 1377
Caro Leonardo,
più da te che non mi pare che l'altro -
Savinio presto. E dimmi come fai -
Io lo spero che alcuni lavori a Firenze
per Michelucci. Con qualche vedere parte di
nelle che lo fatto - Mi ha detto Michelucci
che sei stato da lui e che hai parlato
due giorni e che l'ho fatto lo ha commesso -
Povero Michelucci, che ha fatto come lui,
meno venuto da ^{una} irrealità -
Io ho visto anche di color - Ho da altri
prima non pare dipingere per concetto di linea
Ti prego proprio di comparare e di questo
modo con un'impresa -
Ho scritto da Paolo del padre - Paolo Paolo!
Mi ha fatto molto dolore -
Savinio presto e a te e dimmi le cose

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40 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, March 26, 1944.

41 ASF, FS, Scritti, 19, January 1, 1945.

42 On Savioli's Ideal City see: ASF, FS, *La città ideale*, 1-5; Savioli, *La città ideale*; Piero Albisinni, ed., *La città ideale nei disegni di Leonardo Savioli* (Firenze: Il Ponte, 1986); Luca Barontini, "La Città Ideale di Leonardo Savioli", *Firenze Architettura*, no. 1 (2008): 76-83; Francesca Privitera, "Utopia e topos nella Città ideale di Leonardo Savioli (1943-1945)", *Esempi di Architettura*, no. 1 (2017): 1-7.

43 See: Savioli, *La città ideale*, 172, 177.

Fig. 4

Leonardo Ricci. Letter to Leonardo Savioli, March 21, 1943, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Fondo Leonardo Savioli.

tury models⁴⁴ – borrowed from the urban planning thought of Michelucci, who is the bearer of the need to look at the legacy of the past with new eyes, according to the inventions of modern architecture⁴⁵ – Savioli follows a twofold path: partly a visionary proposal, partly an example of growth for the contemporary city.

In *Ideal City* Savioli addresses the relationship between nature and architecture: the *forma urbis* is defined in its relationship with the river, a pre-existing natural element that is taken as a founding principle⁴⁶. In keeping with the warm, dreamy tones of the letters the two Leonardi wrote to each other between 1943 and 1944, Savioli's city is a kind of ancient urban landscape seen in a dream, with all the warmth of its squares, monuments and history. The descriptive texts that accompany the drawings allow us to understand how painting is always at the center of the treatment. The city must be a work of art: "The street will be frescoed – Savioli writes – In the Ideal City there will be much painting. Indeed, painting will predominate there. A city without wonderful frescoes is dead. Think of Orvieto where Signorelli is the goal"⁴⁷. Savioli strongly asserts that art is an inescapable condition of human existence, both psychologically and biologically. Therefore, the city is rooted in the depths of our existence.

Between March and April 1943, the two friends discussed at length the subject of the Ideal City. Ricci is also considering drafting a series of plates to devise an ideal city himself. Initially he is hesitant:

Well, for your 'ideal city' – Ricci writes in March 1943 – I am sorry I cannot follow you in your effort and to discuss it when the work is done. I am sure it will come out very beautiful. I for my own part have given up. At first I had allowed myself almost to be flattered by the joy of the "vision" and was happy because often the insight was so penetrating so full that the "ideal city" even seemed to me to be built. But then I reflected. I still do not have enough faith to continue without uncertainty. All cities are tense toward God. Tense is the right word. Tension. Magnificent. But to realize, to actualize, requires a very long meditation. It is this meditation that I have not yet been able to conquer⁴⁸.

Shortly after he changes his mind: «During this period, I am at a disadvantage compared to you. But it's precisely now that I want to begin. When I return to Florence, we should be very close to each other»⁴⁹. Unfortunately, we don't have any of Ricci's drawings of his Ideal City, but we know for certain that he starts drawing it in these months: «Dear Leonardo, I'm sketching out the ideal city. It's turning out beautiful»⁵⁰.

44 In the *Ideal City*, contemporary man's dialogue with the ancient is continuous. See: Savioli, *La città ideale*, 179.

45 Franco Borsi, ed., *Giovanni Michelucci* (Firenze: LEF, 1966), 45-59.

46 Ezio Godoli, "Il rapporto città-fiume nelle proposte della cerchia di Michelucci", *Universo*, no. 5 (2017): 890-909.

47 Savioli, *La Città ideale*, tav. XXXIII.

48 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, March 29, 1943.

49 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, March 29, 1943.

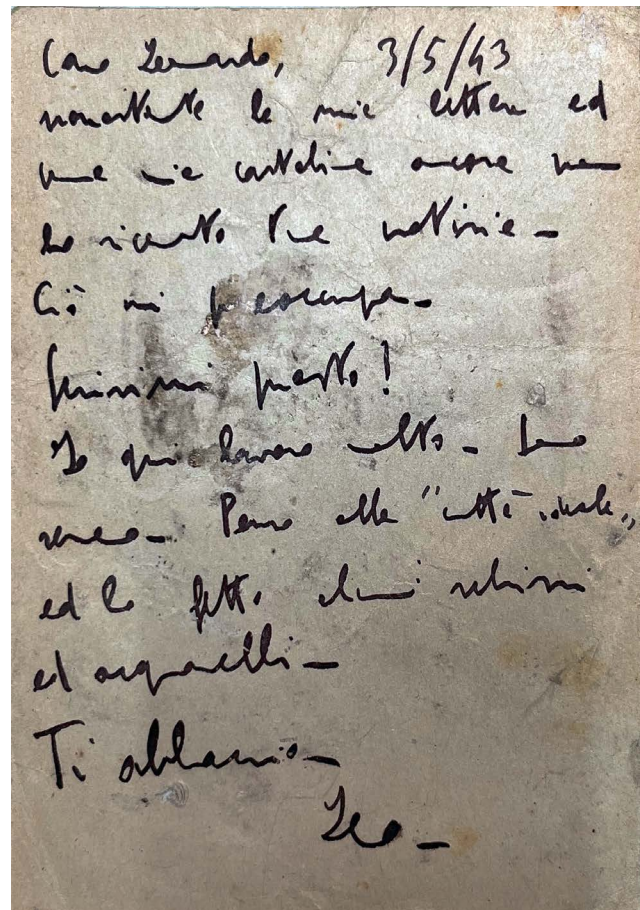
50 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, March 30, 1943.

He continues:

I've been working on the 'ideal city' during the few hours of serenity. In the night, when after a few hours of silence, I find myself again and feel so immaterial that I sense the emptiness inside me⁵¹.

On the theme of the Ideal City, Ricci will return several times over the years, but in the subsequent elaborations, we don't know which elements he will retain from these sketches of the 1940s⁵². What we do know, however, is that by 1943, he had reached a good level of definition for the buildings that make up the heart of the city ("In the 'ideal city' I've defined where to place the museums"⁵³), the road system, and the infrastructure. Furthermore, we know that like Savioli, Ricci organizes the city along a river. The choice to give great importance to natural elements is a classical reference, likely derived from Michelucci's teachings. For instance, Savioli in one of the accompanying texts for the drawings of his *Ideal City* writes: "Michelucci 'handed' me over to the ancients"⁵⁴. Classical civilizations associated the names of the gods who had aided humans in founding the city with elements of nature (a watercourse, a soil structure, a type of vegetation). This would allow the city to never lose its image and essence over the centuries.

Among the many possible references to which "the two Leonardis" looked for their plans, there could be the "Ideal City" by another Leonardo: Leonardo da Vinci. In a unified *corpus* of drawings, the artist proposed some ideas for the design of possible urban solutions for Milan⁵⁵. In these drawings we note numerous similarities with Savioli's (and later Ricci's) proposals: the city is traversed by a river street and characterized by an urban core with elevated streets on different levels with connecting and crossing systems. Such proposals in the years in which Ricci and Savioli graduated were particularly topical in the national and international architectural debate. Indeed, in 1939 "La Mostra di Leonardo da Vinci" had been organized at the Palazzo dell'Arte in Milan. Giuseppe Pagano was the general supervisor of the exhibition and one of the hall was dedicated to "L'urbanistica di Leonardo". This part of the exhibition was set up with models that fully represented his idea of the



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51 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, April 10, 1943.

52 Ilaria Cattabriga, "A Project of the Synopia of the Future Integrated City. MODEL I: Harbor-Center with Water-Sea-Earth Communication Routes", *Histories of Postwar Architecture*, no. 9 (2021): 114-137; Ilaria Cattabriga, *Leonardo Ricci in the USA (1952-1972)* (Siracusa: Letteraventidue, 2023).

53 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, March 27, 1944.

54 Savioli, *La Città ideale*, 7.

55 Agnoldomenico Pica, "La città di Leonardo", *Casabella*, no. 93 (1935): 10-13.

Fig. 5

Leonardo Ricci. Letter to Leonardo Savioli, 3th May 1943, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Fondo Leonardo Savioli.

Leonardo's city⁵⁶. There could be chance that through Michelucci, both Ricci and Savioli were able to leaf through the exhibition catalog and read and see the images devoted to Leonardo's ideal city.

However, in addition to references from other artists and architects who had previously grappled with the dream of designing an ideal city, Ricci and Savioli are particularly enraptured by natural elements. They constitute another element of great fascination for the designs of ideal cities As Ricci says:

I've started drawing en plein air again. And I'm glad because even if the results aren't what I desire, I've noticed new and very important accomplishments [...] for the ideal city [...] Thanks to observing nature, I've solved many problems⁵⁷.

Once again, painting is at the center of their dialogue:

In your latest letter – Ricci writes – I felt immense pleasure in noticing that recently, even from a distance, we've arrived at the same conclusions on some subjects. Let me explain. You see: you tell me that you've started painting en plein air again, and in your painting, you see the birth of the specter of the "ideal city." The river, the lower part, the hill. Isn't it wonderful? Lately, I've wandered around a geometric and well-defined hill, both in weight and volume. This hill is surrounded by a sort of amphitheater of other hills. At the foot of this hill flows a small river that seems to me to be the river of the 'ideal city'. Well, I won't tell you what joy I felt in imagining seeing my city being born with all my houses, the temple, the most beautiful buildings. I imagined entering even the humblest rooms and wandering among the inhabitants; it's an indescribable thing [...] Other times, I stopped on another hill and imagined how from its summit, one could see another part of the city: certainly the poorest. It would have been nice if you could have seen what I saw: the ideal city resembled the eternal. The houses were all made of stone with small doors and small windows. There were terraces and balconies for enjoying the sun. I know it's the truth. The truth that appears to me in all its intensity, as if it were a revelation [...] My city will be defined and measured like no other, like a grand pictorial composition where all volumes are perfect. I am certain of it⁵⁸.

Anticipating some themes that Ricci will also address in the subsequent years⁵⁹, these letters strongly convey the almost religious faith in the city's ability – with its spaces and its houses – to save human beings from their natural condition of loneliness and despair. These themes clearly appear as a reference to Michelucci's

56 *Mostra di Leonardo da Vinci. Catalogo. Maggio-Ottobre XVII* (Milano: Officina arte grafica A. Lucini e C., 1939), 38. On the 1939 exhibition see: Giuseppe Pagano, "La Mostra di Leonardo a Milano nel Palazzo dell'Arte", *Costruzioni-Casabella*, no. 141 (1939): 6-17; Emanuela Ferretti, "L'eredità di Leonardo da Vinci nelle mostre milanesi del 1934 e del 1939: la multiscalarità e il valore epistemologico-comunicativo del disegno come lascito per la Modernità", *Bollettino dell'Accademia degli Euteleti*, no. 86 (2019): 107-129; Orietta Lanzarini, "L'inflessibile dovere di salvar Leonardo' Gli architetti e l'arte moderna come paradigma interpretativo per la *Mostra Leonardesca* (1939)", *Studi e ricerche di storia dell'architettura*, no. 8 (2020): 66-85.

57 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, May 11, 1943.

58 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, April 29, 1943.

59 Leonardo Ricci. *Anonymous (XX century)* (New York: George Braziller, 1962): 198-205.

teachings, who, as both a teacher and a professional, regards the city as a construction of humans in close contact with nature.

In front of these ideal cities – Ricci writes to Savioli – we forget about all the problems that concern our creative minds as modern men because in ideal cities, everything is resolved. There's no longer concern for style or social concept, nor for traffic problems, etc., etc. Everything is resolved because 'my city' is close to eternal things, and eternity has no style, no fashion, it's not momentary like the destinies of men. In my city, it's as if the flow of life has become a static element. As if the men, who are transient in life, are eternal here. It's as if men in this city have found the certainties of their immortality, and for this reason, the city has become eternal. What does it matter then if houses wear out and collapse? The city is eternal. I assure you that it's an incredibly marvelous thing. My city is like an explosion of joy from men who are witnesses to their eternity⁶⁰.

The Competitions for the Reconstruction of the Center of Florence

My dear Leonardo – Ricci writes to Savioli – my mother told me that since I'm a member of the Painters' Guild, I can't also join the Architects' Guild. Anyway, I'll now register with the Professional Architects' Registry. If you're registering, do it for me as well. If I'm in Florence, I'll do it myself⁶¹.

After the period during which they are separated, but as we have mentioned, still in contact through letters, Ricci and Savioli begin to work together as architects. Their debut takes place after the war with a series of projects where the two friends work alongside Giuseppe Giorgio Gori – another student of Michelucci – and engineer Emilio Brizzi, son of Raffaello, Dean of the Faculty of Architecture from 1932 to 1946⁶².

After the 4th August 1944, the center of Florence is no longer the same⁶³. In the first weeks after the destruction of the heart of the city by German troops, the citizens of Florence are dominated by the dramatic feeling of despair. However, from the autumn of the same year – when Ricci is back in Florence for good – different emotions are felt by the citizens of Florence. Probably, observing the destroyed Santa Trinita Bridge, the ruins of streets no longer existent – like via de' Bardi or via Por Santa Maria, for example – Ricci and Savioli may have thought the same words used by writer Alberto Savinio in his novel "Ascolto il tuo cuore, città" (1944) to describe the ruins of Milan. Savinio writes: «Why this exaltation in me? I should be sad, yet I'm tingling with joy. Why? I feel that new life will arise from this death. I feel that from these ruins, a stronger, richer, more

60 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, April 29, 1943.

61 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, November 11, 1944.

62 On the work of Raffallo Brizzi see: Gianluca Belli, "Raffaello Brizzi: modelli e indirizzi della scuola", in *La Facoltà di Architettura di Firenze fra tradizione e cambiamento*, 37-52.

63 On the destruction of Florence in 1944 see: Gianluca Belli, Amedeo Belluzzi, *Una notte d'estate del 1944* (Firenze: Polistampa, 2013).

beautiful city will emerge!»⁶⁴. Florence must be rebuilt. Despite the dramatic impact of the war, Ricci and Savioli are genuinely enthusiastic. As early as 1943, Ricci confides in his friend:

You see, Leonardo, before long this chaotic world will end, and calm will return. Ultimately, it won't be much different from now, nor much different from how it was before. But there won't be war anymore. And then we can work as we want. Goodnight, Leonardo, I'm tired and going to sleep. But maybe I'll keep on fantasizing a little⁶⁵.

The ideal cities they had envisioned in the preceding months must necessarily "transform" into concrete and precise plans for the city's reconstruction.

Each of us upon our return – Ricci will write in 1962 – could no longer allow ourselves to believe in those generous efforts that the ideal cities were [...] We had to put away in drawers those abstract drawings we had created in secret during the war [...] In that period, each of us had an ideal city within our hearts⁶⁶.

Even though the "Competition for the reconstruction of the areas around Ponte Vecchio" was only announced in 1946, by the end of 1944, Ricci and Savioli discuss how Florence should be rebuilt:

For the urban plan of Florence – Ricci writes – You're very fond of the nude man [Ricci refers to Savioli's drawings of ideal cities featuring male nudes]. That's why I'm talking about the nude man. Think of a naked man [...] Think of the naked man on Via della Torricella [a street in the Campo di Marte district of Florence], for instance. He won't fit well there because he'll need clothes: the clothes of the poor man. Instead, think of the naked man on the Campidoglio, he'll fit there much better. He can almost be without clothes, just not always because at times he'll need something like a tunic or something else. However, any dressed person can fit there, from the poor to the rich, and that's already a lot. You see, the functioning city is the city [...] in which a naked man can fit perfectly. Just as he can fit dressed in any manner. Well then, the naked man, Leonardo, can be on the beach by the sea, on the highest mountain, in the forest, by the river, on a meadow. In any place. Do you understand? Well then, the naked man can be on the dome of the great church, in the skyscraper, in the grand square, in the small house [...] And what then will be the secret of the city? [...] I've [...] only worked a bit on the square in the Arno, which appears to me as a marvelous thing. It's partly very small. I've already drawn it [...] I'll show you everything in Florence⁶⁷.

We won't dwell on describing the projects that Ricci and Savioli (along with oth-

64 Alberto Savinio. *Ascolto il tuo cuore, città* (Milano: Adelphi, 1984), 396.

65 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, December 9, 1943.

66 Ricci, *Anonymous (XX century)*, 11.

67 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, October 17, 1943.

ers) formulated between 1945 and 1946 for Florence⁶⁸. What interests us more is to focus on the immense extent of their disappointment toward Florence and its administrative and cultural institutions. Eagerly awaiting their involvement in the city's reconstruction, amid an overall climate characterized by the urgency of cultural and economic recovery, none of their proposals are ever considered. First, the bridges. A theme dear to both Ricci and Savioli as it continues the reflections on the river landscape that began shortly before in their imaginative proposals for Ideal Cities: the bridge is a "true and proper vital organism of the city capable of contributing to the revival of the use of the river"⁶⁹. Both the project for the Ponte alla Vittoria competition (together with Riccardo Gizdulich and Giorgio Neuman), second place, and the proposals formulated with Gori and Brizzi for the Ponte alle Grazie don't win prizes⁷⁰. However, the competition project for the reconstruction of the Ponte alla Carraia wins first prize. Yet, the project will not be realized because it doesn't obtain the approval of the Higher Council of Public Works, which will announce a new national competition tender in 1949, won by Veronese architect Ettore Fagioli⁷¹.

Following the competitions for the reconstruction of the bridges, the protagonists of our story participate in the competition "For the reconstruction of the areas around Ponte Vecchio", with the motto "Florence on the River": once again, the river takes center stage. It's an opportunity for Ricci and Savioli to put into practice what they had discussed in their letters. Following some of the indications already present in the Ideal Cities, the project clearly separates pedestrian traffic – characterized by elevated paths – from vehicular traffic⁷². The proposal is indebted to designs that Michelucci prepared before the competition, as early as 1945, in which a series of pedestrian walkways at different heights connected the ancient medieval towers that had survived the German mines⁷³. Twenty-two groups participate in the competition. The work of Brizzi, Gori, Ricci, and Savioli is awarded, along with four other groups. The jury, composed of Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti, Roberto Papini, Luigi Piccinato, and Giovanni Muzio, among others, entrusts the winners with the task of collaboratively preparing a new urban plan, but this plan is never realized. This will lead to the reconstruction of the destroyed areas through isolated interventions, lacking an overarching vision⁷⁴.

68 Corinna Vasić Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto esistenzialista*, 19-22; Carolina De Falco, *Leonardo Savioli, Ipotesi di Spazio: dalla "Casa Abitata" al "Frammento di città"* (Firenze: Edifir, 2012), 49-57; Fabio Fabbrizzi, *Giuseppe Giorgio Gori. Opera completa* (Firenze: Edifir, 2016), 48-55; 64-69; 245-253; Ghia, *La nostra città è tutta la terra. Leonardo Ricci architetto (1918-1994)*, 52-56.

69 Fabrizio Brunetti, *Leonardo Savioli architetto* (Bari: Dedalo, 1982), 10.

70 Giovanni Klaus Koenig, *Architettura in Toscana 1931-1968* (Torino: ERI), 58-59.

71 Edoardo Detti, "Le distruzioni della zona intorno al Ponte Vecchio", *Urbanistica*, no. 12 (1953): 44-65.

72 Luigi Piccinato, "Ricostruire Firenze", *Metron*, no. 16 (1947): 8-32; Fabio Fabbrizzi, "Firenze sul fiume", in *Firenze, 1945-1947: i progetti della ricostruzione*, eds. Carlo Cresti, Alessandro Gioli, Loris Macci, Giuliano Maggiora, Ulisse Tramonti (Firenze: Alinea, 1995), 159-166.

73 Franco Borsi, "Elementi di città o del realismo utopico", in *La città di Michelucci*, ed. Ezio Godoli, (Comune di Fiesole, 1978), 1-18; Fondazione Michelucci, ed., *Giovanni Michelucci. Disegni 1935-1964* (Reggio Emilia: Diabasis, 2002), 88-110; Ezio Godoli, "Michelucci per Firenze. Dagli studi per la ricostruzione della zona di Ponte Vecchio (1945-47) alle proposte per la riqualificazione del quartiere di Santa Croce (1967-68)", in *Michelucci dopo Michelucci*, ed. Francesca Privitera (Firenze: Olschki, 2012), 57-74; Roberto Dulio, "Studi per la ricostruzione dell'area presso ponte Vecchio a Firenze. 1945-47", in *Giovanni Michelucci. 1981-1990*, eds. Claudia Conforti, Roberto Dulio, Marzia Marandola (Milano: Electa, 2006), 194-195.

74 On the reconstruction of downtown Florence see: Belli, Belluzzi, *Una notte d'estate del 1944*, 109-159.

The negative outcomes of the competition that was supposed to, in the initial intentions of the organizers and enthusiastic participants, mark the rebirth of the city after that dramatic day in August 1944, constitute a major defeat for Ricci and Savioli. Neither Ricci nor Savioli, despite their many proposals, will ever manage in their entire lives to build anything in the center of Florence. In 1964, Savioli will redesign the facade of the Fallaci jewelery store at Ponte Vecchio No. 43⁷⁵, but this is a far cry from the fervent hopes nurtured in the preceding years and well-documented by passages in the letters exchanged between the two architects. After the discouragement from the Florentine events – amplified, moreover, by Michelucci’s move in 1947 to the Faculty of Engineering in Bologna – the Brizzi-Gori-Ricci-Savioli group continues to produce a large number of projects in Tuscany. At least until 1948, when Ricci departs for Paris. “As I go to live in Paris – Ricci will write in the 1960s – we drift apart”⁷⁶. Many of these projects will also be built. The most celebrated in Italian and foreign architectural magazines is the Flower Market of Pescia (1948)⁷⁷. The Florentine projects that Ricci and Savioli pursue together in the 1960s and 1970s, though noteworthy and characterized by a now mature and autonomous style, are not imbued with the same hopes and ideals that distinguished the reconstruction projects. Approximately every ten years, the two architects find themselves participating in events that see them propose projects for marginal areas of Florence. Certainly not in that heart of the city they longed for and idealized in their youth. They will participate in the urban planning and construction of several buildings within the CEP district of Sorgane (1957), a project with a long and troubled history⁷⁸; they will collaborate, though in two separate groups, on the “National Ideas Competition for the urban and architectural arrangement of the Fortezza da Basso” designated for craftwork (1967). Finally, they will propose a project together for the “Competition for the executive center” or the Regional Palace (1977)⁷⁹.

“Painting in the Same Room”

«Our commitments – as written by Ricci in 1966 – while not conflicting, at times have been more convergent, other times divergent»⁸⁰. The enthusiastic tones of esteem and affection towards the friend, which characterize the corpus of letters from 1943 and 1944, change over the years. Indeed, Ricci often criticizes Savioli’s work, focusing in particular on the friend’s lack of ability to achieve a synthesis between art and architecture. According to Ricci, Savioli

75 ASF, Leonardo Savioli, *Rotoli*, 55, T1, C4.

76 Ricci, *Leonardo Savioli*, XXI.

77 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 (1956): 28-33; Claudia Massi, ed., *Mercati dei fiori di Pescia*. (Firenze: Polistampa, 2017); Micaela Antonucci, Alice Fantoni, “Mercato dei Fiori in Pescia (1948-1951): Design Inventiveness and Constructional Experimentation in Italy after the Second World War”, *Histories of Postwar Architecture*, no. 9 (2021): 19-35.

78 Lorenzo Mingardi, *Contro l’analfabetismo architettonico. Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti nel dibattito culturale degli anni Cinquanta*, (Lucca: Edizioni Fondazione Ragghianti, 2020), 49-106.

79 Ilaria Cattabriga, “Directional Center of Florence”, *History of Postwar Architecture*, no. 9 (2021): 217-219.

80 Ricci, *Leonardo Savioli*, XXI.

struggles to create complex spaces⁸¹. Additionally, Ricci believes that Savioli often falls into formalism. He is particularly critical of his friend in reference to architecture such as Villa Bayon (1965), in which elements of Le Corbusier's formal repertoire emerge⁸²:

One might raise the question – Ricci writes in 1966 – whether works that are so formally conclusive and achieved [Savioli's works] are not in a certain sense a demonstration of a priori will, attempting to impose order where it doesn't exist, a content where it has not yet been specified⁸³.

About twenty years have passed since 1943, and as we read, Ricci's attitude towards his friend is quite different. For Ricci, and also for Michelucci – who is equally critical of Savioli – the most important thing in architecture was spatial synthesis. Form is only a consequence. But, as we know, these considerations enter the realm of ideology. In a project, it is evident that each architect's formal preferences emerge strongly.

Despite these design divergences, which often lead to long periods of absence of dialogue between the two⁸⁴, Ricci and Savioli are constantly bound by a sentiment that has, as mentioned, deep roots. Such brotherly love is owed to various factors. Above all, having shared the great tragedies of life as young men, such as the war; furthermore, they were both students of Michelucci, and this certainly influenced their path (both as painters and architects). Finally, both of them, even though demonstrating it with nearly opposite character traits, experienced a constant dissatisfaction with existence that would prevent them from enjoying the milestones achieved: both Savioli and Ricci have seen their projects published in the most important architecture magazines, have been protagonists of exhibitions showcasing their work, and certainly, their work has had a national, and in Ricci's case, partly international diffusion. Both have built a lot, but not what they dreamed of during the war: their constant psychological dissatisfaction can be compared, in terms of work, to the disappointment of never having succeeded in building in the center of Florence.

Throughout the morning – Ricci writes in 1944 – I drew mannequins, and they seemed to be beautiful drawings with so much music. Tomorrow I won't like them anymore. It's because I will have surpassed them. And in the meantime, everything around me moves, turns, totters; what does it matter? There is always something in life that is still, not transient, true, eternally true. And tomorrow we will reach death. And then we might not feel detached from our bodies because we are already detached. That would be true joy. And we will have left behind a painting or drawing or piece of architecture. They won't serve us anymore, but they can serve others. That is life⁸⁵.

81 Corinna Vasić Vatovec, interview by the author, October 12, 2022.

82 Corinna Vasić Vatovec, interview by the author, October 12, 2022.

83 Ricci, *Leonardo Savioli*, XXII-XXIII.

84 Corinna Vasić Vatovec interview by the author, October 12, 2022.

85 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, April 1, 1944.

When Savioli dies in 1982, we cannot help but think about how disappointed Ricci must have been to not have realized something very important together with his friend. The architectural works signed by both have indeed been celebrated, like the Flower Market of Pescia, but they are still examples influenced by other personalities, like that of Gori. It's not a work realized solely by themselves, as they dreamed of doing as young men. They would have wanted to create grandiose works, like the great figures who had contributed to artistically and architecturally shaping their beloved and controversial homeland: Florence. Like Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci at the Salone dei Cinquecento in Palazzo Vecchio:

Truly, I feel a deep love between us two that will bind us ever more and will give beautiful fruits to both of us, and will make us live together for much of our lives, to the point that we could almost paint ourselves in the same room⁸⁶.

86 ASF, FS, C, Letter from Ricci to Savioli, March 26, 1944.

Appendix

38 handwritten letters by Leonardo Ricci to his friend Leonardo Savioli, covering a time span between January 1943 and November 1944, are kept at the Fondo Leonardo Savioli [Leonardo Savioli Fund] in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze [Florence State Archives]. The reference record is: "Corrispondenza: Lettere a Leonardo Savioli. Scatole n.3". https://archiviodistatofirenze.cultura.gov.it/asfi/fileadmin/risorse/allegati_inventari_on_line/n450_inventario.pdf (last accessed 26th August 2023).

These letters are unpublished and they constitute a unified body of documents as they are all missives written during the period when Ricci was at the front and because the topics debated between the two friends are always the same. We can clearly identify at least three of them:

1) *The love of painting. The two architects exchange views both on their favorite painters and technical advice on how best to approach different painting techniques.*

2) *La città ideale [The Ideal City]. Ricci writes to Savioli that he is planning a possible ideal city. We are not sure where this city is located and how much it overlaps with Florence. Savioli in the same period is also planning an ideal city; but if we can trace documents about Savioli's meta-urbanist ideas [...], we have no trace of Ricci's ideal city formulated in those months of the early Forties.*

3) *The Death and the sense of precariousness given by one's condition as a human being, beyond war. The two friends have a blatant fascination with the mystery of the passing: depression, which will accompany their lives for a long time, is for them an almost necessary condition to get as close as possible to that secret.*

Moreover, the letters are important because they provide us with indispensable elements for understanding not only how the relationship between the two friends evolved, but also, to know the genesis of many elements of their later work.

Because of the importance of these unpublished letters, it was decided to publish a selection of them. The editorial board and the author of the essay chose the letters that best made the reader understand the above mentioned themes and not to translate them in order to convey their correct insight to the reader.

3 Gennaio 1943

Caro Leonardo, non ho potuto scriverti prima come mio desiderio perché mi mancava il tuo indirizzo. Ho ricevuto ieri la tua ultima lettera che mi ha recato molte gioie. Continua tu, che lo puoi, e lavora lavora. Va tutto bene anche la poesia che mi hai mandato. È molto coerente stilisticamente oltre che come rimando alla tua pittura. Lavora Leonardo, anche per me. Affinché quando io tornerò e potrò riprendere la mia attività (che purtroppo qui non è possibile far niente) vedrò che nulla si è di cessato, nulla di interrotto. E attraverso le tue nuove conquiste mi accorgerò che il pensiero degli uomini cammina, anche se il mio è per questo momento si può dire fermo completamente. Ho saputo anche da Michelucci che la mostra non si può fare insieme ma poiché la fai subito dopo è lo stesso. Capiranno che pensiamo egualmente. Caro Leonardo, scrivimi spesso e a lungo. Parlami molto di te, di quello che pensi, di quello che fai. Mi farai un vero piacere perché quaggiù io ho bisogno di tanto affetto ed io ci tengo al tuo affetto. Dimmi inoltre come stai e ricordati che se hai bisogno di qualcosa sai che io sono sempre a tua disposizione come io del resto mi rivolgerei a te per qualunque mio bisogno.

Tanti saluti ed auguri a te e ai tuoi cari. Un forte abbraccio

19 Febbraio 1943

Mio caro Leonardo, vedi, la tua lettera mi ha dato grande gioia, soprattutto perché è giunta in un momento di mio totale scoraggiamento.

E vedo che tu lavori e mi aiuti e sei contento e soprattutto fai cose bellissime perché certo sono tali da come tu scrivi perché chi scrive così è come se già avesse disegnato.

E di questo sono contentissimo, perché in fondo gli uomini tendono tutti ad una cosa (ed ora noi moderni tendiamo a quello stesso di mille anni fa, ma in altra maniera, e non vogliamo raggiungere e sognare la realtà dei massimi uomini) e quindi non mi importa di raggiungerla io ma sono contento anche se io fallisco e la raggiungi te. E vorrei risponderti a proposito della pittura e delle altre arti e sono perfettamente d'accordo con te e se ben ricordi anche io sostenevo quello che tu dici (sempre perché la pittura è superiore) ma stasera non ne ho voglia perché la mia testa non funziona e non può seguire una logica, ma devo dirti altre cose.

Vedi, Leonardo, la mia aspirazione di vita è il raggiungimento della serenità. E pensando astrattamente sembra che tale serenità si raggiunga e si possa contenere quasi in uno stato di vuoto intorno a sé. Ma tutto ciò è errato. È come uccidere ogni cosa e sé stessi ed in fondo Dio.

Ed invece la serenità è nella vita totale. Vedi, io sono in campagna ed in fondo, all'infuori dello stato esterno delle cose (che spesso riesco a superare o a dimenticare), nulla mi turba. Ma più sto qui e più sembra che tutto si inorridisca intorno a me e io stesso. Vedi io ho bisogno di mille tentazioni: ora sarà un albero bellissimo, ora un colore che vedo in un prato, ora un quadro, ora una dimensione, e così via. Ed è allora lì che la mia mente si eccita e esiste la comunione dell'animo e la intuizione e la fantasia e così di seguito. E la passione della serenità è quella di essere esterni a quelle cose che danno sensazioni o per dir meglio possederle, o per dir meglio possederle. Il che è la stessa cosa.

Ma qui è come se tutto mi mancasse ed a volte odio anche il paesaggio che vedo perché non mi appartiene più. Ed ho voglia di venire a Firenze ma purtroppo mi è impossibile per troppe ragioni, specie per il viaggiare, e tutto ciò a momenti mi soffoca. In fondo io ho bisogno di stare a contatto continuo con Dio – in qualsiasi modo sia – ed in questo consiste la serenità. Anche se a volte si è non consci di tutto quanto è cosmico, poiché poi l'intuizione è rapida. E non si è più umani ma come se già si fosse morti. Ed invece qui tutto diviene abitudinario e tutto ciò è terribile. Vedi, è un po' di giorni che attendo l'alba perché porti nuove cose e poi giunto alla mattina attendo la notte perché chiuda la giornata che so già non mi darà nulla. Vedi, tutto ciò potrà sembrare ridicolo, ma quando qualche giorno fa cadde la neve e la mattina guardai con gioia la neve fui felice ed intuii tante cose fino alle piccole, per esempio che un albero sotto il peso della neve sembra meglio disperato perché diventa più essenziale.

E poi tante altre cose.

E sarebbe che cadesse ancora, la neve. A volte vorrei allontanarmi persino da Angela e le pupette perché mi sia più bello vederle al ritorno. Fino a queste cose. Ma per stanotte basta Leonardo, non ho più voglia di scriverti eppure so che non cosa fare ora e mi sembra di impazzire perché nulla sarà reale.

Buonanotte

25 Febbraio 1943

Oggi sono molto felice. Ho iniziato il quadro dell'angelo ed è meraviglioso e pare proprio un affresco tanto che quando farò ad affresco sarò proprio felicissimo e sento che verranno bellissime cose. Vedi, questi pare proprio disegnati col colore ed è molto bello ed anche se non sono contento di tutto ed anche se so che nei prossimi giorni verrà più bello perché più realizzato ma non completamente sono tuttavia contento lo stesso perché vedo che certe cose sono bellissime e che mi avvio verso la composizione grande. Anzi io ti dico che oltre che disegnare devi anche dipingere magari come se fossero disegni colorati perché vedi io così capisco il quadro tutto campito di colore e di bella fattura e di colore molto puro e fresco ed essenziale e così credo che anche tu pensi. È per questo che devi adoperare spesso il colore perché ti abitui ad essere puro come quando si fa in bianco e nero.

E poi c'è la gioia del colore che è vero spesso ti fa soffrire perché non viene bene quando si disegna ad inchiostro ed il segno è bello ed essenziale e non faticato ma a volte quando lo metti ti fa quasi gridare dalla gioia e ti pare un miracolo e ti sembra neppure di averlo messo tu. Poi certo si sa, magari non ti piace più perché li hai recuperato, ma poi lo metterai più bello.

Questo anche devi fare Leonardo perché tu hai il colore e mi ricordo di alcuni tuoi paesaggi e ritratti di tua madre con un colore molto misurato e giusto ed essenziale.

Anzi Leonardo tu devi farmi un favore e comprarmi sempre colori perché a me davvero piace perché a me piace non faticare col colore per portarlo e adoperarlo a parte in modo che il pennello scorre bene e pare quasi dipingere ad affresco ad acquerello. Senti, tutto ciò è molto pericoloso e difficile per mantenersi essenziali e puri e dosati ma quando è bello è meraviglioso e ti dà una gioia immensa. Specialmente devi comprarmi bianchi e possibilmente Maimeri e non Fila od altre marche (a meno che Lukas o Le Franc) perché il bianco è un colore molto delicato e temo l'alterazioni perché quello d'argento diventa nero e quello di zinco facilmente si sfalda. E poi certe volte si vede nella pasta del tubetto dell'olio e quasi mi sembra olio rancido ed il colore da buttar via.

Senti Leonardo forse fra pochi giorni spedirò a Firenze alcuni miei quadri e li manderò a Michelucci perché me li ha chiesti e perché preferisco stiano sparsi un po' ed un po' là almeno qualcuno può salvarsi anche se qualche bomba possa colpire qualcheduno dei posti ove si trovano. Non perché io tenga ai miei quadri in modo enorme tanto è vero che spesso distruggo quelli vecchi che non posso più tollerare ma non posso pensare che vadano perduti così stupidamente. Così tu se lo andrai a trovare mi dirai qualcosa; ma ad ogni modo quando li manderò te lo scriverò.

Senti Leonardo, tu mi parli della casa perché tuo padre vuol sapere come si fa circa l'affitto, luce eccetera. Ma tutto ciò non è giusto e l'ha detto anche mio padre. Per l'affitto proprio niente, ci mancherebbe altro, e per la luce quello si vedrà poi e poi è una sciocchezza e non val la pena di parlarne per lettera.

Ti abbraccio caro Leonardo e scrivimi presto ed appena avrò qualcosa da mandarti te lo manderò.

Leo

21 Marzo 1943

Caro Leonardo,

già da tempo non ricevo tue lettere.

Scrivimi presto. E dimmi cosa fai.

Io ho spedito oggi alcuni lavori a Firenze per Michelucci. Così potrai vedere parte di quello che ho fatto. Mi ha detto Michelucci che sei stato da lui che gli hai portato due quadri e che tale fatto lo ha commosso. Povero Michelucci, che ha tante cose buone, spesso oscurate da una certa instabilità.

Io ho bisogno assoluto di colori. Già da alcuni giorni non posso dipingere per mancanza di bianco. Ti prego proprio di comprarmene e di spedirmelo con urgenza.

Ho saputo da Daddo del padre. Povero Daddo! Mi ha fatto molto dolore.

Scrivimi presto e a lungo e dimmi la causa del tuo silenzio.

Ti abbraccio. Saluta i miei zii ed i tuoi.

Leo

Mi raccomando il bianco!

29 Marzo 1943

Carissimo Leonardo, le notizie che mi mandi mi riempiono di gioia tanto grande. Sono proprio contento. Ed inoltre le tue lettere le sento così comunicative come se parlassimo e ti comprendo perfettamente.

Ripensando alla nostra amicizia sono contento che sia nata da poco e non da quando ci siamo conosciuti. Siamo ora più vicini e la nostra amicizia è molto più spontanea più vera e più totale.

Bene per la tua "città ideale". Mi spiace non poter seguirti della tua fatica e di discuterne a lavoro compiuto. Sono sicuro che verrà molto bella.

Io per conto mio ho rinunciato. Dapprima mi ero lasciato quasi lusingare dalla gioia della "visione" ed ero contento perché spesso l'intuizione era così penetrante così piena che la "città ideale" mi sembrava addirittura costruita. Ma poi ho pensato bene. Non ho ancora una fede tale da poter continuare senza incertezze.

Ho bisogno di una "iniziazione individuale" lunghissima che mi porti alle conclusioni più certe.

Sono fermamente deciso ad impormi una "disciplina totale" fin nelle minime cose.

Solo a prezzo di questo sacrificio potrò arrivare a delle conclusioni vere.

Perché ti assicuro Leonardo che quando vedo la pittura, l'architettura e così di seguito mi accorgo, sono certo anzi, che è quasi tutta inutile tanto è il mio pensiero superiore nei momenti di intuizione.

È tutta arte di un genere suadente ed inferiore.

Può servirci come esperienza di materia ma non più.

Leo certo che la pittura in special modo può arrivare alla concretizzazione del "mistero". Come la religione più della religione come realizzazione concreta (all'infuori delle conseguenze sul popolo).

Ecco quello che voglio e non più compromessi.

In questi giorni ho avuto delle visioni di alcuni quadri "La nascita", "La morte", "L'angelo malato", "L'angelo del vuoto", "La madre". Ti assicuro che tutto questo è meraviglioso. Quasi che il mistero mi fosse totalmente svelato, o meglio non esistere più, perché se fosse svelato lo ricorderei. Ma è una verità inconfondibile.

E così per la "città ideale". Certe cose sono perfette.

Tutte le città tese verso Dio. Tesa è la parola esatta. Tensione. Magnifico.

Ma per realizzare per concretare occorre una meditazione lunghissima. È questa meditazione che non sono ancora riuscito a conquistare.

In questo periodo io sono in svantaggio. Ma è proprio ora che voglio iniziare.

Quando tornerò a Firenze dovremo stare molto vicini.

Per aiutarci a vicenda. Poi dei periodi di distacco.

Purtroppo qui io ho poco tempo per pensare.

Ed ogni ritorno dal lavoro meccanico al pensiero è faticoso.

Caro Leonardo, scrivimi presto di te.

30 Marzo 1943

Caro Leonardo, sto buttando giù la città ideale.

Viene bellissima.

Ti prego di mandarmi una nota (come quelle della "spesa" al mattino delle donne di servizio) di tutto ciò che occorre per una città. Perché qui non ho nessun libro. E siccome vorrei definire tutto non vorrei dimenticare nulla (per es. mercati ecc. ecc.). Tanto tu l'avrai già fatto quindi non ti costa fatica.

Non vorrei mi sfuggisse qualche cosa benché nulla può sfuggire perché tutto quello che ho fatto è l'essenziale, il resto non mi interessa.

Scrivimi a lungo.

Ti abbraccio , Leo

10 Aprile 1943

Caro Leonardo,

avrei bisogno di parlare con Angela, Poccetto e te, con tutte le persone a me care.

Sono terribilmente solo. Ed in certi momenti non ho le forze di essere solo. Oggi ha nevicato! Fa molto freddo.

Ho lavorato per la "città ideale" nelle poche ore di serenità. Nella notte quando dopo alcune ore di silenzio ritrovo me stesso e mi sento così immateriale da sentire il vuoto in me.

Ma mi manca la possibilità di realizzare.

Sono parecchi giorni ormai che non ricevo tue notizie. Perché? Scrivimi Leonardo perché le tue lettere mi sono care.

Ti avevo pregato in una mia lettera di mandarmi alcuni dati che mi mancano per la "città".

Inviameli per favore specie dati tecnici (aree, viabilità ecc.).

Ti abbraccio

Leonardo

Saluti a tua madre.

29 Aprile 1943

Carissimo Leonardo,

una grandissima gioia provo nel ricevere le tue lettere.

Questo nostro vicendevole parlarsi che sembra venire dall'anima sembra passare attraverso il cervello è meraviglioso.

Nella tua ultima lettera ho provato un piacere fortissimo nel notare che in questi ultimi tempi, benché a distanza, siamo venuti alle medesime conclusioni in certi determinati frangenti. Mi spiego. Vedi: mi dici che hai ricominciato a dipingere dal vero e nel dipingere vedi nascere il fantasma della "città ideale". Il fiume, la parte bassa, il colle.

Non è meraviglioso? Io in questi ultimi tempi mi sono aggirato a lungo nei pressi di un colle geometrico ben definito come peso e volume, attorniato da un anfiteatro di altri colli, ai piedi del quale scorre un rigagnolo che mi appariva e mi appare il fiume della "città ideale". Ebbene non ti dico qual gioia era il vedere nascere la città con tutte le mie case, il tempio, gli edifici più belli, il penetrare fino dentro le stanze più umili, aggirarmi fra gli abitanti; è una cosa indescrivibile.

E pur non avendo tempo disegnavo nella mia mente tutte queste cose. E formano nel pensiero un disegno preciso, definito, fatto a punta di penna con inchiostro di china leggermente diluito. Vedi non ho potuto fare ancora tutto

ciò, ma è come se lo avessi fatto. La conquista è già fatta. E spero potrai trovare alcuni momenti liberi per andare a disegnare. Anzi ci sono già stato una volta ma sono dovuto andar via. Appena iniziato una torba di ragazzini mi è venuto attorno e non ho potuto continuare. Volevo cacciarli ma erano bimbi ed io gli volevo bene. E non potevo disegnare con loro attorno.

Altre volte mi sono fermato su un altro colle dalla cui sommità si vede una parte della città: certamente la più povera. Pure tu vedessi come sapeva di eterno. Le case tutte di pietra con piccole porte e piccole finestre. Terrazze e balconi per il godimento del sole. Ebbene ci vuol poco a far divenire quelle piccole misere sporche casette le meravigliose rimirate belle case della "città ideale".

E tutto ciò non è un paradosso. So che è verità, verità che mi appare in tutta la sua intensità quasi fosse una rivelazione.

È che gli uomini hanno perso il concetto delle "misure" dell'uomo; è per questo che tali verità gli sfuggono.

La mia città sarà definita e misurata come nessuna altra, come una grande composizione pittorica in cui tutti i volumi sono perfetti. Ne ho la certezza. Davanti a queste città sfuggono tutti i problemi che preoccupano la nostra mente creatrice di uomini moderni perché in esse tutti sono risolti. Non c'è più preoccupazione né di stile né di concetto sociale, né di problemi di traffico ecc. ecc.

Tutto è risolto perché la "mia città" è vicina alle cose eterne e l'eternità non ha stile, non ha moda, non è momentanea come i destini degli uomini.

Nella mia città è come se il fluire della vita fosse diventato un elemento statico. Come se gli uomini, che sono transitori, fossero sempre.

È come se gli uomini in questa città avessero trovato le certezze della loro immortalità e per questo la città è diventata eterna.

Cosa importa poi se le case si logorano e cadono?

La città è eterna.

Ti assicuro che è una cosa incredibilmente meravigliosa. La mia città è come una esplosione di gioia degli uomini testimoni della loro eternità.

A momenti soffro terribilmente perché non posso lavorare interamente e queste cose a me care.

Ma poi mi accorgo che questo mio stato è transitorio e che potrò tornare con più calma e con più esperienza di vita e lavorare in queste cose. Ed allora la sofferenza si tramuta in gioia ed ho attimi bellissimi.

Ti avevo chiesto dei dati tecnici. Ma pare non mi sono spiegato. Quello che mi hai spedito non mi occorreva. (Tanto più la mia città non ha bisogno di edifici che ha la città attuale e ne ha bisogno di tanti altri).

Volevo sapere dati di misure più che altro tanto per vedere

approssimativamente quanto ha grande l'area della città per la "mia città".

Perché quando vedo e il fiume ed il colle e le vie e tutte le altre cose sento una misura ben definita oltre la quale non si può andare e del resto non si può rimanere al di qua. E così avrei visto il numero degli abitanti così come statistica della turba di uomini che io vedo nella città.

Ma non importa. Non mi interessa più tanto tutto questo.

Leo lieto che anche tu apprezzi ora il 500 in questa maniera. È un secolo che rasenta la perfezione per alcune cose.

Giusto di Leonardo rispetto a Buffalmacco.

La nuova pittura sarà una cosa superiore a tutte.

Ne ho l'esatta sensazione. E così tutte le altre arti.

Ed ora voglio sapere come stai. Come ti senti. Cosa hai intenzione di fare.

Spero presto esserti nuovamente vicino.

A volte ho la certezza che a luglio sarò a Firenze all'Istituto Geografico, a volte tale ipotesi mi sembra estremamente lontana.

Caro Leonardo ti abbraccio

Leo

Scrivimi presto. Saluta tua madre.

6 Giugno 1943

A Leonardo carissimo.

Ho sempre definito l'arte ideale quasi rovina della Grecia e del Cristianesimo. Mi accorgo che ciò è errato. Non errato come intuizione dell'arte ma come definizione. E questo è nato da una incompletezza di conoscenza. In questi ultimi tempi la cosa che ho più amato è stato l'Evangelo.

Moltissime cose che avevo nell'animo dovute a stati di intuizione non avevano preso forma. Falsato era pertanto il concetto di Cristianesimo. Tanto che la mia fede religiosa non poteva dirsi cristiana, come non ancora lo è adesso benché più vicina. Il Cristianesimo ha avuto nel suo corso storico una sua realizzazione religiosa, variata dal tempo e dagli uomini secondo i propri bisogni. È per questo che al Cristianesimo dovevo aggiungere la Grecia per indicare il concetto della mia intuizione dell'arte superiore.

Ciò ora sta scomparendo. Ciò che noi vediamo del Cristianesimo è cosa parziale, regionale, medievale ancora sotto molti aspetti. Da qui la mia incertezza.

Il Cristianesimo è invece totale, universale.

AmMESSO il concetto di rivelazione, il Nuovo Testamento non può essere che una manifestazione, una realizzazione di tale rivelazione.

Nello stesso modo in cui la manifestazione, la realizzazione dell'intuizione è l'opera artistica.

Ciò che ha fatto divenire parziale, regionale la rivelazione (che ho ammesso per poter continuare a parlare. Anche qui dovrei parlarti ancora perché lo stesso concetto di rivelazione per me è stato limitato, diluito, per volerlo ingigantire, sintetizzare) è proprio il fatto di non aver capito tale concetto del Nuovo Testamento.

E l'intuizione è talmente gigantesca che nonostante il miracoloso, il sublime, il divino del Nuovo Testamento (non che io come uomo arrivi a ciò, ma come intuizione divina della mia anima) ho la fede che ci sarà (non posso precisare il tempo ma a volte mi sembra debba avvenire presto) un ripensamento del Nuovo Testamento o per essere più precisi una manifestazione una realizzazione nuova ancora più totale, della "rivelazione".

E questa mia fede crescente mi permette di annegarmi nella divinità totalmente.

Lentamente il mondo si definisce intorno a me, l'ambiente stesso. La mia "città ideale" prende consistenza (anche se purtroppo non ho tempo di dedicarmi per la sua realizzazione), la pittura diviene sempre più un atto di amore, di adorazione, senza che dubbi di concetto e quindi critici turbino la serenità e la gioia della creazione.

Passo ore a dipingere "un angelo" perché so cosa è l'angelo.

Così l'ala di un angelo.

Tutti i problemi della vita dagli intellettivi ai materiali che mi sono sembrati a volte insormontabili, difficilissimi divengono piani o meglio scompaiono.

Problemi politici, sociali, per non dir poi dei più grandi, filosofici, artistici divengono annullati.

Esiste solo l'intuizione e la manifestazione di essa in uno stato di serenità e di gioia.

Ti ho accennato a questa mia evoluzione meravigliosa.

Ma ancora più meravigliosa sarà. Sento che sono ancora in via di metamorfosi. A questo seguirà necessariamente un periodo di realizzazione e di conclusione.

Sono lieto di parlarti di ciò, caro Leonardo, anche se costretto ad essere breve.

Sono lontano dai miei affetti e costretto ad un lavoro a me contrario, ma ciò non turba la mia serenità.

A conti fatti anche questo periodo sarà stato molto utile.

Sono lieto per le tue attività. Ho compreso perfettamente i tuoi concetti. Sono dello stesso parere.

Desidererei molto vedere i tuoi lavori.

Mi hai parlato dei miei schizzi per la laurea.

Se puoi, cerca di prenderli tutti.

Quanto ritorno mi piacerà completarli con le mie nuove idee.

Fammi sapere presto tue notizie.

Ti abbraccio.

Leo.

22 Ottobre 1943

Mio caro Leonardo,

ho iniziato ora di dipingere. Senti in certi momenti desidererei che dopo morto io rimanga pittore, sì pittore magari del paradiso, mi sembra che gioia più alta non esista. Pensa essere pittore per sempre, senza più lo sconforto, la sola gioia. Non mi importerebbe neppure di conoscere il mistero, ma soltanto afferrarlo serenamente. Pensa: la gioia quando ancora la tavola in cui dipingere ha soltanto il colore del fondo neutro.

E tu che sei pieno, pieno di non so cosa, pieno di colore e di forma. E poi le prime pennellate. Questo tutto è musica, più della musica. E davanti agli occhi ti nasce il miracolo. E sei tu che l'hai fatto.

Ed ora tutto è tanto triste, e doloroso. Ed in questa continua incertezza del tuo stato, in questa continua ansia per tutti gli uomini ecco irrefrenabile questa data gioia pura al di là di tutto, di noi stessi.

Sto lavorando a due quadri. "Bambino con fiore: a sera" e "Davanti ad un bosco". Vedi ancora forse non ho trovato tutto quello che voglio. Anzi sento che troppa strada c'è da fare. Pure sono contento.

Vedi ancora non sono certo per composizione. A volte mi sembra di esserci vicino vicino, altre volte mi sfugge. Ma ci arriverò certamente. Vedi: un albero, il cielo, un prato, può diventare armonia pura come io voglio ma ancora non è difficile una fermezza umana. Si può cadere nel non "posseduto" nel non "finito" completamente. Eppure sento che ci arriverò. Dissolvere una forma umana di una armonia coloristica fatta di forma pura. La statica e la dinamica fuse insieme in una legge irrilabile.

E sento che in tutta la vita questo è il segreto. Che una cosa statica e dinamica nello stesso tempo. Senza la prima cosa si è necessariamente semantici, senza la seconda necessariamente neoclassici.

E forse il vero "classico" è così come lo intendo io: statica e dinamica.

E ciò io vedo nella mia città ideale.

Ma adesso mio caro Leonardo esco fuori a dipingere.

Mentre ti scrivo guardo continuamente questo quadro "Davanti al bosco". E ho bisogno ancora di lavorare.

Ti abbraccio forte e spero poterti vedere presto dopo tanta rovina. Leo.

9 Dicembre 1943

Sono molto stanco stanotte. Dinnanzi a me sono due abbozzi ed un disegno grande fatto a penna. Sono due giorni che lavoro accuratamente a questo disegno, ma ancora non sono contento.

Ho bisogno di lavorare e di lavorare. Come è difficile costruire!

Costruire persino il cielo che pare fatto con la pietra.

Ho comprato il libro su Palladio. Ha delle cose meravigliose.

Oggi ho ricevuto una tua cartolina. Senti quella testa è proprio bella e l'hai fatta già da qualche anno.

Sei proprio avanti Leonardo e chissà ora! Sono proprio contento per te ed avrei bisogno di vederti e di parlarti.

Pensavo proprio ieri che io e te dovremmo stare parecchio insieme. In un posto che piaccia a noi e viaggiare ogni tanto per vedere le cose belle. Ogni giorno sento che ti voglio bene di più. E mi piace dirtelo come si può dirlo solo ad una donna.

Vedi fra poco questo mondo caotico finirà e tornerà la calma. In fondo poi non sarà tanto diverso da ora né da come lo era prima. Solo non ci sarà più la guerra. E allora potremo lavorare come vorremo.

Buonanotte Leonardo, sono stanco e vado a dormire. Ma forse rimarrò a fantasticare ancora un po'. Se non ti scriverò prima per Natale ti faccio ora tanti auguri. Ti abbraccio

Leo.

17 Dicembre 1943

Mio caro Leonardo,

mi sembra di essere in mezzo a dei fantasmi. Uomini e bimbi che volano nei cieli d'oro. Mi sembra impossibile a volte che l'uomo non possa volare, quasi sia come una colpa acquisita, una pesantezza dovuta al non volare per essere stato troppo pigro. A volte quando nella testa mi si disegnano, ora più nitidi ora più confusi, questi fantasmi, e ne scorgo le masse ed i muscoli e anche spesso fin le più minute pieghe, ti assicuro che credo di volare anch'io e quasi i miei muscoli reagiscono.

Ed allora sono spesso a disegnare e mi affatico e cerco di finire queste figure e divento pignolo e calco e calco e calco fino a che il disegno è quasi tutto nero e non posso più lavorare. A volte solo degli schizzi ed allora sono più freschi. Ma non voglio fermarmi qui ed insisto perché voglio arrivare alla composizione. Purtroppo, nonostante che sappia che ho fatto molti progressi, non sono affatto contento. I disegni sono spesso ancora accademici, specie quando voglio condensare le forme, cristallizzarle in una linea, per poi poter

prendere questa pietra in movimento e colorarla, colorarla per conquistare ancora per renderla più veloce, per costruirla ancora e perché infine con tutti gli altri colori, quelli d'oro del cielo e quelli verdi e celesti e viola degli alberi e dei prati formino davvero una bella musica.

Avrei tanto desiderio disegnare dei cadaveri. Deve essere magnifico. Cogliere quelle linee cristallizzate dalla morte. Mi spiace proprio non aver fino ad ora o per una cosa o per l'altra potuto.

Penso ogni tanto ma intensamente agli antichi, specie quelli che hanno il disegno più robusto ed incisivo e poi ai moderni specie Van Gogh, anzi direi unicamente Van Gogh.

E sento che ci sarebbe ancora tanto da fare nella pittura che non è stato ancora fatto e quindi sono contento di essere ora, ma poi a volte quasi li invidio perché almeno avevano un ambiente, specie gli antichi, ma anche Van Gogh (pensa che c'era Cezanne e compagni) e vorrei essere, se non fosse una stupida cosa pensare così, essere nato allora. Perché vedi Leonardo in questo momento penso ai contemporanei. Ci sono dei valori anche, ma vedi nessuno te che possa costruire un "ambiente" per noi? Siamo forse noi due soli e forse ce ne saranno degli altri che non conosciamo ma a volte lo dubito, chissà perché.

Ed a volte mi illudo che saremo noi due che ci aiuteremo a vicenda e formeremo l'arte nuova, la pittura nuova. Ma quanta fatica ancora e quanto cammino.

Perché quello che si è fatto fino ad ora è ancora niente in confronto a quelle che sono le nostre intuizioni i nostri fantasmi. E le nostre opere non devono essere fantasmi ma dure come la pietra e veloci come gli angeli. Ti abbraccio e ti faccio tanti auguri. Leo

Caro Leonardo, devo dirti ancora una cosa e così approfitto e sto ancora queste due paginette con te. Ho bisogno di colori ed a Siena non se ne trovano. Ho bisogno di bianco, di zinco o permanente o di qualsiasi altro tipo piuttosto che niente e poi terra verde e verde veronese. Compramene tre o quattro tubetti di ogni tipo, specie dei bianchi tubetti grossi. Meglio Lukas o se no i tipi che trovi. E poi una serie di colori in tubetti di acquarello, naturalmente i colori più importanti, quelli che preferisco.

Niente bianchi ma verdi veronesi e terra verde sì se li trovi. Poi li porti a mio zio su in villa e da lui ti fai rimborsare. Lui poi provvederà a spedirmeli.

Mi fai proprio un piacere perché, anche se cerco di dipingere sempre di meno e di disegnare di più, spesso ne provo mancanza e dolore. Sono così belli i colori a volte li metto in mano e guardo i tubetti e ne provo gioia soltanto a vederli.

Ed ora dimmi di te. Sono proprio contento che sei felice per le tue nuove conquiste e sono certo che i tuoi ultimi disegni sono bellissimi. Se puoi mandamene qualcuno attraverso mio zio. Anch'io te ne manderò o per posta o attraverso mio zio. Ed ora tocca a te a scrivermi a lungo.

Saluta i tuoi genitori e fagli i miei migliori auguri. Ti abbraccio. Leo

5 Marzo 1944

Carissimo Leonardo,

anzitutto, per favore, colori. Comprami i colori; quello che mi occorre di più è il bianco. Di questo ne avrei urgenza. Tu forse ti meravigli del colore che consumo. Eppure ho fatto pochissimi quadri.

Ho ripreso la composizione. Senti Leonardo il problema del colore è davvero terribile e ti assicuro che forse negli antichi era meglio il disegno del colore, tranne qualche accenno di colore meraviglioso. Vedi qualche pezzo di Giotto, vedi soprattutto Piero della Francesca negli affreschi di Arezzo.

Oggi ho trovato dei toni gialli e arancioni meravigliosi e ti assicuro che è difficilissimo. Ma che gioia meravigliosa quando i colori si esaltano fra di loro e che terribile dolore quando dei colori ti assorbono quelli vicino. Eppure è meraviglioso quando si arriva ad un risultato! Van Gogh è meraviglioso ma non su tutte le scale; nel giallo è sublime. Vedi spesso, quasi sempre sia negli antichi sia nei moderni il colore ha servito per colorire i disegni, ma nulla più, nulla della gioia del vero colore che è meraviglioso come la musica, meglio anzi perché il colore è più reale e più metafisico nello stesso tempo.

E poi vedi io amo disegnare, ma ti assicuro che quando dipingo e viene bene, la felicità è al massimo. E poi per esempio, prendi un bel disegno e fanne un quadro con i colori. Pur rimanendo invariato il disegno tutto può divenire brutto. Vedi, adoperando ocre e terre soltanto e pochi altri colori quali ad esempio l'azzurro (ma anche questo portato alla tonalità delle terre) si possono fare cose meravigliose e tradurre in bellissimi dipinti bellissimi disegni. E così pure rimanendo nel monocromato o quasi. Ma quando tu lavori con un giallo ed un blu vicino, ad esempio, e poi un bianco e poi un rosso e poi un grigio e così via sempre in una tonalità alta c'è da impazzire e da perdersi come nulla.

E guarda che nella pittura antica certamente sono più belli e pittorici in generale alcuni colori ad affresco che quelli a tempera o ad olio. Alcuni colori di Giotto, specie nella cappella degli Scrovegni a Padova (che un'altra volta ti indicherò), oppure di Buffalmacco, o di Piero della Francesca ad Arezzo sono non certo superati dai cosiddetti coloristi veneti, che adoperano i colori ma spesso senza sapere cosa è il colore pittorico astratto e meraviglioso.

E forse solo Van Gogh mi dà una gioia indescrivibile e poi altri pezzi di Cezanne e Gauguin.

Vedi io in questi giorni mi sono messo a fare delle forme qualsiasi e colorarle per accostare i colori come voglio e ciò ti può sembrare una pazzia ma ti assicuro che è bellissimo come è bellissimo a volte vedere i tubetti dei colori che ti danno subito una gioia e ti verrebbe voglia di lavorare ma poi non puoi perché ti manca l'intuizione, il tessuto.

Ti abbraccio

Leo

Scrivimi presto e dammi tue notizie sopra tutto su ciò che fai, sia di disegno che di pittura.

26 Marzo 1944

Mio caro Leonardo,

in quale gioia davvero le tue lettere e le leggo e vedo la tua anima bella e ne sono felice. Davvero sento fra noi due un amore profondo che sempre più ci legherà e che darà ad entrambi bellissimi frutti e ci farà vivere insieme moltissimo tempo della nostra vita che quasi potremo dipingere nella stessa stanza (e dire che questo una volta mi sembrava assurdo). Eppure, se tu vuoi, ci siamo visti poco e non tante ore abbiamo speso insieme. E per questo che sento che i frutti saranno bellissimi appena potremo stare di più assieme. Ma ecco che debbo parlarti di tante cose che la tua lettera mi ha suscitato e di cui sono pieno e non so come fare a scriverti. Ma basterà poco.

Voglio parlarti sopra tutto di quello che tu mi rammenti io dissi, cioè che noi due e come noi due gli altri artisti veri ecc. eravamo come degli eletti. E mi dici che vorresti io fossi cambiato.

Vedi Leonardo, io sono molto cambiato e sento sempre più in me un senso di umiltà e di bontà che spero in tutta la mia anima diventino grandissime e direi quasi senza limiti. E certo io amo sempre più e vorrei amare sempre più, continuamente, come nei momenti più belli, nei quali davvero non sento più la corporeità e provo davvero distacco; anzi meglio, dell'avvenuto distacco me ne accorgo dopo, quando risento la corporeità. Ma di questo dovrei parlarti veramente a voce, a lungo, e poi ogni momento, ogni qualvolta ci incontrassimo e ne avessimo desiderio. Vedi Leonardo, in fondo noi due siamo due nature molto diverse eppure tendiamo alla stessa cosa.

27 Marzo 1944

Ho ieri interrotto la lettera per troppa "pienezza". Ed anche stasera sento che non ti scriverò molto a lungo come vorrei. Gli è che il problema è troppo vasto per una lettera. Ma cercherò di spiegarmi in breve.

Tutto ciò che tu dici sugli uomini infelici per qualsiasi ragione sia è bellissimo ed io condivido perfettamente il tuo pensiero.

Sento però che differiamo in qualche cosa, non nel pensiero, ma direi nella vita quotidiana. Ed è qui che il discorso sarebbe lungo.

Vedi Leonardo, mi ricordo ciò che tu dicesti una volta di quei bambini che tu aiutavi, e ricordo che tutto ciò mi commosse e mi sembrò meraviglioso. E così quando tu mi parli dei tuoi derelitti ai quali ti senti vicino. E così è. Ma se io un giorno dovessi entrare in questo mondo tenderei con tutte le mie forze di divenire un santo per intenderci, con tutta la opera umana.

E non potrei neppure dipingere. Ma io come mia missione intendo la pittura e l'architettura; e questa è la mia opera.

Vedi, Van Gogh, era pazzo per le riproduzioni colorate e desiderava che le sue cose fossero in riproduzione in tutte le case degli umili e fin sulle barche dei marinai, se ben ricordo.

E tutto ciò è bellissimo ma forse è anche errato, (sotto un certo aspetto, cioè sotto quello di Van Gogh).

Vedi Leonardo io intendo la vita come in due modi, una quella che è e l'altra quella che dovrebbe essere o per lo meno che vorrei fosse. Io sento che quando sto meglio, quando sono più puro, quando intuisco in poche parole, è quando non mi sento più "corporeo" ma divino e quando sono così io sento la felicità degli uomini o meglio addirittura la felicità dell'anima degli uomini e non il loro dolore. Vedi una volta io avrei dipinto l'Inferno per intenderci (e ti ricordi i miei quadri con le carni rosse; e ti assicuro che non è una vanità), ma vorrei dipingere il Paradiso. E nel Paradiso i derelitti non ci sono più.

Ed ancora: negli ultimi giorni scrissi a Michelucci e riportai alcune parole di S. Giacomo nella sua "Epistola" che se non sbaglio son queste: "C'è qualcuno fra voi che soffre? Preghi. C'è qualcuno fra voi che ha l'animo lieto? Salmeggi" E dicevo che in queste parole trovo quasi tutta la ragione della vita umana nel suo operato e nell'arte compreso fino quello che è Romantico e quello che è classico. "Salmeggi". Ecco l'arte.

Ed ancora. Vedi Leonardo io sento sempre più la solidità fra gli uomini, la loro eguale natura divina, il bisogno totale dell'aiuto scambievole ed un posto di ogni uomo nella umanità. E sento che l'umanità è come un mare non ha un volto definito se non quello della divinità che non è il volto di un uomo singolo. Ora io sento il compito della missione, dipingere ed anche architettare, e la sento come una missione e come una elezione, (ecco ancora quindi che mantengo il concetto di eletti). E tu credi forse che il più umile S. Francesco non si sentisse un eletto se fece quello che fece?

Tutto quello che è vita è vita e fa parte dell'esperienza umana e quindi poi dell'arte ma non è l'arte. Io non vado a cercare il dolore degli uomini; se io l'incontro non offendo il dolore ma amo questo dolore sia negli altri che in me stesso in fondo. E ti assicuro che in questi ultimi tempi ho avuto un gran campo di esperienza del dolore. Ma poi è come tutto dimenticato e superato nella gioia della creazione.

Tu dici: "... che si abbruttiscono nei lavori più infimi e che invece la pittura non ha mai pensato a loro. Tutti devono essere contenti. Neanche il Signorelli mi dice questo."

Io ho pensato spesso a questo e con intensità ed ho risolto così. Io non posso agire nel singolo uomo, se non casualmente, cioè per l'incontro, e so che un quadro non è compreso in egual misura da tutti, e nemmeno dallo stesso nei vari momenti. Ed allora, a volte pensavo, quale la mia opera per gli uomini, se le

mie cose non vengono vedute che da poche pochissime persone e non sempre da quelle che ne avrebbero più bisogno? Ecco il bivio: il santo e l'artista.

Ma non è poi una pretesa troppo forte il voler giovare a tutta l'umanità con un aiuto diretto? Ecco allora vedi che viene fuori tutta l'umanità, ognuno al suo posto. Io dipingo ecco tutto, dipingo. E pochi comprenderanno quello che io faccio ma la vita è tutta uno scambio; io do a questo e quello dà a me. È tutta una gerarchia di valori. Ed io persino nella "città ideale" ho diviso i musei in ordini fino ai "capolavori" che sono in un museo a parte.

È l'evoluzione dell'umanità che conta non del singolo uomo. Vedi Gesù Cristo, l'Amore Uomo, trascura perfino la Madre e sembra aspro con lei, ma è perché ama l'Umanità non il singolo, e se nella sua vita, come esperienza e come mezzo, c'è anche la Maddalena, quando è sulla croce la Maddalena scompare e c'è tutta l'Umanità.

Ed ancora fino al particolare. Quando io dipingo un albero quest'albero non ha volto. È l'albero, tutti gli alberi.

E quando io lo formo e gli do colore non posso dire che è un albero che soffre o che gioisce. È un albero: l'albero. E così un volto, una figura. Ma è Dio tutto ciò, è la sua manifestazione, la sua creazione. Così come la nostra manifestazione, la nostra creazione, come anima che è parte dell'anima di Dio, è quest'albero che io faccio.

Tu pensa all'Uomo per esempio e pensalo intuendolo naturalmente. Ne vedi tu forse un particolare atteggiamento del viso, o di un occhio, o della bocca? No.

È l'Uomo. Si avrà un braccio alzato magari o guarderà in alto ma ciò non ha importanza; poteva avere il braccio o la testa rivolti verso terra. Lo farò così perché l'ho intuito così. E pensa ancora: una Maria di Nicolò dall'Arca. Tutto è grido, urlo, fino al verismo. Ma in fondo è velocità è potenza è gioia, non è dolore, e se c'è è romantico.

Ecco vedi che ti parlerei a lungo, terribilmente a lungo di tutte queste cose di cui sono certo.

Ed invece ho scritto così, come è venuto, velocemente perché tu mi comprendessi e del resto non mi importa.

Ecco perché puoi sentir sordo anche Signorelli perché un uomo non è un uomo certe volte ma un uomo determinato. E ciò che non ti dà gioia.

Guarda una donna di schiena di Giotto. È un blocco colorato. Non ne vedi volto mani, niente, ma la gioia e bellezza e neppure la Maria è così.

28 Marzo 1944

Buongiorno Leonardo. Oggi sono molto triste ed insoddisfatto.

Voglio ancora continuare nel discorso intrapreso ma non posso. Oggi pensavo all'architettura. A fare una casa ideale, che da tanto tempo penso ed ancora non

l'ho in mente.

Vedi a volte ti basterebbe una unica grande stanza, a volte nascono altri ambienti, infiniti, un gran palazzo. E mica è sbagliato. Ma dove è l'essenziale, il giusto, la misura? Dove si riduce tutto l'essenziale umano?

Ma non importa scrivere queste cose. Sono momenti. Poi si riprende. Certo è da un po' di giorni non lavoro in soddisfazione. Sono fermo in pittura, fermo in architettura. Davvero è terribile questa nostra anima misteriosa e tutto questo mistero che a volte mi dà tanta gioia e tanta pienezza da non essere che una realtà e non più un mistero.

Ma adesso basta. Senti Leonardo. Va bene per i disegni. Continueremo gli scambi. Ma per ora non ho voglia di guardarli e di cercarli. Fra qualche giorno. E poi in certi momenti come oggi vorrei proprio che finisse questo stato di cose per poter riprendere a vivere normalmente. Che a volte tutto diventa una oppressione.

Addio, Leonardo caro, e scrivimi presto.

Ti abbraccio, Leo

1 Aprile 1944

Mio caro Leonardo,

quello che tu dici sui miei lavori è esatissimo e coincide perfettamente con quello che penso io. Vedi io, si può dire, ho appena iniziato a dipingere. Tutto quello che ho fatto nel passato è roba da dilettanti. Ed è proprio ora che sto nella fase critica di passaggio dal dilettantismo allo stato di pittore che deve avere il suo mestiere ben solido.

Vedi in questi ultimi tempi, e specie dopo la laurea, avevo sperato proprio di iniziare veramente a dipingere, ma purtroppo ne sono stato impedito come tu sai, e soltanto ora incomincio ad avere un periodo di vera attività, ma anche questo purtroppo in un momento poco propizio per la vera assoluta e continua calma interiore. È per questo che i miei lavori sono ancora soltanto degli sprazzi di luce. La testa d'angelo l'ho dipinta in un'ora senza mai averla disegnata prima, direttamente col colore.

È stato un attimo di divinità, in tutto avrò lavorato un'ora, come ti ho già detto, e dopo ho visto la mancanza sia di disegno che di colore, ma oramai non potevo riprenderlo più. E così anche gli altri. Ma tuttavia a momenti sono contento di quello che ho fatto, perché mi fa capire e convincere che potrò fare veramente e che la mia non è una pazzia. Illusione. Sento che potrò dipingere un angelo grande al vero senza esitazione, come un blocco solo. E poi anche composizioni. E poi quale eredità noi abbiamo! Dobbiamo disperatamente attaccarci, dopo averli riscoperti, ad un Giotto, ad un Piero e così via e tra i moderni ad un Cezanne o ad un Van Gogh. Ma anche allora sentiamo che sono ancora frammenti, che non è ancora la pittura, anche se paurosamente grandi e meravigliosi

ed a volte ci danno una gioia infinita. Vedi ad esempio: una testa di Mantegna degli affreschi agli Eremitani, vista in fotografia o molto da vicino dal vero è una cosa che fa impazzire. Possiamo noi urlare di gioia e dire che quella è la pittura quella a cui noi aspiriamo? No. Assolutamente no. L'affresco non è di getto, non è intuito totalmente: è provinciale ancora. E come per un Mantegna anche per gli altri, anche se superiori. Guarda un Piero: vedi che è pittore per davvero, quei volumi colorati di una battaglia per esempio fanno impazzire dalla gioia. E senti che davvero è musica ma meglio anche, una realtà tangibile, un mondo costruito creato come questo che ha fatto Dio, se è permesso il paragone. Ma se tu guardi una testa per esempio ti accorgi che non è quello che vuoi (anche se ha delle teste stupende come misteri) ed insomma tutto l'affresco non è ancora quello schianto, quella vera pittura.

E così di seguito. Vedi in Cezanne qualità supreme di pittore ma lo trovi pieno di intuizione e di gioia divina e così in Van Gogh trovi la pazzia che non diventa pittura. E così di seguito ed a voce ti potrei parlare dettagliatamente su tutto ciò che ho esaminato e che amo anche immensamente.

Ma non è ancora quello che io voglio. E come faccio allora io che non so ancora disegnare, che non so ancora dipingere, che non so ancora comporre criticare così ampiamente (sembra) tutto ciò? Non te lo potrei neppure dire con precisione. Ma è così. Sento che voglio di più, che quando sono in stato di grazia tutto è più bello, che quando nella mente volano i fantasmi quello, se realizzato, sarebbe la pittura. E allora avanti, faticosamente, disperatamente a volte, altre con una gioia. E dove si arriverà? Chi lo sa davvero.

Ma non importa. È la mia vita, è il mio posto di uomo fra gli uomini, il mio dovere verso me stesso e verso gli altri. E vorrei sempre lavorare, lavorare continuamente, ed invece non so ancora stare un'ora di seguito senza interrompere il lavoro per mancanza di visione perché è fuggita, e perché io sono stanco. Ed a volte vedo cose colossali, come stanotte ad esempio, che vedevo con gli occhi sbarrati dentro il mio cervello un uomo nudo in scorcio.

Cosa potentissima e meravigliosa e tanto certo tanto definito che occupava il volume della mia testa perfettamente e non esisteva altro. Ma poi? Non tento neppure di disegnarlo. Ecco la nostra impotenza.

Ma non importa oggi così, domani meglio, finché ce la faremo. Basta non essere imbroglioni ma sinceri davvero. Ecco perché ti voglio bene, perché ti sento come me, anche se diverso contemporaneamente, anche se tu farai una composizione ed io un'altra. E ci aiuteremo a vicenda, in questa lotta disperata contro tutto nella conquista della divinità o meglio nella rivelazione di noi stessi, della nostra anima. Tu hai fatto un meraviglioso disegno? Bene. Io ho fatto un pezzo piccolissimo meraviglioso di pittura? Bene. Quello serve a me e questo serve a te e viceversa. Ma non più indugi, non più guardare sbalorditi un terribile quadretto di qualcuno di questi moderni e domandarci, ma siamo noi pazzi?

Non più. Se un Morandi ci può servire in qualche cosa, bene, e così via. Ma quello è nulla ancora: quella è soltanto una bottiglia, anche se arrivasse

all'idea-bottiglia. Ecco Leonardo come si deve fare. E oggi tu disegni cadaveri e li ami come cosa miracolosa e divina, ed io non vedo l'ora di poter fare altrettanto.

Oggi io disegno un albero e mi appare davvero un miracolo in atto.

Tutto stamani ho disegnato manichini e mi sono apparsi disegni bellissimi con tanta musica, domani non mi piaceranno più. È perché li avrò superati. Ed intanto tutto intorno si muove, gira, barcolla; cosa importa? C'è sempre nella vita qualcosa di fermo, di non caduco, di vero, di eternamente vero.

E domani arriveremo alla morte. O davvero allora potremmo non sentire distacco dal nostro corpo perché già distaccati. Quella sarebbe la vera gioia.

Ed avremmo lasciato dietro di noi qualche quadro o disegno o pezzo di architettura. A noi non serviranno più ma potranno servire agli altri. Questa è la vita.

Senti Leonardo, presto ti manderò alcuni disegni che sono certo ti piaceranno per molti progressi.

Io attendo con ansia i tuoi.

Attendo anche i colori che tu hai comprato. Mi domandi se ne desidero degli altri. Ma certo. La lista non occorre. Tu sai i colori che ci vogliono. E fra gli altri desidero giallo di Napoli, verde veronese e blu ceruleo oltre il bianco che consumo sempre e di cui ho sempre bisogno. Più che puoi insomma perché mi servono sempre e non vorrei rimanere senza. E poi spediscimi anche qualche pennello che sceglierai tu. Mi basta che la setola sia resistente allo sfregamento perché io non adopero solventi. Ma del resto anche tu così.

Poi ti farai rendere da mio zio, che ti prego salutare molto insieme a mia zia e ringraziarlo.

Molti saluti ai tuoi. I miei ricambiano i saluti.

Ti abbraccio. Leo.

2 pennelli piccoli

1 grande

Biacca

Olio cotto

3 cartoni

Crete

Avevo già chiuso la lettera ed ora la riapro per scriverti ancora. Dicevi dei miei ultimi disegni che ti ho mandato.

E tu dici che non c'è sentimento e per questo non ti piacevano.

E ciò mi addolora molto perché volevo loro bene ed ora mi sembra non più. Io non ricordo neppure con precisione quali ti mandai perché li presi in fretta dagli

altri. Certo sono soltanto studi ma non he non ci sia sentimento. Tu dici non c'è "né rabbia, né impeto, né disperazione, né abbandono". Ed io sono d'accordo ma c'è silenzio. E questo ti preparo?

A volte una pietra è lì sull'erba ferma immobile. E non c'è né rabbia né impeto né altro ma c'è silenzio.

E non è forse anch'esso un sentimento tanto che ti senti di essere questa pietra? E poi non mi parli degli altri. Per esempio quei due alberi grandi a china che hanno solo il contorno e poi sono tonalizzati con china annacquata. Non ti dicono nulla? Eppure non può essere così perché io quando li feci ne andavo pazzo e ne ho fatto anche un eguale a colori con l'albero a destra giallo che è meraviglioso contro il cielo azzurro. O forse cerchi anche in lui la disperazione l'impeto ecc. io invece l'ho intesi immobili e fermi ed eterni? O sono forse io che non riesco a fare nulla che sia manifestato mentre a me pare o forse invece tu che travisato dal tuo lavoro rifiuti qualsiasi altra cosa che non partecipi di esso?

Con ciò io non voglio difendere quello che ho fatto perché sono il primo a dire che non è nulla ancora e che sono scontento ma vorrei, come dicevo nel principio, che tu penetrassi in me attraverso essi e tu vedessi, oppure che tu mi dica che non riesci attraverso essi a veder nulla il che vuol dire che nulla è manifestato. E ciò mi addolorerebbe sì molto ma tuttavia cercherei di lavorare ancora più tenacemente per manifestarmi.

E così i manichini che io ho tanto amato in quei momenti che disegnavo e mi sembrava che quelle cose contenessero tanto in sé e fossero come uomini addormentati per sempre nello spazio.

Ed allora parlami ancora di essi e con precisione e con lentezza perché io desidero sapere.

Vedi tutt'oggi io non ho fatto nulla e mi sono aggirato su e giù da una stanza all'altra e poi fuori e dentro casa senza poter nulla afferrare ma se io ti dico che quando penso ad un angelo vorrei che la testa non avesse orecchi né i fori del naso affinché nulla mi dia fastidio e che non rompa il volume e così che anche le labbra quasi non fossero, allora tu cosa diresti o che io non amo abbastanza queste cose e per questo non le vorrei (e potrebbe anche essere così ed allora avresti ragione) o che io sono pazzo, oppure invece come mi sembra a me e cioè che tutte queste cose sono dannose (almeno in questo) momento alla composizione e che se l'uomo ha gli orecchi per udire ciò non ha importanza per la pittura. E vorrei dirti ancora tante cose ma ora non ho voglia di prendere un altro foglio. Ti abbraccio. Leo

5 Aprile 1944

Mio caro Leonardo,

racchiudere una forma, che racchiude un volume e colorarla. Questa è la pittura. Io ne sono certissimo così la pittura mi pare meravigliosa e cosa ancora

non raffinata da alcuno. Ora non che non si possano citare nomi di massimi artisti che hanno fatto ciò ma gli è sempre che non ho ancora trovato un solo quadro in cui tutti gli elementi siano così compenetrati e divenuti unici, tanto che non puoi dire: qui c'è del bel colore, qui una bella linea, qui un bel volume, e che risponda a quel concetto della pittura che io ho e cerco di manifestare, anche se fra molti anni.

Racchiudere una forma, che racchiude un volume e colorarla.

Questo io ho detto ma tutto ciò deve essere contemporaneo nell'opera. Anche se i processi di ricerca siano superati.

Tu mi parlavi una volta del Presepe degli Uffizi di Leonardo e ti pareva cosa meravigliosa perché compostissima e pronta per colorire. Io invece dico di no. E sono certo di questa mia negazione. Vedi, quando una composizione è così preparata senti che il colorirla è come dare una cosa sovrapposta e non compenetrata. Senti che il colore, per quanto bello esso sia, sarà sempre un pretesto un mezzo per vedere più plastici i volumi e creare l'atmosfera. Ed io dico che ciò è errato. Io in vero ancora non so come precisamente procedere in modo da ottenere totalmente il mio scopo e anzi tutti i miei lavori, si può dire, partono sempre diversamente ed a volte riesco in parte a concludere ed a volte no e più nello stesso lavoro alcune parti sono ben dipinte ed altre no. Ed è questo che io voglio: arrivare e procedere egualmente in tutti i quadri perché questo è mestiere ed è essenziale come mezzo. Vedi io sono in continua ricerca e per spiegarti ti dico che a volte inizio un quadro senza neppure disegnare prima ma tutto facendo col pennello come per esempio una statua nel marmo che si ricava col solo scalpello, ma so che ciò è errato, perché non posso leggere una composizione così e sempre ci saranno deficienze di disegno; a volte invece all'opposto disegno precisamente il contorno dei volumi e le linee essenziali e poi inizio a colorare con piccole pennellate e calma e ciò mi sembrerebbe il metodo migliore ma poi mi accorgo che anche così difficilmente si arriva perché se per un piccolo quadro si può per un grande quadro perdersi di vista, per così dire, i valori tonali coloristici degli altri pezzi e spesso ti innamori di tonalità bellissime ma che poi saranno troppo alte o troppo basse e così si perde l'equilibrio della composizione; a volte invece dipingo il solo contorno e una coloritura generale tonale in modo da poi poter lavorare col colore a pennellate piccole date con calma costruendo, e questa è forse la migliore maniera. Tuttavia ancora non sono certo e faccio molta fatica ad arrivare ad una conclusione tanto che in certi momenti mi viene la disperazione e mi sembra di impazzire.

A volte penso ai pittori mediocrissimi che facevano grandi composizioni così orribili ma che riuscivano a concludere anche se cosa mostruosa. Orbene io dico che facevano così perché non capivano. Infatti credo che non sia affatto difficile dopo lungo e minuzioso studio dipingere la cosa più complicata ma tutto ciò senza capire la pittura. Infatti nella pittura il colore è colore e non si può dire per esempio che questo è il colore di una stoffa e quello di un albero, né prendendo un colore dire questo è il colore della stoffa e quello dell'albero

avendo la stoffa determinate qualità e l'albero altre. Questo infatti vorrebbe dire rifare la realtà che non è pittura; e questo io dico non solo per i pessimi pittori ma anche per grandi pittori che spesso si sono smarriti ed hanno perso la pittura mai per mancanza di concetto e di critica mai per mancanza di dati naturali mai per qualsiasi altra ragione che non è il caso qui di esaminare.

E vedi anche Leonardo errava spesso e non era pittura (ed io ti ringrazio nuovamente del libro e mi hai fatto proprio piacere).

Il suo spesso è un modo poetico e non pittorico. Per esempio il chiaroscuro sfrenato come intende lui porta a sensazioni gradevolissime e bellissime ma di natura non pittorica.

Lo sperdersi delle cose nella lontananza è un non senso in pittura. Sarebbe come dire per esempio in musica che quando si vuol musicare un crepuscolo per così dire (e già errato è dire musicare un crepuscolo ma dico così per intendervi) si debba far suonare gli strumenti in maniera dolcissima e quasi persi in lontananza. Ma questo anche se desse gioia uditiva sensitiva non sarebbe musicale e ciò è facile capire.

Vedi Leonardo io ti scrivo di queste piccole cose per farti capire quale sia il mio terribile lavoro, e così quando tu mi scrivi come nell'ultima lettera dei tuoi disegni dei lottatori e mi parli della tensione io ti dico che capisco perfettamente e ti sono vicinissimo in questo terribile sforzo.

Perché davvero io ripeto che noi siamo dei primitivi della nuova grande pittura, e tutto dobbiamo rifare per crearci i mezzi necessari a tale pittura.

Attendo con impazienza i tuoi disegni e, specie gli studi per i lottatori. E se puoi qualche schizzo colorato, ché ciò mi interessa anche molto.

Ti abbraccio e scrivimi presto

Leo

Mi raccomando sempre, per favore di comprarmi colori. Soprattutto bianco ché già ne sono privo e poi degli altri con preferenza al blu di cobalto, viola di cobalto, giallo di Napoli, terra verde, verde veronese, verde di cobalto. Inoltre delle tempere a tubetto specie bianco.

6 Aprile 1944

Mio caro Leonardo,

sono in un periodo meraviglioso. Ed ho fatto dei disegni bellissimi. Forse i primi che mi soddisfano pienamente.

E poi questo non conta. È che mi si sono aperti nuovi orizzonti vastissimi e vedo la pittura cosa non raffinata e chiusa quando raggiungibile. Certo la pittura che intendo io. L'arabesco non è pittura. L'impressionismo non è pittura. Io sto lavorando nuovamente alla mia composizione. Certe cose vanno bene ma non è certo quello che voglio. Pensa sono cinque figure in volo e molti alberi, ed un

nato. Il prato ed il cielo. Bene, a momenti l'impressionismo: perché vedo il cielo come un solido nel quale sono altri solidi che sono le figure in volo e gli alberi. Qualcosa di veramente impressionante e di divino. Qualcosa come tutte le leggi di Dio. E come manifestazione cioè cose create e come principio di queste cose create. Qualche cosa come il verbo e la creazione. Certo tutto questo non è nel quadro ma ho fatto progressi impressionanti.

Vorrei proprio tu fossi qui per sorreggermi in certi momenti.

Vedi nella mia vita mi basterebbe di fare un quadro così.

Vedi la testa d'angelo ancora non è nulla. Quello che voglio è qualcosa da far impazzire davvero.

Ed ora voglio lavorare sempre più. Ti ricordi che ti dicevo che in una figura mi dà quasi noia che ci siano degli occhi dei nasi, delle orecchie. Ebbene allora ancora non capivo perfettamente cos'era. Ora sì. È che tali cose portano facilmente all'arabesco e si perde la pittura. Portano al particolare e si perde l'essenziale. Fra i pittori quello che sento più vicino in questo momento è Piero della Francesca. Rivivo ora in cui sono stato in estasi davanti ai suoi affreschi di Arezzo e mi sembrava che ero dentro alla pittura. I suoi volumi colorati sono impressionanti. Lì un occhio non dà più noia. C'è in lui un senso di essenziale formidabile. Ma è una strada temibile e difficilissima nella quale neppure lui è andato a fondo. Ed è questo che a volte ce lo fa parere un "imbianchino".

C'è che in quel mondo astratto deve avvenire come un miracolo e così anche le sue figure e lui stesso è in attesa di questo miracolo.

Ho pensato in questo momento ai tuoi disegni e sì anche tu sei in questa strada, meglio in questo mondo della pittura. Quello che dicevi che nei tuoi disegni c'è musica è questo; non è che ci sia la musica nel senso normale, è che sei verso la vera pittura che è come una musica perfetta, reale e tangibile. Qualcosa come il verbo e la creazione.

9 Aprile 1944. Pasqua.

Caro Leonardo, ho fatto ancora disegni bellissimi e presto te ne manderò. Una interpretazione rapida di alcune figure del Signorelli è cosa meravigliosa.

Devo lavorare moltissimo ed ho in testa numerosissimi acquarelli.

Vorrei dipingere anche ad olio, ma ora ho bisogno di rapidità perché sono in un periodo di ricerca. Però spero presto concludere. Intanto, ad intervalli, lavoro alle due composizioni, le quali però già sono separate e sono in fase di transizione. Vi lavoro soprattutto per alcuni particolari che mi danno grande gioia o per una certa disciplina pittorica di cui sento la mancanza. Ora non ti dico di più ma presto spero di parlarti di cose conclusive.

Ti abbraccio, Leo.

Dimmi a lungo di te e mandami disegni ed acquarelli se ne hai fatti.

30/4/1944

Mio caro Leonardo,

vengo a te appena terminate le lunghe lettere a Miglioretto, quel mio amico di Milano, pittore, al quale sono legate da profonda amicizia, al quale voglio bene, il quale come me non è alla ricerca di quella pittura umana con tutta la sua arte. Due pittori mi interessano, ed uno sei tu, uno è lui (anche se non conosco di lui nulla se non qualche acquerello-studio). L'altro pittore che mi interessa sono io. È un po' di noi tre che io voglio parlare e per questo motivo: ammiro ed amo voi due moltissimo come uomini-artisti-pittori. Sento che le vostre aspirazioni sono immense e ci troviamo perfettamente d'accordo sui problemi più importanti dell'arte. Ma quello che a volte mi turba è questo: le nostre tre differentissime manifestazioni. Ora ciò naturalmente dipende dalle nostre tre differenti nature. Ed allora tutto risulterebbe molto semplice. E ciò è in realtà. Ma quello che è strano è come sia tu che lui al vedere i miei lavori o al sentire varie idee sui differenti miei lavori provate, non saprei neppure come dire precisamente, come una specie di turbamento, cosa che provo spesso anch'io riguardo a voi.

Per esempio io trovo più vicini al mio ideale della pittura un Piero ad un Signorelli. Tu viceversa. E te lo motivo in breve. A parte il fatto della saggia classicità di un Piero, della quale ora non tengo conto per non andare troppo in là con il discorso, trovo in Piero una maggiore saldezza pittorica: colore, volume, sono perfettamente fusi in alcuni tratti. Signorelli no. I Dannati sono più dei disegni che delle forme dipinte. La idealizzazione delle forme in un Piero permette maggiormente la fruizione fra forma e colore. Cioè in poche parole Piero è in uno stato più avanzato verso la pittura come io la intuisco.

Le mie rapide interpretazioni fatte in acquerello (che vorrei tu vedessi, ma non posso spedirti perché mi serve) di alcune figure del Signorelli mi hanno convinto della imprevedibilità nel senso pittorico assoluto, almeno come io lo intendo, della pittura del Signorelli.

Per esempio quando io vedo i tuoi disegni io rimango impressionato dalla potenza e musicalità di essi e non penso neppure di paragonare i miei ai tuoi nel senso di disegno, ma io non so come su essi potrai mettere il colore o meglio come potrai costruire col colore quelle figure.

Così quando tu vedi i miei lavori trai bellissimi pezzi di pittura ma non sai come io potrò sistemare un disegno.

È per questo che io voglio parlarti un poco delle mie cose. Dicevo poco fa a Miglioretto che io sento che farò una grande opera pittorica, alla quale già potrei dare un nome: Il Paradiso. Non so naturalmente, dicevo anche, quale sarà e come sarà questa opera, se una composizione, oppure una figura sola, ed una testa (anche se ritengo una composizione perché mi offre maggiori mezzi pittorici per realizzare questa gigantesca intuizione che si sta svolgendo in me) e neppure in quale tecnica la realizzerò, (se la realizzerò perché potrei anche fallire), se ad olio, o ad affresco, o in mosaico. Tutto quello che io faccio ora è in

funzione di quella opera, faccio dei particolari, dei frammenti per così dire non nel senso letterale naturalmente, faccio cioè delle esperienze, ma esperienze non a freddo ma, già essendoci in me l'intuizione, davvero vive. Un mio quadro quindi, un mio acquerello, un disegno si devono intendere così. Per esempio: so che le possibilità della tecnica dell'acquerello sono secondo diciamo così la stessa intrinseca materia alcune; eppure non mi interessa di violarle per così dire, per raggiungere un determinato scopo. Così è per un disegno, o per un quadro.

Quando tu mi parlavi della testa d'angelo e mi dicevi che c'era violenza e penetrazione eri perfettamente nel giusto, e così per le altre osservazioni in fatto di disegno specialmente. Ma a me le deficienze non importano. Mi basta la violenza e la penetrazione. Mi basta che quando io guardo o penso a quella testa, velocemente, violentemente quasi, non vedo né il mare, né la luna, né altro, non molte deficienze o altre cose, ma sono subito portato in quello stato di intuizione che è in me, e sento me stesso totalmente. L'opera completa, Il Paradiso avverrà da sé, quando sarà poi avvenuto il miracolo attraverso la fusione totale di tutti gli elementi di conquista. Così per esempio è per quell'"albero sotto la neve", davanti al quale non hai provato grande emozione. Eppure come dicevo a Michelucci in una lettera, è uguale alla testa d'angelo, né più né meno ed è anch'esso un pezzo del "Paradiso". E così per esempio quando io disegno e cerco ora di inchiodare una forma, bella o brutta che sia, non guardo mai del disegno in sé stesso, ma vedo moltissime altre cose; qualche pezzo di Paradiso. Così accostando dei colori e così di seguito.

Questa è la mia via e sento che nessun'altra posso seguire e questa per me è la buona. Consigliare ad esempio moderazione nell'esecuzione o come vuol dire ora capire le mie finalità. Io ora faccio il passo per espiare. Non me ne importa proprio niente come ora importa a te. Posso anche espiare; chi capirà e chi no ma questo non mi importa niente lo stesso. Io vivo giorno e notte si può dire in questo mondo fantastico della mia intuizione della quale do ogni tanto più o meno realizzate parziali manifestazioni. Il resto non mi interessa. Ottengo pian piano i mezzi per la grande opera, che sento sarà formidabile. Vedi Leonardo io parlo così a te perché voglio che tu veda più in là delle mie cose perché mi è necessario. E così tu devi parlare con me affinché sempre più veda attraverso i tuoi lavori, cosa che del resto già faccio. Infatti un tuo disegno non mi interessa affatto di per sé anche se bellissimo ma come mezzo per la tua pittura.

E quando tu nelle tue lettere mi parli di figure che lottano, che disegni in varie posizioni fino ad isolarle per te stesso nell'aria, io già, pur non avendo visto il disegno, vedo al di là. E so che questo tuo è come un particolare della tua futura grande opera, altrimenti per me queste due figure che lottano non avrebbero senso. Non è forse così? Scrivimi presto

Ti abbraccio, Leo.

P.S. non ho ancora ricevuto i tuoi disegni; per questo non te ne ho ancora parlato. Lippi ancora non li ha portati. Poi vorrei sapere una cosa. A volte mi

dici di ricordarti la testa e il paesaggio a volte dici di no. Vorrei sapere con precisione. Io in verità preferirei tenerli con me e così dai miei disegni che hai tu perché dato che lo scambio può avvenire, date le attuali condizioni, soltanto attraverso parecchi giorni, credo sia meglio che ci mandiamo continuamente nuovi disegni, tenendoci per noi i più necessari, senza poi più sostituirli se non quando ci rivedremo. Non ti piace? Saluta i tuoi ed i miei zii.

9 Maggio 1944

Mio caro Leonardo,

ho ricevuto poco fa la tua lettera e ti rispondo subito poiché io sto subendo un travaglio fortissimo che spero mi porti presto a qualche risultato poiché se no c'è da impazzire. Purtroppo una lettera, delle lettere non sono sufficienti a spiegare tutto quello che in me è avvenuto e sta avvenendo e le poche cose mie da te viste, siano essi schizzi o abbozzi o studi di quadri, dei quali non sono affatto contento, anch'esse non ti possono dire nulla di me. Ed ora mai la nostra lontananza dura da un anno e mezzo circa e le saltuarie visite improvvise di febbraio e settembre del '43, se hanno dato gran gioia a noi per il solo poterci rivedere e riabbracciare e constatare l'affetto, non hanno permesso quella manifestazione dei nostri pensieri come vorrei veramente che fosse. E tutto ciò specie nel mio riguardo. E cerco di spiegarti il perché. Vedi Leonardo io sono arrivato all'oggi dopo una tumultuosa e caotica corsa, per così dire, attraverso le varie vicende della vita e relative esperienze ma mai ho ancora avuto un periodo abbastanza lungo di quiete materiale che mi abbia permesso un logico svolgimento nella mia manifestazione. Non dico che tutto ciò non mi abbia giovato perché in realtà ho tratto grande profitto nel cogliere l'essenziale nella vita e lasciare tutto ciò che è caduco e vano, e quindi si è andata formando la mia conoscenza e quindi il mio mondo interiore; ma certo per quel riguarda la pittura sono rimasto meno che un dilettante. E questo ultimi mesi mi hanno sì fatto, per così dire, raccogliere i miei poveri stracci ed iniziare un faticoso periodo di cernita, di separazione, di inizio nella via che ho scelto e che vedo molto chiara. Purtroppo anche questi mesi però sono passati in un momento troppo ostile, data l'attuale situazione, al mio lavoro. Ho cercato di affermare, di realizzare in questi mesi qualche cosa di quelle fantastiche e meravigliose visioni che nella mia mente, per ottenere, strappare, un risultato, qualunque esso sia, per poter dire a me stesso che la mia non è poesia ma una realtà e che riuscirò ad ottenere qualche cosa. E questo specie nella "Donna" e nell'"Angelo", che tu non hai visto. Purtroppo il risultato complessivo è molto scarso ed io mi sono trovato assolutamente impreparato. Nell'impossibilità di ottenere tale risultato ho tentato di ottenere altri sia pure parzialissimi quali un piccolo albero, un campo, un colore qualsiasi, che rivelassero a me stesso le mie possibilità di realizzazione. E oggi come nelle due composizioni ho ottenuto misere cose. Nulla quindi di quello che voglio è vero; però qualche

cosa sì; qualche cosa della pittura che tu hai visto e di queste che ho non una mi ha dato le certezze di me stesso anche se ho terribile visione di tutto il lavoro che devo fare per arrivare, qualche cosa che può essere visto soltanto da chi, come noi, sa quello che vuol fare e in quale modo vive. Farà magari un pezzo di colore, una linea, qualsiasi cosa, come questo qualche cosa mi ha dato questa certezza. Ed è ora che sto iniziando il trapasso, lentissimamente, ricadendo spessissimo, in completa solitudine, ripeto in completa perché la presenza di Angela e delle mie creature, se pur mi danno nei momenti di terribile sconforto, con la loro bellezza di creature in se stesse, un appiglio per riportarmi alla normalità di uomo, ma non possono darmi quello che nulla può darmi se non io stesso. E così anche le tue lettere carissime che spesso attendo con ansia, e così anche quelle di qualche altro come quelle di Miglioretto ed anche di Michelucci, e così persino i tuoi meravigliosi disegni, non colmano affatto questa mia solitudine. Ora scendo a mangiare e continuerò poi.

Ho appena terminato di mangiare e cerco di riprendere quello che dicevo. Vedi io vorrei, e sento che in parte è così, che tu penetrassi maggiormente in me, per così dire, non soltanto attraverso quello che di me vedi. Perché io ne ho bisogno di questo per i momenti di maggior sconforto. Quanto a te io sono invece già in questa posizione. Infatti io non vedo soltanto i tuoi disegni ma quello a cui vuoi arrivare e sono lieto ed impressionato del tuo continuo superamento in un unico senso (è questo che più mi impressiona) senza cioè, subire sbandamenti. Il tuo sacrificio del non colorire ma solo disegnare ha per me un sapore di eroico, come chi non vuole trarre gioia da nessuna altra cosa che lo devii. E quando vedo i tuoi disegni, anche se come in una delle precedenti lettere, non so come farai a mettere il colore, questo lo dico quasi come in attesa, perché so che metterai su il colore e con il colore ed un colore bellissimo e potente, anzi lo costruirai addirittura col colore, cosa alla quale io pure tendo. Ed adesso per inciso voglio dirti che non ho ancora ricevuto i tuoi disegni e poiché non si è verificato mai alcuno smarrimento col Lippi desidero sapere con precisione quando sono stati portati al Lippi stesso, se isolati in rotolo o in valigia. Per essere più preciso vorrei che tu chiedessi con precisione a mio zio; che purtroppo non è l'ordine in persona, in che collo sono stati messi, e quando è stato portato al Lippi. Perché io ritengo che non siano stati smarriti ma che mio zio li abbia tenuti molto con sé prima di portarli al Lippi, che quest'ultimo non li abbia subito spediti e quindi non si tratti di smarrimento ma di ritardo. E fammi sapere subito qualche cosa di preciso in proposito, perché se davvero si trattasse di smarrimento da parte del Lippi, voglio che li ritrovi. Ed ora voglio parlarti un poco anche di Piero e del Signorelli perché desidero che il mio concetto sia chiaro. Io ti ho parlato della superiorità di Piero come pittore, cosa che tu stesso ammetti nella tua ultima lettera, e quindi sembrerebbe assurdo il continuare. Ma non è così; tu infatti parli anche della superiorità del Signorelli in quanto è più costruttore. Dici anche che Piero è più generico ed invece Signorelli più reale ecc. ecc.

Potremmo così concludere che Piero è più pittore anche se Signorelli più grande come mondo (ma anche qui ho le mie riserve). Ma voglio essere più chiaro. Io sono alla ricerca di un mezzo per la realizzazione del mio mondo, che ho già in una definito, e che non è né quello del Signorelli né quello di Piero.

11 Novembre 1944

Mio carissimo Leonardo,

ancora una volta nella mia vita un fatto accidentale, esterno cioè alla mia volontà, mi costringe nell'inattività. Vedi ho sperato tanto a lungo di un momento di sosta, di un periodo duraturo di calma e di serenità per realizzare, per poter constatare quello che io posso e quello che non posso, per potermi esprimere liberamente con una certa continuità. Ed ora che credevo vicino tale momento, nuove cose impediscono questo mio desiderio; non solo, ma mie necessità. Ma inutile è l'indagare ciò che non si conosce. Forse è bene così, anzi certamente è bene così. Può darsi, anzi è, che io non solo non sono maturo ma neppure degno di tale calma esterna.

E poi questa volta le cose non sono come prima, cioè richiami, allontanamenti forzati ecc. ecc.; questa volta il male è più intimo, per così dire, più mio. Lì era un dolore forzato qui è un dolore diretto. Ma mio caro Leonardo io non so come dirti di queste cose che mi accadono e che mi trovano oltre a tutto impreparato. Vedi io non so: anche ora io a momenti di grande tribolazione alterno momenti se non di gioia creativa, che da alcun tempo mi sembra negata, per lo meno di serenità e di aderenza alla natura.

Vedi Leonardo, io non so neppure giudicare in me stesso, perché non so se sono veri i momenti di serenità, come a volte mi sembra debba essere la posizione dell'uomo di fronte alle avversità, oppure veri momenti di dolore, in cui sembro disperare di tutto. Forse è che sono veri e necessari tutti e due essendo tutti e due stati dell'animo umano.

Ma ora debbo spiegarti un po' come stanno le cose, amico mio caro, e come mi trovo impotente di fronte ad esse.

Anzitutto Angela non sta bene. L'esame clinico e radiologico hanno rivelato un male polmonare. A questo dovute le febbri che ormai da più di due mesi perseguitano la mia cara compagna mamma. Non so spiegarti bene il male tanto più che non conosco i nomi tecnici. Non che la cosa sia grave in sé stessa, tanto che non occorre nulla di speciale come il pneuma, ma è il principio del male. In questo stato quindi è molto incerta la gravidanza. Perché le due cose si danneggiano reciprocamente. Ora gli stessi medici, ai quali ho parlato a lungo, non sanno cosa decidere e quale sia la cosa migliore da fare.

Angela non vorrebbe assolutamente la sospensione a costo di morire, ed io come tu puoi immaginare non so cosa fare, non essendo medico e non potendo

quindi sapere con precisione secondo un logico giudizio. La prima cosa da fare era portare Angela a Firenze e lì finalmente decidere con nuovi medici, dei quali alcuni, essendo da anni i nostri medici, possono consigliare con migliore ocularità.

Ma purtroppo anche qui complicazioni. La prima domanda di permesso è stata subito cestinata. Ora ne ho già fatta una seconda e martedì saprò se Firenze avrà dato il nulla osta, poi dovrò Siena darmi il permesso.

Ho parlato di nulla osta di Firenze perché la procedura è fatta in modo tale: prima si fa domanda di permesso a Siena, primo vaglio e primo sì o no; se sì Siena chiede il nulla osta a Firenze; secondo vaglio; se sì sarà poi Siena che dovrà concedere il permesso definitivo.

Tu capisci che in questa maniera i giorni passano senza alcuna conclusione concreta. Io a volte sono tentato di partire egualmente senza permessi data la necessità di Angela di essere a Firenze. Ma poi anche qui non posso decidere perché io metto a rischio totalmente la salute di Angela nel caso dovessero fermarci. Ora mi sembra impossibile che gli uomini si creino tante difficoltà oltre quelle inevitabili. Ebbene mentre tutto è così io magari passeggiavo fuori e vedo la meravigliosa natura immutabile e serenissima. Ed io in tale maniera non sono più presente a me stesso perché mi trovo sospeso fra una verità, per così dire, divina ed un'altra umana. Non ti spiego meglio questo mio pensiero perché mi costerebbe fatica e perché tu certo comprendi

Ma mi faccio egualmente coraggio. Anzitutto spero nella prossima settimana di ottenere il permesso definitivo e di venire a Firenze. Intanto domani stesso mando certo Pocchetto in macchina con alcune valigie. Pensa che oggi è venuto qui il fratello del guardiano di mio padre con una Balilla e domani se avessimo già i permessi potremo venire tutti a Firenze.

Mio caro Leonardo io ti sto scrivendo una lettera molto sconnessa. Me ne avvedo ma devi capire questo mio stato di incertezza. Il pensiero mentre ti scrivo corre a mille cose, dal male di Angela al sole che ora sta tramontando.

Ed ora voglio parlarti anche di noi due, dopo i giorni trascorsi insieme a Firenze. Vedi quando noi ci scrivevamo credevamo di poter dipingere anche nella stessa stanza ed invece non è così e non sarà mai così. Ciò in fondo è naturale. Ma quello che deve essere fra noi è una maggiore realtà di uomini oltre che di amici. Anche di questo non ti scrivo che brevemente e affrettatamente. Ma è bene accennare. Dicevo di uomini oltre che di amici e ciò è la cosa più importante. Perché anche fra noi esiste una realtà di uomini, come fra noi e gli altri uomini. E come ci siamo accorti di non essere ancora reali nei rapporti con gli altri uomini così non lo siamo fra noi. Vedi noi non siamo ancora degli uomini equilibrati, maturi quindi, noi passiamo velocissimamente da uno stato di formidabile gioia ad uno incertissimo di terribile sconforto. Orbene tutto questo è bello per noi due amici, ma non può essere così per noi uomini, vero?

Ma vedrai Leonardo che anche in questo miglioreremo.

Quello che ora importa fra noi è il reciproco grande bene che ci vogliamo e la reciproca stima.

Vedi Leonardo, per esempio, in questo momento in cui io non potrò lavorare il massimo regalo che tu puoi farmi è che lavori e progredisca tu. Questo è certissimo ed io voglio che sia così.

Ed ora Leonardo vengo alla fine di questa mia lettera malata anch'essa.

Ti ripeto che non so con precisione quando potrò venire a Firenze. Ad ogni modo il mio programma è questo. Domani manderò Pocchetto e qualche bagaglio con la macchina. Ed è un primo passo. Poi attendo Detti che ritengo e spero venga non più tardi di sette giorni a partire da oggi. Se quando verrà Detti saranno pronti i permessi verranno tutti, altrimenti verrò solo io. Di là poi attenderò Angela, che verrà necessariamente o con Detti o con la macchina di cui ti ho detto precedentemente. Io vengo a Firenze perché se non mi daranno il permesso qui cercherò di ottenerlo di là in una maniera che mi è stata indicata.

Mio caro Leonardo, io vorrei scrivere anche a Michelucci ma non so se ne avrò la forza. Ad ogni modo ti prego di accennargli qualche cosa tu perché a Michelucci voglio molto bene, nonostante i difetti che ha. Del resto è proprio vero che gli uomini non possono giudicare gli uomini.

Mi diceva mia Mamma che siccome ero iscritto ai Sindacati Pittori a quel tempo le dissero non era possibile iscrivermi anche a quello degli Architetti. Ad ogni modo ora mi iscriverò all'Albo Architetti. Se tu ti iscrivi fallo anche per me. Se sarò a Firenze lo farò io.

Così pensa tu per favore alle eventuali cose che dovessi fare e che tu puoi fare per me.

Ti ringrazio tanto e ti abbraccio forte.

Leo

Saluta i tuoi

17 Novembre 1944

Mio carissimo Leonardo,

io non so ancora quando sarò a Firenze. Ho bisogno di dirti alcune cose. In questi ultimi giorni, nei momenti liberi da occupazioni e preoccupazioni ho pensato ancora alla questione "Artista come uomo sociale" specie dopo il nostro contatto a Firenze. E debbo dirti molte cose che poi ti chiarirò al mio ritorno.

Ecco in breve il risultato di questi miei pensieri.

Le facoltà del pensiero dell'artista sono infinite. Limitate le possibilità realizzative, come limitata è la nostra vita corporale.

L'uomo ha molteplici aspetti ma pochissime possono essere le sue attività.

Esiste quindi una doppia vita nell'uomo, come del suo continuo squilibrio: ma è quella di anima e pertanto infinità, non misurabile quindi e senza tempo, l'altra quella di un uomo sulla terra che deve risolvere quotidianamente il suo problema. È necessario quindi per qualsiasi uomo porsi dei limiti se non vuole perdersi nei vasti campi dell'attività umana, limiti ripeto nel campo delle sue attività e non in quello del pensiero, che anzi quest'ultimo deve essere senza limiti perché qualsiasi attività sebbene parziale ha bisogno di un substrato spirituale totale.

Ecco quindi "l'artista come uomo sociale".

L'artista amerà una infinità di cose: amerà il sole ed il cielo, gli uccelli e le erbe, la natura tutta. Il suo pensiero si spingerà fino all'infinito: ora sarà più intuitivo ora più razionale. Amerà ora dipingere, ora disegnare, ora scrivere ora musicare.

Amerà ora lavorare la terra, pescare, giocare con i bimbi, stare con i poveri, essere povero. Ora amerà Dio nell'estasi che distrugge il senso di uomo corporeale di se stesso e di tutti i suoi simili, ora nell'emozione e commozione profonda di un bimbo che corre o di un uomo malato e povero. E così di tutte le cose.

Ma l'artista dovrà fare pochissime cose. Passato il periodo giovanile, nel quale l'amore per tutte le cose lo porterà in una attività molteplice e caotica, ecco che egli, postosi dei limiti, lavorerà nelle cose sole che si è scelto e per le quali deve lavorare onestamente come qualsiasi altro operaio.

Porsi dei limiti. Questa è una domanda che tu mi hai già rivolta: tu ti poni dei limiti? Rimasi allora un po' titubante ma per orgoglio. Io sì. Anzitutto voglio solo dipingere e architettare, non scrivere non filosofare ecc. Posso scrivere delle lettere, degli appunti ma tutto ciò non ha valore che per me stesso o per i pochi amici di ora o del futuro, se ci saranno anche quando sarò morto. Ed anche nel dipingere ed architettare avrò dei limiti: perché anche qui posso dipingere ed architettare col pensiero e posso invece realizzare. Orbene la mia realizzazione sarà sempre una parte infinitesima di quello che io chiamo il "fantasma".

Ma qualsiasi cosa che farò dovrò risentire del fantasma.

Ma l'angelo che dipingerò dovrà essere quello e non più soltanto mio ma di tutti, realizzato quanto meglio posso, esposto al giudizio di tutti, qualunque esso sia. E magari uno sarà pieno di gioia nel vederlo ed un altro no. Ma questo non vuol dire ed io avrò lavorato per tutti e due, anche per quello che non avrà gioia nel vederlo. Perché io avrò lavorato per una cosa che vivrà fino a quando dovrà vivere e poi morirà come tutte le cose umane.

Non ti parlo di più. Ti chiarirò ancora a voce.

Ed ora un'altra cosa. Per il piano regolatore di Firenze.

Tu ami molto l'uomo nudo. Per questo ti parlo dell'uomo nudo. Pensa ad un uomo nudo. Pensa all'uomo nudo in via della Torricella per esempio. Sarà un uomo che non ci starà bene perché avrà bisogno di vestiti ed anzi proprio quelli dell'uomo povero. Pensa all'uomo nudo nel Campidoglio, qui già ci starà molto meglio. Può quasi stare senza vestiti, solo non sempre perché in alcuni momenti

avrà bisogno di qualche cosa come tunica od altro. Però qualsiasi persona vestita ci potrà stare, dal povero al ricco, ed è già molto.

Ecco la città ideale è quella nella quale può stare perfettamente l'uomo nudo. Così come potrà stare vestito in qualsiasi maniera, che è come dire non la stessa cosa, ma quasi.

Orbene l'uomo nudo, Leonardo, può stare sulla spiaggia del mare, nella montagna più alta, nel bosco, in riva ad un fiume, su un prato, in qualsiasi luogo, tu comprendi.

Orbene l'uomo nudo può stare sulla cupola della chiesa grande, nel grattacielo, nella grande piazza, nella piccola casa, nel giardino architettonico e quello fatto da un ciliegio e due piante di giuggiole. E quale allora sarà il segreto della città?

Ecco vedi che l'uomo passi attraverso tutte queste cose rimanendo sempre nudo. Ed è inutile che ti spieghi cosa ciò voglia dire. Ebbene di ciò io sono certissimo e ti dirò allora di alcuni tuoi e miei difetti.

Io ho poco lavorato. Solo un po' per la piazza nell'Arno, che mi appare come fantasma, cosa meravigliosa. Ed è in parte piccolissima ma già realizzata in disegno, la "casa d'abitazione" di cui fino ad ora sono in uno stato teorico e di qualche studio architettonico per grattacieli ed altre cose.

E ti farò vedere tutto a Firenze.

Mio caro Leonardo il nostro incontro ultimo a Firenze fu violento, il prossimo no o per lo meno molto meno vedrai. Io ho invece stima per te e moltissimo affetto, Leonardo. Siamo due nature differenti ma questo non vuol dire, perché due nature fisiche differenti.

Ti abbraccio.

Leo.

Tu mi dicevi che io manco di un ambiente. È vero Leonardo. Io non possiedo ancora un ambiente perché ancora non ne amo alcuno di cui non possa fare a meno. È vero. Io l'ho come in testa, fatto da tanti ambienti che ho amato immensamente. Ma a volte io non so se lo troverò e se è giusto che io lo trovi. Certo è che non amo un ambiente come una persona cara. Fino ad ora amo solo la stanza nuda in cui lavorare. In segreto non so.

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Leonardo Ricci

Back on Sorgane. An Open Neighborhood Adhering to Existence

Leonardo Ricci wrote the following unpublished letter to Giovanni Michelucci to explain his master the project for Sorgane's possible development both under an existential and an operative perspectives. The text of the letter is kept in Casa Studio Ricci and was translated by the curator.

My dear Giovanni,

ever since I came out of the Antico Fattore I have been sick and have been brooding to myself whether today's heated discussion, which threatened to create rifts among the "Sorganini," was good or bad. And cold and rational as well as emotional and irrational reasoning cannot give me exact answers. Perhaps because it was at the same time good and bad, and perhaps neither good nor bad, somewhat like all things in life, that is, existential acts that always involve in themselves that particular form of "friction," called by men "pain."

Certainly it is, apart from any element in "moral" or "intellectual" judgment about what happened today, that tonight I feel the desire to have a "love" chat with Sorgane's colleagues. So I am writing this letter to you so that you may make yourself an interpreter to others. It is just laziness not to make many copies and send them to everyone and perhaps also a sense of modesty that keeps me from being totally and brutally "open" with too many people. With



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you it's easier for me whether it's out of habit, whether it's out of filial affection, whether it's because you're more experienced than I am, whether it's just so I'm driven by it from the inside.

I said "loving" chat. And since my way of loving (when I really love) is certainly not, as you well know, sweet, sentimental, detached, but very often violent, jealous, sometimes even cruel, certainly in this letter some of these characters will shine through, so I beg you and the others to excuse me not because of "lying faith" (which I would not consider extenuating) but precisely because of that attempt I make to break between us those last veils or walls, depending on whether you mean it.

Again, this is how it happens to me. When I am in love with a thing, my woman, a child, a tree or a starry night it doesn't matter, to feel a state of "communion" is necessary.

The osmosis between beings, this mysterious decanting of universal realities whereby what is unknown, foreign, absurd, becomes known, friend, logical (in the sense of *logos*), seems to me the only satisfying condition of love. So when, in spite of love, I prevent, for imponderables issues (fatigue, habit, boredom and so on), this "creative" act that the state of the conversation can give, I sometimes become as if blinded with wrath.

Today I am a little older and calmer. But even with a little more wisdom it is still the yelling, the beating perhaps, the swearing, all that at the seemingly most bestial if you will, that arises within me as a "holy wrath" to break those barriers that divide me from the things I love. The pretending that everything is all right in the thousand ways that human mystification has taught us, seems to me not a sign of love, but the death of love.

Now I have fallen in love with Sorgane, and with Sorgane I have fallen even

Fig. 1
Pictures of the building type D "La Nave", pictures by Giuliano Gameliel, Casa Studio Ricci.

more in love with those I already loved and who work for Sorgane, and I would really like to fall in love with everyone, even those whose lives for thousand reasons, whether for lack of sufficient contact or for others unknown to me, had prevented me from falling in love.

Because I am certain that this is the only possible condition for something to be born true and objective.

I think that more or less this is the story of all of us although the methodology is certainly different.

I am no longer naive, though. I know that loving exists, but I know that it is not enough. One must also know how to love. And I also know that if one does not know how to love afterwards there is the wound. And each wound hurts me, you, everyone, cats and worms included. Now for Sorgane we have to know how to love.

Because Sorgane is not just a private act (I love, I can't love, I take the consequences: game over). This is with people as well as with a work of art: (for example, I mistake a painting because my heart was not sufficiently penetrating, I take it and burn it).

Sorgane is a public act. It's about making houses where men then live, and it's about making houses possibly "historically appropriate" and all the "components that history today gives us as the basic elements of our analysis, our judgment, finally our design.

And we have been "ambitious." We have declared among ourselves several times that we want to make Sorgane something within limits (of cost, of environment, of authority, of a thousand other things) which represents what urban planning and world¹ architecture of the last fifty years have done, a fixed point, new objective, participant of the human adventure in the present historical condition in its plenitude or at least tending toward this plenitude.

We all have made mistakes and we will make mistakes again. And we will make mistakes for Sorgane as well. And mistakes must be punished. It is my understanding that the Father or whoever for that matter makes everything pay in life once you have the grace of being brought into the world. Grace then that perhaps someone else or we ourselves have paid. But without going into the seemingly metaphysical or transcendent, it seems certain to me that if some mistakes cannot be avoided precisely because they are out of our reach due to human limitation, other kinds of mistakes can be avoided² if the problem-setting is done with that clarity, openness, total sincerity even if the latter things often cost effort, constraint, pain.

I went out of the house to get some rest. And I saw the eclipse of the moon. Here is an example that comes so naturally to clarify my thinking even more.

1 The word was underlined by Michelucci in the original document

2 The word was underlined by Michelucci in the original document

Once savages (now I don't know anymore) created a "taboo" of every fact mysterious to them, so that an eclipse of the moon was an event that made them afraid (devil or god, spell or benefit they could interpret it). Animals certainly still feel this taboo. The dogs tonight here in Monterinaldi seem mad and you can hear the barks echoing in the valley. We men who know the motion of the earth and the moon are no longer afraid of it. Not because a rational thing only makes us understand this little boy's mechanical game, but because a "new dimension" has been added to man. It is only a matter of "awareness." The mystery! Or the wonderful mystery remains. Indeed deeper is the mystery now that we "know" the juggling of motion. But the soul remains at peace and I remain hopeful waiting for the moon to pop up again through these wonderful strange phases of light and shadow that speak to me even more of the stupendous miracle (in the etymological sense) of the life of the world.

And now back to Sorgane.

I would not want to be hurt again. If others will prevent us as much as we desire, because they are stronger than us despite our fighting for this reality, it is ok; but to screw us among ourselves would be a stupid thing for boys to do. To not screw us over there is only one thing left. Specify what we want to achieve in Sorgane, always within the limits imposed by the actual conditions. Which I believe is not bad but only good because realities of life.

It has been about 12 days since I started this letter. First fatigue, then work, then a thousand other things, prevented me from continuing it.

This is how things happen. You set out to reach the "moon" when you are a boy, then slowly you get tired and the moon stays up there.

But not all things are the "moon up there." There are things that belong to us. And we must not "let them go". So on Monday we met again, talked calmly about Sorgane. Some people made concrete, serious and interesting proposals, but in my opinion, the "fundamental" part was glossed over so much that I again, with less violence but still with a certain firmness felt the duty to precise again.

What in my opinion is the fundamental part? I try to become a little abstract to make myself better understood.

In the things of history there are two that history itself leaves us with: one is real, the other conventional. If the former is therefore valid, the latter is only hindrance to continue the journey.

As it is, if any accident (total war, atomic bomb, sunspots) destroyed what man has done, the former would remain, the latter would disappear.

Let us therefore imagine that this is the case.

Let us therefore imagine that Sorgane for a moment was the beginning of a work that some men who escaped disaster feel they must do in order to continue life. How will we act? This is the crux of the matter, earth, sky,

geography, children, women, men. Flying into space, living in this new multi-dimensional space, navigating the cosmos. Smiling, making love, being born and dying. It is always the mystery. But a new mystery, no longer that of taboos. That of the consciousness of existing.

If so, it seems to me that the "structure" of the new neighborhood would be open, free, spatial, new.

What meaning would certain elements of the ancient city have? What meaning would those old streets, those old habitual spaces, those once-human relationships, now inhuman, limited, narrow, elbow-to-elbow, where since man's adventure on earth no "sign" exists? What would be the meaning of those cubes or rectangles or parallelepipeds, placed side by side, static, inert, without cosmic participation of existence? And within these boxes, tall little boxes where men enclose themselves more and more, separate themselves from others, limit themselves, kill themselves because they kill the intrinsic vital realities of man? That those courtyards, courtyards, courtyards, barren and dead spaces that do not participate in the sky, in motion, in the rising and setting sun, in the breathing trees, in the integrated contemporary life of all things that stand on and off the earth?

That those absurd separations of functions of man "the religious," "the political," the "public," the "private," as if man were only religious in the church, political in the town hall, public in the social center, private in the bedroom?

But what is this perhaps life? And is believing life an abstraction and not reality, madness and not ---³ things? But is not the rest just conformity and not adherence to existence? Can we cut those natural spaces, calcine parts of them, make them become tombstones, ---⁴ to men sky, moon and sun? But where will they make love, immerse themselves in space, live, if you want to call it that, God? And where are the dead? And those who will come where are they? But wouldn't it then be better to do nothing more, to sleep in the woods, to make love in the meadows, to walk barefoot, to eat sitting on stones, if we everything of life is to be destroyed? And this may still seem abstract and untrue. But are we born with underpants the collar and the vest?

I am neither a pagan nor a naturalist. And so we build, and we build to live there as men who are embedded in nature and transform it. But transforming it does not mean killing it. We will lay stone upon stone, iron and lime, brick and wood, but as "signs" of our existence. We will build spaces in space but as "witnesses" of our universal consciousness. Otherwise what we do that is worth that "separates" us from the world and does not integrate us with it?

When I say let us make not houses but one house as if it were a hill. When I say let us make not fragments but one structure. When I say let's make not squares, courtyards, streets, but one space, and so on, sometimes I feel

3 Missing word in the typescript.

4 Missing word in the typescript.

misunderstood. But when flying in an airplane we see the crust of the earth, do we see many little holes or a single composition? But when we see from above an albeit stupendous medieval city, what are those holes that we loved so much?

They were not wrong. We are wrong if without any "hope" to live we live only on those dimensions that no longer belong to us.

And I could exemplify more.

But let us overlook the abstraction as well. Let us also get back down to earth.

There are limits. There is Florence. There is Sorgane. There are 12,000 inhabitants. There are laws. There are economic limits. There are lots of planners.

Right. Right. I agree. But I don't find a difference. Limits are always there in life. One eats, sleeps, breathes, otherwise one dies. Yet there are a thousand ways to eat, sleep, breathe. That's the point. I don't believe at all that these limits prevent our design, prevent these new dimensions of man.

But let us come even more to the point and respond to the "points" set out last Monday by one of the Sorgane groups.

I respond point by point:

1) Building density.

2,9. This does not seem excessive at all. There is no need to thin out. Men are increasing more and more on the earth. Men need to be concentrated just as hills and mountains are a concentration of soil compared to plains. Therefore, for me there is no problem at all.

2) Building types of housing.

In my opinion it has no meaning to say; building types. Talking about terraced or isolated houses, high houses or low houses, no longer means anything. You have to create a single fundamental structure in which living spaces fit together.

3) Construction elements.

Very interesting would be the normalization of plant and fixture structures, but one has to do the calculations with time, as I believe that when one designs the knowledge of the used elements (especially structural) must be clear. So a posteriori analysis is impossible.

4) Social elements and their areas.

In the neighborhood structure I would determine only those elements that everyone can use. Those on the other hand that not everyone uses, either eliminate them completely or make them become private acts of some (at least if they maintain traditional concepts). Structurally they must be also included in the overall composition with compositional freedom that is absolutely

different from traditional ones, especially since the relationship that exists between the dwelling and them no longer takes place through one dimension of time-space, (man-walking),but with multiple dimensions of time-space (man-pedestrian, man-mechanized).

5) Elements of speculation.

Consider them, even if of speculation at present, as integral and participating elements of the overall structure; that is, do not make them become added elements of the neighborhood.

6) Road network and types

Almost total elimination of multi-function venues (pedestrian, mechanized), as both the plastic compositional relationship and that of the possibility of enjoyment of things change according to the speed man has (remembering sequence, rhythm; mnemonic memory of space).

Condensation of mechanized roads (single trunk with branches).

The pedestrian road no longer understood as a road, but as a free path. The hearse story should not create fear.

There is nothing wrong with a coffin being carried perhaps 50 meters on foot to the mechanized vehicle. Nothing wrong with the living "seeing" the dead.

7,8) Private green and public green.

Complete osmosis between the two types. Absurd and insignificant single-family green spaces in any case, but especially in this one where the predominantly working-class population does not even have time to take care of its green space that turns into the garbage storage.

9) Sports area

Sports elements grafted directly to dwellings for those sports that do not need large equipment, deferring to the extra-neighborhood area those elements that need extensive equipment.

10) Flora

Regional flora that does not need special care that lives naturally.

11) Water, telephone, gas, electricity.

Centralized elements with their own inspectable and underground locations.

12) Heating.

Theoretically centralized.

13,14,15) Public lighting.

Public water.

Public transportation.

To be studied in a more technical line.

16) Squares understood in their urbanistic relations.

Squares understood as open spaces that have become plastic and architectural not as heretofore enclosed in the medieval sense.

17) Public building types.

Again plastic elements incorporated into the overall structure.

19) Pedestrian walkways

Depending on function

18) Nature-architecture relationship.

Attitude neither romantic nor classical but existential.

20) Neighborhood entrances.

Not monumental and rhetorical but real "nodes" of departure.

21) Osmosis

I have briefly expressed my thoughts about these points but it seems to me that there are especially two other fundamental ones:

1) Neighborhood issue

Of this point I have already expressed, in the first part of this letter, some opinions.

It would remain to make a more specific analysis of what the collective centers are: church, public building, etc...

2) Relationship between urban planning and architecture

If the plan were made by one group, each could resolve this relationship in its own way, but since we go from an urban planning problem of general setting, to the design of the housing cores that each group makes, I think it is impossible to arrive at binding "manufacturing" plans. Consequently once the general fabric is tacked on, it is up to individual planners to study the relationships between the dwelling cores and the general structure.

Dear Giovanni,

I have tried to express with this letter, as simply as possible, my opinion. And I would like, definitely, these points to be analyzed and expressed, and especially by you, who are the coordinator, summarized and synthesized.

What is important is that each of us know clearly the path to follow. Although deliberately not expressed so as not to influence anyone, it shines through clearly both from this letter of mine and from my group's contribution to the plan what my intentions are: human, expressive and plastic.

It is not important that my views or those of others prevail. On the contrary, it would be good if they were the synthetic expression of everyone, so that in

Phase II everyone will be able to express his or her personality more specifically.

What is important for me is to set precise limits in order to move with exactitude without infatuation from before, resulting in disappointment.

If by chance the result of the synthesis is also very far from my point of view it is fine. One can in any way arrive at a true and good thing. What is important for me is to know what we all accept together and what we reject. Because, dear Giovanni, I really would not want misunderstandings to arise. I really wouldn't want to be mistaken for being conceited or eccentric. So far I have made the contribution I was capable of, and I will try to do the same in the future, even in case everyone's common denominator is far from what I personally think.

Leonardo Ricci

An Architect Facing the Problems of a City (1952)

Unpublished typescript of a lecture addressed to the University of Southern California Department of Philosophy. In the lecture Ricci firstly reasons on the way towns were designed in the past, on the variables influencing their change in time, drawing a distinction between European and American cities. He secondly suggests possible factors to be analyzed to design contemporary cities. The document belongs to the holdings kept in Casa Studio Ricci.

Ladies and gentlemen. Unfortunately, my knowledge of the English language is such that I must read my lecture instead of speaking directly to you as is my custom. The subject of my lecture is: an architect confronted by the problem of a town. I am not a lecturer but only a friend speaking to other friends. This is my position in life when I talk to my students as well as when I address a larger group.

I do not believe that a man can have such a universal knowledge as to be a dictator of thought. I can only say I am a man; I live; I have made some experiences. These are my opinions. But I say these opinions sincerely, with all my heart, without fear, because we live in a moment when each man has to take his personal position and responsibility. I am an architect, but above all a human being. Like many other men, architects and non-architects, I have been asking myself what the city of the future will be; or better, which will be the city best capable to satisfy the exigencies of a modern man.



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Modern man. What does this mean? What does modern mean? What is hidden behind this word? Does it mean perhaps a man who flies to the stratosphere, bombards the atom, will eventually reach the moon, and so on? Yes, but the modern man also is: a man who lived between the last two world wars, has seen falling down one after the other the great myths of the past, is born at the end of a civilization and the beginning of another. A man who finds himself in a kind of vacuum, ready to look at the facts straightly without mystifying himself nor trying to deceive others; to find out whether both as an individual or part of a collectivity he can justify his life and live, or to the contrary only make the efforts of surviving, as a being fallen by absurdity into a transition time and pushed around by events larger and stronger than himself. Lastly, a modern man is one tired of being alone, trying to break this circle of solitude, to establish new contacts with others, outside all conventions, dogmas and false morals of the old and newer pasts; one who does not feel like being a god, a superhuman, nor a slave, but only one who tries simply to live in peace with others.

Now, what does it mean, a town? I think that any person, looking at a town plan, can understand the life of its inhabitants. Because a town is the exact mirror of the life lived by its people. It is not my intention to give you a historical lecture. For this you have your teachers and your books. I wish to make only some observations.

When carefully observing the plan of an old town, be it Indian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Mediaeval and so on, if we have imagination we see little by little the paper reach the third dimension. Buildings take their weight, men walk in the streets, in the squares, rest in their homes, go to church, to work, and so on. If we take the plans of an old town chronologically, we can also understand the gradual transformation from the early man to the man of today. We can understand that always in history the towns were an organism and not an aggregate of parts; because their life was one of an organism and there was a hierarchy within the parts: we can see in each period the predominance of some power, the religious power or the political power, or the social power, and within each period we can see the dominant power of that period expressing itself in the most important buildings as well as in the smallest details such as a fountain, a little statue or what you prefer. When we reach the twentieth century we can see immediately the destruction of this organism: an amorphous chaos of houses, blocks crossing each other in and out of the old cities, and practically we create from order disorder.

Certainly, certainly, there are many reasons. We know them all: sudden increase in the population of a city, intervention of the machine, the sudden changes of functions, and so on. Personally I think that beyond these reasons another more radical and deeper exists: We, the modern men, have not yet been able to find and express what we desire to be our individual and collective life. Is this a negative observation? I do not think so. It is only a dry and cold observation we must all make if we honestly wish to begin a new civilization and consequently to build the new town.

Allow me to be for the time being a European. Afterwards, I will try to enter the shoes of an American. European towns are wonderful. Italian towns are wonderful. This is not a nationalistic point. When I walk through Rome, Paris, Florence, Venice, and so on, I feel so happy at times, to see, to observe, their cathedrals, buildings, gardens, fountains. This is not only in large cities, but also in small towns: a small artisan shop is enough, a door frame, a panel of engraved marble. Are, however, these towns, good for us? Can we live there relaxed, according to our innermost feeling and desires of men of today? No. These towns are not ours. What we have accomplished is a disfiguration of the old towns. I think that they will never again be ours unless a radical transformation takes place. A transformation that our town plans, even the most idealistic and utopistic¹ ones do not even dream of. Perhaps I am a nocturnal animal who lives during the night and sleeps, when he can, during the day. This when I am in a town. But when I am in the country the opposite takes place. I sleep at night and stay up during the day. Perhaps this is a symptom that our towns are not ours. Thus I often walk during the night. I like it. I like to walk when people are asleep, and on the roads there are only a few night-walkers, taxi drivers and lovers. At night, when the fascination of the city is stronger, when we can enjoy more feelings of plastic and coloristic² beauty of buildings and material, just then I feel like a stranger in these cities because I should change my clothes³, wear some antique ones, travel on a horse carriage by the light of the torches. And thus these marvellous⁴ European cities will end up like many older ones, run over by the flow of life because they are unable to express our life. If we are not aware we shall destroy the thing that we should save, not as the mummies of the past, because mummies are no use, but as a lesson to be learned from a past civilization. A civilization that we must use as a term of comparison, in order to weigh what the men of the past have accomplished and what we are able to accomplish. At the present time I do not know a single European town which is our city or could be our city unless radical measures are taken.

And now allow me to enter your shoes. When I left for the United States I was very anxious to see American towns, not only from pictures and maps as I had done in the past. I was very curious to see New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and other cities which developed during the present or the last century. Cities born in the age of the machine, or at least after the industrial revolution, brothers and sisters of the modern inventions. I was curious to see if they were modern towns, or at least capable of a rapid and easy transformation. Let me render to you the first impression I had arriving in New York:

"I feel at ease. New York was not born from the spring of a metaphysical problem. It was born spontaneously from the life and work of men, and yet it is strangely a religious town. Eschatological, perhaps more than our European

1 Mistype: to be replaced with "utopist".

2 Mistype: to be replaced with "coloristic".

3 Mistype: to be replaced with "clothes".

4 Mistype: to be replaced with "marvellous".

cities. They say that money has created the skyscrapers. It is not true. It is something much deeper. It is something even deeper that which pushed the Italian Princes to build their towers. They are the arms and the hands of men tending towards the sky, even more than the Gothic cathedrals. In this city one works. Work here is a religion. Another observation: all is a question of relation. The European city: the church, the city hall; religious power; political power, then the rest. Here: Wall street, the office buildings. Idols the churches, idols the skyscrapers. But between the two, which is nearer to our life? Wall Street. The office buildings, skyscrapers. One must kill idols. But yours are easier to destroy than ours. They have smaller and younger roots. The wonderful town of the future without idols. Made by men for men.”

You can easily see from the first impression received from New York that I could observe at once a superiority of New York over the European cities as far as modernity of life is concerned. New York is the only town which shows its being completely the child of the bourgeois civilization after the French revolution. In this town I felt very well. Always excited and with a clear mind. But yet it is not a really modern town, and it is difficult that it will be transformed, it is too difficult to destroy the idols of steel and concrete.

Let me tell you the impression I got from Los Angeles. Although I do not know many other American cities, these are the extremes between which the others are included. Particularly because some others, such as Boston, New Orleans, and San Francisco are much more similar to the European cities. My first impression was very negative. Los Angeles is not a town. It is not a village. What is Los Angeles? It is nothing. Really nothing? Something it must be. Here was the prairie, wonderful land to cultivate. Black ground with dry grass. Under the ground, oil. Then men came. The land was divided by roads. And next to the roads tents and barracks. Then men got richer and the tents became small houses. Then they grew wealthier and the small houses got the swimming pool. The grass is cut, and there are flowers. But the houses have remained tents. Are you familiar with a soldier’s camp? They look so sad. Isn’t Los Angeles sad? I wanted to leave immediately. Then the night came. Only stars and a city filtered with light. I was in a desert made of houses. I was empty in the emptiness of the houses. But there were no idols. No churches. No monuments. No skyscrapers. This is the strength of Los Angeles. Tomorrow this town can have a face, a body, a heart. You can notice that, notwithstanding my first negative impression, I could find at last a town which really represents the present position of mankind. Indeed we, sons of problematic times, live a kind of existence, naked, so to speak, without any of the firm religious and moral supports of former ages, and we are waiting for a new, total cosmic justification of our existence.

For this reason I can sincerely say, and not paradoxically that Los Angeles is perhaps the only large town which is the present perfect mirror of our present life; a great potential force of mankind which has not yet found his general directives to solve his present problems. I am not a demagogue, “being well conscious of the disastrous consequences of demagogy in Europe, and therefore I

do not emphasize an evident superiority of Los Angeles as a standard of living. It is evident that common workers own better automobiles than wealthy people in Europe, and they have in their homes the modern comforts that only luxury homes do have in Europe. They enjoy public swimming pools, golf courses, tennis fields, at little cost. In other words, that have a standard of living superior to any of the richest and smallest European nations such as Switzerland. This fact may seem at a first glance a net progress in the solution of social problems in a democratic state. I however, as an Italian accustomed to consider not comfort by happiness the highest social purpose, do not consider this accomplishment an authentic social progress. Do we know if the poor urbanite of Naples, who after a day of hard work sings and goes fishing is happier than the North Italian of the great industrial cities, who, after having worked hard and earned considerably, does not know how to spend his money? After all I notice that in Los Angeles men are lonelier than elsewhere, and that children though stronger and better-looking than those in other parts of the world, are perhaps less spontaneous and natural. I notice that young people have cars to take to take out their girls in, but they do not know the beauty of the long walks of a European courtship; that the adults after a day of work and two hours of commuting go home to see television, without the possibilities nor the will of more profitable and deeper human contacts, that every house has the same face, that stores, factories churches all look alike, both from the viewpoint of architecture and city zoning. Perhaps, notwithstanding all your technical and mechanical advantages, this points toward a mankind more easily subject to moral and spiritual solitude, deprived of that comfort and human solidarity that can only make man if not happy, at least in peace with himself and the others.

At this point someone may ask me: Good, you have given us a picture of the general situation of towns in Europe and in America. You have told us that there is not in Europe a single town which deserves the name of modern, and that in America perhaps only Los Angeles is the town which may become more easily a modern city, even if now it is only an agglomeration of buildings. What would you then do if you had a magic wand to transform this city in accordance with your conceptions?

Unfortunately: first there is no magic wand, second, if there were one I would not be able to use it in order not to exercise a dictatorship of thought over other beings. Third, I should make a very accurate analysis of all elements which constitute life of mankind, a thing which is impossible within the limits of one lecture. Nonetheless I will try to answer in the most synthetic, honest and sincere manner possible. My experience of life has brought me to very simple conclusions. I have had the good or bad fortune of personally knowing and talking to some of the most important living men in all fields of human activities. I grant you that the first contacts were very hard for me. I considered them so important and superior to me that I behaved with great respect and timidity. I felt that they had in their hands important secrets for mankind that I could not understand. But knowing them better I soon found out that behind the mask of

power and superiority they had the same fears I had, were upset by the same problems, and in last analysis they, like me under the starlight, were only men with a heart oppressed and full of anxiety. I had then another bad or good fortune to be in a war just when I had begun to understand something. I was only twenty-two when the war started in Europe. I could witness the monstrosities and the horrors which mankind can reach in a war. I was able to read, practically in a book made of blood and death, what I had before examined only theoretically. From these two experiences I have reached very simple conclusions in which I can finally believe, on which I can found my life, build something sure also if what I may be doing is as simple as my conclusions were. But I am sure that these simple conclusions may finally create that minimum common denominator which can put the basis of a new future civilization and consequently of a new future city.

What do I believe is man?

I would like to be so objective, free of prejudice and of the influence of my cultural past, so able to exactly choose my words, to give the most precise and free definition. A definition that everyone could accept, on which everyone could build, so that in the town which could reflect and be the manifestation of the man so defined, all people could feel at ease and not strangers, not masters nor slaves but really citizens. I am not a philosopher, no my desire to give the definition of man seem gratuitous and not of my competency. But what could I do when through the exercise of my profession of architect, when making town plans, as in Italy I had the occasion to do, just then having to create streets, residential sections, industrial sections, business and cultural centers, hospital, schools, and so on. After having exhausted the logical technical problems, and the more difficult esthetical problems, I found myself faced by this last problem: what is man? How must he live? How must his city be? Thus I was forced to answer my problem for myself, because I could no longer with good conscience plan a city, which means to make men live one way or another, if certain fundamental points were not made clear to myself. Man is a terrestrial animal, living on earth without a certain knowledge of why he is born or what will he be after his death, living therefore in the mystery. He is an animal with definite biological requirements. Within himself he is driven toward a search for meaning in which he has expressed in many ways, without however reaching a precise conclusion, valid for all times. His position in the universe in dynamic and as a consequence his position on earth dynamic and temporary. He is an animal which is part of a cosmic rhythm. He is an animal destined to live not alone with associated with others. The possibility of living in harmony with others comes from the nature of such an association of men.

Man's quality of living in a mystery, whatever we may call this mystery, God, the devil, energy, the last end, evolution and so on, makes him consequently a religious being. Religiosity is understood by myself as the aptitude to keep our faculties open to a secret life outside the apparent real life, open to a reality of which what we see is only temporary demonstration and witness. This being a

religiosity in act, man has no right to express it in fixed terms, bind it in dogmas, limit and codify it.

As a practical consequence of this religiosity man has no right to oppress, nor dominate another being not knowing exactly which consequences he may bring to this other being in his terrestrial life and possibly non terrestrial life. This position must be well visible in the organism of a city. As a practical consequence of his biological requirements, the problems must limit itself to the means which can best satisfy these requirements. If men were not so proud to believe one thing and force others to believe it, creating in them a complex of inferiority and fear, if they were not in such bad faith as to bring out disastrous consequences as in these last wars, only to defend with their swords their dogmas and principles, which they themselves do not observe. If they were only men of good will and good sense, it would not be so difficult to establish some fixed points on which all could meet. Indeed all of us know more or less what we want, and our desired and needs are not so complex as they may at first appear, because the step from the most intelligent man to the least developed is not so long. If we had reached this degree of intellectual maturity, this degree of reciprocal tolerance and understanding, if we had the courage and the constancy to apply in our lives this theoretical reality, it would not be so difficult to find an equilibrium, because in the long run man needs only: to find peace; to be able to enjoy the sky and the nature; to have a body so sound as possible, and not mined by physical or psychical sicknesses, admitting that the two can be separated; to live with a woman that he loved, to have children to continue the human species; to have something to eat and to shelter, and not much more. With a little honesty it would not therefore be so difficult to draw the basis for new towns, where to live well. This explanation of social and human nature was for me necessary because I only believe in life and no longer in all the abstractions by which, as a European and Italian, I was enslaved perhaps even more than you are. Thus I do not believe in things born from such abstractions.

Therefore, coming back to town planning, when I notice the ideal cities projected by some modern architectural genius, if you wish, who gratuitously would like to see mankind living in skyscrapers like in a beehive, or in small individual houses on highway ribbons, or in the thousand and one ways that imagination could suggest, when I notice that such plans, although made by intelligent men, conscious of certain modern problems, are so different from each other as to seem the result of completely different civilizations. I say: let us try to be more humble and simple, more human and true, because only thus can a true city be born. After all, notwithstanding the scientific progress and the greater number of comforts, we see that the house built by the most free and modern architect is not so far from the one built by Chinese and Japanese architects thousands of years ago, from the Pompeian house built three thousand years ago, and so on. This means that, although many things change in man, there exist some elements of immutable order as part of man, which can never be extirpated so long as man be man.

As a conclusion of this very hurried analysis we could examine all the old problems of the city in the past, canvass them through our recent technical and spiritual elements, and finally create an organism. It would not be difficult to canvass all the elements forming a city, old or new as they may be, churches, squares, theatres, public buildings, museums, railroad stations, airports, schools, and so on, observe them under thin new visual angle, to find out what their new manifestation might be, and with the marvellous⁵ modern techniques create organisms as good as the old ones. It would not be difficult for example to ask ourselves: must we really have a church? or should we not rather have a place where men, instead of making rites and thus separations between themselves and other men, may feel united to the other in this adventure on earth? and if such a thing as a church or its modern substitute must exist, in which position must it be in respect to the city zones? Must the theatre exist or not, and if it must exist, must it acquire a new form? something which is not the bourgeois parlor, and what place shall it take in our new city? What must be a hospital? and what is the patient? Must a hospital be something like a prison, a hotel, an apartment house? Is the patient a being who must be temporarily isolated from society or, just because in a state of temporary inferiority, treated with greater care because he needs more humanity near him? Must there still exist the old squares, like in the European towns, where children play and the old ones sit to breathe the fresh air, and the citizens and the foreigners sit at the tables of the open cafes, or must something else be born instead? And, coming to more recent constructions, how must we build railroad stations, airports, etc., and how should we be ready to give place to possible new organisms, which modern techniques may demand at any time? Which and how should be the k house of man? And how should they be related to the problems of the family, particularly when divorce is permitted? In conclusion, it would not be difficult after examining all these elements, to evaluate them, to classify them and order them organically within the new town.

This, theoretically.

Practically you may ask me: what to do? Unfortunately I will know, perhaps better than .you because Italy and Europe are countries poorer than yours and with fewer material possibilities, I will know all the obstacles that men of bad faith and short sightedness put to the execution of these projects. Difficulties that it is unnecessary to enumerate because every town planner in every country has met them in the exercise of his profession. But as I know them well I do not believe in these difficulties. Because, as in a good industrial administration, a certain program is needed to regulate a city. It means to create order in a city, and consequently economy, under any point of view. I wish you would ask me: If you were in a town, and were allowed to, how would you go about it? The question is not embarrassing.

I would do it this way: I would promote a meeting with the mayor, the local authorities, the best representatives of any field of human activity, politicians, industrialists, union chiefs, and so on, and would express myself in this way:

5 Mistype: to be replaced with "marvellous".

"I have called you not to form one of the usual bureaucratic committies⁶ where one loses time and money but only to make come concrete proposals for a plan of operation. We live in a town developed in these last times, so that the heaviness of false tradition does not oppress us. We have on the contrary many oppportunities in our favor. We have the possibility of studying together the fundamental requirements of modern man, and making our city a really modern city? Shall we get rid of our egoism end egocentrism, and get busy?"

I know the answer of the various individuals. The artists and the architects would be jumping for happiness, medical and professional people probably would be happy of this experiment, others, at the beginning, indifferent. Those to put the first objections would possibly be political men, economists and burocrats⁷. The main objections could be resumed into two. One, economical impose sibility⁸ to act in order not to increase the budget and consequently taxes. Two, impossibility to limit the individual initiatives and freedom of action. To the first objection one could answer with easy factual data. It would not be difficult to demonstrate that poor zoning calls for commuting two hours to work, with consequent tiredness and inferior output. That the expense of instalment and maintenance of streets, sewers, power lines etc. owing to the great dispersion in area, weigh heavily on the city's public budget. From a merely economical point of view, since America is a country of over-production, the use of capital for public works would allow the same rhythm of currency circulation and market absorption that other less noble economical expedients allow. In this case we would also create a public patrimony of which everyone would benefit. As far as freedom of initiative is concerned, I wish to be purposely paradoxical, because often on this word many equivoques are created. Is it freedom to walk on the street and slap somebody on the face without reason whatsoever? Is it not the same as slapping somebody on the face if I, the egoist, decide to put a chimney under the neighbour's eyes, or build a monster of ugliness that my neighbors have to see day and night? Is not freedom a symbol of order, and not of anarchy? These and other similar objections being surpassed all that is left is to start work. With the means that Los Angeles has, as it changed face completely in area and comfort during the last years, it could in an equally short time change face as far as civilization is concerned in a clear demonstration⁹ to the world of a modern and alive city.

Thank you.

6 Mistype: to be replaced with "committee".

7 Mistype: to be replaced with "bureaucrats".

8 In English this noun does not exist, but it is expected that the author would have liked to employ "impossibility".

9 Mistype: to be replaced with "demonstration".

Leonardo Ricci and Florence (1936-1989)

Leonardo Ricci, Florentine Architects, List of the Works, Arts and Architecture, Design Evolution

/Abstract

The paper wants to be an overview on the work of Leonardo Ricci in his town, Florence, by depicting a complete frame about his activity as a painter, architect, scenographer and about his relationship with Florence and with his projects in the different phases of his life.

The chronological span, from 1936 to 1989, was chosen in function of the available archival resources. The list of Ricci's work is therefore enriched by his drawings that best explain his experimentation through different representative methods and languages, able to convey the projects' strength.

The pictures of the drawings's choice was also driven by the intention to integrate the iconographic material already published in HPA issue no. 9, *Leonardo Ricci (1918-1994) - Archives I*, which collects a plenty of unknown graphic documents, especially in the archival records sections.

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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 with the title *Leonardo Ricci in the United States (1952-1972)* by LetteraVentidue. She has collaborated on architecture exhibitions in 2019 and 2020 about Leonardo Ricci as well as on national and international research projects: she was free researcher at UBA for the interdepartimental project SPEME (Questioning Traumatic Heritage: Spaces of Memory in Europe, Argentina, Colombia) in 2018, helping in collecting research materials on the traumatic memory of the dictatorship in Argentina, then free researcher at MIT in 2019 and 2022.

She is involved in national and international conferences and she is currently adjunct professor of History of Architecture at Architecture-Engineering degree course (Bologna campus).

Leonardo Ricci was born in Rome in 1918, but soon his family moved to Florence because of his father's work. To describe Leonardo Ricci's relationship with Florence it is worth making an introduction about his view on painting, since his artistic work there began as a painter. It is important to start dealing with Ricci's view on painting with the words he used to explain the meaning of painting in a paragraph of the eight chapter of his book *Anonymous (XX century)* titled "Raison d'Être of Painting". To Ricci painting was an act as the form in architecture, the form-act deriving from the human acts:

No longer painting-opinion, painting-comment. No longer painting enslaved to an idea. No longer painting propaganda. Nor painting experiment. No. This is painting as an act. Painting as living. Like breathing, eating. Painting as loving. Painting as creation, emancipated and free. Painting that has become object. That functions as object. The object of Anonymous (20th Century)¹.

In the book Ricci faced all fields of interest for his work - architecture, urban design, urban planning, and painting - feeling them in strong connection one to the other.

Painting is not a state of perfection; it is not a state of grace. You paint because there is something inside your chest that wants to get out. It cannot stay in there. It hurts. It hurts like a head-splitting toothache. It must get out².

What does painting really mean to me? Why do I go on painting, still making pictures? I paint them because I am still alone, and not capable of integrated acts every minute of the day. I also know that painting is no longer a symbol of perfection but a demonstration of my imperfection; which means that my acts are not yet accomplished³.

Ricci's painting was "free and relieved" - as he himself defined it - and it was driven by the feeling of solitude, which was strongly connected to the concept of existence: casting paint on canvas or wooden tables was for him a way to let a piece of himself get out. A piece of his existence was getting in touch with the external world. Painting was born because of the human incapacity to break solitude, and, to do it, men painted images that became free, liberated forms in space⁴. It consisted in and had turned into a relationship with all things, it became act, and then, life. It must be understood in its main function of describing the process of revealing the truth of life and as a discipline practiced to investigate on life, on existence, and on the need for the synthesis of the arts. Painting introduced Ricci to some of the fundamental themes of investigation for his architectural research, some encountered as guiding themes of the exhibitions he took part in.

1 Ricci, *Anonymous (XX century)*, 142.

2 Ricci, *Anonymous (XX century)*, 127.

3 Ricci, *Anonymous (XX century)*, 133.

4 Ricci, *Anonymous (XX century)*, 137.

To Ricci painting was useful to reach the truth of life the society had to give back to the artist with the possibility of being useful and integrated in a world that considered artists evil fellows, emarginated, anarchical men. To him, with the help of the artists' sensitivity and attitude to dominate the world of textures and colours, with their imagination - «better prepared than others' to create new and vital spaces» - everyone could «get honest products, genuine, useful, and well-made products. [...] An end will be put to all those absurd, pseudo-cultural polemics between "realism" and "abstractionism", or among the various schools of abstractionism as to which is the true one⁵».

Moreover, Ricci did not understand classifications and the critics' attempts to define artistic movements and works of art. Since he intended painting as a language, the only things that mattered were expression, communication, and truth.

Ricci firstly faced painting at sixteen, when he had already started his painting self-taught work and had his first exhibitions in Italy in Florence and Padova: the "Esposizione intersindacale veneta di pittura" (Padova, 1934 and 1935), and the "Esposizione intersindacale toscana di pittura" (Firenze, 1936 and 1937). Indeed, in half 1930s he started working with a group of Paduan artists, a small group of young self-taught artists who had the desire to renew the Paduan artistic environment. There he knew his friend Lucio Grossato, who remembered Ricci as the youngest, the most quick-tempered and passionate member of the group⁶.

When *Il Bò*, fortnightly of the fascist university group, decided to publish an article on Ricci's painting by Grossato⁷, Ricci's artistic ambition was already visible in the sign of his works, which, despite showing their author's acerbity in colour and plastic effect, in the deformation of the sign they showed his temperament⁸ [Fig. 1].

In Ricci's early works, at twenty⁹, already animated by primitivist influences, the colour acquired particular importance because it was born with the realistic intuition of things, and then changed once it became the object of the author's imagination and elaborations. The design was concise, and the volumes were



1

5 Ricci, *Anonymus (XX century)*, 143.

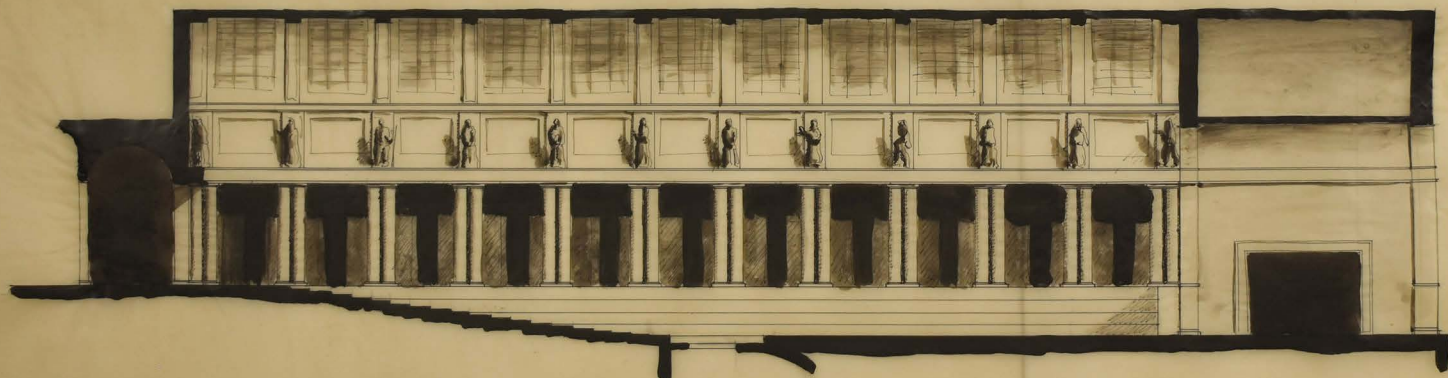
6 Lucio Grossato was a historian of art who knew Leonardo Ricci in Padova, where Leonardo Ricci spent the first part of his life. A significant corpus of letters by Grossato spanning from February 1936 to September 1942 tells the deep friendship between him and Leonardo Ricci. The letters are kept in Casa Studio Ricci.

7 Lucio Grossato, "Il Pittore Leonardo Ricci", *Il Bò*, no.5 (May 15, 1938).

8 At the time Ricci was still blocked by ethical, psychological, naturalistic, and rationalistic dictates, but he was passionate and solitary at the same time. This feeling of loneliness will be what will allow him to subsequently define his relationship with painting and the reasons for it. "Solitary, rude, but not naïve", as Grossato remembered him, he was guided by moments of solitude, in which he meditated intensely. He gave precedence to his own spiritual rather than aestheticizing values. Leonardo Ricci started his reflection from nature and life, using man, not understood as an ethical entity but as the grounding principle and measure of his works, to create, without re-using pre-established forms.

9 Clément Morro, "Leonardo Ricci", *Revue Moderne illustrée des artes et de la vie*, no. 15 (September 13, 1938).

Fig. 1
The article by Lucio Grossato published in *Il Bò* magazine, page 1 of the Logbook no. 1, Casa Studio Ricci.



ALZATO RAPP. 1:100

clear, the plastic of the shapes highlighted the material essence of things, sometimes full-bodied and sometimes aerial.

In this period Ricci acquired a modern synthesis of plasticity and colour, as well as a concise plasticity in structure derived from the nineteenth century teachings. Primitivism was what approached Ricci to the Italian art of the time, it was at the same time the sign of his search for sincerity and of the lack of decadent refinement¹⁰.

Afterwards, Ricci followed the "Scuola Romana" and its preference for dark tones expressing a clear heretical vision with respect to the demands of vigorous realism by fascism. In the meanwhile, he graduated in Architecture in 1942 at the Faculty of Architecture in Florence with a thesis work concerning the project for a theater titled "Teatro al chiuso e Teatro all'aperto" for the Boboli Garden [Fig. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6].

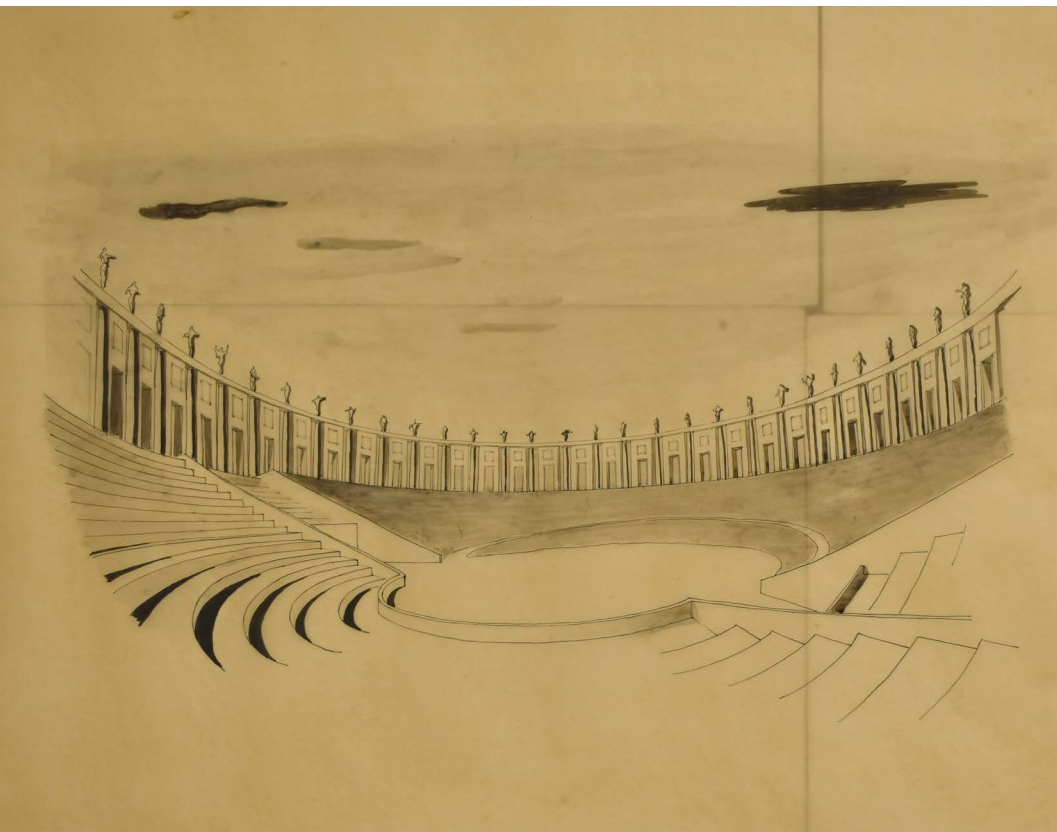
After his graduation, the appointment as Giovanni Michelucci's assistant professor allowed Ricci to deepen his research, meet the first job opportunities and the possibility to combine painting, architecture, design, the set-up of exhibitions, the staging of opera shows, and scenography. Ricci was completely involved both in painting and in architecture till the postwar period, when he took part in the work of the maverick classic Abstract art group "Arte oggi", under the supervision of the master Michelucci and of the Gallery "La Vigna Nuova". In this period he gave birth to both paintings similar to those of classical abstract artists and others with figurative subjects that had to do with the ancestral myth and the primitive activities of ritual

Fig. 2
Leonardo Ricci's thesis work titled "Teatro al chiuso e Teatro all'aperto", section, scale 1:100, Casa Studio Ricci.

10 Grossato, "Il pittore Leonardo Ricci".



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Fig. 3

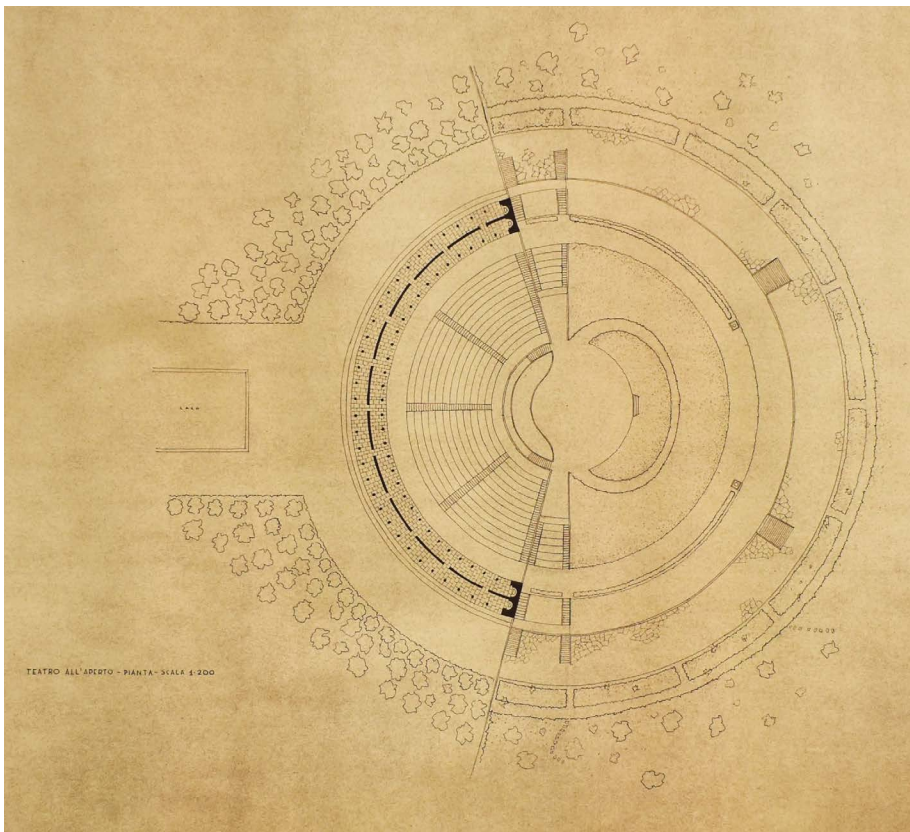
Leonardo Ricci's thesis work titled "Teatro al chiuso e Teatro all'aperto", view from the inside of the covered theatre, Casa Studio Ricci.

Fig. 4

Leonardo Ricci's thesis work titled "Teatro al chiuso e Teatro all'aperto", view of the open theatre from the inside, Casa Studio Ricci.



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Fig. 5
Leonardo Ricci's thesis work titled "Teatro al chiuso e Teatro all'aperto", general view of the open theatre, Casa Studio Ricci.

Fig. 6
Leonardo Ricci's thesis work titled "Teatro al chiuso e Teatro all'aperto", plan of the open air theatre, Casa Studio Ricci.

dance, struggle, embrace, birth, death and motherhood. Figures are often moving and they represent masks or human shapes, in which the sensation of movement is given with the use of sinuous lines and brush movements. For the group of young painters, the aim was to break with naturalist intimacy in favor of a new social interventionism, to overcome the "return to order" and experiment with new languages as the historical avant-gardes did before. The Florentine group took the name of classical abstractionism: they pursued the purity of form, rigorous compositions, flat and bright color backgrounds, crystalline geometrism, as if to return to the example of the Tuscan Renaissance, that created in architecture a perfect space Ricci would have then broken with his projects.

Making a step forward in time, in 1962 Ricci published in his *Anonymous (XX century)* his "Farewell, Masters; Farewell, Geniuses", as he titled a chapter in which he declared his love for the masters of painting and architecture of the twentieth century, but recognized their limits for the new direction art had to follow: masterpieces and heroes belonged to the pre-war period¹¹. The new era had suffered the crisis of values and, therefore, their teachings were not enough. Ricci experienced the masters' lessons finding new forms and open solutions: ritual masks, female figures playing the moon, simple silhouettes on textured backgrounds as in cave paintings, primitive pregnant Venuses, angels, and demons, all immobile and absolute¹².

Ricci's relationship with the masters' lesson and the attitude he derived from it influenced both his painting and architecture. More in detail, in his architectures Ricci declined the grammar adopted for painting for his home design: volumes clinging to the curves of the ground, load-bearing partitions in local stone, beams and inclined slabs in exposed reinforced concrete, simple wooden stairs, poor iron fixtures, in contrast with the refined finishes in stone and marble and with the numerous artistic interventions: ceramic panels on the terrace of the living room and on the wall of the library, compositions in recycled pieces of coloured glass such as the 'stone garden' in front of the house.

The first project that links Leonardo Ricci to Florence is the interior design and furnishing transformation of the center and didactic national museum of Palazzo Gerini in 1942 with Giovanni Michelucci. Michelucci, commissioned by Minister Bottai, drew up the project for the arrangement and furnishing of Palazzo Gerini in 1941 with his collaborators Edoardo Detti, Giuseppe Giorgio Gori, Ernesto Nelli and Leonardo Ricci in order to carry out the rearrangement of the rooms for the National Educational Center in Borgo Allegri, 51, inaugurated in the same year. For the occasion they engaged in an integral design effort, from restoration to fixed and movable furnishings, to the ordering of explanatory materials.

11 Ricci, *Anonymous (XX century)*, 79-99.

12 Giovanna Uzzani has recognized in these subjects of Ricci influences of the blue period or the contemporary period of Picasso who painted on ceramics, in the dramatic nudes on two-colored and gloomy backgrounds of Egon Schiele contrasted with material and golden surfaces that recall Cimabue. Uzzani, "Leonardo Ricci pittore", 135.

Already in 1936-38, following the redevelopment to the neighborhood and the new arrangement of Piazza dei Ciompi, Palazzo Gerini underwent a complete restoration promoted by the municipality and directed by the architect Ezio Zalaffi, head of the office of Fine Arts. The overlook on Via Michelangelo Buonarroti 10 is the result of the ex-novo reinterpretation of this portion of the factory, obtained after demolition of the old buildings, again designed by Ezio Zalaffi, but in strict adherence to Renaissance forms, including the roof-terrace, at the time highly praised in its restitution of the characters proper to Florentine tradition as well as the paired Tuscan columns and pillars. Next to the building there were plans for the erection of an additional body of the building, for which Giovanni Michelucci was given charge.

The center was divided into three main sections: the Educational Museum, the Technical Education Exhibition and the Historical Exhibition School; in the technical area there was a reserved room for the celebration of the immortal Carlo Collodi, the author of *Pinocchio*. The rooms housed materials illustrating the evolution of the school through the centuries. In the Historical Exhibition, the collected documents of the greatest interest have found their proper setting in rooms that, devoid of any reference to style and built with modern architecture and furnishings, provide that special atmosphere that did not allow distraction or misrepresentation. In the rooms devoted to technical education, the mechanical element of scientific instruments and materials, moderate in number and distribution, have been inaugurated with a rigorous architectural sense. The Educational Museum, in relation to elementary education and school building, has been contained in its own freshness and immediacy, in simple and bright rooms¹³.

One year later, always with Michelucci, Ricci worked at the project for the interior and furnishing transformation of Termini Ventura House, in Guicciardini road. After World War II the project was revised by Michelucci, who built the house on the corner of Via Guicciardini and Via dello Sprone for the Ina Assicurazione and parts of the Termini Ventura house¹⁴.

In the decade of the 1940s, therefore since the very beginning of his career, Ricci reflected on a typological theme he would have later investigated in other phases of his professional life: the cemetery, the "city of the dead", a spatial representation of the passage between life and death.

Indeed, in 1944, while designing the Settignano cemetery, a young Ricci was still in a phase of formal experimentation, he was a pupil of Michelucci, who worked also with Edoardo Detti, Giuseppe Giorgio Gori, Riccardo Gizdulich and Leonardo

13 Luigi Pescetti, "Compiti e aspetti del Centro Didattico Nazionale," *Il Corriere del Tirreno*, October 28, 1941; "A Palazzo Gerini," *Il Nuovo Giornale*, October 28, 1941; "A Palazzo Gerini," *Il Nuovo Giornale*, October 29, 1941; "L'inaugurazione del Centro Didattico Nazionale," *La Nazione*, October 29, 1941; articles collected in "Logbook", n.1 (1938-1952), page 2, Casa Studio Ricci; Corinna Vasič Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto "esistenzialista"* (Florence: Edifir, 2005): 18.

14 <https://www.michelucci.it/architetture-nel-tempo/> (last accessed: May 12, 2023). Luigi Pescetti, "Compiti e aspetti del Centro Didattico Nazionale," *Il Corriere del Tirreno*, October 28, 1941; "A Palazzo Gerini," *Il Nuovo Giornale*, October 28, 1941; "A Palazzo Gerini," *Il Nuovo Giornale*, October 29, 1941; "L'inaugurazione del Centro Didattico Nazionale," *La Nazione*, October 29, 1941; articles collected in "Logbook", n.1 (1938-1952), page 2, Casa Studio Ricci.

Savioli to enhance in them a reasoning on the possibility to think of architectural insertions into the surrounding landscape that did not create any “architectural void in nature”. Their reflection was centered on the wall: a wall proportionate in height and thickness, broken into several segments, distributed in different planes of the promontory, which could free up views of the landscape. The main sector downstream was also concluded by a simple plastered wall, pierced by a few windows that lighten it, re-proposing the theme of ‘panoramic pictures’.

With the other young architects, Ricci designed the “Cimitero dei Partigiani” in Settignano. The Partisans’ Cemetery did not yearn for the “vanity of the living” or a detachment with them, because the partisans, of whom Ricci was also part, were an active part of the living world and should continue to be so. The architect, therefore, thought of a project that suggested a connection with nature and with men, making the partisans “equal in the uniform of death” as equal they were in combat. The tomes are all equal and all united, stripped of unnecessary additions, in a serene and humane environment where they could rest in communion with the living and their thoughts that went to honor their memory.

The chosen site was on a slight slope, dotted with olive trees and bordered by two streams. The designers’ first goal was to find the perfect rest place for three hundred partisans, that had to fit in nature without destroying the continuity of the landscape. For this reason, in the Settignano cemetery, the wall does not divide, creating an architectural void in the landscape, but it is proportionate in height and thickness, breaking into several segments distributed on different planes, leaving unobstructed views of the landscape at different points. For the same reasons, it was decided not to close the various openings

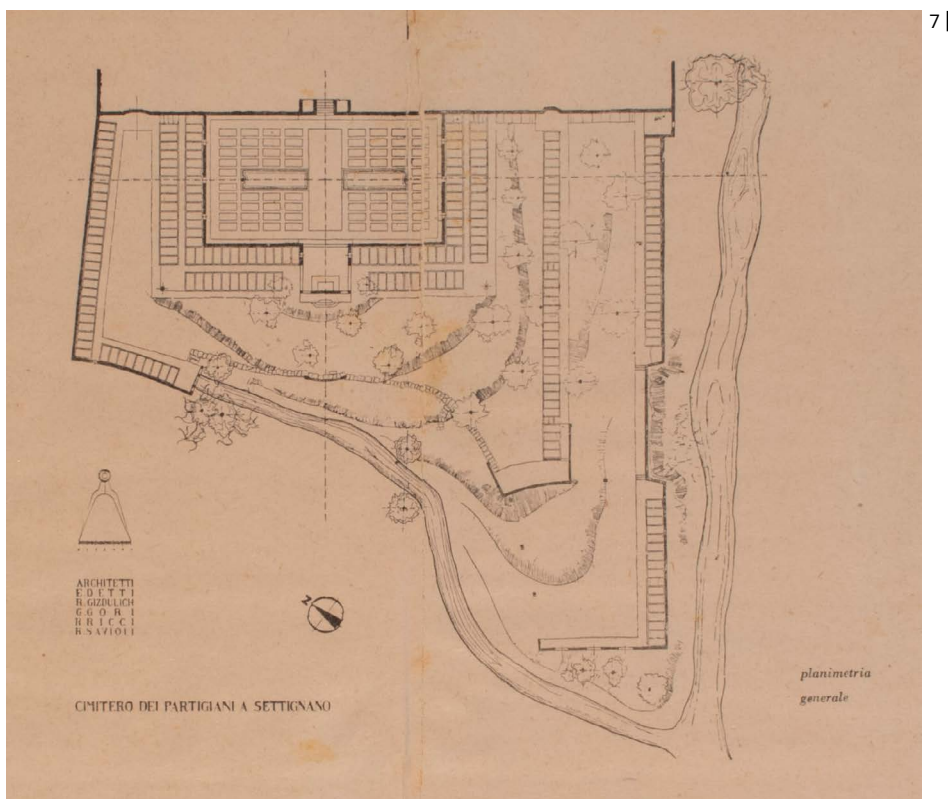


Fig. 7
The Partisans’ Cemetery, Settignano, general plan, image published in the article by Manlio Cancogni, “Il Cimitero dei Partigiani a Settignano.” *Il Nuovo Giornale*, August 11, 1944., Logbook no. 1, page 3, Casa Studio Ricci.

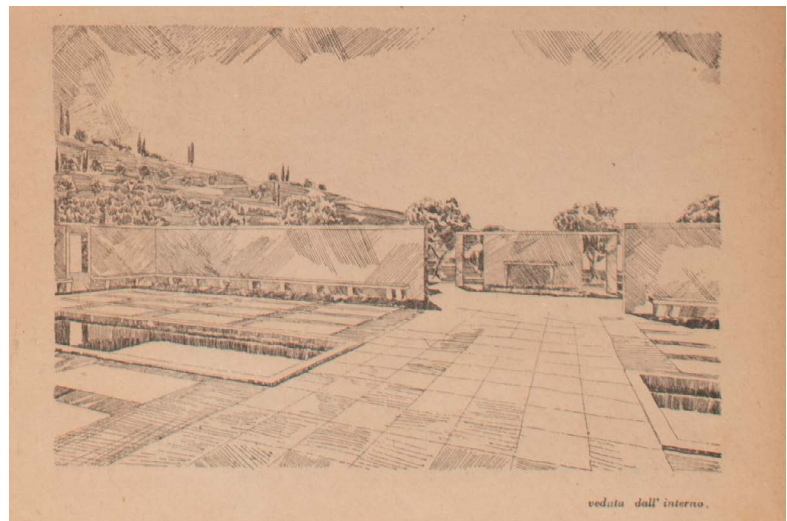
with gates, and the existing trees were maintained. The graves were arranged regularly around the wall and lined up, all covered by the same marble slab. In the main sector, downstream, the wall was finished with a simple architectural element and sandstone benches were placed there, on the inner side, to facilitate visitors' rest. The wall, made of plaster, was lightened with windows opening along its entire length. The design strength was thus found in the harmony of proportions, of colors - primarily green - and volumes, rather than on decoration and pageantry¹⁵ [Fig. 7, 8, 9].

Ricci would take up the cemetery program theme again years later, in 1967, with the expansion of the Montecatini Basso cemetery¹⁶. While the commission for the Montecatini Alto cemetery is given to Leonardo Savioli, who will build his part with Emilio Brizzi and Danilo Santi, Ricci's project was not realized.

On June 18, 1946, after an initial collaboration with Renzo Chiarelli and Riccardo Gizdulich, Ricci was given responsibility for the entire project of the Reconstruction and general plan of Vicchio del Mugello by



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15 Lucio Grossato, "Leonardo Ricci," *il Bò*, no. 5 (1938); Clément Morro, "Leonardo Ricci," *Revue moderne illustrée des artes et de la vie*, no. 15 (1938); Manlio Cancogni, "Il Cimitero dei Partigiani a Settignano," *Il Nuovo Giornale*, August 11, 1944, 5, 68, 72, 75, article and drawings collected in "Logbook" n. 1 (1938-1952), page 3, Casa Studio Ricci. Vasić Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto "esistenzialista"*, 19; Maria Clara Ghia, *La nostra città è tutta la terra, Leonardo Ricci architetto (1918-1994)* (Wuppertal: Steinhäuser Verlag, 2021): 62, 264.

16 In the 1966 study project, Savioli imagines the new cemetery as a park organized by paths, a circuit that also includes the old cemetery and establishes a dialogue with the landscape through large visual cones open onto the valley. In the final project of 1967, this attention to views remains in the blades that cut the roof of the large interior space, as does the theme of the path through terraces and the strong tectonic impact of the structure obtained through the excavation of a large unified space for the basilica hall. There are of course similarities with Ricci's project, the idea of the path, the grounding and the excavation, but Ricci formally resolves the theme through the design of a sculptural shell: l'ésprit de finesse prevails over l'ésprit de géométrie. Burials are placed on mounds of soil. The transition between nature and architecture, between life and the space of silence, of rest, of the intimate relationship between the living and the dead, is represented with great drama. The connection to the ground takes place through promenades, ribbons emerging from the openings of the shell-membranes that give shape to the project. An idea takes shape that, perhaps at an unconscious level, is even referable to the excavation for the burials of the monument to the martyrs of the Ardeatine Quarries by Mario Fiorentino and Giuseppe Perugini (1944-51), but the stereometric slab of the roofing takes on informal aspects here. The closest reference is, as always, Michelucci: in the tormented sketches for the monument for the fallen soldiers of Kindu of 1961, an underground space appears covered by an uneven volume, like a heap of stone blocks. On the other hand, in the project realised for the cemetery of Jesi in 1984-85, it is easy to find references to the forms of the great pyramid and the sentinel towers, or the shoe-shaped basement that alludes to the fortified walls of Jesi, as well as the relationship with the ground, in the ascent of the vertical paths to form overlooks, resting places, suspended squares from which to look inwards or towards the landscape. If the 'cities of the dead' are indeed configured as 'pieces of city' in a constant relationship with the landscape, so too the 'cities of justice', designed for Savona in 1981-87 and for Florence in its two design phases, from 1981 to 1987 and from 1987 to 1989, are 'pieces of city' this time carved out within the urban context. More difficult, in the latter cases, is the insertion of strong, recognisable signs that must resonate with built or expanding neighbourhoods.

Fig. 8

The Partisans' Cemetery, Settignano, top view, image published in the article by Manlio Cancogni, "Il Cimitero dei Partigiani a Settignano," *Il Nuovo Giornale*, August 11, 1944., Logbook no. 1, page 3, Casa Studio Ricci.

Fig. 9

The Partisans' Cemetery, Settignano, view from the inside, image published in the article by Manlio Cancogni, "Il Cimitero dei Partigiani a Settignano," *Il Nuovo Giornale*, August 11, 1944., Logbook no. 1, page 3, Casa Studio Ricci.

the municipality. Integrating the reconstruction plan with the master plan, instrumental in the drafting of the detailed plan for the town's new historic center, the plan mainly aimed at giving the town a more organic appearance from a compositive point of view. It was more rationally structured for facing traffic and hygienic issues. In this intervention the intention of preferring redesign over restoration of the pre-existing buildings clearly emerges. In order not to incur a false history, the plan refuses to restore the ancient towers, but maintains the concept of wall closure. The inspiring theme of the project is the beautiful landscape that induces the enhancement of open spaces and panoramic views¹⁷ [Fig. 10, 11, 12].

In the same year of the reconstruction of Vicchio, Ricci was also encharged of a consultation for the reconstruction and the general plan of Dicomano, then elaborated by Leonardo Savioli, and finished in 1948.

In 1945-1946 Ricci's experience in the bridges' design with the Tuscan group started: the first projects under the guide of Michelucci affected the development of Ricci's work to such an extent that he was able to identify in those projects the premises for design solutions adopted later. The bridges had a monumental emphasis in the stairways at various levels and in the opening of the squares to the heads on the pylons with round arches. These components were already present in the project for the "Ponte alla Vittoria", where the stairs placed along the extrados of the three downstream arches made it possible to reach the base of each pile, perforated and passable along its entire length to allow the passage on the slope upstream. Leonardo Ricci participated in the competition for the "Ponte alla Vittoria", dated January 15, 1945, with Leonardo Savioli, Riccardo Gizdulich, Giuseppe Giorgio Gori and Giorgio Neumann with a project titled "Luomo sul Ponte" ["The man on the Bridge"] and it was selected for the second session of the competition. It was then awarded with the second prize by the jury composed by Giovanni Michelucci, Roberto Salvini and Roberto Longhi, after Nello Baroni, Italo Gamberini, Lando Bartoli, Carlo Maggiora and Carlo Focacci's project titled "Il Ponte" [The Bridge]¹⁸ [Fig. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17].

Leonardo Ricci had participated in the competition for the reconstruction of the Ponte alla Carraia in July 1945 with Leonardo Savioli, Giuseppe Giorgio Gori and Giorgio Neumann with the project entitled "Ponte di Città" ["Bridge of Cities"].

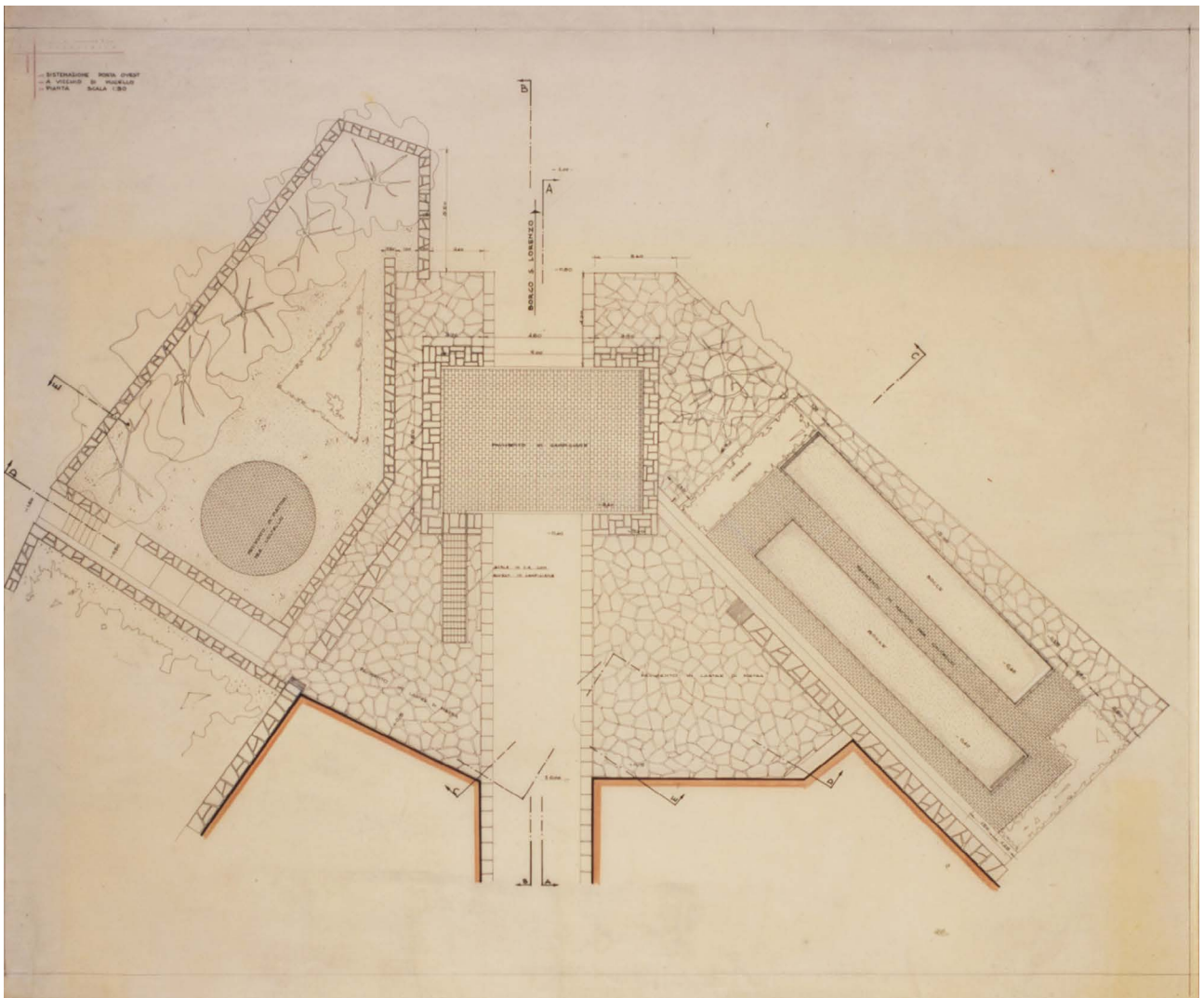


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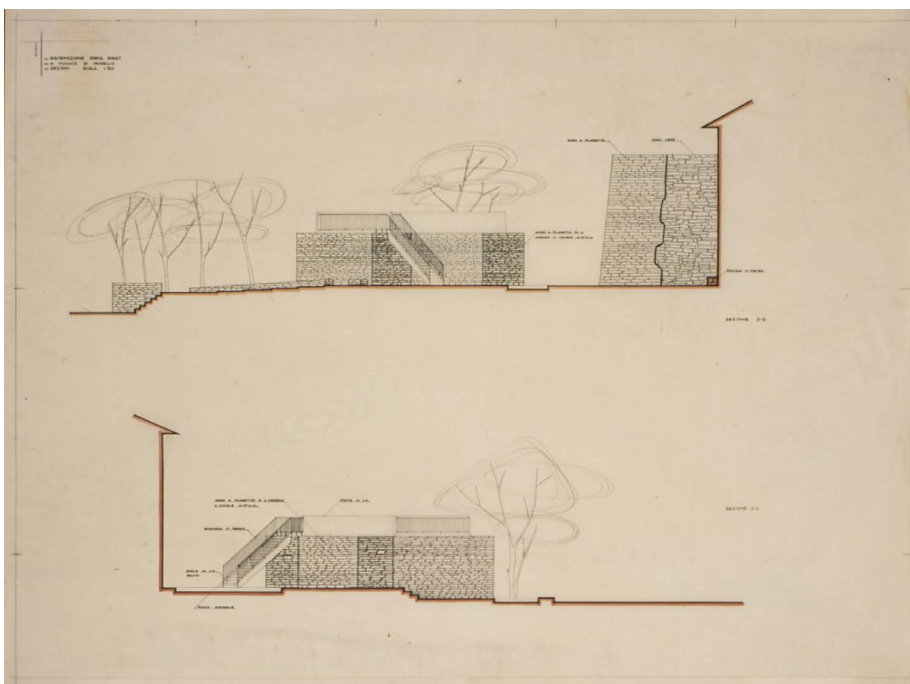
17 Renzo Chiarielli, "Problemi della ricostruzione. Urbanismo di due piccoli centri: Vicchio e Dicomano," *Emporium*, no. 617 (1946): 242-44; "Vicchio, piano di ricostruzione di Leonardo Ricci," *Associazione toscana architetti*, no. 3-4-5 (March-April-May 1947), magazine and Vicchio's floorplans collected in "Logbook" n. 1 (1938-1952), pages 14-15; Vasič Vatovec, *Architetto "esistenzialista"*, 21.

18 "Il Ponte della Vittoria, un concorso di secondo grado fra i primi tre progetti prescelti," *Il Corriere*, February 28, 1945; "Tre progetti prescelti per un concorso di secondo grado," *La Nazione del Popolo*, February 28, 1945; "Il ponte della Vittoria," *L'Arno*, March 11, 1945; "Postilla ad alcune considerazioni," *La Nazione*, March 13, 1945; "Il Ponte della Vittoria, considerazioni su di un concorso," *La Nazione*, March 10-11, 1945; "Il concorso del Ponte," *La Nazione del Popolo*, March 29, 1945; articles collected in "Logbook" n. 1 (1938-1952), page 4, Casa Studio Ricci.

Fig. 10
General plan for Vicchio del Mugello, pages of the article "Vicchio, Piano di Ricostruzione di Leonardo Ricci", published in *Associazione Toscana Architetti*, no.3-4-5 (May 1947), collected in Logbook no. 1, page 14, Casa Studio Ricci.



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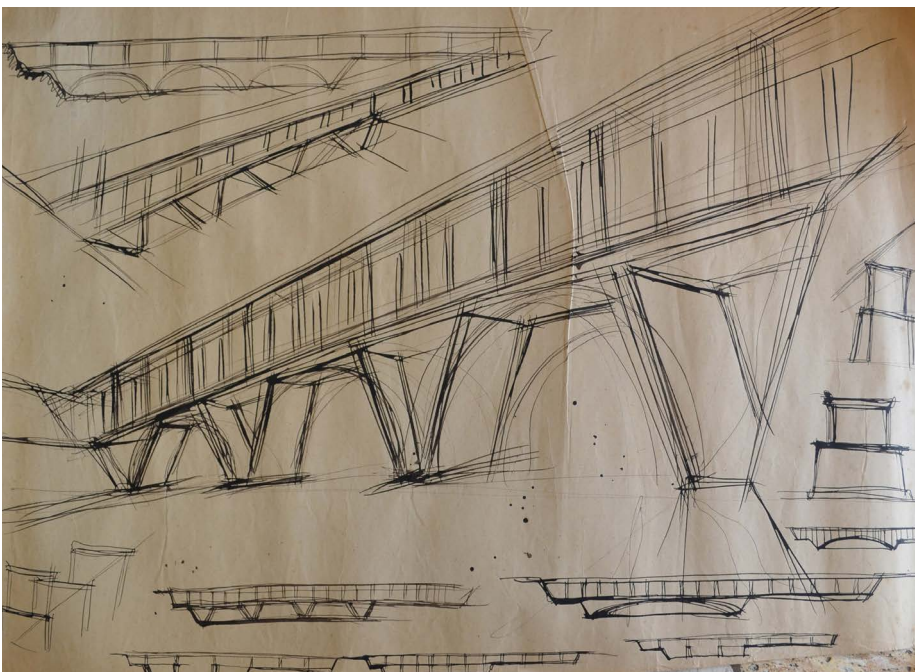
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Fig. 11
General plan for Vicchio del Mugello, west door restoration, plan, scale 1:50, B038564S, CSAC.

Fig. 12
General plan for Vicchio del Mugello, west door restoration, section and elevations, scale 1:50, B038566S, CSAC.



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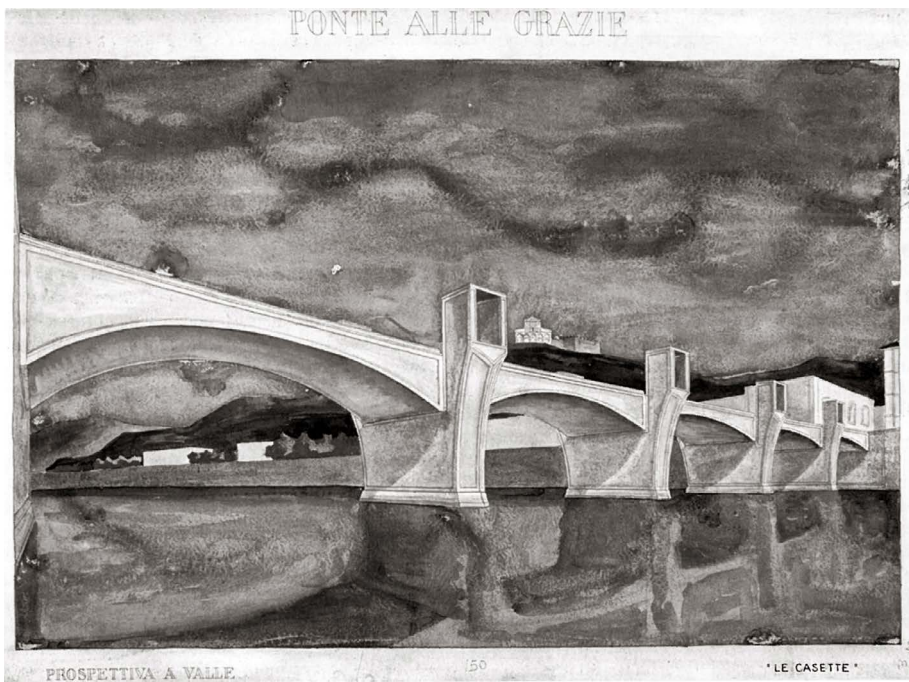
Fig. 13-17
Sketches for the reconstruction of the Florentine bridges,
Casa Studio Ricci.



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From 1945 to 1946 the group elaborated four versions of increasing complexity following the theme of full usability for humans, but the winner version was the first, the simplest one. It prefigured a bridge with five arches in reinforced concrete with stone formworks to make the cladding an integral part of the structure, which was neither a subsidiary nor a decorative element. The bridges were, as it was evident in the fourth version of the project for the "Ponte alla Carraia", "city pieces", architectural-urban-landscape, parks, and route junctions, because they interacted with the river and offered new views¹⁹. In 1948 Ricci, Giuseppe Giorgio Gori and Leonardo Savioli took part again in a new competition-contract for the same bridge.

The theme of the "Casette" ["Little Houses"] project for the "Ponte alle Grazie", anticipated the theme of panoramic views as "paintings" or "telescopes" that became the generating themes of entire projects with a fan plant. The "Casette" was the second version of the project for the "Ponte alle Grazie", object of a competition held in 1946. Ricci firstly participated in the competition with Giuseppe Giorgio Gori, Leonardo Savioli and Emilio Brizzi with a purpose titled "Le Piazze" ["The Squares"] based on the same principle of the project for "Ponte alla Carraia" on five arches with squares at the ends, from which the river was accessed with stairways. The version entitled "Le Casette" showed an accentuated plasticity, in which the five lowered arches were integrated with the triangular curvilinear spurs and tapered in the lower part that connected to the overhanging small houses-niches, from which the project version took its name [Fig. 18].

19 "Ricostruire le nostre città che la guerra ha disfatto- Lasciare testimonianza dei tempi nostri," *La Montagna*, November 15, 1946; "Il nuovo Ponte alla Carraia," *Il Nuovo Corriere*, September 28, 1947; "Linee e caratteristiche del nuovo Ponte alla Carraia," *Il Pomeriggio*, October 23, 1947; "Imminente inizio dei lavori per la ricostruzione dal Ponte alla Carraia," *Il Mattino*, June 15, 1948; "Notizie poco confortanti per il progetto del Ponte alla Carraia," *La Nazione Italiana*, December 22, 1949; articles collected in "Logbook" n. 1 (1938-1952), pages 13, 24, Casa Studio Ricci.

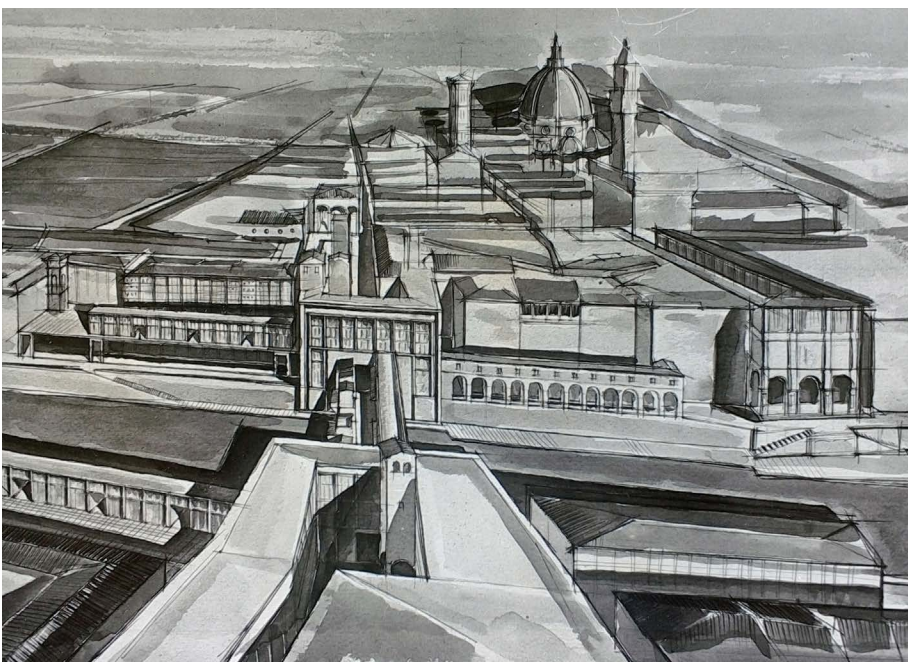
Fig. 18

Second version of the project for the "Ponte alle Grazie": titled "Le Casette" (1946), table of the project, undated and untitled sketch, Casa Studio Ricci.

After the destruction of World War II, with reference to the formative period and as a synthesis of the initial research based on the master's teaching, Giuseppe Giorgio Gori, Leonardo Savioli, Emilio Brizzi and Leonardo Ricci designed the plan for the reconstruction of the destroyed area in the neighborhood of Ponte Vecchio, taking part in the national competition for the reconstruction of the center of Florence (1946), and the Flowers' Covered Market in Pescia (1949) which was awarded at the Sao Paolo Architecture Biennale in Brazil in 1953, in Naples with the "Naples" Prize for Architecture in 1956 and published in Kidder Smith's *Italy Builds* (1955).



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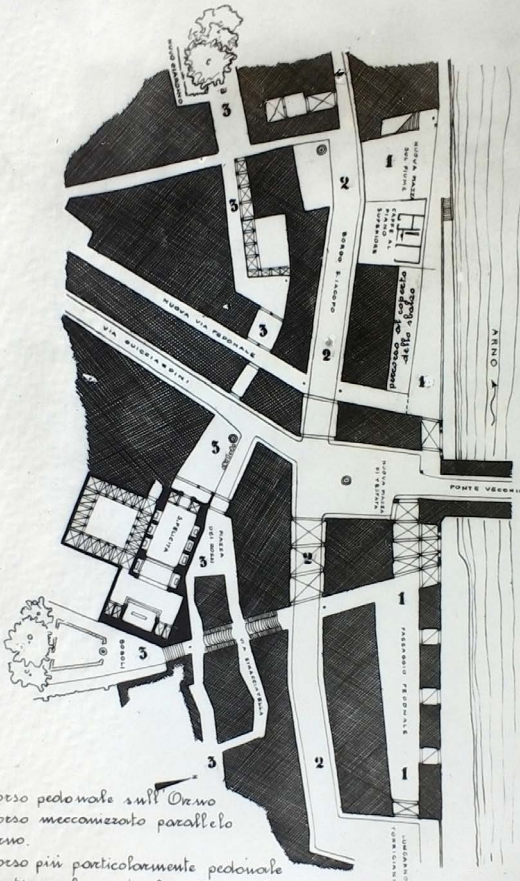


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Fig. 19
"Firenze sul Fiume", plan for the reconstruction of the destroyed area in the neighborhood of Ponte Vecchio, national competition for the reconstruction of the center of Florence (1946), top view, sketch, Casa Studio Ricci.

Fig. 20
"Firenze sul Fiume", plan for the reconstruction of the destroyed area in the neighborhood of Ponte Vecchio, national competition for the reconstruction of the center of Florence (1946), top view, sketch, Casa Studio Ricci.

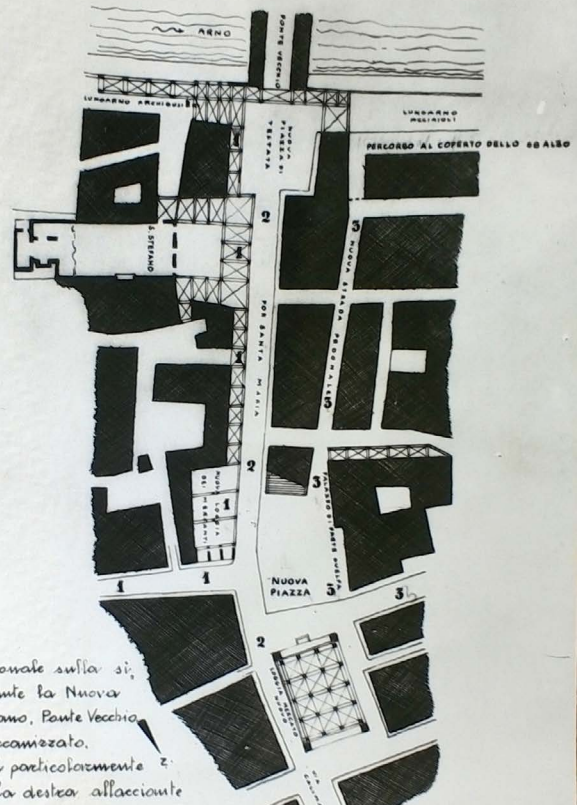
PIANTA AL PIANO TERRA AL DI LA' DELL'ARNO.



- 1- Percorso pedonale sull'Arno
- 2- Percorso meccanizzato parallelo all'Arno.
- 3- Percorso più particolarmente pedonale di quartiere che porta la vita dalla zona di Via Cosimella, al Nuovo Giardino, alla Chiesa di Santa Felicità a Boboli o alla Costa S. Giorgio.

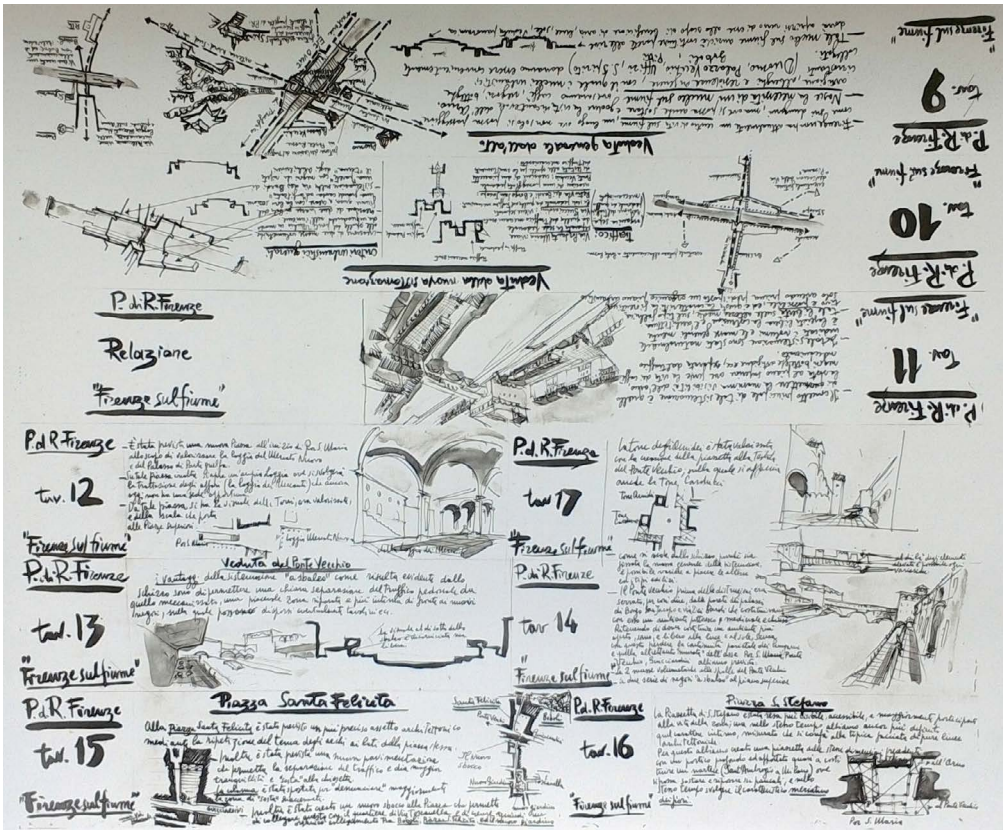
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PIANTA AL PIANO TERRA AL DI QUA DELL'ARNO.



- 1- Percorso pedonale sulla sinistra, affiancato da Nuova Loggia, S. Stefano, Ponte Vecchio.
- 2- Percorso Meccanizzato.
- 3- Percorso più particolarmente pedonale sulla destra affiancato da loggia del Mercato Nuovo, Palazzo di Parte Guelfa, l'Arno ed il Ponte Vecchio.

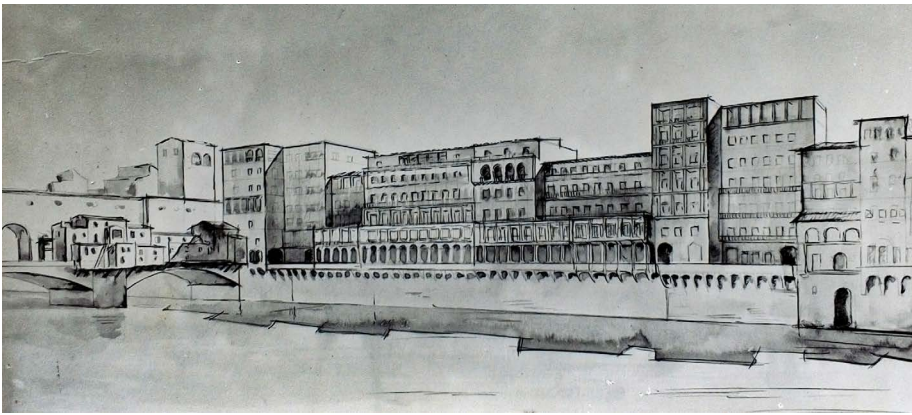
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Fig. 21-22
"Firenze sul Fiume", plan for the reconstruction of the destroyed area in the neighborhood of Ponte Vecchio, national competition for the reconstruction of the center of Florence (1946), tables of the projects, Casa Studio Ricci.

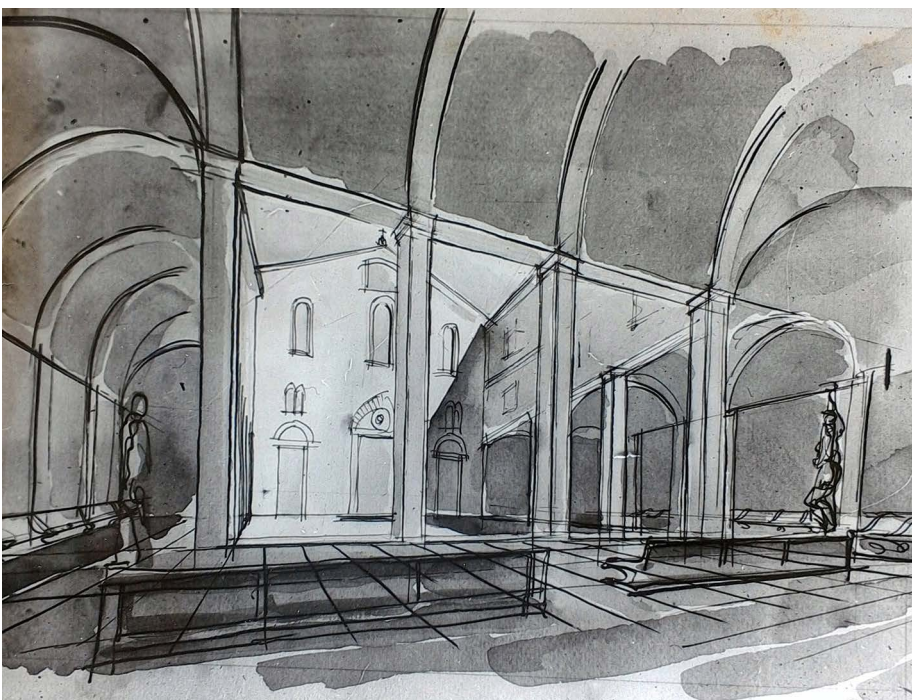
Fig. 23
"Firenze sul Fiume", plan for the reconstruction of the destroyed area in the neighborhood of Ponte Vecchio, national competition for the reconstruction of the center of Florence (1946), thumbnails sketches of the project drawings, Casa Studio Ricci.



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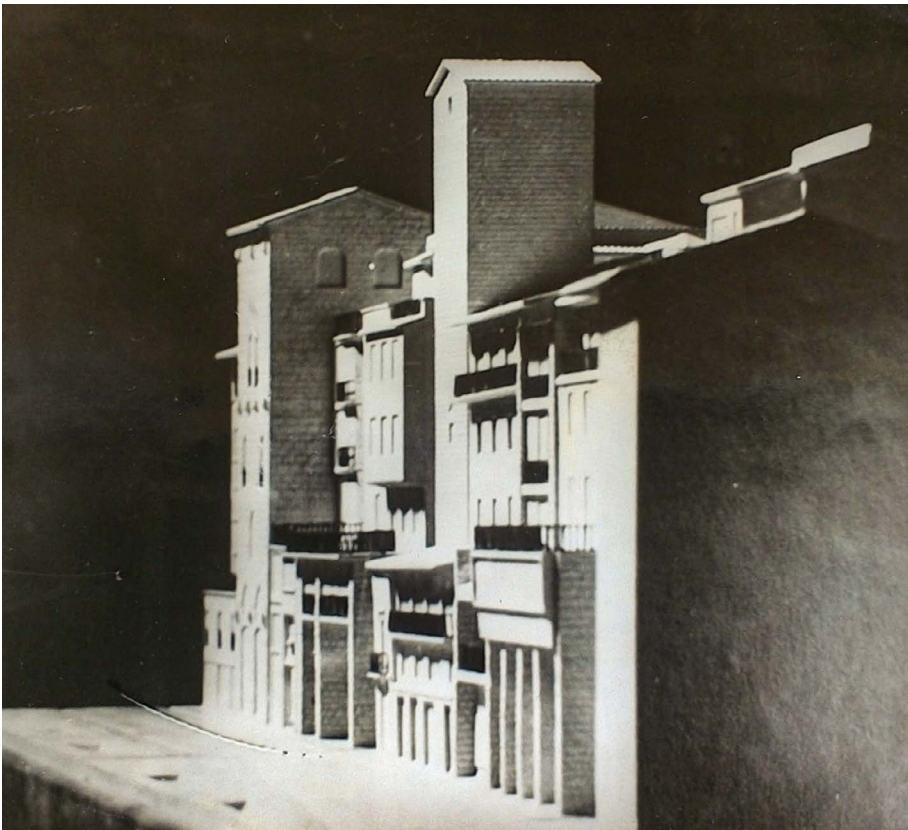


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Fig. 24
 "Firenze sul Fiume", plan for the reconstruction of the destroyed area in the neighborhood of Ponte Vecchio, national competition for the reconstruction of the center of Florence (1946), sketch by Leonardo Ricci of the project for the elevation on the Arno River, Casa Studio Ricci.

Fig. 25
 "Firenze sul Fiume", plan for the reconstruction of the destroyed area in the neighborhood of Ponte Vecchio, national competition for the reconstruction of the center of Florence (1946), sketch by Leonardo Ricci of the project for the elevation on the Arno River "Lungarno Acciaiuoli", Casa Studio Ricci.

Fig. 26
 "Firenze sul Fiume", plan for the reconstruction of the destroyed area in the neighborhood of Ponte Vecchio, national competition for the reconstruction of the center of Florence (1946), sketch by Leonardo Ricci, inside road view, Casa Studio Ricci.



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For the first Ricci's group elaborated the project "Firenze sul Fiume" ["Florence on the river"], perfect example of how the projects for bridges had matured in Ricci and in his colleagues the desire to extend the possibilities of reconnecting the urban tissue from the bridge to the surrounding areas. The project linked Por Santa Maria road to Guicciardini road through the connection offered by the preexistence of Ponte Vecchio. Two building blocks grafted the bridge to the two banks, on which two closed and covered squares opened on each side. In Casa Studio Ricci archive there are many drawings of the final project and a short report, which states that «the pedestrian path on the upper level (the first floor of the buildings) was planned organically, it was not fragmented or devoid of meaning. It originates from the sorting node of the new square on which it faces the Palazzo di Parte Guelfa, crosses the Arno on the roof of the Vasari Corridor, suitably arranged as a terrace, along the two elevated paths on the Arno at the end of which there is a staircase and ends at the opposite junction in via Guicciardini. Furthermore, as it can be clearly seen from the graphs, a direct connection was provided, from the roof of the Ponte Vecchio, through the Gallery of the new head building, with the Boboli Gardens. So that from the Loggia del Mercato Nuovo it is possible, with organic connections, to go to the Boboli Gardens without going down to the mechanized traffic floor»²⁰ [Fig. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27].

20 Luigi Piccinato, "Ricostruire Firenze," *Metron*, no. 16 (April, 1947); "Piano di ricostruzione d'Oltrarno," *Il Nuovo Corriere*, June 21, 1950; "Le Ricostruzioni intorno al Ponte Vecchio," *La Nazione Italiana*, June 27, 1950; articles and drawing of the facades of the buildings facing the Lungarno River near Trinita bridge collected in "Logbook" n. 1 (1938-1952), pages 19-20 and 32, Casa Studio Ricci; Luigi Piccinato, "Concorso per il piano di ricostruzione," *Urbanistica*, no. 12 (1953); article and picture of the model collected in "Logbook" n. 2 (1952-1956), page 58, Casa Studio Ricci; Vasič Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto "esistenzialista"*, 22.

Fig. 27

"Firenze sul Fiume", plan for the reconstruction of the destroyed area in the neighborhood of Ponte Vecchio, national competition for the reconstruction of the center of Florence (1946), sketch by Leonardo Ricci, picture of a model, Casa Studio Ricci.

In 1946 the group of Leonardo Ricci, Leonardo Savioli, Giuseppe Giorgio Gori, and Giulio Krall took part in the competition for “Ponte San Niccolò” with two projects: the first of a bridge with a single arch that reflected the requests of the competition, characterized by access stairs to the river leaning against the shoulders, and a version with three lowered arches on perforated piles connected to the road level. The same year saw the competition-contract for the bridge on Sieve river, San Piero a Sieve, in which Ricci participated with Giuseppe Giorgio Gori, Leonardo Savioli, executive firm Ferrobeton.

Between 1946 and 1947 Ricci took part in the competition-contract for the Ponte alla Rufina on the Sieve river with Giuseppe Giorgio Gori, Leonardo Savioli, Emilio Brizzi, Giorgio Neumann. They won the first prize and the bridge was realized. At the time Ricci was also involved in the project of reconstruction and expansion of Palazzo Albion, Lungarno Acciaiuoli with Giuseppe Giorgio Gori, Leonardo Savioli²¹.

In 1947 he also took part in several competition such as the competition for the Ponte of Salitone on the Sterza river with Giuseppe Giorgio Gori, Leonardo Savioli, Emilio Brizzi, the competition for the Ponte of Bottacina on the Sterza river with Giuseppe Giorgio Gori, Leonardo Savioli, Emilio Brizzi, the competition-contract for the Ponte on the Arno river in Signa with Giuseppe Giorgio Gori, Leonardo Savioli, Emilio Brizzi, the competition-contract for the Ponte San Niccolò in Florence where he won the II prize with Giuseppe Giorgio Gori and Leonardo Savioli, Emilio Brizzi e Giulio Krall. In addition, it is worth reminding the competition-contract for the bridge in Figline Valdarno with Giuseppe Giorgio Gori, Leonardo Savioli, Emilio Brizzi (I prize), the competition-contract for the bridge in Terranova Bracciolini on the Arno river with Giuseppe Giorgio Gori, Leonardo Savioli, Emilio Brizzi who presented three design purposes and won the I prize.

In 1947 the XI Market Exhibition of the Craftsmanship of Florence was organized for the first time since the outbreak of the war. In this edition, a new architecture made up of plastic, coloristic and life-like elements, in which the fantastical element is predominant, was emerging; an architecture of exteriors and an architecture of interiors, in which decoration plays a key role in the interpretation of the environment. The Florence Craft Exhibition was defined by Roberto Papini “a laboratory” where artists and architects of the new generation worked together. The group of young Florentine architects, all students of Giovanni Michelucci, designed the setting up of the rooms where toys, jewels of the Florentine goldsmiths, and ceramics were exhibited. The architects Giuseppe Giorgio Gori, Enzo Gori, Leonardo Ricci and Leonardo Savioli were joined by the painters Osvaldo Tordi and Renzo Grazzini²² and worked together also in the preparation of the central room C.A.D.M.A. (Association for the revival of Italian artisan productions which worked with the support of

21 Giuseppe Gori, *Operosità didattica e architettonica del Prof. Dr. Architetto Giuseppe Gori*, (Florence: C.I.P.E. 1950); Maria Elisabetta Bonafede, *La scuola fiorentina tra le due guerre: genesi, figure e contributi nella cultura architettonica europea*, (Florence: Print & Service, 1993); Carlo Cresti, *I progetti della “Ricostruzione”*, (Florence: Alinea, 1995).

22 Roberto Papini, “Orientamenti di architetti, di artigiani e d’altro”, *Stile*, no. 9-10-11-12 (1947): 11-13.

the American Handicraft Development Inc. Foundation in New York)²³. In those years in Florence realists and abstract painters opposed their views, but they all had the same goal to seek the synthesis of the arts to find a new birth and a new direction for the society²⁴.

The late 1940s saw a rich production both in painting and in architecture for Ricci, who, in 1949, rebuilt the bridge on the Bisenzio river in Novanella (Signa) with Giuseppe Giorgio Gori and Leonardo Savioli. 1949 was the year of Leonardo Ricci's first personal exhibition at the Gallery "Il Fiore" in Florence²⁵, for which he was introduced as a mature painter. There Ricci's one was recognized as a the painting of an architect, therefore as a painting "built with an architectural love of positivity"²⁶.

In the same period Ricci belonged to the abstract art group with articulated volumes, structural solutions, and neoplastic compositions, but, at the same time, primitive influences emerged with the representation of ancestral myths, and, finally the Informal appeared as well. Giovanna Uzzani defined them the three optional visions of the world Ricci would have described in the *Anonymous (XX century)* some years after: the logic world, the world of myth, and the world of the absurd, respectively²⁷.

1949 also marked the beginning of the design for Monterinaldi general plan, modified and revised until 1953, and the construction of the residential settlement on the hill near Florence that brought Ricci to the international scene as it was widely published. The first house was Ricci Study-Home, designed from 1949 to 1950, it was executed in 1951 and finished with the furniture design in 1952 with Engineer Gianfranco Petrelli. In Monterinaldi Leonardo Ricci established an architectural synthesis based on tensive, spatial, formal, structural polarities displayed by means of a material contrast between rough stone and reinforced concrete masonry, and on the themes, then recurring, of the turriform body incorporating the main staircase and the fireplace, which also has symbolic significance [Fig. 28].

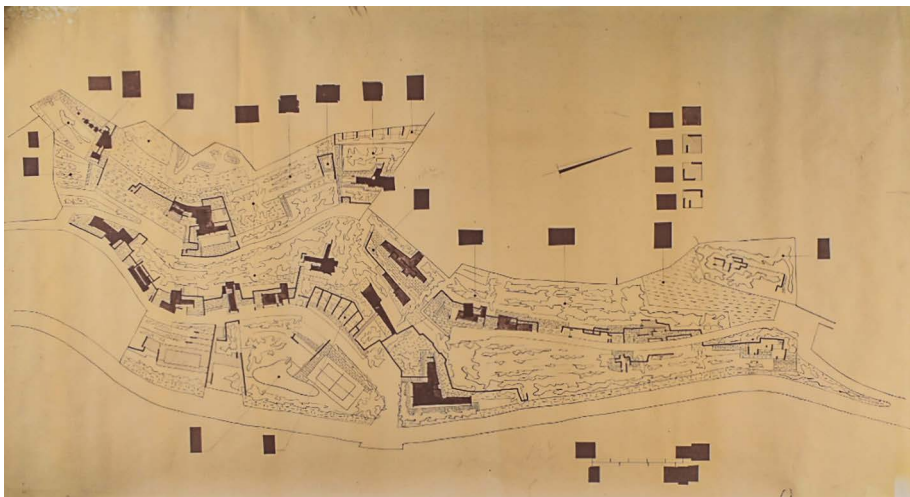
23 The Foundation C.A.D.M.A. financed the whole Exhibition and arranged the first Italian Craft Exhibition in New York in April 1947. Giovanna Uzzani, "Leonardo Ricci pittore", in *Leonardo Ricci 100. Scrittura, pittura e architettura. 100 note a margine dell'Anonimo del XX secolo*, eds. Maria Clara Ghia, Clementina Ricci and Ugo Dattilo (Firenze: Didapress, 2019), 129-139.

24 Roberto Papini, "Orientamenti di architetti, di artigiani e d'altro", *Stile*, no. 9-10-11-12, (1947): 11-14; "La Mostra dell'Artigianato", *Il Nuovo Corriere*, September 11, 1947; Renato Venturini, "Mostra film a 11", *Il Pomeriggio*, October 1, 1947; articles and magazine collected in "Logbook" n. 1 (1938-1952), pages 22-23, Casa Studio Ricci; Ghia, *La nostra città è tutta la Terra. Leonardo Ricci architetto (1918-1994)*, 71.

25 "Al 'Fiore", *Il Mattino dell'Italia Centrale*, December 11, 1949; Gianna Basevi, "Ricci", *La Nazione Italiana*, December 23, 1949; "Leonardo Ricci al 'Fiore'", *Nuovo Corriere dell'Italia Centrale*, December 23, 1949, "Stanze Fiorentine. Leonardo Ricci", "Pittura nuova di Leonardo Ricci", *Pomeriggio*, December 15, 1949.

26 «It seems to us that he has been able to obey the Rilkean precept of "listening to himself": which is a famous exhortation as betrayed by the presumptuous impatience of most, young and not young. Here is a painter, we said, who from the first apparition denounces a considerable degree of maturity and fits effortlessly into the heart of a suggestive pictorial adventure: that committed, precisely, to a classically unitary synthesis of all the scattered fragments of the post-romantic diaspora, from Impressionism to today. As immense and risky a commitment as everyone sees, as it is certain that the rational and geometric spirit to which even Ricci may abusively entrust himself will not be sufficient to fulfil it, where the figurative mechanism restrains the possibilities glimpsed by fantastic intuition and precipitates the image on the lost slope of critical processing. However, we welcome this first exhibition by Leonardo Ricci as a conscious, and so far, stylistically identified promise of the very human results that the "split automaton" of absolute abstractionism can achieve». *L'Ultima*, no. 52 (April 25, 1950).

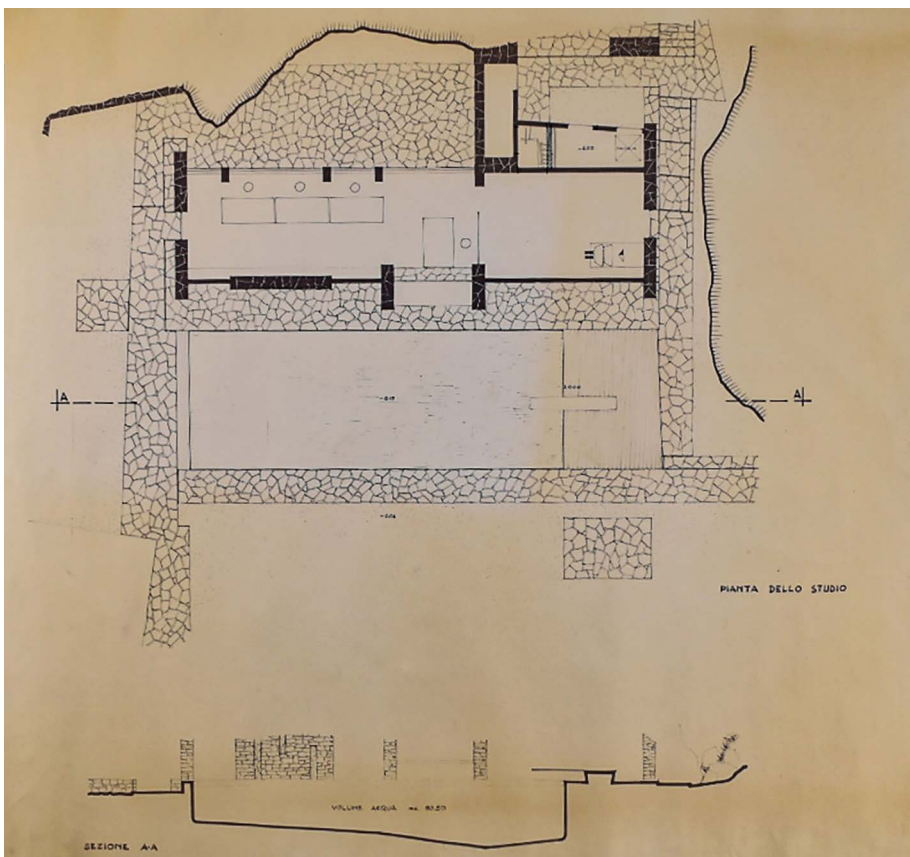
27 Uzzani, "Leonardo Ricci pittore", 133.



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In the original design of the Monterinaldi plan, Ricci envisioned a few common services and the absence of fences, thus wishing to reintroduce the theme of the community village as a single organism capable of stimulating a form of relational life among families. Although this aspiration was eventually disregarded for the few services were not realized, Monterinaldi saw the birth of a small artists' colony, unfortunately forgotten as such, but still inhabited.

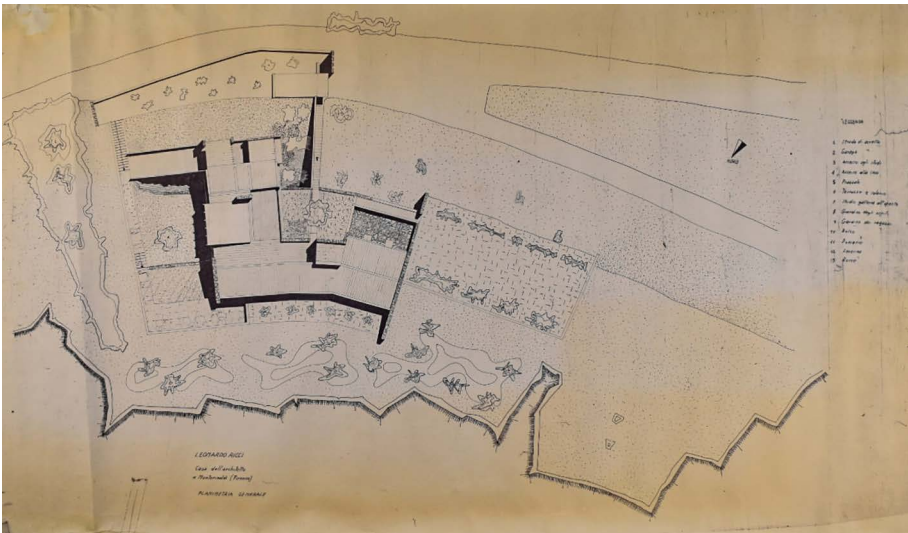
The village construction history continued in 1951 with Petrelli House, until 1952, then with Selleri House (1952-1953), Sante House, David House (1952), Masi House (1953, then Santoni House in 1953, modified with following changes in 1955-1957), all designed with Gianfranco Petrelli and Giovanni Klaus Koenig. Then De Giorgi Ricci House was built in (1954), while Petroni Bonifazi House



29 |

Fig. 28
Monterinaldi, general plan,
Casa Studio Ricci.

Fig. 29
Ricci Study Home, Monterinaldi,
plan and section of the
study, Casa Studio Ricci.



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between 1954 and 1955. They were followed by Tinu-Sebregondi home-study (afterwards Meucci home-study), Innocenti home study (afterwards Durante home study), Rodriguez home study, Baldacci restaurant, Van Damme Capacci House (afterwards Guidi House), and Bellandi home study that saw the light all in 1956. Nardoni House (after Ricci House) was built in 1957, Fantoni house between 1956 and 1957 whereas Fantoni factory-study was built in 1958 with Dusan Vasić and Ernesto Trapani. Coisson House (after Benocci House) was finished in the time span 1958-1962 and the early Sixties saw the execution of Nahum House (then Corsi House) in 1962, and in 1963 of the project for Micheletti House and Focardi House (1963)²⁸ [Fig. 29, 30].

Among the houses for Monterinaldi, the unrealized project for the “Theoretical house” (1956-1958) deserves a special focus as it led Ricci to the definition of his design method. It can be considered to all intents and purposes one of the first experimental dwellings of Leonardo Ricci, conceived to be built next to his

28 Leonardo Savioli, “Una casa sulla collina a Nord di Firenze,” *Architetti*, (1952): 15; “Vive con le stelle nello spazio l’umanissima casa di un architetto-pittore,” *Il Mattino dell’Italia Centrale*, November 19, 1953; Silvano Giannelli, “Cinque edifici fiorentini in gara per il <<fiorino>> dell’architettura,” *Giornale del Mattino*, November 21, 1954; “Premio del fiorino,” *Nazione Sera*, November 29, 1954; Paolo Nestler, Neues Bauen in Italien: 66-67, 164-165; “Habitation près de Florence,” *Aujourd’hui, art et architecture* I, no. 5 (November, 1955): 30-33; “Vom Museum zum Bauplatz. Ein Prototyp moderner Architektur in Italien,” *Der Galler Tagblatt*, (December 2, 1955); Race Eden, “Leonardo Ricci, an architect of Florence,” *Architecture and building* (August, 1956): 296-302; Friedrich Rasche, “Ein Haus am Monte Rinaldi,” *Feuilleton*, no. 1/2 (September 2, 1956): 205; Ernesto Trapani, “Alcuni progetti di Leonardo Ricci,” *La Provincia, Il Comune*, no.1 (January-February 1957); Leonardo Ricci e Gillo Dorfles, “A Monterinaldi presso Firenze: un centro di quindici case,” *Domus*, no. 337 (Dicembre, 1957); 1-12 “Palast im Steinbruch,” *Der Standpunkt* (January 20, 1958); Silvano Giannelli, “La città dal cuore di pietra serena,” *Giornale del Mattino*, January 23, 1958; Kurt Ekholm, “Ny Arkitektur i Florens,” *Goteborgs Handels och Sjöfartstidning* (September 18, 1959); Kurt Ekholm, “Ny vy i Florens,” *Hufvudstadsbladet* (October 8, 1959); M. A. Febvre-Desportes, “Beauté des maisons campagnardes: Monterinaldi près de Florence,” *Meubles et décors* (October, 1959); Alberto Boatto, “Village Monterinaldi près de Florence, Habitation a Forte dei Marmi, Italie,” *L’Architecture d’aujourd’hui*, no. 86 (October-November, 1959): 28-32; Creighton, “The involved man: Leonardo Ricci”: 144-151; “Leonardo Ricci. Conjunto residencial Monterinaldi,” *Revista informes de la construcción*, no. 120 (Aprile 1960); materials and pictures of Casa Studio Ricci, Casa Masi, Casa Petroni, Casa De Giorgi, Casa Selleri, Casa Tinu, Casa Bellandi, Casa degli Innocenti, Casa Van Damme collected in “Logbook” n. 2 (1952-1956) (these articles can be found in the Logbooks kept in Casa Studio Ricci on pages 43-46, 48, 51-53, 59, 63, 65-67, 82-83, 85-86, Casa Studio Ricci; “Logbook” n. 3 (1956-1959), pages 92, 95-99, 111-114, 116, Casa Studio Ricci; “Logbook” n. 4 (1959-1963), pages 135-1139, 144-145, 149-150, 153). Leonardo Ricci, “Ville a Monterinaldi presso Firenze, di Leonardo Ricci, Villa all’isola d’Elba, di Leonardo Ricci,” *Casabella continuità*, no. 291 (September, 1964): 36-38; Chiara Baglione e Leonardo Ricci “Leonardo Ricci: le case di Monterinaldi. La maniera Toscana,” *Casabella*, 63, no. 669 (August, 1999): 46-61; Luigi Spinelli “Leonardo Ricci, spazi fluidi che inseguono la vita. Nello studio di architettura e pittura a Monterinaldi si rinnova quella che Giovanni, Klaus, Koenig definiva la ‘la conformazione spaziale dell’esistenza,’” *Domus*, no. 938 (August 2010): 70-78; Nicolangelo Gelomini, *Leonardo Ricci, Monterinaldi, Balmain, Borgese*. Documentario, 2011; Antonella Greco e Maria Clara Ghia, *Leonardo Ricci Monterinaldi/Balmain/Borgese*. Roma: Palombi, 2012; Vasić Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto “esistenzialista”*, 28.

Fig. 29
Ricci Study Home, Monterinaldi, planivolumetric, Casa Studio Ricci.



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Fig. 31
Picture of the stone quarry in
Monterinaldi, Florence, Casa
Studio Ricci.

Study-home, in front of the quarry from which the stones to build were taken and anchored on a steep terrain [Fig. 31].

This “Experimental House” was a case of considerable interest as it provided the architect with the possibility of being able to design without limits imposed by a probable client since he himself was the client. From reading the technical drawings of plans, elevations and sections, a space emerges that contracted and expanded on different staggered levels, where no main or predetermined path prevented the eyes from looking upwards or from right to left.

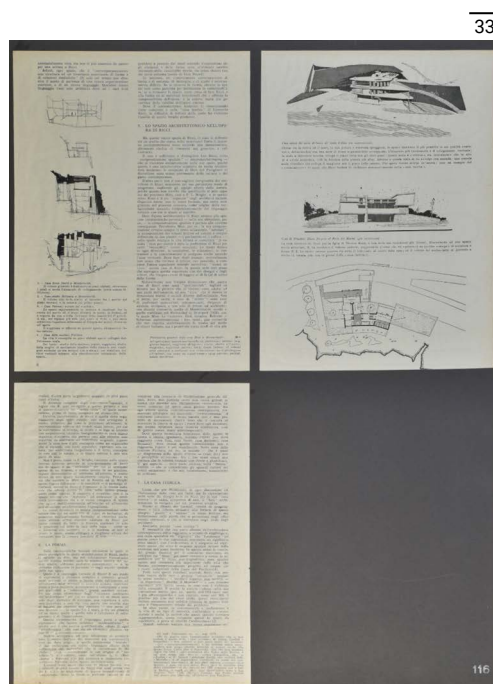
This project is a good example of Ricci’s work on the community space of the family, in which the design for the common space can be read in plan and section in Ricci’s sketches titled “the space in the vertical” and “the space in the horizontal”. The spatial interpenetration dominated: each space was not concluded in itself, but was integrated into the entire composition, inisolable and irreplaceable [Fig. 32, 33, 34].

Fig. 32-33-34

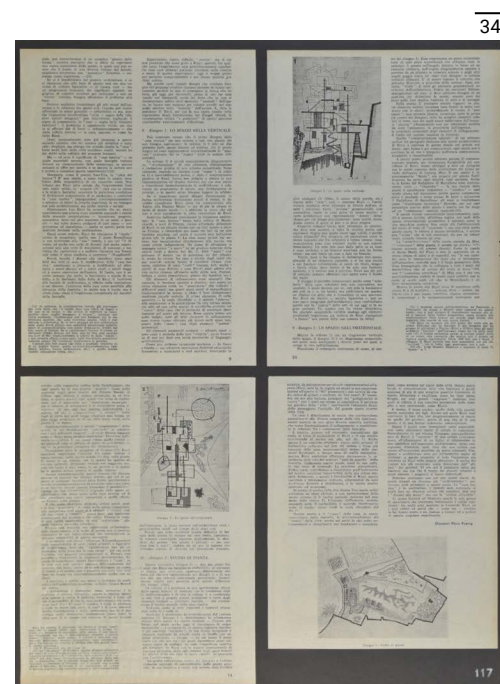
Logbook no. 3, pages 115, 116 and 117 of the article by Giovanni Klaus Koenig, “Leonardo Ricci e la “casa teorica” (alla ricerca di un nuovo spazio architettonico)”, *Bollettino Tecnico - Rassegna bimestrale fondata nell’anno 1936*, no. 7-8 (July-August, 1958): 4-12.



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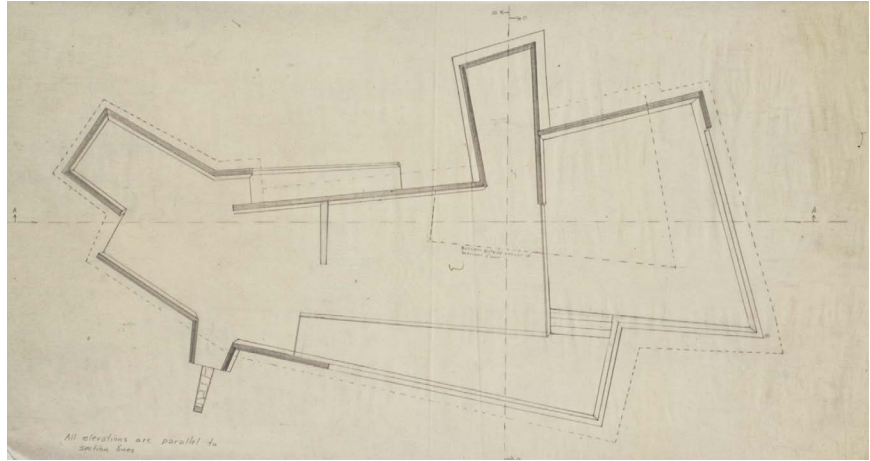
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The project for the "Theoretical House" also marked the search for a different spatial quality, which respected the concept of existence as experience, thus resulting from a careful study of the acts of human existence and of the relationships between these acts. In this sense, the building was responsible for respecting the Mumfordian equation "city - sign of integrated social relations", which, according to Giovanni Klaus Koenig could «be transcribed, removing the summation sign, in "home - sign of family relationships"²⁹». The name "Theoretical House" derived from the fact that the architect had not found the human capital on which to carry out the experiment of designing existence as an experience and, for this reason, he had become the client of himself. Indeed the design had to proceed with the experience of the family who would have lived in the house, but this would have caused too much slowness in the realization.

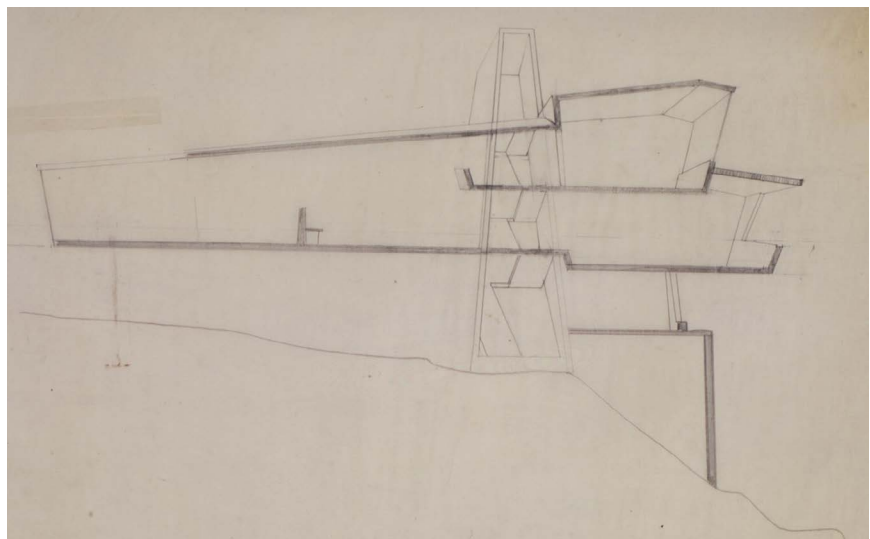
The community experience of the members of the family was reflected in the drawings, which changed and evolved with the evolution of the family life: the school rejection of Ricci's son or the enrollment of his daughter in the faculty of architecture caused the drawings to change. Each element of the architectural composition was moving and changing according to the phenomenological principle

of giving to the building's users infinite possibilities of choice as the infinite were the ways of living. The sketches in the vertical and horizontal dimensions were diagrams, "a conceptual scheme of existence", or better, of the activities and movements of the users [Fig. 35, 36, 37, 38, 39].

The house was sited in Monterinaldi, where also Casa Studio Ricci stood emerging from the rocks, while the "Theoretical House" was positioned in the cave dug in the quarry from which all the stones to build the houses of Monterinaldi had been extracted, but it did not lean against the rock, it had a view of Florence and was enclosed on three sides by the rocky walls. In section,



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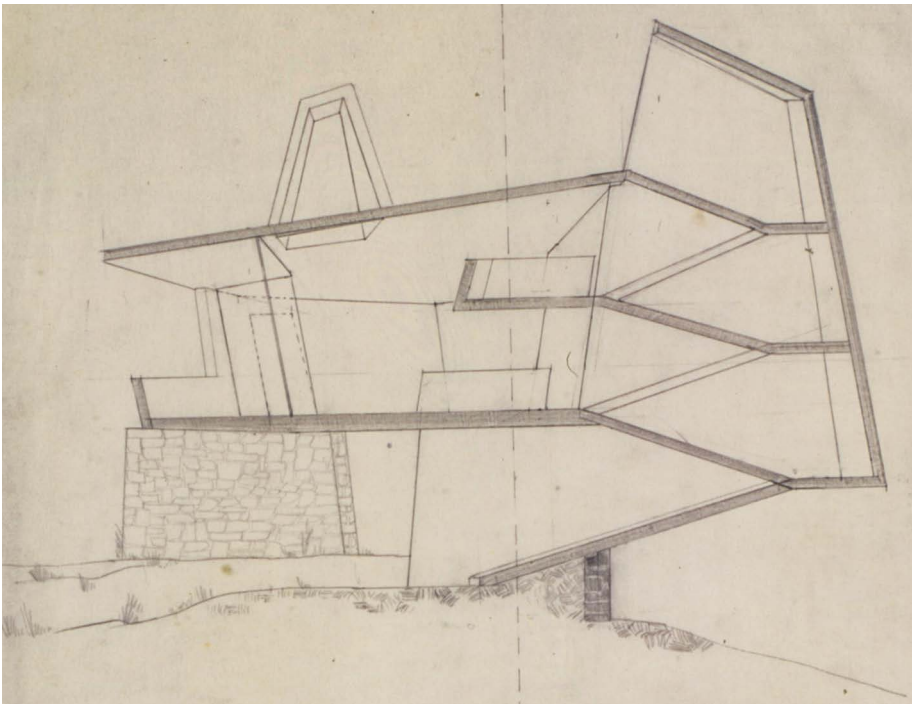


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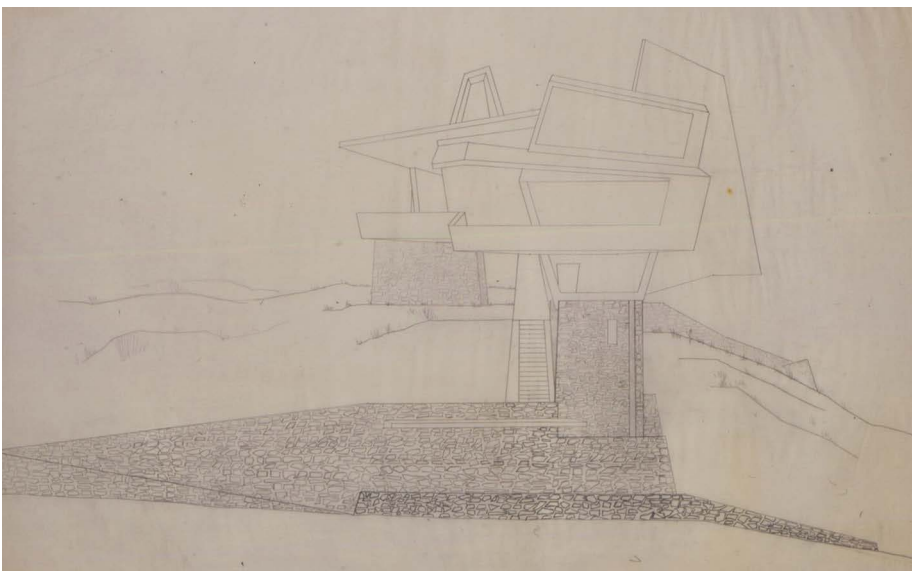
Fig. 35
Project for a "Theoretical House", plan, B022300S, CSAC.

Fig. 36
Project for a "Theoretical House", section, B038552S, CSAC.

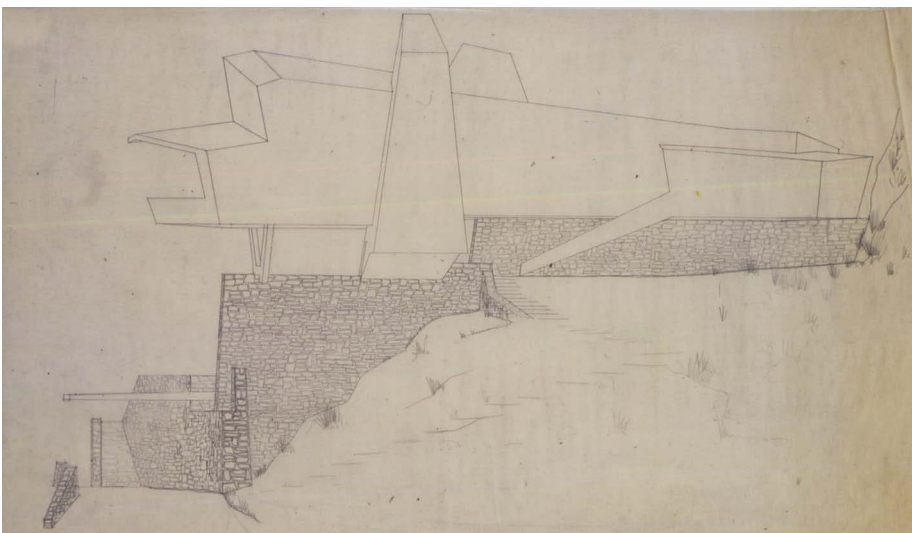
29 Giovanni Klaus Koenig, "Leonardo Ricci e la "casa teorica" (alla ricerca di un nuovo spazio architettonico)", *Bollettino Tecnico - Rassegna bimestrale fondata nell'anno 1936*, no. 7-8 (July-August, 1958): 21.



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Fig. 37
Project for a "Theoretical House", section, B022302S, CSAC.

Fig. 38
Project for a "Theoretical House", elevation, B022303S, CSAC.

Fig. 39
Project for a "Theoretical House", elevation, B022304S, CSAC.

while one of the floors leaned on the rock, the others leaned on pillars in order to create closed spaces between the building and the rock. In one case the connecting elements were clearly stairs, but in other points the same floors were transformed into connecting ramps.

The relationship that the house assumed with the earth was evident in the drawings: as for its ascending house-studio, the theoretical house faced the rock and was held firmly by it through a stone fence in opposition to the centrifugal forces acting inside it. From these forces sliding planes that floated in the air in a precarious but stable balance emerged. Set in motion, the "Theoretical House" launched towards the panorama of the Arno valley through a forked concrete structural element, a fixed point between the ground and the projecting floors.

In plan Ricci drew different black squares and rectangular forms because his design conception foresaw the overlapping of the activities on the different levels of the house. The different shapes were alternated, such as the circle that symbolized the study and the hatched shape of the swimming pool, which was inserted under another quadrangular shape. Ricci's sketch highlighted two further aspects of the project: the interpenetration of spaces given by the intersection of shapes and the importance of the coexistence of internal and external spaces, avoiding the Renaissance perspective.

There is a third drawing of the "Theoretical House" in which Ricci developed a more precise hypothesis in plan, which was therefore no longer a preformal conceptual scheme, but a possible configuration of the "evolved family life". In the planimetric plant there were three bodies that corresponded to different family needs and that were expandable. In them, the detached space of the raised parents' bed, the main body of the house with a center that welcomed the community life of the family, and a last nucleus dedicated to the life of the children, which was partially detached from that of the parents, but not totally. The three parts were interconnected and form an organic complex³⁰.

While the construction of Monterinaldi was under way, at the beginning of the Fifties, in Florence, Fiamma Vigo directed the Gallery "Numero", the gallery "La Vigna Nuova" exposed the "Manifesto of the Classical Abstract Art" and Giorgini began the made in Italy in fashion. In this active cultural climate Leonardo Ricci designed some of his funding projects as the Mercato dei Fiori di Pescia (1949), the Ecumenical Village of Agàpe (1946-1951), while some of his personal exhibitions reached France at the "Galerie Pierre"³¹ and the "Salon de Mai" in Paris (May 9 – May 31, 1950)³², then Germany for the "Review of Art in Germany"

30 Koenig, "Leonardo Ricci e La "Casa Teorica", 3–34; Marco Dezzi Bardeschi, "Aspetti Dell'architettura Toscana d'oggi", *Bollettino Tecnico - Rassegna Bimestrale Fondata Nell'anno 1936*, no. 10–12 (December, 1958): 9–13; Luigi Prestinzenza Puglisi, "Architetti d'Italia. Leonardo Ricci, Lo Straripante", *A Tribune* (September, 2018).

31 Galerie Pierre, "Leonardo Ricci", May 5, 1950, "Un Florentin expose à Paris des oeuvres d'une étrange indépendance", V, May 28, 1950, Charles Estienne, "Les Expositions", *L'Observateur*, May 11, 1950.

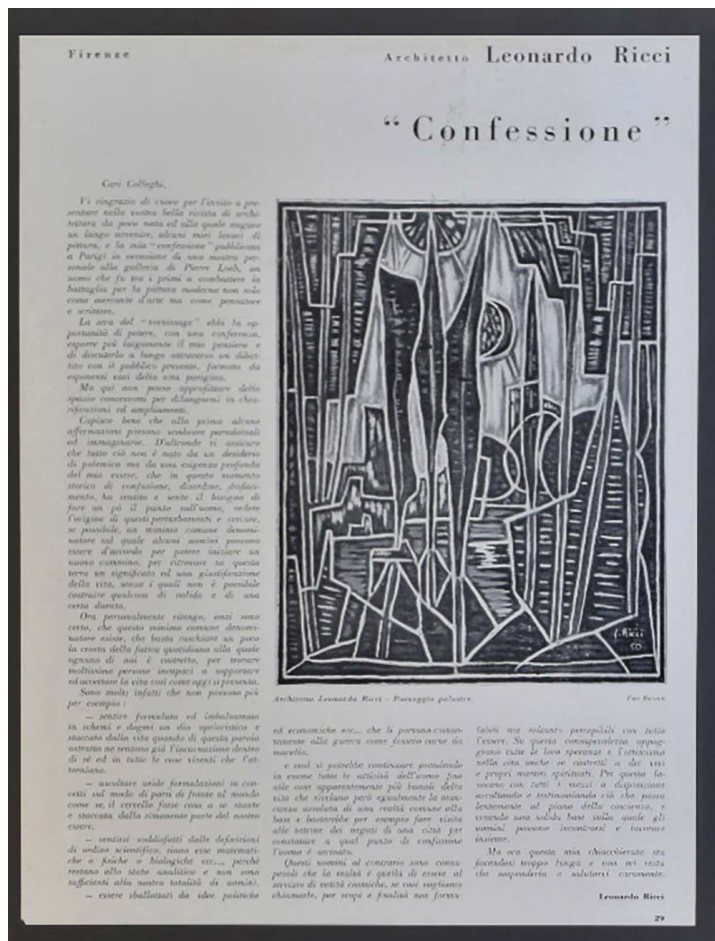
32 "Au Salon de Mai. Jeunesse perpetuelle de la peinture", *Le Monde*, May 12, 1950. The exhibition of Italian painters at the "Salon de Mai" meant a definite recognition of the importance and international value of the Italian art by France, as well as the importance of the cultural exchange between Italy and France for the European culture. To deepen this theme: Giovanni Grazzini, "Come oggi la Francia 'italianizza'. L'interesse c'è: bisogna aumentarlo", *La Nazione*, June 13, 1950. Some materials about the Salon de Mai exhibitions Ricci took part in are collected in "Logbook" n. 1 (1938-1952), pages 33, 34, Casa Studio Ricci.

(1950). More in detail, the exposition at the “Salon de Mai” dealt with a fundamental theme that affected Leonardo Ricci’s next studies on architecture, influenced by Michelucci’s teaching: the importance of tradition, not intended as a sum of human experiences, but as a *unicum* of contents to be understood. To be inside tradition was the guiding theme and Italian painting was hosted as a symbol of re-elaboration of tradition, the place where tradition was stronger and richer than elsewhere. The new generation of painters had to face the fact that a too strong tradition could also turn into a burden, and the merit of the new generation consisted in realizing it and in having accepted all the romantic and melancholic feelings of the past³³.

In 1950 (from April 28 to May 12, 1950) Leonardo Ricci inaugurated his personal exhibition at the Galerie Pierre in Paris with a strong speech. The text of the conference was then published in Paris and in Italy with the title “Confessione” [“Confession”], a sort of artistic manifesto dated April 3, 1950³⁴ [Fig. 40].

In the article Ricci explained his feeling about human existence at the time and how it could be translated in art: he maintained that it was necessary to use all the values felt as prisons for man up to that moment to make man reintegrate and reincarnate, without having to deny anything of the past. The past had to be left behind, only the painting had to remain because it was the first language of man and, therefore, it could not die, it was necessary to pass from the subjective to the objective, from “the mysterious” to “the revealed” through man. Ricci wanted to become that man, a man-means through which the new reality had to pass for “the other”, who had to recognize himself in this reality as a living being. This was the mission of art and artists for Ricci.

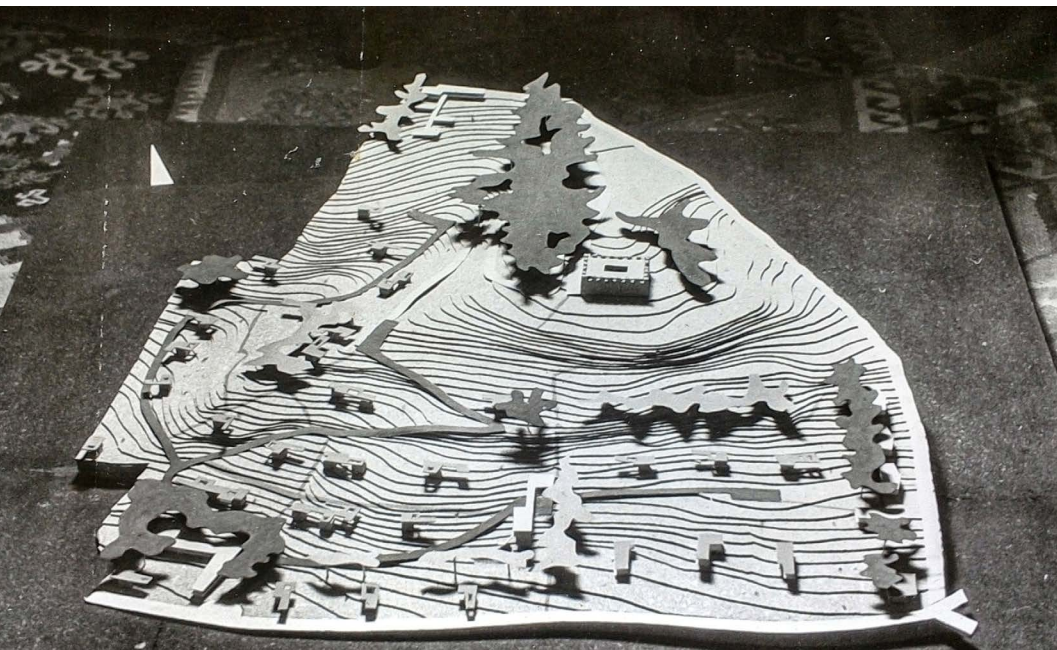
In 1951, he was invited again at the “Salon de Mai”, he took part in the “Rassegna della pittura italiana” at the Gallery “La Boetie” in Paris, then in the “Rassegna d’arte italiana” at the Gallery “Bompiani” in Florence, in the “Rassegna d’arte italiana contemporanea” at the Gallery “Numero” in Florence from August 23 to August 25, 1951, in the painting exhibitions titled “Premio del fiorino” in



33 What is more, the city of the exhibition, Paris, was the place that gave birth to the most important artistic movements and vanguards that firstly broke tradition and, this was the reason why the new exhibition at the Salon had the responsibility and awareness “to break the tradition of breaking the tradition”. With their works, the exhibiting artists had been able to convey intuition and divination in the breaking of tradition, and the visitors would have recognized it. Beniamino Jappolo, “Nouvelle peinture italienne”, Catalogue of the exhibition at the “Salon de Mai” (May 9 – May 31, 1950).

34 Leonardo Ricci, “Confessione”, *Architetti*, no 3 (August, 1950): 29-32. The published text included a date at the end: April 3, 1950. That was probably the date of Ricci’s speech or the mentioned conference.

Fig. 40
Leonardo Ricci, “Confessione.” *Architetti*, no. 3 (August, 1950): 29–32, pasted in the Logbook no. 1, page 37.



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Florence where he was prized³⁵, in the “Golfo La Spezia” in Lerici from July 22 to September 23, 1951, and finally in “Premio Sassari” in Sassari³⁶.

In 1952 Ricci’s paintings appeared again in Florence at Palazzo Strozzi with the exhibition “Mezzo secolo d’arte in Toscana”³⁷, and, in the same year, they travelled overseas to the United States with a personal exhibition at Landau Gallery in Los Angeles to come back Italy in 1953 for his personal exhibitions at the Gallery “Vigna Nuova” and, again, for the “Premio del Fiorino” in Florence (both in 1953 and 1954).

As an architect, in 1953 Ricci was working near Florence at the subdivision of the hill in Poggio Gherardo in Settignano with Gianfranco Petrelli, Giovanni Klaus Koenig, where they designed the Fattirolli House. For the hill of Poggio Gherardo Ricci designed another residential settlement of single-family villas, minimal apartments, stores, a guesthouse, a restaurant, a bar, and a swimming pool. The only realizations of the project were casa Fattirolli (1953) and casa Gervasoni (1954-1956), with a fan-shaped floor plan, wedged into the land behind and facing the hill with a long terrace. The themes are all there: open fan-shaped floor plans, striking overhangs of terraces, turriform vertical elements pivoting on the ground, large windows and brise-soleil, themes simultaneously developed in Monterinaldi’s houses³⁸ [Fig. 41, 42, 43].

35 Silvano Giannelli, “Scampato il “pericolo di morte” per la giovane pittura italiana”, *Il Mattino dell’Italia Centrale*, August 17, 1951.

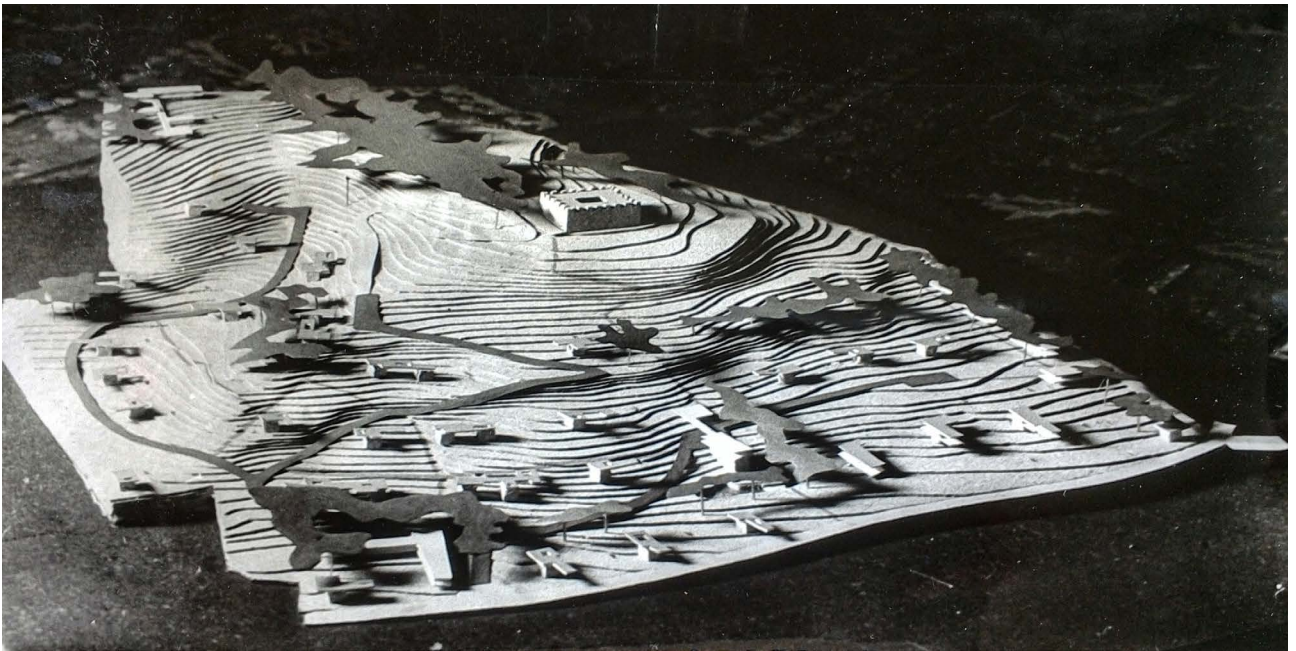
36 Carlo Cuccioli, “4 pittori fiorentini al secondo premio Sassari fanno la vera arte perchè hanno qualcosa da dire”, *L’Unione Sarda*, September 1, 1951.

37 “Destinata alla Germania. Interessante rassegna di pittori contemporanei”, *La Nazione Italiana*, October 29, 1950. The exhibition was set up at the first stage of Palazzo Strozzi and it had to be moved in Germany for the Review of Art.

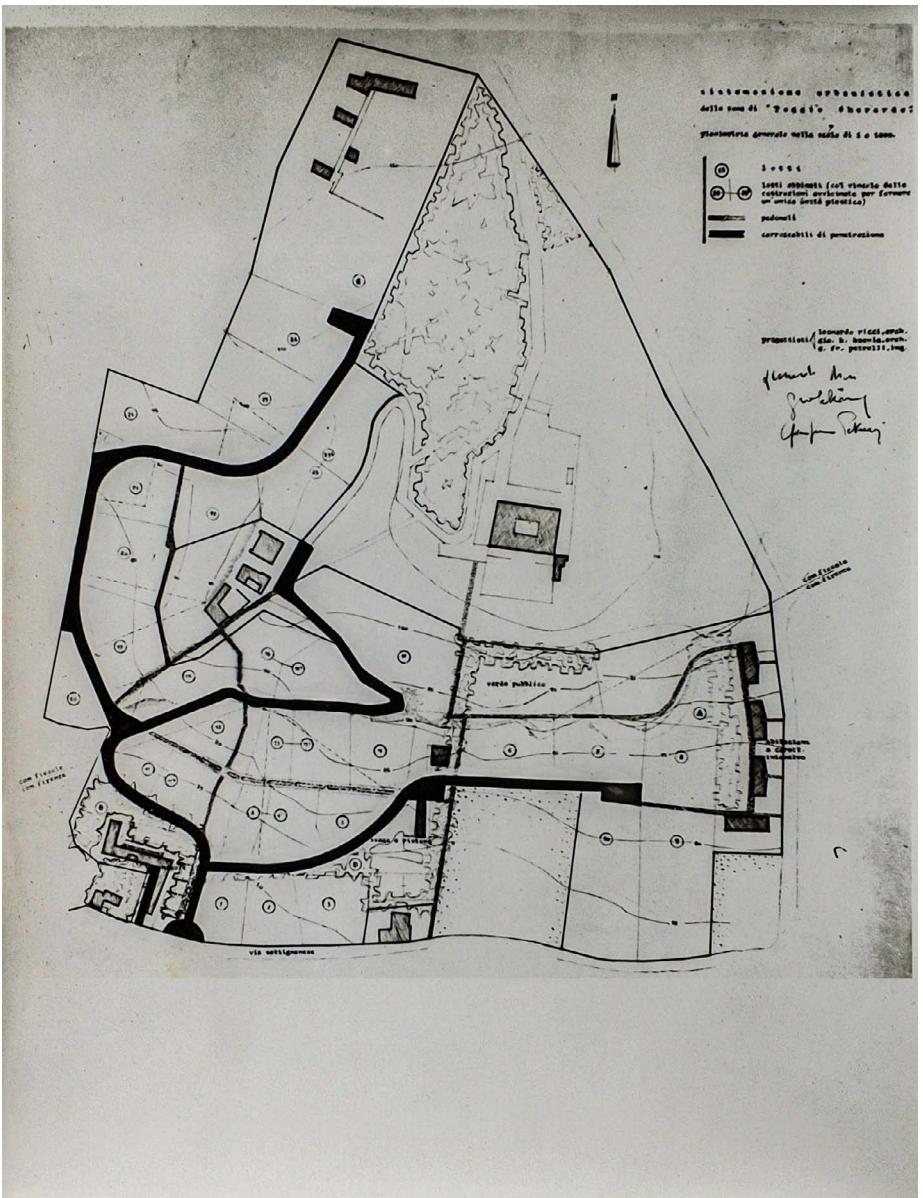
38 Enzo Trapani, “Alcuni progetti di Leonardo Ricci. Villa a Beverly Hills in California. Casa Fattirolli a Poggio Gherardo. Casa Betti a Lipari”, *Il Tecnico della Provincia e il Comune*, no. 1: 13-17; Ghia, *La nostra città è tutta la Terra. Leonardo Ricci architetto (1918-1994)*, 107; A picture of the Poggio Gherardo hill model is kept in “Logbook” n. 2 (1952-1956), page 56, Casa Studio Ricci; an external view picture of the Fattirolli House in Poggio Gherardo is glued in “Logbook” n. 3 (1956-1959), page 100, Casa Studio Ricci.

Fig. 41-42

Plan for the hill of Poggio Gherardo, picture of the model, Casa Studio Ricci.



42



43 |

Fig. 43
Plan for the hill of Poggio
Gherardo, general plan, Casa
Studio Ricci.

Leonardo Ricci was also a scenographer and intended the design of a set-up – either for a painting exhibition, or for an opera, ballet, or fashion show – as a design of a space embracing men: actors and spectators of a space at a time. In 1955 Ricci designed the scenography and costumes for the show “Il filo errante” in the Garden of Boboli for the conclusion of the VI exhibition of Italian fashion in Florence, but his first set up project for the scenography and dressing was for the *Orfeo* in Aix Les Bains, from July 22 to August 7, 1955³⁹ [Fig. 44, 45, 46, 47, 48]. On that occasion, Ricci thought of a very steep wooden staircase with cantilevered steps, which recalled the stairs of the Monterinaldi houses, to represent the descent of Orpheus into hell. The flames were painted at the bottom of the scene on wooden panels, which would have been a constant for Ricci’s future installations: the plastered “centinella” was used by the architect both for the installation of the Expressionism exhibition and for the 1:1 scale model of the prototype of “living space for two people” created for the exhibition “La Casa Abitata”, one year later⁴⁰.

The property of architecture to host temporality was extremely evident in Ricci’s architecture, but in the displays it was accentuated precisely for their temporary nature. The installations were for Ricci the most synthetic spatial devices, in which content and container were deeply integrated into a single set of contents and matter. In the installations, as in architecture, the path, its theatricality, the continuous movement of man in space as time flew, were fundamental because they allowed to see the relationships between the elements.

1955 was the year of the quite unknown unrealized project for the Tendi House in Fiesole which inaugurates the theme of staggered volumes and cantilevered terraces, widely developed later and also present in the design for the house of his



39 Michel Boutron, “Autres Impressions sur l’Orfeo de Monteverdi,” *Echo Liberté*, August 8, 1955, “AIX-LES-BAINS: smokings et imperméables pour applaudir l’Orfeo, de Monteverdi,” *L’Aurore*, August 8, 1955; “Un grand événement musical à Aix-les-Bains. Création de ‘Orfeo’ de Monteverdi,” *Le Progrès*, August 8, 1955; “A Aix-les-Bains accueil très favorable avec mouvements divers de l’Orfeo de Monteverdi,” *L’Information*, August 9, 1955; “Dernière images du 2 Festival de la Danse organisé par la Municipalité le Comité des Fêtes et le Casino de la Ville d’Aix-les-Bains. Après l’Orfeo,” *Le Dauphiné Libéré*, August 9, 1955; Nicole Hirsch, “Présentation révolutionnaire de l’Orfeo de Monteverdi,” *France soir*, August 9, 1955; “L’Orfeo de Monteverdi ancêtre de tous les opéras point final du festival d’Aix-les-Bains,” *Le Monde*, August 9, 1955; Dominique Arhan, “Un Soleil Grec En Savoie: ‘Orfeo’,” *Le Figaro Littéraire*, August 13, 1955; Leonardo Ricci, “Presentazione dello spettacolo nel Catalogo del 2 Festival de la Danse organisé par la Municipalité le Comité des Fêtes et le Casino de la Ville d’Aix-les-Bains, Première représentation de plein aire en France ‘L’Orfeo’ de Monteverdi,” October 6, 1955; Ghia, *La nostra città è tutta la Terra. Leonardo Ricci architetto (1918-1994)*, 189; Vasić Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci, Architetto “esistenzialista”*, 29.

40 Some of the most beautiful drawings by Ricci for the “Orpheo” were published in HPA issue no. 9, in the archival sheet titled “Orpheo” Scenographies and Dressing”, pages 95-96.

Fig. 44-45-46-47-48
Articles and pictures on the “Orfeo di Monteverdi” presented at the festival d’Aix-les-Bains, Logbook no. 2, pages 71-75, Casa Studio Ricci.

Sous le Haut Patronage de Monsieur le Président de la République

2^e FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE LA DANSE

organisé par LA MUNICIPALITE, LE COMITE DES FETES ET LE CASINO de la Ville d'Aix-les-Bains

22 JUILLET - 7 AOUT 1953

SAMEDI 6 AOUT
Soirée de Gala

DOMAINE 7 AOUT
Soirée de Représentations

THEATRE DE VERDURE DU PARC DES THERMES

PREMIERE REPRESENTATION DE PLAIN VIE EN FRANCE

"L'ORFEO" DE MONTEVERDI

Légende en montagne représenté à Montroc en l'an 1937 et nouvellement repris à partir pour le II^e FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE LA DANSE D'AIK LES BAINS



L'ORFEO DE MONTEVERDI

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Dirigeant musical: MAURICE LE ROUX
Maestri dei cantori: SINGIER
Choregraphe: FRANCISQ ADRET
Mus en scène: ANTOINETTE
R. GUILLIOT DE BOIS
Balletmeister: SYDORONAT

Commissiones de DANSEURS, de l'Oratorio, Dramatic

LA SCALA DE MILAN
LE BALLET DU NEDERLANDSCHE OPERA D'AMSTEDAM
L'ASSOCIATION DES CONCERTS CHAMBERY
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EUSEBIE FERRI (de l'Opera de Buenos Aires)
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HEATRICE WITT
NATHALIE DE VERT
GIORGIO CASANOVIS (Choeurs de la Commune Propagande, de la Scala de Milan, de l'Opera de Buenos Aires)

Amateurs de collection: MAURICE GILLAUD
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La soirée commença par la lecture de QUATRE MOUVEMENTS

Oratorio de MONTEVERDI
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Le festival d'Aix-les-Bains par l'image

UN GRAND EVENEMENT MUSICAL A AIX-LES-BAINS CREATION DE "L'ORFEO" DE MONTEVERDI

LE PROGRES (20/7/53)

En marge du festival de danse à Aix-les-Bains Quelques minutes avec Gisèle Casadessus


LE PROGRES (20/7/53)

Le Festival International de la Danse d'Aix-les-Bains ORFEO, un très grand spectacle

Accueil très favorable avec mouvements divers de l'Orfeo de Monteverdi

L'Orfeo de Monteverdi, centre de tous les opéras point final du festival d'Aix-les-Bains

AUTRES IMPRESSIONS sur l'Orfeo de Monteverdi



Un soleil grec en Savoie (« Orfeo »)

Toute la DANSE dans les Arts et les Lettres et la MUSIQUE

LE FIGARO LITTÉRAIRE - SAMEDI 12 AOUT 1953

LAURENCE (20/7/53)

MAILLERANS (en marge du festival de danse à Aix-les-Bains)

FRANÇOIS SOLER (20/7/53)

DERNIERES IMAGES DU FESTIVAL D'AIK LES BAINS

Après l'Orfeo

AT LA DÉROULE MONTEVERDI

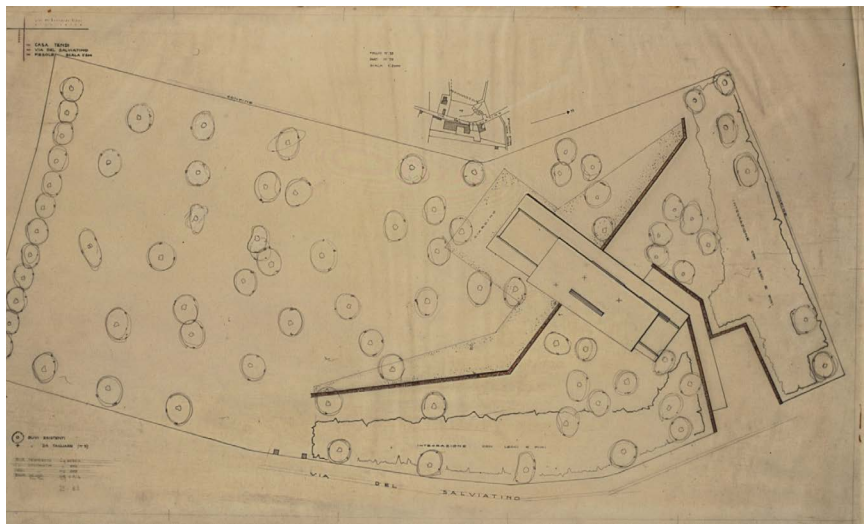
L'ORFEO DE MONTEVERDI



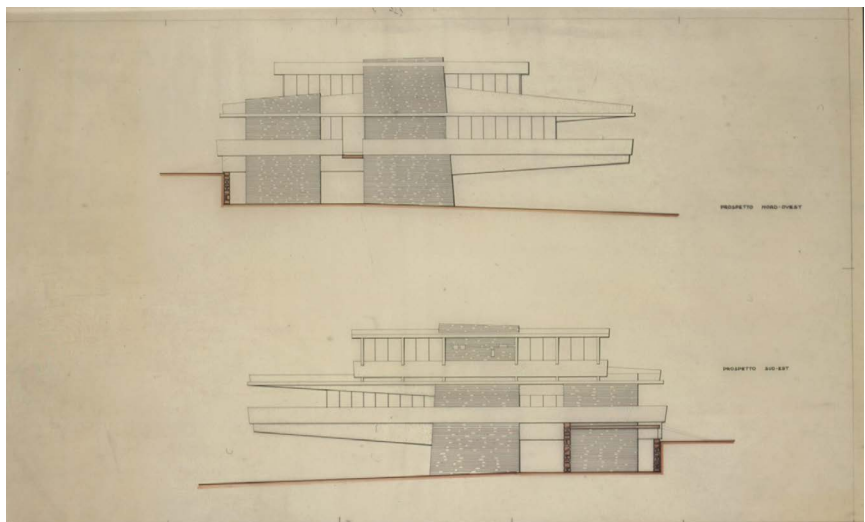
brother Arnaldo Ricci in Ginevra⁴¹. In the same year Ricci was consultant then competitor in the national competition of the "Fondo per l'incremento edilizio" for which Ricci designed the prized project residential center called "Iso lotto" on the hill of Sesto Fiorentino with Leonardo Savioli, Danilo Santi, and Gianfranco Petrelli [Fig. 49, 50, 51, 52, 53].

One of the essential features of the recent Florence Master Plan is the organic development of the city in the open countryside by means of satellite cores, designed for about three thousand people. The fundamental direction of this development, as has long been felt, is the Florence-Prato line, along which considerable industries and urban clusters have rapidly sprung up. In the program of P.R. implementation, the Castelli area where numerous industrial, commercial, craft and agricultural activities now take place, was chosen at the time by the planners for the inclusion of the new neighborhood. The new housing cores are designed to complement the centers of Quinto in Castello, and between them divided by large areas set aside for free private initiative. The subsidized constructions are mainly arranged along the three lines that connect the collective facilities and form the backbone of the neighborhood.

The area had three sectors with different landscape characteristics: the one to the east, facing Florence (from the dwellings of which there should be a beautiful view), the one to the west facing the plain, and finally the one to the north where the existing church-convent is located, to be enhanced. The clear division between pedestrian and mechanized traffic was planned. By the creation of elevated street levels adapting to the terrain the manufacture of tall buildings with those of lesser height, six types of dwellings are planned, up to the executive plans: twenty paired houses, twenty-six ramp houses, one hundred and two row houses, ninety-six four-story houses of twenty-four dwellings.



49

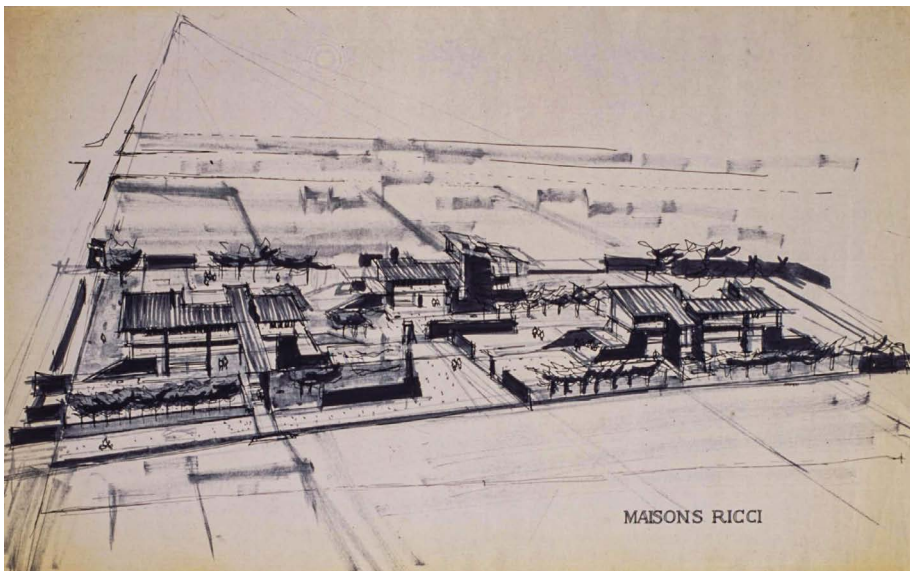


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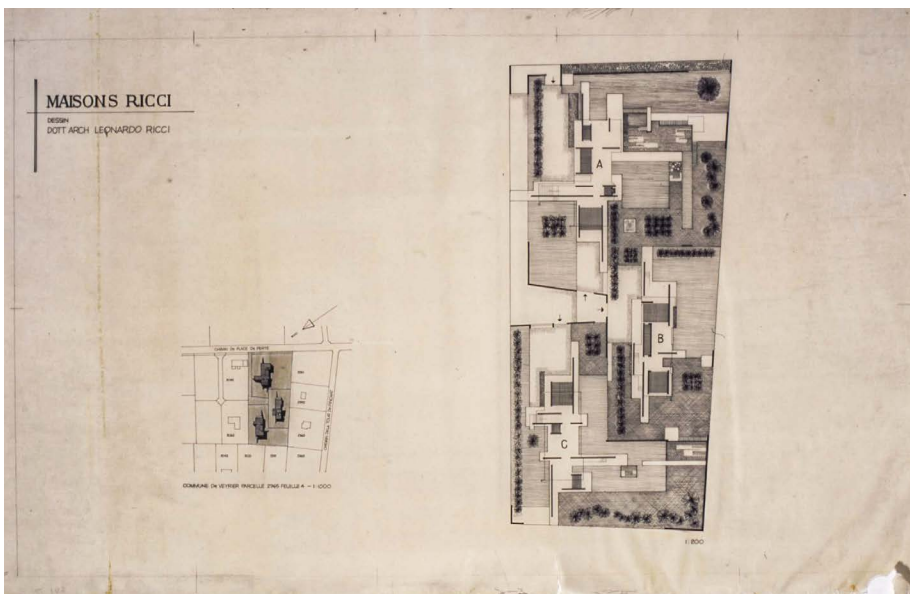
Fig. 49
Project for Casa Tendi,
planivolumetric, scale
1:100, Casa Studio Ricci.

Fig. 50
Project for Casa Tendi,
north-east and south-west
elevations, Casa Studio
Ricci.

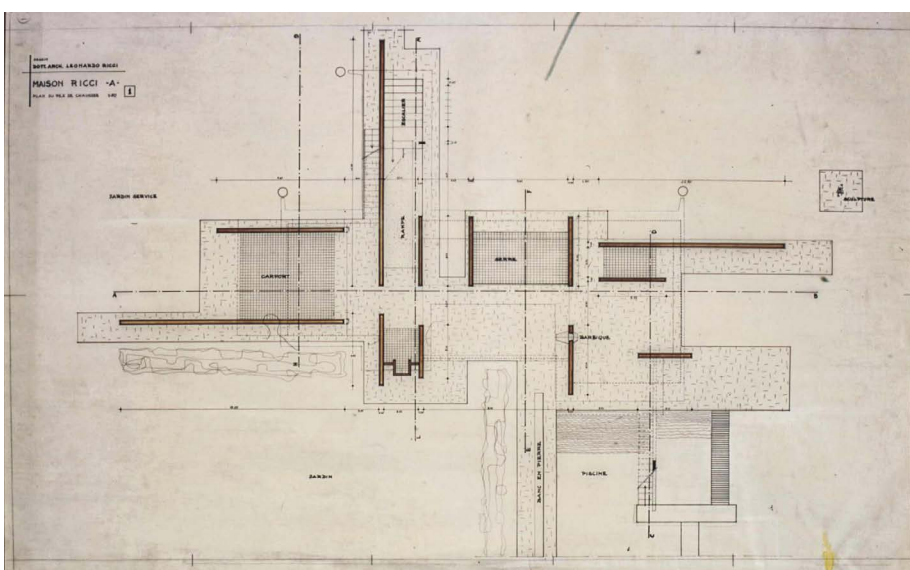
41 Ghia, *La nostra città è tutta la Terra. Leonardo Ricci architetto (1918-1994)*, 107, 109.



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Fig. 51

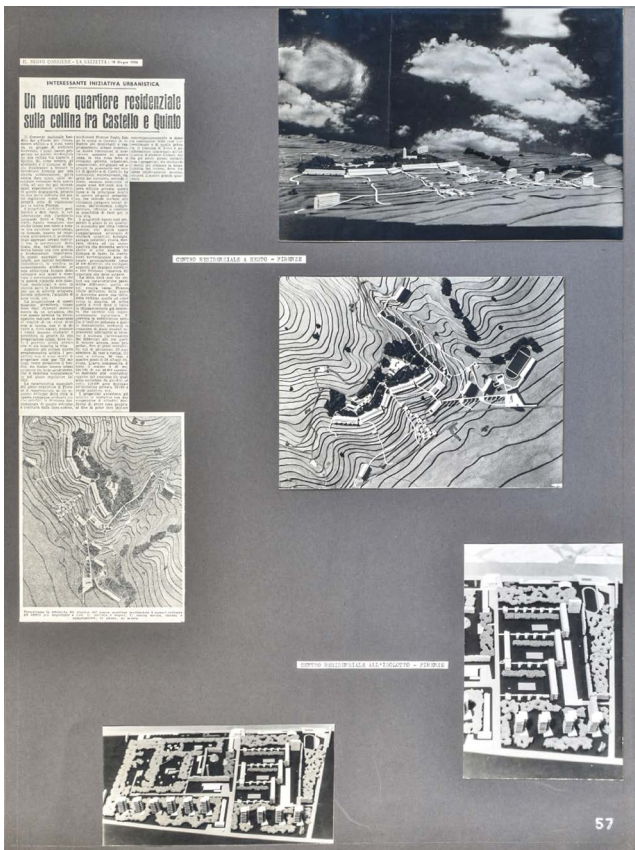
Project for three "Maisons Ricci", general view, B038550S, CSAC.

Fig. 52

Project for three "Maisons Ricci", general plan, scale 1: 200, ink on transparency, B001091S, CSAC.

Fig. 53

Project for Arnaldo Ricci House, plan, scale 1:50, B001089S, CSAC.



The total area of the core was 295,700 sq. m., of which 46,900 were for the constructions of the object of the competition (accompanied by gardens and vegetable gardens), 119,300 areas for private initiatives, 70,100 for public green⁴² [Fig. 54, 55].

As it is easy to infer, the Fifties were a rich period for Leonardo Ricci both in architecture and painting: he took also part in several exhibitions in famous American galleries⁴³. When Leonardo Ricci had come back home from France and had begun the building of the Village of Monterinaldi, in Florence Fiamma Vigo involved Ricci, who was exploring the themes of myths and archetypes, approaching the search for the primitivism of some artistic avant-garde and to Picasso, Schiele, Giacometti, Ernst and the Surrealists he had known in Paris, in her work⁴⁴.

The collaboration between Ricci and Vigo gave birth to the Exhibition “La Cava. Mostra internazionale all’aperto di arti plastiche” [“The cave. International outdoor exhibition of plastic arts”] realized in 1955 in Monterinaldi. The exhibition

42 *Urbanistica*, no.12 (1953); “Un nuovo quartiere residenziale sulla collina fra Castello e Quinto,” *Il Nuovo Corriere - La Gazzetta*, June 10, 1954; *Urbanistica*, no.14 (1954); articles and pictures of the Centro Residenziale all’Isolotto model collected in “Logbook” n. 2 (1952-1956), pages 57-58, Casa Studio Ricci.

43 At the North “La Cienega” Gallery in California (19 January-27 February 1953) and at the International Exhibition of Contemporary Painting in Pittsburg (13 October-18 December 1955).

44 Primitivism as a symbol of an uncorrupted and pure state of nature had led Ricci in those years to make «handprints stretched out, feet walking on cliff or cave bottoms, archetypes of all time, totems and taboos that had survived up to dawn of myths, mostly more pictorially expressed in large or very large formats». Giovanna Uzzani, “Pittura liberata e libera”, in *Leonardo Ricci 100. Scrittura, pittura e architettura. 100 note a margine dell’Anonimo del XX secolo*, eds. Maria Clara Chia, Clementina Ricci and Ugo Dattilo (Firenze: Didapress, 2019), 28.

Fig. 54-55
Plan for the area between Quinto and Castello, articles collected in Logbook no. 1, pages 57, 58.

was the first expression of the synthesis of the arts Ricci pursued for all his life: it 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 arts, which were melting and working as complementary fundamental expressive elements of a whole. Andréé Bloc took part in the exhibition and decided to install a sculpture in the panoramic point on the terrace of the Ricci Study-Home, right where the dome of Brunelleschi was visible. The idea of the synthesis of the arts was still alive in Ricci's mind since the very beginning of his career, when he worked with other artists, craftsmen and intellectuals attracted by this existential tension. Lionello Venturi supported Ricci and Vigo's initiative, as he highlighted in a letter he addressed to them:

Dear friends, Fiamma Vigo and Leonardo Ricci, I have full faith in you and in your initiative. The unity of taste in painting, sculpture, architecture is today's most imperative need in the art world⁴⁵.

The exhibition was successful as the numerous Italian and foreign articles demonstrated⁴⁶, it hosted sixty-six Italian and foreign artists in the streets of Monterinaldi, in Ricci's studio, in the external walkways of the house and in the large steep garden along the slope. The importance of the company laid in setting up a dialogue between the work and the space in a place that was not originally thought of as an exhibition hall, but which was the right one to compare painting, sculpture, and architecture. The arts had remained separated in their research so far, while the exhibition was melting them: the works merged with stones, wood, perspectives on the house or landscape, glass and, in this way, they demonstrated their foundational role to human life. Ricci wrote on the catalogue of the exhibition that they wanted to prompt the collaboration among artists, architects, and craftsmen, to give them the possibility to exhibit their works and let the visitors buy the most suitable objects for their life⁴⁷. Ricci avoided the function of art as ornament, but he intended it as an expression of life. Therefore, he moved from primitivism and abstract art to explore the informal, by representing matter in all its colors and textures and indulging in the act and strength of the gestural experience⁴⁸.

Between 1954 and 1956 Ricci continued his work in Poggio Gherardo, while in 1955 he won the II prize with Leonardo Savioli, Danilo Santi, Gianfranco Petrelli in the competition for the urban redevelopment and requalification of the San Frediano neighborhood announced by the City of Florence. The group presented a project for the rehabilitation and building rearrangement of the San Frediano

45 "Logbook" n. 2 (1952-1956), page 76, Casa Studio Ricci.

46 Some of them are: Gillo Dorfles, "Una mostra all'aperto di arti plastiche", *Domus*, no. 313 (December, 1955): 61-64; Giovanni Colacicchi, "Un esperimento di grande valore a Firenze. Arte all'aperto", *La Nazione Italiana*, November 1, 1955; "Palast im Steinbruch", *Der Standpunkt*, January 20, 1958. These articles are collected in "Logbook" n. 2 (1952-1956), pages 64-65, 76-77, Casa Studio Ricci.

47 Alessia Lenzi, Susanna Ragionieri, Maria Grazia Messina, Rosalia Manno Tolu, and Loredana Maccabruni, "Fiamma Vigo e 'numero' una vita per l'arte", catalogue of the exhibition (Firenze, Archivio di Stato, 7 October-20 December 2003) (Firenze: Centro Di, 2003).

48 Alberto Busignani, "Cinque pittori fiorentini", *Domus*, no. 360 (November, 1959): 26-28.

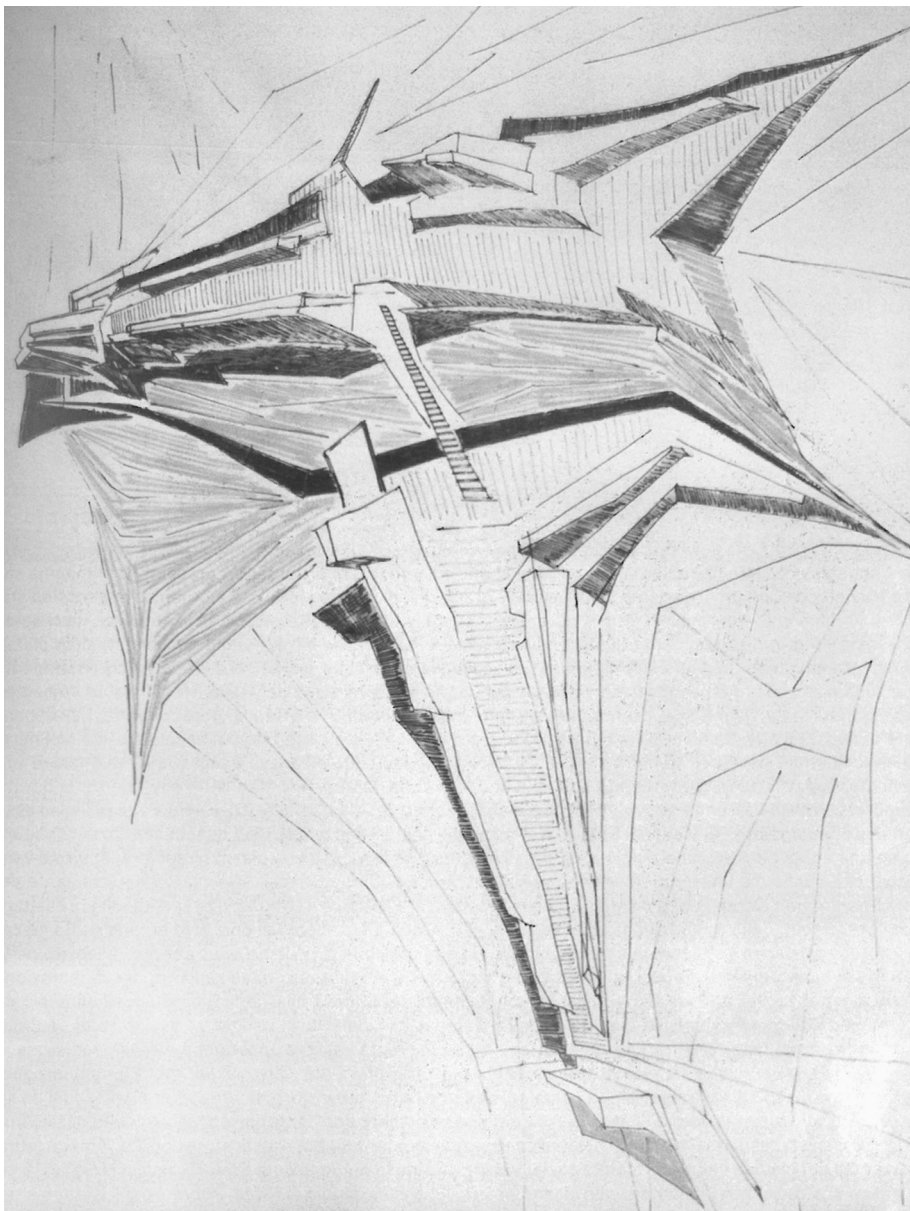
district, which was in a degraded condition, both from the hygienic and housing point of view. It involved an intervention in a vast area of the Oltrarno, divided by the walls adjacent to the San Frediano gate into two qualitatively different zones with respect to historical-architectural pre-existences, urban characterization, and population density, which required differentiated but coordinated solutions. The project received the second prize and much acclaim: particularly appreciated were the proposal to value the oldest area of the neighborhood through a system of pedestrian paths through green areas inside the blocks and the solution of a large public park on the bank of the Arno⁴⁹.

Later, in 1957, Ricci participated in the design of another Florentine district: Sorgane. The popular neighborhood was designed by a group of 37 designers, including Ricci and Savioli, guided by Michelucci.

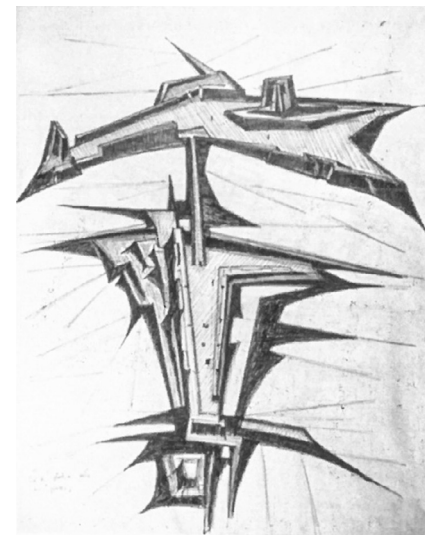
In Casa Studio Ricci two drawings of the general plan of the CEP district of Sorgane are kept, one by Leonardo Ricci and one by Giovanni Michelucci. Ricci's drawing showed the architect's desire to organically blend city and landscape in an architectural and urban *continuum* consisting in the connection between a lower part of the city on the plain and the upper part where he drew a bastion square with a small building in the center. The two drawings are particularly similar especially in the general layout, but only in a second drawing, Ricci defined the "L"-shaped square of the lower part, surrounding it with long buildings and connecting it with the upper square thanks to a staircase which crosses the wooded belt that separates the two parts. Ricci's general plan is monumental and his organic-expressionist design underlines his intent between reality and utopia [Fig. 56, 57].

In the detailed plan of 1957, the "upper town" was configured as an area for the service structures and an irregular open square that housed the church of the neighborhood. Ricci repeated the fan-shaped structure numerous times both in the design of neighborhoods and private residences, exploiting, in most cases, the natural slope of the land on which his interventions were grafted. According to Corinna Vasič Vatovec, the similarity of the drawings by Ricci and Michelucci was symptomatic of a close collaboration between the two for the Sorgane project, for which the master «aimed to re-evaluate spontaneity, to enhance everyday behavior, to reassign the meaning of a path to the street human and to the square the function of attraction for community assemblies, imagining the equivalent of a "village" nestled in nature». According to Vasič Vatovec, despite the evident collaboration with the master, the fan shaped system of the project, underlined in the design of the square on the hill and on the settlement of the lower part, was certainly to be attributed to Leonardo Ricci, because he used it in a number of projects. That shape basically allowed him to resolve the organic integration between

49 Aurelio Cetica, "Concorso per la sistemazione urbanistica del quartiere di San Frediano", *La Regione*, no. 4-5 (1955); 30,40; S.A., "L'esito del concorso per il risanamento di San Frediano," *Il Nuovo Corriere - La Gazzetta*, November 4, 1955; S.A., "Il risanamento di San Frediano," *Nazione Sera*, November 7, 1955; collected in "Logbook" n. 2 (1952-1956), pages 69-70, Casa Studio Ricci; Vasič Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto "esistenzialista"*, 30.



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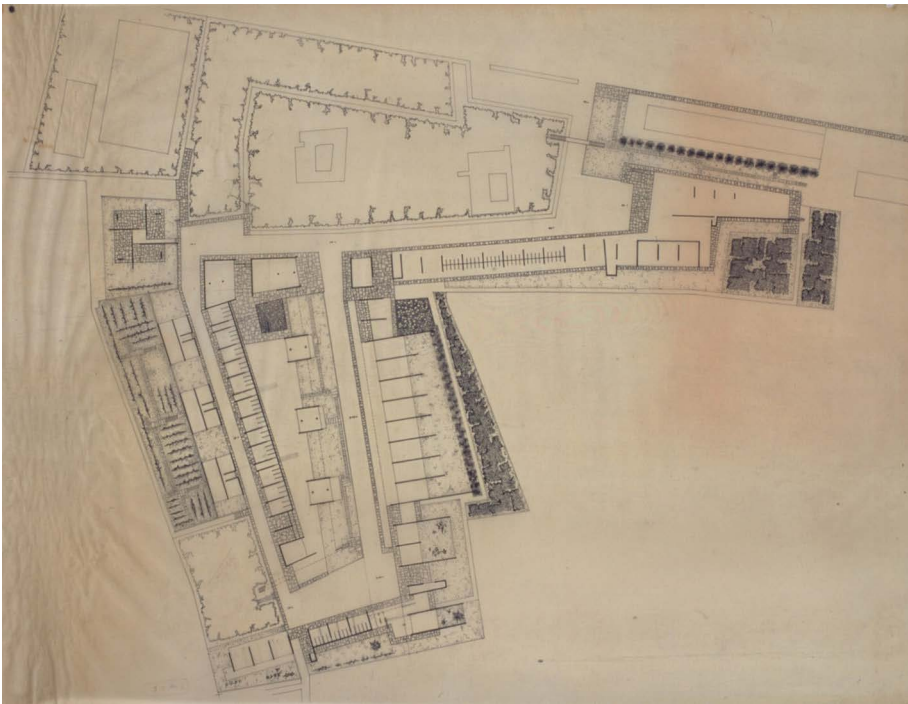
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nature and architecture thanks to a gradual expansion of space and a gradual arrangement of the rooms following the natural slope on which Ricci's projects were often grafted, as in the large hall of the community village of Agàpe (1946/1948-expansions 1951), in some houses in the Monterinaldi village, in the villa Fausto Maria Ricci in Beverly Hills (1952), Casa Fattirolli in Poggio Gherardo (Florence, 1954-1956), Casa Perrone (Lecce, 1955), Casa Mann-Borgese (Forte dei Marmi, 1958-1960), and Casa Pleydell-Bouverie (Marciana – Isola d'Elba, 1958-1960).

The collaboration between Ricci and Michelucci on the Sorgane project is told by a number of letters kept in Casa Studio Ricci. In those letters Leonardo Ricci explained to his master the designers' group opinions and summed up his view, always centered on the existential value to be preserved between the environment and the buildings, to be found in the relation between architecture and urban design. Moreover, since the project was conceived by a group of

Fig. 56
Sketch of Sorgane, general plan, Casa Studio Ricci.

Fig. 57
sketch of Sorgane, general plan titled "Visione plastica delle due piazze" ["Plastic view of the two squares"], Casa Studio Ricci.



58 |

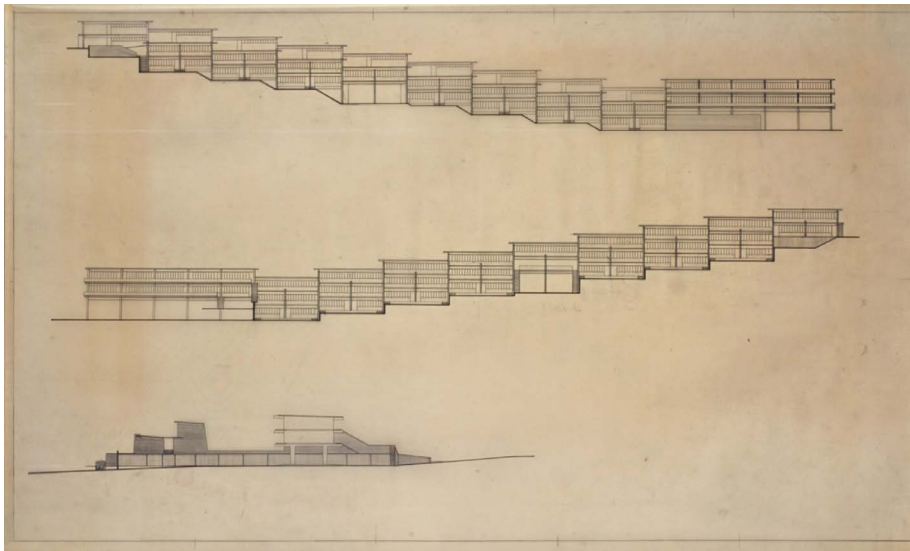
architects and engineers, it was important to Ricci to solve the urban-architectural relation in a unified way. The passage from the master plan to the design of habitat units by the different groups was the most important one and, in Ricci's opinion, each single designer had to consider that homogeneous character as the first design principle⁵⁰ [Fig. 58, 59, 60, 61].

In 1958 Ricci exposed at the collective exhibition of sacred art at the "Chiostro Nuovo" in Florence, a personal exhibition at the Gallery "La Bussola" in Rome, and was invited at the "Rome-NewYork Art Foundation" in Rome.

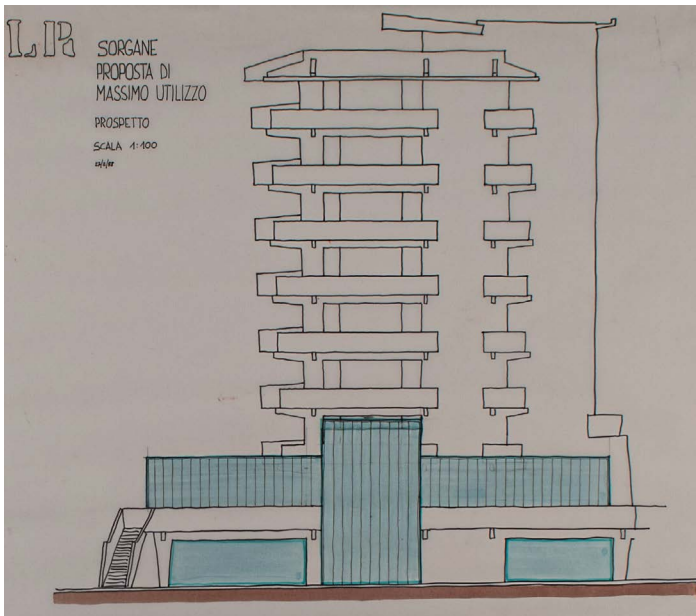
He approached the Gallery "La Bussola", once introduced by Lionello Venturi: «Form and composition enhance the color to reach the expression, which encompasses all the visual elements, and goes beyond revealing a particular

50 Leonardo Ricci's letter to Giovanni Michelucci (undated); "Firenze Ha Bisogno Di Sorgane per Essere Più Bella," *Il Giornale Del Mattino*, February 20, 1957; Giovanni Michelucci, "Una Lettera Del Prof. Giovanni Michelucci. Non Sono Argomenti Validi Quelli Dei Critici Di Sorgane," *Il Giornale Del Mattino*, February 24, 1957; "All'invito Dei Progettisti Di Sorgane Replicano Le Personalità Della Cultura," *La Nazione Italiana*, March 20, 1957; Ottavio Cecchi, "Firenze Indecisa: Verso Est o Verso Ovest?," *Il Contemporaneo*, May 25, 1957; Bruno Zevi, "Sette Accusati a Firenze," *L'Espresso*, June 23, 1957; Giovanni Michelucci, "Sorgane. Quartiere Autosufficiente," *Edilizia Popolare*, no. 16 (June 1957): 8–12; Giovanni Astengo, "Firenze: La Polemica per Sorgane," *Urbanistica*, no. 22 (July 1957): 2–8; "Modifiche al Progetto Di Sorgane in Una Riunione Romana Ad Alto Livello," *La Nazione Italiana*, November 28, 1958; collected in "Logbook" n. 3 (1956–1959), pages 103–108, Casa Studio Ricci; "Non Sono Basate Su Motivi Consistenti Le Opposizioni al Quartiere Di Sorgane," *Il Giornale Del Mattino*, January 29, 1960; "La Polemica Degli Oppositori Di Sorgane è Degenerata nell'equivoco," *Il Giornale Del Mattino*, January 31, 1960; "La Costruzione Del Quartiere Di Sorgane Avrà Inizio a Marzo," *Il Giornale Del Mattino*, February 10, 1960; "Una Serie Di Falsi Ha Affiancato La Campagna per Impedire La Realizzazione Di Sorgane," *Il Giornale Del Mattino*, February 13, 1960; "Logbook" n. 4 (1956–1963), pages 156, 157, Casa Studio Ricci; Bruno Zevi, "Unità d'abitazione a Sorgane, Firenze," *L'Architettura*, no. 14 (157) (November 1968): 546–549; C. Benbow, "Überbauung Sorgane Bei Florenz," *Werk* 56, no. 5 (May 1969): 323–325; Zevi, "Il Quartiere Di Sorgane a Firenze/L'edificio Città Di Leonardo Ricci": 298–301; Bruno Zevi, "Processo al Quartiere Di Sorgane/A Firenze Un Boomerang Di Ritorno," *L'Espresso*, then collected in *Cronache di Architettura vol. II*: 396–401; Raja, "Un Sogno in Città (Intervista a Leonardo Ricci)": 176–182; Carlo Cresti, *Firenze capitale mancata: architettura e città dal piano Poggi a oggi* (Milan: Electa 1995), 339–344; Emanuele Masiello, "Architetture Di Leonardo Ricci in Toscana," *La Nuova Città*, no. 5/6 (1999): 66–84; Fabbrizzi, Macci, and Tramonti, *Opere e progetti di scuola fiorentina, 1968–2008*: 130–143; Vasic Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto "esistenzialista"*, 60–65; Giovanni Bartolozzi, "Leonardo Ricci. Un Nuovo Inizio," *Archphoto*, 2014; Sandro Gioli, "Lettera per Leonardo. Ricci 100. In Memoria Di Leonardo Ricci," *Cultura Commestibile*, no. 267 (June 16, 2018): 6; Matteo Zambelli, "Buon Compleanno Leonardo (Ricci)"; Silvio 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'".

Fig. 58
Sorgane, general plan,
B038589S, CSAC.



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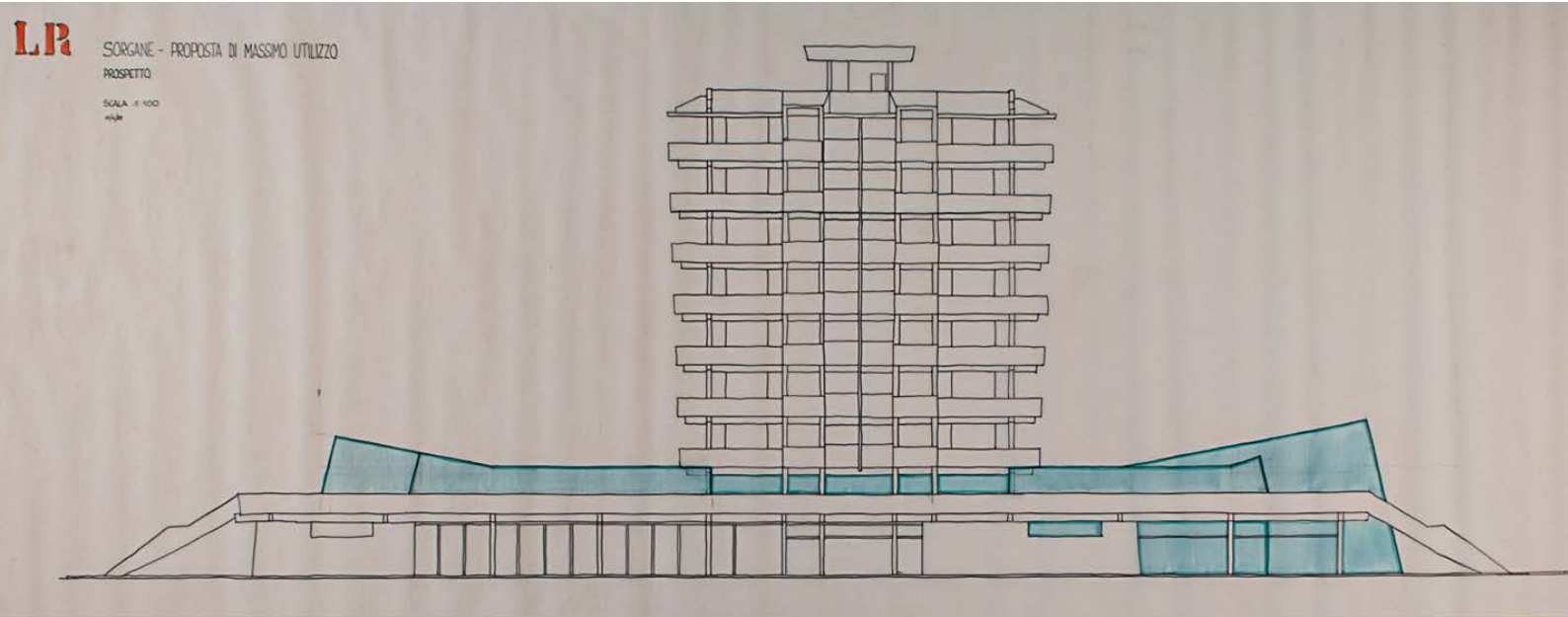


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Fig. 59
Sorgane, Building type
A, elevations, B038590S,
CSAC.

Fig. 60
"Sorgane, purpose for a
maximum use", elevation,
scale 1:100, Casa Studio
Ricci.

Fig. 61
"Sorgane, purpose for a
maximum use", elevation,
scale 1:100, Casa Studio
Ricci.



tension. Tension is the reason for the work, the vitality itself, the aspiration to investigate the world through painting⁵¹». The same tension that represented the soul of Ricci's informal painting was what most characterized Ricci's paintings of the last half of the 1950s and it indicated his "cultured" quality and the possibility of communicating with the other painters⁵².

In 1959 Ricci's exhibitions in Italy were: "Prima Mostra Regionale d'Arte Toscana", "Mostra di pittura di gruppo" alla "Galleria Michaud", "Pittori astratti fiorentini" alla "Galleria Michaud" (1959-1960), all in Florence, and the "Esposizione di pittura" al "Festival dei due mondi" in Spoleto, while in 1960 Ricci exposed at Trabia Gallery in New York (29 March-30 April 1960). Besides, Ricci was in the United States in 1959 when he was entrusted of the project for the Goti Spinning Factory in Campi Bisenzio. He was Boemis visiting professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, when Nazareno Goti entrusted Ricci the project, then carried out with the help of Enzo Trapani and Fabrizio Milanese.

The Goti factory was an industrial plant of textile products that lies between Prato and Campi Bisenzio in Tuscany. In this project, the monumental ambitions of the imposing exposed structures of the brutalist district of Sorgane were announced, which heralded the macrostructural projects then studied and built by Leonardo Ricci in the United States. In the Goti factory the power of the structures left exposed was manifested above all in the interiors.

The project started in October 1959, when Leonardo Ricci was entrusted by the industrialist Nazareno Goti, who wanted to build a large yarn factory on the state road to Prato, leaving to the architect a complete freedom in the design, but only setting him the economic limit of the usual costs of an industrial warehouse and the goal of realizing a beautiful working space. Leonardo Ricci carried out the brilliant project with the collaboration of the engineer Enzo Trapani and the architect Fabrizio Milanese, who took care of the interior design. The factory was ready in 1960. The project program integrated various functions such as residences for workers, production and commercial spaces. The system designed by Leonardo Ricci, characterized by a broken line roof and tricuspid reinforced concrete support pillars, was aimed at favoring, even in this case, the continuity of space and the movement of the workers in their different job activities at all levels. The intent of the architect was to oppose the man-machine binomial, widespread in industrialized society, to re-propose a new space in which machines and men coexisted in balance, trying to overcome the model of the shed covered with a brick vault. Ricci used local stone, reinforced concrete and glass to create a large central hall intended for industrial work to which a stairwell with a glass tower with brise soleil was added

51 Giornali di bordo – "Logbook" n. 3 (1956-1959), page 102, Casa Studio Ricci.

52 Alberto Busignani, "Cinque pittori fiorentini", *Domus*, no. 360 (November, 1959): 26-28. The five painters are Berti, Bueno, Loffredo, Native and Ricci. For Ricci's painting, Busignani quoted Lionello Venturi's words on "tension", and read it in function of the work of the other artists: all five, according to the author, were driven by an undisputed vitality but also by a certain rigor, "a true norm of meditation and common expression in a vaulted work which is substantially original and individually different".

and two lateral bodies were inserted into the main rectangular compartment with warehouses and service spaces. The project was completed without the residential tower envisaged by Ricci's project. According to the chronicles of the time, Ricci's factory was an industrial building «very different from the hundred and one hundred spinning mills and weaving mills already scattered throughout the territory of the Municipality of Prato». The importance of Ricci's project and the beauty of the factory, in its subdued tones in the gray of the concrete and in the black of the large luminous windows' frames, laid in the spatial quality achieved, in which the emerging productive capacity of the Prato textile industry was enhanced and constituted an important factor in the implementation of the work. To Ricci, the commission of the factory marked a turning point in his design since he had mainly dealt with villas and residential houses so far. The building occupied 2600 square meters and a volume of 28,600 cubic meters. It included a single main hall, a very large room that housed all the activities of the factory equipped with a bridge placed at half of the total height, used to house machinery and men.

The cost of the "Y" pillars, inspired by the "tree" reinforced concrete pillars firstly conceived by Michelucci, was higher than that of normal pillars, so the architect decided to use them for a room that was twice as high as a usual shed and built the bridge to increase the available working surface (11 meters wide and 67 meters long). The pillars were all inclined according to the static requirement: they separated into three branches, one supporting the cantilever-terrace shelf, two supporting the bridge beams and extending to support the gables of the roof. The pillars were the most characteristic elements in the single and uniform main room.

I wanted to transform the classic pillar so as 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 so far I have seen expressed in a symbolic way. The terms of the natural man-machine relationship, a relationship that was as natural as that of the individual in front of his furniture, his home, and I tried to restore a balance. Man no longer lost in front of the machine, but contained like her in a single living space⁵³.

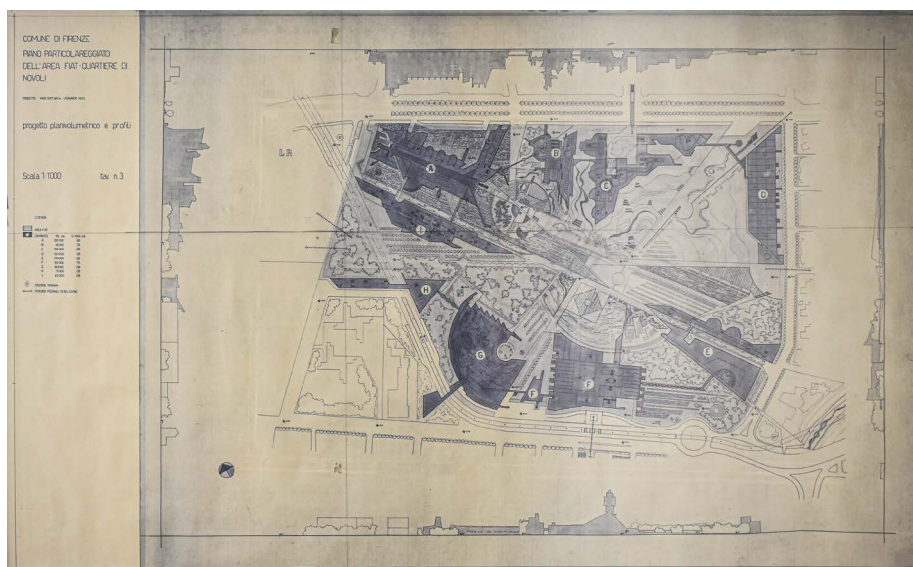
Leonardo Ricci's project, in addition to solving economic and social issues, managed to make space issues facilitate the production process. Therefore, the main activity of the company, the industrial process, was simplified by a correct combination of vertical and horizontal paths in order to minimize the time for workers to move from one work area to another and the industrial cycle. The placement of the managers' or employees' offices, two apartments for workers, rest rooms and changing rooms were designed on one side of the main body. The loading points and the warehouses were perpendicularly inserted to the main body in correspondence of the spaces used at the end of the industrial cycle, while

53 Lattes, Wanda. "Perché è nata la fabbrica "bella" *Il Giornale del Mattino*, July 31, 1960.

the spinning department mirrored the volume of the warehouses on the opposite side⁵⁴.

The 1960s were a meaningful decade for Ricci, that began with the project for the Fitzgerald House in Fiesole (1960), never realized. Those years were permeated by the appointment of the detail plan for the Novoli area of the General Urban Plan of Florence. Ricci was the leader of the group composed of Dusan Vasić, Fabrizio Milanese, Ernesto Trapani. In 1962 the City of Florence instructed Bruno Zevi to oversee the drafting of the Detailed Plan for the Novoli Area, and Leonardo Ricci was convened along with his mentor Giovanni Michelucci, precisely entrusted with the Palace of Justice project, and twelve other leading architects. In addition to an initial meeting, the draft design was refined during three workshops at the end of which a plan for the Palace of Justice was agreed upon. Various misunderstandings and unpleasant events lead to the dissolution of the commission of architects and the project is entrusted to Leonardo Ricci, then blocked by political issues and realized after the architect's death with numerous variants.

The Palace of Justice is set in an eighteen-hectare park connected to new infrastructure and buildings. It is proposed to solve the integration problems of the Novoli area and to become a driving force for a suburban area of Florence inserted in an urban park. Ricci had planned to subdivide the large central green lung with water mirrors initially thought by the group of architects to achieve a diffuse park, and a diagonal axis described by the body of the Palace of Justice emphasized by an alternative driveway, to relieve traffic, and a settlement system [Fig. 62, 63, 64].



62

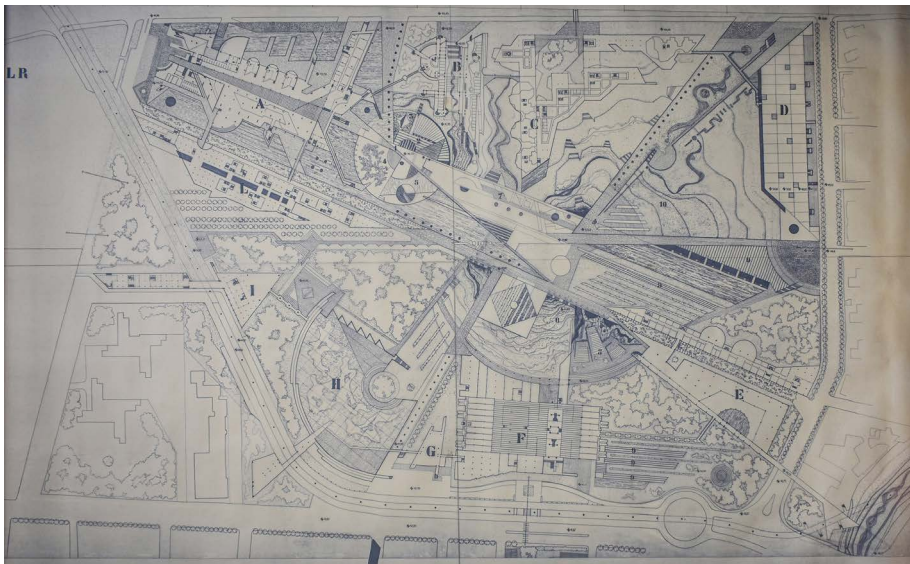
The signals of this shift to a bigger scale had always been present in Ricci's work —one only needs to think of certain episodes in the Sorgane neighborhood in Florence (1962); however, it was since the 1970s that this tendency

54 Ricci, Leonardo. "Space in Architecture: the visual image of environment," *Journal of University of Manchester Architectural and Planning Society*, no. 7 (1956): 7-11; Lattes, Wanda. "Perché è nata la fabbrica "bella", *Il Giornale del Mattino*, July 31, 1960; Ricci, Leonardo. *Anonymous (XX century)*. New York: George Braziller, 1962; Vasic Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto "esistenzialista"*, 38; Ilaria Cattabriga, "Leonardo Ricci and the Project for the 'Man-Machine Space': the Goti Factory (1959)", *Histories of Postwar Architecture*, no. 9 (June 2021): 68-86; Ilaria Cattabriga, "Leonardo Ricci e il progetto dello spazio uomo-macchina: Fabbrica Goti (1959)", proceedings of the conference "Archivia, lezioni dagli archivi", Dipartimento di Architettura, Università di Firenze, May 12, 2021 (Florence: Didapress, 2023). The pictures of the Goti Spinning Factory model are collected in "Logbook" no. 4, (1956-1963), page 167, Casa Studio Ricci. See also the Archival Source on the Goti Factory published in *Histories of Postwar Architecture*, no. 9 (June 2021): 65-67.

Fig. 61
Plan for the Novoli Area,
planivolumetric and, elevation,
scale 1:1000, Casa
Studio Ricci.



63 |



64 |

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 gave to the students of his courses at the University of Florence, or at the American universities where he was visiting professor, or for the competition project for the restoration of the Fortezza da Basso (1967)⁵⁵.

55 Francesco Bandini, *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*. (Florence: Centro Di, 1978); Giuseppe Campos Venuti, Pierluigi Costa, Luciano Piazza, Odoardo Reali, *Firenze. Per una urbanistica della qualità. Progetto preliminare di piano regolatore 1985* (Venice: Marsilio, 1985); "Il gran rifiuto di Michelucci. Perché non vuole progettare il nuovo palazzo di giustizia," *Il Corriere di Firenze*, December 20, 1987; Paolo Baldeschi, "Leonardo Ricci e il progetto del Palazzo di Giustizia di Firenze," *Dossier di urbanistica e cultura del territorio*, no. 16 (December 1991): 4-13; Leonardo Ricci, "Progetto per il Palazzo di Giustizia sull'area Fiat a Novoli, Firenze," *Zodiac*, no. 5 (1991): 203.

Fig. 63
Plan for the Novoli Area,
territorial framing, Casa
Studio Ricci.

Fig. 64
Plan for the Novoli Area,
general plan, Casa Studio
Ricci.

The year 1963 saw the downsizing of the plan for Sorgane, the so-called "Sogane Ridotto", by the group headed by Ricci and composed of Antonio Canali, Luigi Cencetti, Fabrizio Milanese, Gianfranco Petrelli, Ernesto Trapani, Ferdinando Poggi and Leonardo Savioli. By studying the archival documents, we can draw a detailed report of the buildings to be designed in chronological order :

- 1962-72: building "Ricci A" (via Enrico De Nicola n. 11)
- 1963-72: building "Ricci B" (via Enrico De Nicola n. 2)
- 1964-78: building "Ricci D" o "La Nave" (via Tagliamento n. 3-17)
- 1964-82: building "Ricci C" (via Enrico De Nicola n. 1-3)
- 1964-81: building "Ricci E" (via Tagliamento n. 27)
- 1961-87: building "Ricci F" o "Casa Torre" (via Livenza n. 3-5)

Moreover, during the evolution of the Sorgane neighborhood, in 1964 Ricci was entrusted of the set up for the exhibition titled "L'espressionismo: pittura, scultura, architettura" in Palazzo Strozzi he completed thanks to Fabrizio Milanese as coordinator of the works.

In 1964, Expressionism was the theme of the *Maggio Fiorentino* and many events were organized in which various artistic disciplines intervened together including theater, music and art. Ricci chose for the exhibition at Palazzo Strozzi to make the expressionist works "scream" in a silent and balanced Renaissance palace. Therefore, he refused the ideas of designing a new architecture and a new expensive set up in the ancient Florentine palace, or of simply laying out pictures and drawings on the walls, trusting in the overwhelming force of colors and shapes, in their ability to dominate the static cavities of the rooms, because he had to enhance the pictures and their meaning first. Architecture could only sprout from this need and from the due to serve painting⁵⁶.

In painting the Informal manifested the refusal of predetermined formal schemes and this expression of painting was experienced by Ricci and became subject of the volume *Opera Aperta* by Umberto Eco. Bruno Zevi explained Ricci's "informal" attitude towards painting and architecture dealing with the architect's set up of the Expressionism Exhibition at Palazzo Strozzi in Florence (1964): he defined it an informal work of art itself, overcoming the boundaries of the arts by melting architecture and sculpture. Ricci's set-up of the exhibition "Espressionismo: pittura scultura architettura" ["Expressionism: painting, sculpture architecture"], then awarded with the "Fiorino d'Oro" in the same year, took shape in the wake of the experiments conducted by Friedrich Kiesler and André Bloc, spread also in Florence in the Sixties. The Expressionism exhibition in Florence was supervised by Palma Bucarelli for the figurative part, and by Giovanni Klaus Koenig for the architectural one, it was realized in the climate of re-evaluation of the power of exhibitions encouraged by Carlo Ludovico

56 Giovanni Bartolozzi, "Allestitimenti come concentrazioni di materia", in *Leonardo Ricci 100. Scrittura, pittura e architettura*, 161-165.

Ragghianti since the immediate post-war period. Ragghianti had studied the importance of the exhibitions as mediators between public and museum, as a response to the aesthetic education of the public thanks to their “discursive power”. The exhibition was in fact for Ragghianti a device that let the work to express itself at its best thanks also to the combinations with other works that allowed it to be read as a system with the text of the history of art.

According to Bruno Zevi, Ricci thought of an “archi-sculpture”: a series of winding walls, covered with rough plaster, dense with cracks, on which the names of the artists were written in red, freehand and without fear of draining. It constituted a shell for content of the exhibition, in dialectical contrast with the ancient environment⁵⁷. The rooms of Palazzo Strozzi however remained in view of the spectator, the vaults rebalanced and framed the winding path designed by Ricci⁵⁸.

Ricci’s project for the Expressionism exhibition was a strong example of architecture free from lexical or compositive rules and freed from the set-up concept of placing the paintings in a wall layout, they were displayed without caring distances, proportions, regular distribution, but they crowded portions of panels, they were isolated sometimes and sometimes they stood out against the visitor, according to the message they conveyed.

In the architectural section the landscape images of Bruno Taut followed the designs for suspended cathedrals of Paul Giesch and Carl Krayl, the constructions of the Luckhardt brothers, Gropius, Hans Poelzig, a truly excessive series of sketches by Hermann Finsterlin. The famous Einstein tower in Potsdam, by Erich Mendelsohn, was documented by original slides and the exhibition closed with Hans Scharoun’s Berlin Philharmonie of which some extraordinary drawings were exhibited. Those expressionist architectures were the symbol of the Twenties’ idea to escape from reality as far as form completely dissolved.

The set up invented by Ricci both for the painting and for the architecture sections was informal itself, an informal wall changing dimensions, directions and height along the path arranged for the audience who could follow the astonishing exhibition while becoming part of the informal walking. In that project Ricci melted two worlds and created a break between them: the Renaissance world with man as center of the universe and the expressionist man and artist who tried to escape reality and reach a metaphysical, obsessive, and evasive reality. The experiment was difficult because the project had to combine two different kinds of spaces: the measured, self-restrained and refined space of Palazzo Strozzi and the dynamic, action, the daily space of Expressionism, the quiet vaults of the historical palace and the pain, anxiety and screams of those painters. The spatial problem was only the first of a list of four main problems the design should have solved: the second problem was to quadruple the number of square meters needed for such a large number of works to be exhibited, the third problem was to allow the comparison

57 Bruno Zevi, “Mostra dell’Espressionismo/temporalità antilessicale e sdegno materico”, *L’Espresso*, then collected in *Cronache di Architettura vol. V*, (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1971), 318-321.

58 Zevi, “Mostra dell’Espressionismo”, 318-319.

between the different results achieved by the artists, who despite coming from the same historical and cultural background, had developed different expressions and treatments of problems from distant angles and periods. The fourth problem consisted in bringing back into a museum a painting that was not born for museums but as a protest to denounce the drama of a historical moment.

In his report Ricci explained his design choices which moved from these problems. He decided to leave the Renaissance palace walls free from every possible duty as if they were «spectators of the painters' drama⁵⁹». In the set-up he decided to build a continuous sculpture crossing the rooms of the palace which would have allowed a journey through both the single stories of each author and the collective artistic experience of Expressionism. That long and jagged path let all the works to be displayed and succeeded in going with the visitor from the very beginnings of Expressionism, across the different single authors' experiences to the last expressions of the movement, when it was nearly becoming an academic protest.

The reference Ricci followed to design that kind of space was the staging of an exhibition arranged by the expressionist painters themselves in which they decided to build simple walls in bricks painted in white to exhibit their works. Therefore, Ricci decided to build white walls for them inside Palazzo Strozzi trying to be one of them and imagine what those artists would have chosen for the set-up of their works⁶⁰. Following the path, the spaces fitted both to the quality of the works of the artists and to the different expressions, more or less strong, of the pain and anguish of the artists, until they reached spaces such as the one set up for Klee and Kandinsky, Ricci's favorite piece of the exhibition where a new world was taking shape⁶¹. In some points of the path there were the rooms of the drawings and graphics to let the visitors relax and admire the most famous works, suitable for a more daily distribution. The architectural section was a minor part of the exhibition that hosted the architects' drawings explaining the birth of some famous works of expressionist architecture. The drawings were preferred to the pictures because more exhaustive of the process of birth of the buildings, the pictures instead were reproduced by means of a projector⁶².

Ricci's work as curator and designer of the exhibition was appreciated by Bruno Zevi, who wrote a review for *L'Espresso*, Palma Bucarelli and Giulio Carlo Argan, who took part in the organizing committee, but it was criticized by Nello Ponente⁶³, whose criticism was sent by the Director of Palazzo Strozzi to Leonardo Ricci. Ricci decided to answer all his disapprovals in a letter to the

59 Leonardo Ricci, "Una mostra dell'espressionismo a Palazzo Strozzi", report by the author, 1, then published in the exhibition catalogue, Casa Studio Ricci.

60 In his report, Leonardo Ricci remembered that during the exhibition, the painter Rolf's wife told him about the same exhibition he took inspiration from, and that this event gave him the confirmation of having done a good work for the set up. Leonardo Ricci, "Una mostra dell'espressionismo a Palazzo Strozzi", report by the author, 2.

61 Leonardo Ricci, letter to the Director of Palazzo Strozzi replying to Nello Ponente, kept in Casa Studio Ricci, 1.

62 Leonardo Ricci, "Una mostra dell'espressionismo a Palazzo Strozzi".

63 Art critic and historian (Velletri 1925 - Rome 1981); student of Lionello Venturi, professor of contemporary art history (1974) at the university of Rome. Author of numerous essays and monographs on problems and exponents of contemporary art: *Tendances contemporaines* (1960); *Paul Klee* (1960); *Modigliani* (1967); *Magnelli* (1973); *Paul Cézanne* (1979). Source: <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/nello-ponente/> (last accessed May 26, 2020).

Director attached to his report⁶⁴. In Italy, all art galleries were turning into cultural institutions where the exhibition rooms could work with libraries, laboratories, rest rooms and further cultural organisms to allow everyone to visit museums and temporary exhibitions. Therefore, Ricci specified to the Director that the aim was to avoid the common idea of museums as “temples of the arts” separated from men, as they exposed human life and the human works of art⁶⁵.

The staging of the Expressionism exhibition was a clear example of architectural sculpture, of the influences and melting of the arts. Bruno Zevi introduced Ricci's work dealing with the “sculpture à habiter”, that was, a new architecture born from the fusion with sculpture, which produced new non-boxlike living spaces. The continuous sculpture was an autonomous space containing the world of Expressionism⁶⁶. At a time when plastic research was living its crisis and architects seemed unimaginative, perhaps a new impulse could have sprung from spontaneous architecture, as the exhibition *Architecture Without Architects* shown at the Museum of Modern Art in New York from November 9, 1964 to February 7, 1965, denounced⁶⁷, and from the union of architecture and sculpture. The crisis of Rationalism brought the rediscovery of artists such as Antoni Gaudì, of the visions of Hermann Finsterlin, Frederick J. Kiesler's *Continuous House* and *Universal Theater*, that became examples to be explored, but, above all, of the work of André Bloc which definitively raised the problem from the magazines *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* and *Aujourd'hui*⁶⁸.

64 Leonardo Ricci, letter to the Director of Palazzo Strozzi replying to Nello Ponente, Casa Studio Ricci, then published Leonardo Ricci, “Risponde Leonardo Ricci”, *Marcatré*, no. 8-9-10 (1964).

65 Leonardo Ricci, letter to the Director of Palazzo Strozzi replying to Nello Ponente, Casa Studio Ricci.

66 To Bruno Zevi «the real architecture [was] not the product of a few intellectuals, but the fruit of spontaneous activity, of the common heritage of a whole people and [developed] under the influence of collective experiences. [...] As the abstract movement [followed] the informal movement, an industrialized, standardized and increasingly inhuman architecture [reacted] by shaking off the entire baggage of rationalist rigor». Bruno Zevi, “Sculpture à habiter/In Francia si torna alle caverne”, *L'Espresso*, then collected in *Cronache di Architettura vol. XII*, (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1970), 276. In Zevi's opinion, the future of the new ideas of France Charles Letrosne in Vincennes, Frei and Hunziker in Switzerland, Herbert Goldman in California, Mathias Goeritz in Mexico, Giovanni Michelucci in the Church of S. Giovanni Battista, and Leonardo Ricci with the project for the integrated city was unknown and they risked falling into folklore and the vernacular. It was yet a way to revive architecture, which nevertheless took new impulse from this movement, which emerged from sculpture and denounced how modern architecture, bought by neo-capitalism, betrayed its original contents and the space research. What was important was that it suggested new solutions based on light, scale ratios and visual dimensions. Bruno Zevi, “Sculpture à habiter”, 274-277.

67 «[...] The ‘architecture without architects’ was rediscovered with Bernard Rudofsky set up for the large exhibition of exotic buildings titled *Architecture Without Architects* shown at the Museum of Modern Art in New York from November 9, 1964 to February 7, 1965. The exhibition was financed by the John Simone Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and by the Ford Foundation, which helped to finance the research on the project by awarding fellowships to the director of the exhibition for a study of non-formal, non-classified architecture. The exhibition was also possible thanks to the help of the architects Walter Gropius, Pietro Belluschi, José Luis Sert, Richard Neutra, Gio Ponti and Kenzo Tange». Bernard Rudofsky, *Architecture without Architects: An Introduction to Non-Pedigreed Architecture* (Museum of Modern Art: New York, 1964), acknowledgements.

68 Frederick J. Kiesler designed the project for the Endless House dealing with the study of the problem of living which was not a simple physiological function to be fulfilled, but rather an art whose rules had to be continually sought and understood. “Man was in fact a complex entity, biological, psychological and socio-political which had to regain the general and complex sense of living through creativity (...)”. It was according to these principles that the fluid forms and volumes of his project were freely combined in search of a spatial continuity that precisely represented the idea of the Endless Space. The space was dynamic and flew inside following the unfolding of human action. The distinction between the floor, walls and ceiling was confused creating a flexible and organic environment.

André Bloc produced from 1962 to 1966 several Sculpture habitacles. This research marked the evolution of the sculptor from geometric abstraction towards free forms. Architecture and sculpture mixed in organic imbrications, staggered to form different levels and fortunes, opening the visual unity of form to a physical and space-time experience, such as Kiesler's Endless house. Bloc allowed light and air to penetrate through simple and complex paths, conveying in the habit of sculpture a continuity of the visual and internal exterior through a system of interpenetration of space, thus multiplying relationships, contrasts, and changes in volume. Mélanie Fortier, “André Bloc” (Centre-Val de Loire: FRAC Architecture Sculpture, 2016).

Informal architecture did not exist and it would have been impossible, although the architects remained influenced by reviving the surfaces, shaping them, and giving them a material aspect: smooth, pasty, lumpy. However, it was a matter of releasing the buildings from a stereometric rigor. The informal in architecture could not be intended as in painting, where the separation of the project and the execution was denied: in architecture they were separated facts, and no one could have melted them⁶⁹.

In the Spring of 1965, from March 6 to May 2, the first edition of the exhibition "La Casa Abitata: biennale degli interni di oggi" was inaugurated. The organizing committee formed by Giovanni Michelucci, in the role of president, Domenico Benini, Tommaso Ferraris and Pierluigi Spadolini, proposed as main exhibition theme the interior living of a house, since 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 factors⁷⁰». 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 society⁷¹. Some of the most qualified Italian architects were called to answer, including Leonardo Ricci, Leonardo Savioli, Giovanni Bassi, Carlo De Carli⁷², Achille e Pier Giacomo Castiglioni, Marco Zanuso, Angelo Mangiarotti, Luigi Moretti, Vico Magistretti, Edoardo Gellner, Eduardo Vittoria, Giovanni Bassi, Gregotti Meneghetti Stoppino. They were not asked to provide definite solutions but to think and propose 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 were «constituting an "open formativity", capable of reciprocal, lively and usable

69 Umberto Eco, *Opera Aperta*, (Milano: Bompiani, 1962); Lara-Vinca Masini, "A Firenze la mostra dell'Espressionismo," *Domus*, no. 416 (1964); Leonardo Ricci, "Risponde Leonardo Ricci," *Marcatre*, no. 8-9-10 (1964), then published in HPA no.9 with the title "A Sculpture that Allows a Journey through Expressionism": a Reply to Nello Ponente", pages 91-94; Marisa Volpi and Giovanni Klaus Koenig, eds., *L'espressionismo: pittura, scultura, architettura: mostra in Palazzo Strozzi: Firenze, maggio-giugno 1964*, catalogue of the exhibition (Florence: Vallecchi, 1964); Leonardo Ricci, "Una mostra dell'espressionismo a Palazzo Strozzi," report by the author, 1, then published in the exhibition catalogue: *L'espressionismo: pittura, scultura, architettura: mostra in Palazzo Strozzi: Firenze, maggio-giugno 1964*, catalogue of the exhibition (Florence: Vallecchi, 1964); Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti, "Le rassegne d'arte in Italia"; *Critica d'Arte*, no. 69 (1965): 65-70; Bruno Zevi, "Mostra dell'Espressionismo/temporalità antilessicale e sdegno materico," *L'Espresso*, then collected in *Cronache di Architettura*, vol. V, (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1971): 318-321; Vasič Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto "esistenzialista"*, 38; Giovanni Bartolozzi, "Allestimenti come concentrazioni di materia," in *Leonardo Ricci 100. Scrittura, pittura e architettura*, edited by Maria Clara Ghia, Clementina Ricci, and Ugo Dattilo (Firenze: Didapress. Department of Architecture, Università degli Studi di Firenze, 2019): 161-165. Some of the most beautiful drawings by Ricci for the Expressionism exhibition were published in HPA issue no. 9, in the archival sheet titled "Staging of 'Espressionismo: pittura scultura architettura'", pages 89-90.

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

71 Miccinesi, "Una mostra a Firenze: La Casa Abitata", 10.

72 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.

relationship between the various elements that [made] up the house⁷³». If the first edition of the exhibition aimed at formulating those proposals, the second one had to focus on the relations.

Giovanni Michelucci 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 solution proposed, if inserted in a city, could lead the city towards the definition of a precise form. The theme, according to Michelucci, was stigmatized in the relationship between architect-population and among the habitat-city-metropolis, starting from the small to the large scale⁷⁴.

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 that of open format, 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 scale⁷⁵». The project presented by Ricci looked as a detached cell of the already described macrostructure for an integrated city, the model elaborated with the students of the Pennsylvania State University in the same year, and presented at the Montréal Expo two years later⁷⁶.

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 direction.

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 possible dimensions of 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 in which there were no internal partitions, but the shape followed the hypothetical flow of human actions inside, thinking of a limited internal space connected to an open space outside the cell, without rooms. 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’

73 Miccinesi, “Una mostra a Firenze: La Casa Abitata”, 11.

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

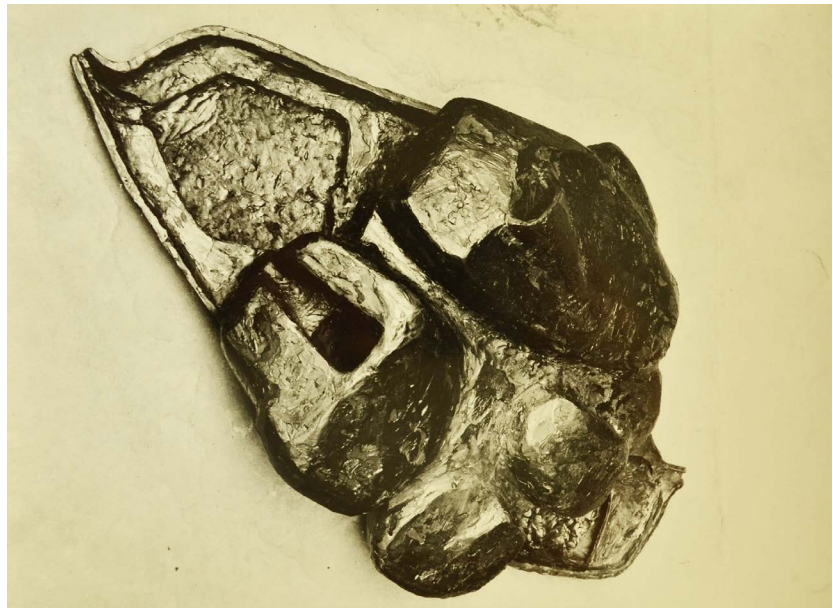
75 Ricci’s report about his project was published in Miccinesi, “Una mostra a Firenze: La Casa Abitata”, 13.

76 See Ilaria Cattabriga, “A Project of the Synopia of the Future Integrated City. MODEL I: Harbor-Center with Water-Sea-Earth Communication Routes”, *Histories of Postwar Architecture*, no. 9 (June 2021): 114 – 137.

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. Ricci presented a full-scale "Livable Space for Two": between the sculptural and the architectural, enveloping like the cavern of a cave, a primordial cell in the manner of Frederick Kiesler. From the preparatory sketches Ricci imagined a warm, sensual, uterine environment. The bed, bathroom, living room and kitchen were molded into a single surface, minimizing any division between the acts of the inhabitants, free or mechanical acts, spiritual or material, because any separation was a "waste of life". That space could be made industrially or by hand, designed for a certain form of industrialization or used independently of structures. The fixed furniture was integrated into the space itself and shaped with the organic external shell, while the moving elements could be varied and differentiate the interior⁷⁷ [Fig. 65, 66].



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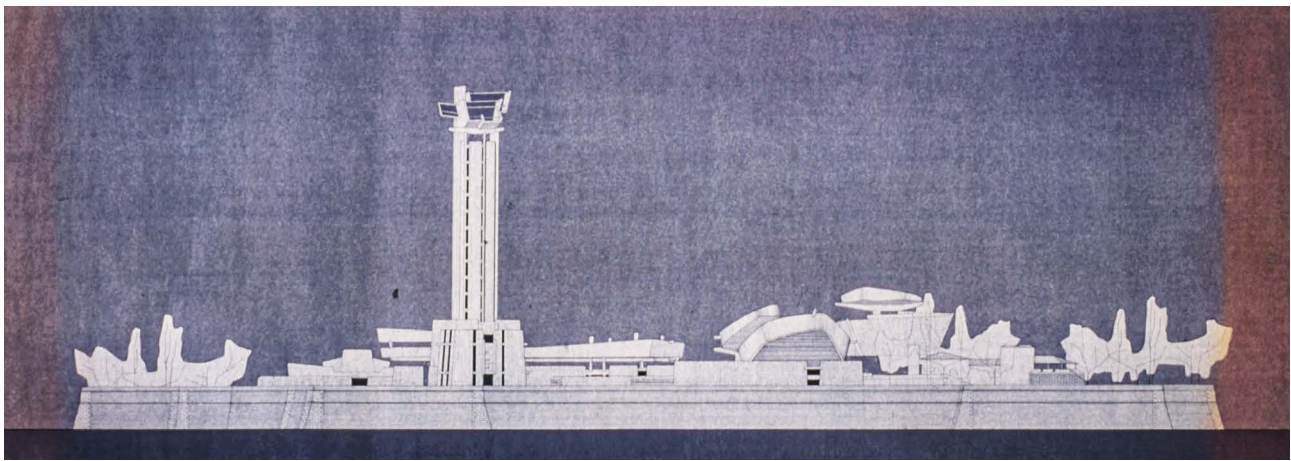


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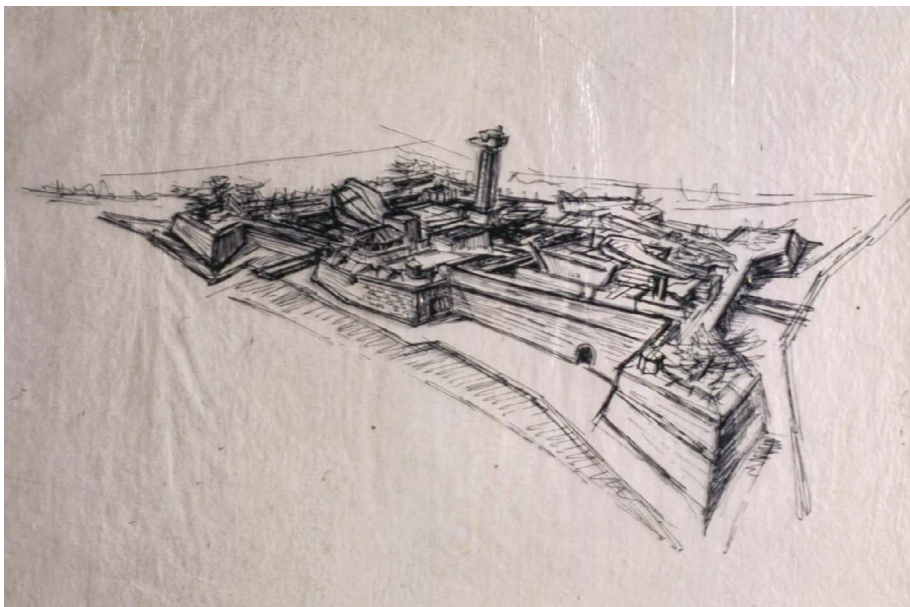
In 1967 Ricci took care of another set up. Created for a national competition of ideas, announced in 1967 by the Florence International Handicrafts Exhibition Authority for the urban and architectural arrangement and restoration of the Fortezza da Basso, the project related to a 16th-century pre-existence located near Santa Maria Novella station. Ricci participated with Ezio Bienaimè, Leonardo Savioli and Danilo Santi as consultants. More precisely, Savioli and Santi also collaborated on the project, appearing in the competition affair in the dual capacity of candidates and consultants to Ricci and Bienaimè's project. They submitted a project entitled "Three by Three," which did not win but was judged worthy of mention and thought of a new use for the building, changing it from a National Crafts Center to a cultural equipment for all plastic and visual arts, and they design a complex building, articulated in several volumes held

77 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. Achitetto "esistenzialista", 39.

Fig. 65-66 pictures of the bronze model for the "form-space" model, "Spazio vivibile per due persone", realized for the "La Casa Abitata" exhibition, Casa Studio Ricci.



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together by the massive ancient walls, which act as an anchor for the edifice. Thus, on the one hand, the pre-existences were respected, equipping, for example, the empty ramparts with pedestrian paths, but on the other hand, modernity was not renounced, neither in language nor in function, and the building was expanded by drawing inspiration from its being “unfinished” by inserting new volumes such as that of the sample tower, a turriform body, which formed the pivot of the composition and whose image referred to the vertical element of the later Dog Island project, or an inverted pyramid museum⁷⁸ [Fig. 67, 68].

During the second part of the 1960s until the early 1970s Ricci spent a lot of months in the United States, where he taught at the Pennsylvania State University (1965-1969) and at the University of Florida (1968-1972). In 1973 Ricci abandoned

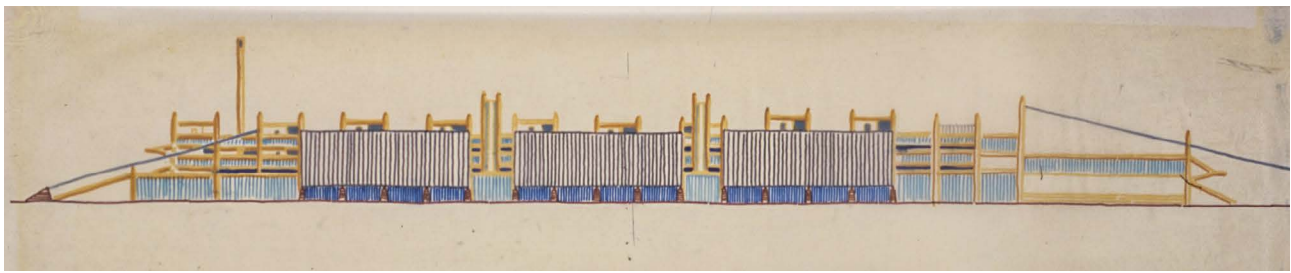
78 C. Matteini, “L’esito Del Concorso d’idee per La Fortezza Da Basso Di Firenze, 12 Progetti per La Fortezza Da Basso (Relazione Dei Progettisti),” *Bollettino Degli Ingegneri*, no. 12 (December 1968); Carlo Perogalli, “Metamorfosi Nella Fortezza/Metamorphosis in the Fortress,” *Casabella*, no. 336 (April 1969): 26–39; Corinna Vasić Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto “esistenzialista”*, 39, 40; Sandro Gioli, “Lettera per Leonardo. Ricci 100. In Memoria Di Leonardo Ricci,” *Cultura Commestibile*, no. 267 (June 16, 2018): 6; Silvia 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; 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* (Florence: Didapress. Department of Architecture, Università degli Studi di Firenze, 2019).

Fig. 67

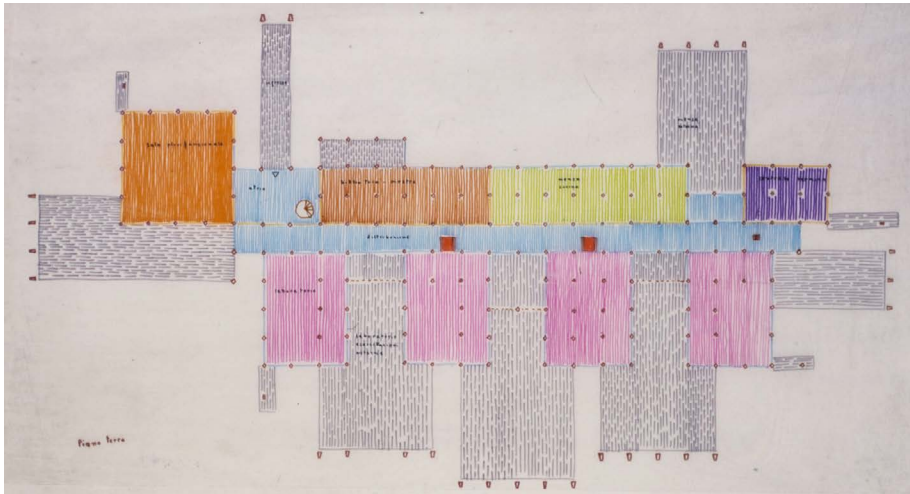
Project for the Competition for the Fortezza da Basso, main elevation, B038539S, CSAC.

Fig. 68

Project for the Competition for the Fortezza da Basso, top view, B001063S, CSAC.



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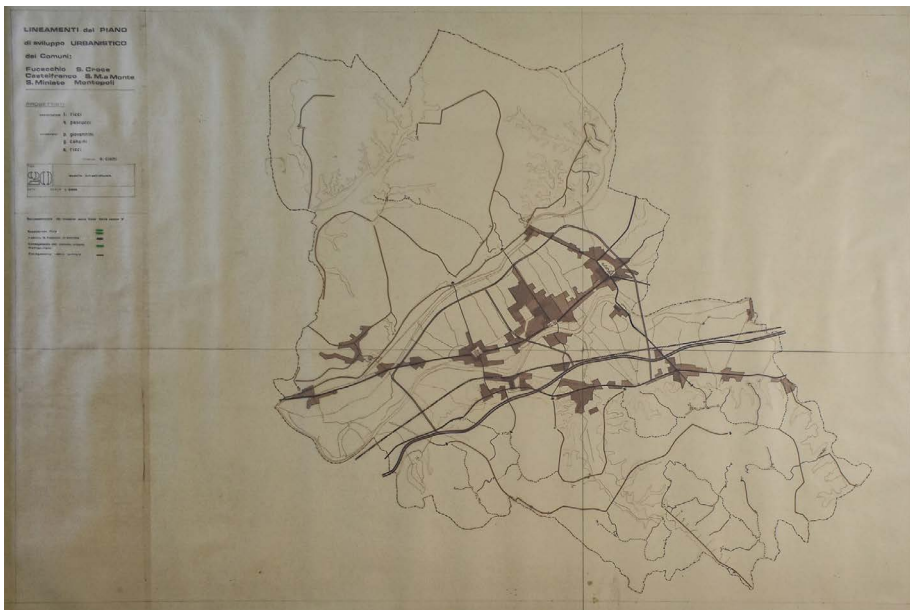
Florence after his resignation from the deanship of the Faculty of Architecture in Florence. Therefore, in those years he worked in other regions as Sicily, Piemonte, Liguria, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Lombardia, Sardegna, Veneto, Emilia Romagna and in other Tuscan cities as Pistoia, San Gimignano and Grosseto.

Ricci was back in Florence in 1974 to carry out the project for the regional pre-fabrication plan of Vaglia and for the project for the professional building school in Calenzano with Alidamo Preti (1974-1975) [Fig. 69, 70].

From 1975 to 1978 he worked with passion to the project for the Plan of the District of the Leather Area. A few publications deal with this project that represents one of the most important results to Ricci, who remembered it as the perfect result of what he intended an organic planning. The Tuscany Region had not yet established the District and Leonardo Ricci had to manage a Consortium of six municipalities with the same population of twenty thousand inhabitants: Fucecchio, Castelfranco, S. Miniato, S. Croce, S. Maria al Monte, and Montopoli. Leonardo Ricci carried on an interdisciplinary study with the help of the sociologist Paolo Giovannini and of the relations expert Cioni who cared the contacts between the planners' group and the people, with the architect Sigfrido Pascucci (coordinator with Leonardo Ricci), the architects Giovanni Censini, and Andrea Ricci (collaborators). Therefore, the plan's importance lied in its interdisciplinary, participated, and existential organic planning approach.

The so-called "leather district" was characterized by an intense industrial activity, kept alive by small and medium industries, where the territory was practically destroyed by the chaos caused by the last expansion of the Seventies.

Fig. 69-70
Project for a school in Calenzano, sketch of the main elevation and of the plan, Casa Studio Ricci.



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Fig. 71-72-73-74
Plan for the Leather District, Casa Studio Ricci.



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The local rivalry in those areas was very strong and the plan had the highest goal of planning a city consisting of the six municipalities. Ricci was proud of the work and the first step was done once the group elaborated the pre-model to be discussed with the people, to whom the group explained that they were going to pass from the scale of twenty thousand to one hundred twenty thousand inhabitants. The goal was not to assign a driving role to one of the municipalities, but rather to set up a model of city to be reconfigured in a new way on a production district scale [Fig. 71, 72, 73, 74].

According to Ricci, the success of the project laid in having been able to block the Florence-Livorno highway project that could completely destroy the territory by connecting only the two production centers. Indeed, the project had already been accomplished and under construction but they managed not to advance the work to change the joints of the freeway and to start from it the load-bearing structures of the district area.

Once the model was accepted by all six municipalities, they revised the town or manufacturing plans in each town (some of them did not have a town plan) to compose a district plan. The acceptance of the final plan was complicated both politically and socially because some politicians came from different municipalities and local rivalries were even stronger. The composite group of designers had thus secretly redesigned the territory by laying the foundations of the new city, of six municipalities, which was finally a founded and non-derivative city. The foundations for developing the area on the base of human activities, especially productive, but not only, had been laid and Leonardo Ricci's organic plan had been created, without even designing buildings⁷⁹.

A few years later, in 1977, the competition for the Directive Center in Florence was published and Ricci participated with Lonardo Savioli and the Ziggurat

⁷⁹ Antonio Nardi, *Leonardo Ricci. Testi, opere, sette progetti recenti di Leonardo Ricci*. 87-93; Leonardo Ricci, *Centro integrato «La terza Porta» al Parterre, Firenze*: 88.

Study. Leonardo Ricci participated with his project in a national competition with Leonardo Savioli and a large group of alumni designers: A. Breschi, R. Buti, G. Censini, C. Clemente, V. Giarrizzo, G. Gorelli, R. Pecchioli, A. Ricci, D. Santi, W. Saraceni, and the urban sociologist P. Giovannini. The group did not want to propose a new pole in which powers were concentrated, but, on the contrary, they thought of an integrated complex of services and facilities ordered in three main groups: the complexes of the Region and Justice, the block of cultural and scientific facilities, combined in a new system, and a propelling center for the city. This also made it possible to unify the different design conceptions of the group members, using as a unifying element, of functions and intent, an articulated system of physical or visual connections such as a lake, new pedestrian paths, the subway line and the Florence-Prato freeway axis, among other services and facilities⁸⁰.

Afterwards, Ricci's work went on in the 1980s in different project phases: from 1981 to 1987, and from 1987 to 1988 with the architect and Ricci's second wife Maria Grazia Dallerba. Ricci designed his version of the Court of Law of Florence in Novoli road, but the project was revised and changed by the following workshops and meetings until 1990s⁸¹.

In 1982 Ricci also worked at the project for the integrated center "La Terza Porta" with Maria Grazia Dallerba and his son Andrea Silvio Ricci. This project, never realized, represented for its architect the possibility to build the new town, a possible fragment of the City of the Earth. The site, the Parterre, on the edge of Piazza della Libertà in Florence, once a garden donated by the Lorenas to the city of Florence, constituted a stretch of the city that united city and countryside but it had been destroyed by the construction of out-of-scale and symmetrical architecture in the 1920s. However, to Ricci that area represented the opening of the city of Florence towards the north, towards Bologna, and towards the Mugnone river, largely canceled by the new constructions.

Ricci was entrusted with the design of this area in 1982 and the project he elaborated tried to take into account, on the one hand, the historical evolutions of the project area, the expansions of the city of Florence, and, on the other hand, both the needs of the district council, more specific, concerning traffic congestion with daylight and abandon in the night, and the needs expressed at an urban and territorial level, which required the inclusion of cultural facilities and administrative decentralization.

After the destruction of the ancient walls at the behest of the Superintendent Giovanni Poggi, a ring boulevard and a square welcomed the symmetry of the surrounding buildings for Florence which was to become the capital. The

80 Vasič Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto "esistenzialista"*, 44; Silvia 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.

81 See Lorenzo Mingardi, "Leonardo Ricci's Palace of Justice in Florence. A Desolate Fragment of an Urban Ideal (1987-1994)", *Histories of Postwar Architecture*, no. 9 (June 2021): 220-243. Some of the most beautiful drawings by Ricci for the "Orpheo" were published in HPA issue no. 9, in the archival sheet titled "Directional Center of Florence", pages 217-219.

destruction of the walls had occurred because they were considered anachronistic for that moment, when the city no longer had to defend itself from external enemies. On the contrary, Ricci was convinced that the walls conferred the shape of the city with respect to the countryside and proposed the city as a single composition, as a single house. The two doors, now only remained as "monuments" in an unqualified garden island, were made unlivable by the chaos of traffic. He was worried about the economic problems that could have affected the realization of the project, but he thought that if the project could offer the Municipality and the citizens something useful and vital, it could find the necessary funding. He then thought of giving the city a new entrance, a new door for those who, like him, had always enjoyed the view of Florence from above, but then, just arriving in the city, lost any kind of perceptive reference they had from the hills to the plain.

Ricci's non-academic words best explain the project:

«Thus was born the idea of the "Terza Porta". With two different faces. Towards the center like an altarpiece. Materials: stone, white and black marble; an Albertian facade. Towards the hills, steel, aluminum, and glass. In the doorway, for an intuition, I projected the two shapes of the existing doors. Not for a scenographic desire. To add to the space the celebration of the time dimension. For an upward measure. Perhaps to indicate that today we must not be more shy than those who preceded us».

He began an uninterrupted series of sketches, until I was satisfied with the form, with the scale in relation to the square. As regards contents, it could offer spaces for decentralized municipal or regional functions, connected to the neighborhood services that already perform some of these services. Those spaces had to be enriched with tourism and commercial routes.

As a model, just think of Palazzo Vecchio. Not to a Kafkaesque castle, a symbol of power, which hides the mayor and administrators, but a space where different moments intersect. City management. The great exhibition. The testimony of a different public power. Ultimately what was missing was a heart, a knot of exchange matching the quartier and the administration needs.

Ricci stated that Alberti gave him inspiration for the façade, while Brunelleschi, for the creation of an exchange node for the inhabitants, for which he also found inspiration in the church of Firminy by Le Corbusier.

However, while Le Corbusier's structure was an empty shell for a closed space, Ricci's building had a load-bearing structure with different functions: at the base and in the mezzanine floor it had places of exchange for the neighborhood such as a theater, a suspended library and a space for music, in the upper part a trade center, a coordination center that offered work spaces to Tuscan artisans, exhibition spaces for products, as well as social spaces for operators and the public.

To reach the main goal of connecting the different parts and the building with the surroundings it was necessary to think how to treat the existing buildings and the connections. Ricci decided to preserve the existing and built parts that in plan represented the ellipse of the square and to define connections with the Piazza della Libertà, with the Mugnone river, with the horticultural garden, with the hills and with the Via Bolognese. He decided, after various attempts including that of raising the riverbed, to decrease its section to be able to build a flow artery in the remaining area without excessive costs. In this way, floods - such as that of 1966 - could have been avoided since the river would have overflowed into the street rather than into the city.

To characterize the path that led from the Parterre to Fortezza da Basso Ricci proposed an elevated path that could connect the ancient houses on the river with the castle and its garden, the other houses, and the Parterre. The path could then be animated by further production and commercial spaces for the artisans, thus decentralizing administrative, cultural, and commercial functions. Other minor paths could have been connected to this up to the horticultural garden and all, in the green spaces and the Via Faentina, inside the Via Bolognese, could lead through other inhabited and uninhabited landscapes of the hills. The car parks were positioned at the junction of the connections with the main infrastructures. Therefore, they constituted a separate system that went from Piazza della Libertà to the Parterre, to the sliding axis. In this way it was also possible to put the underground parking in Piazza della Libertà in contact with a parking system above.

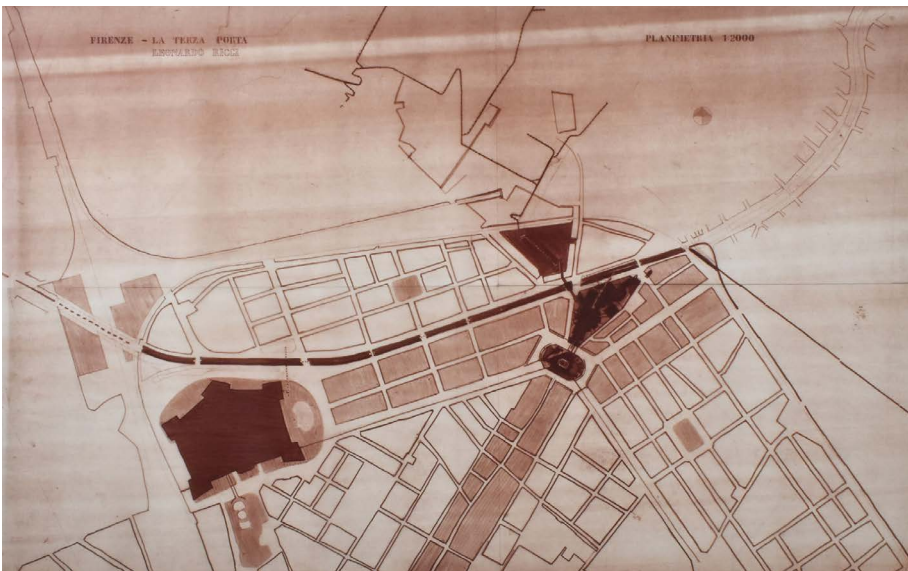
Ricci had designed an integrated system of functions, connections, services, and infrastructures for the Terza Porta project that connected the old city with the new one, re-establishing the harmony of the asymmetry of the ancient avenues, using the part between the sidewalk and the busy streets. His hypotheses, however, remained on paper due to economic and administrative problems⁸² [Fig. 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81].



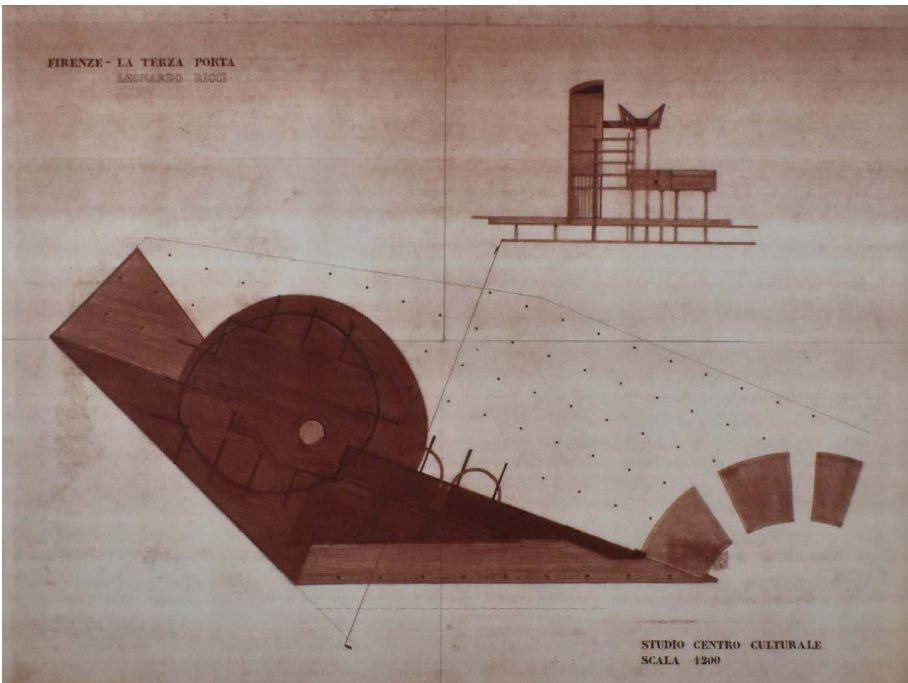
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82 All quotations are taken from Leonardo Ricci, "Centro integrato «La terza Porta» al Parterre, Firenze", *Catalogue of the exhibition of the project*, Parterre, Piazza della Libertà, Florence, July 2-10, 1983; published in Antonio Nardi, *Leonardo Ricci. Testi, opere, sette progetti recenti di Leonardo Ricci* (Pistoia: Edizioni del Comune di Pistoia, 1984): 87-93. Further bibliographic references are: Corinna Vasič Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto "esistenzialista"*; 65, 66; Fabio Fabbrizzi, "Leonardo Ricci," in *Opere e progetti di scuola fiorentina*, 1968-2008, ed. Fabio Fabbrizzi, Loris Macci e Ulisse Tramonti (Florence: Alinea, 2008): 130-143.

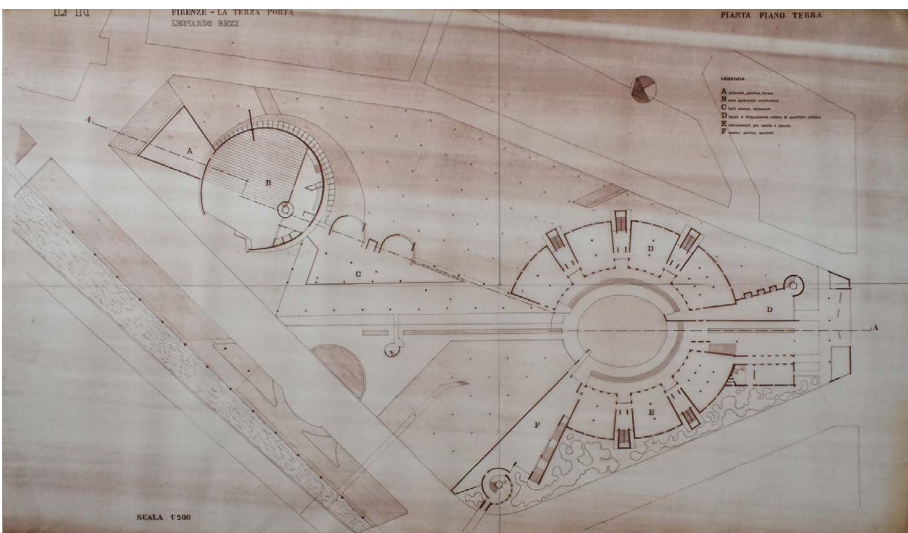
Fig. 75 Project for "La Terza Porta", poster of the project Exhibition (July 2-10, 1983), Casa Studio Ricci.



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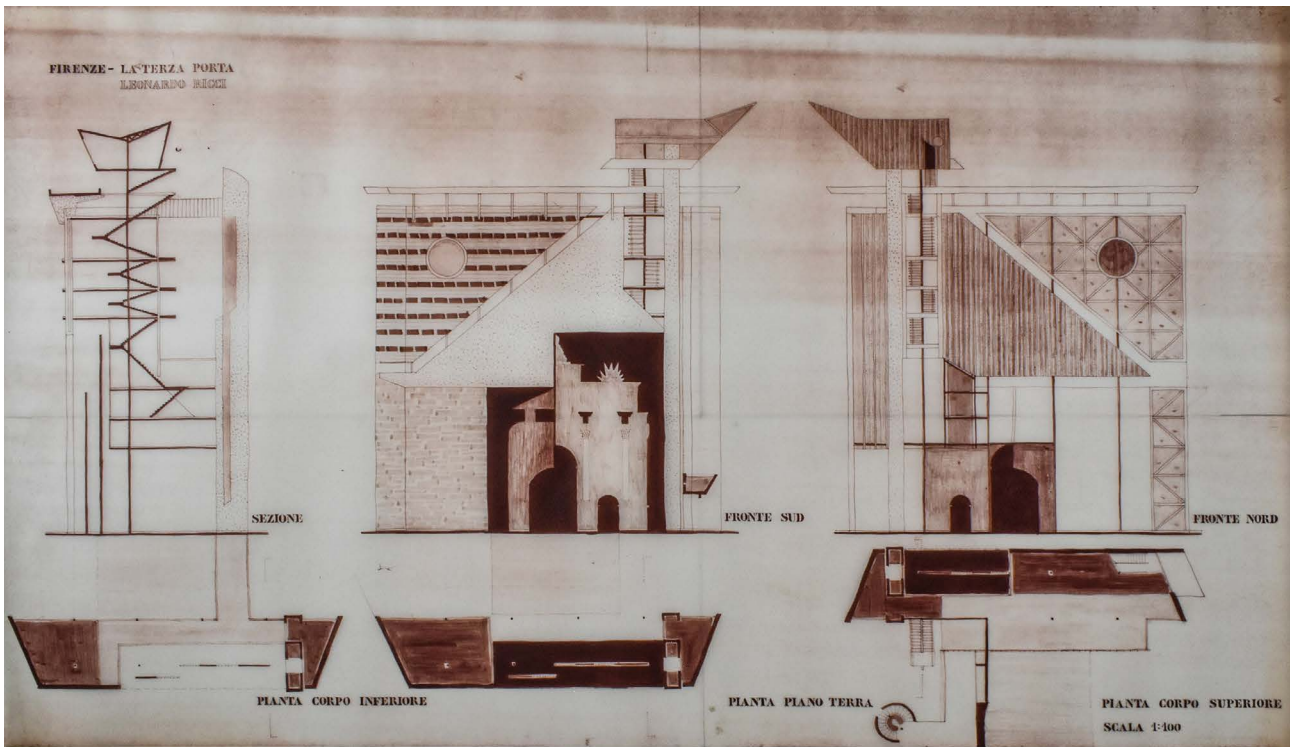


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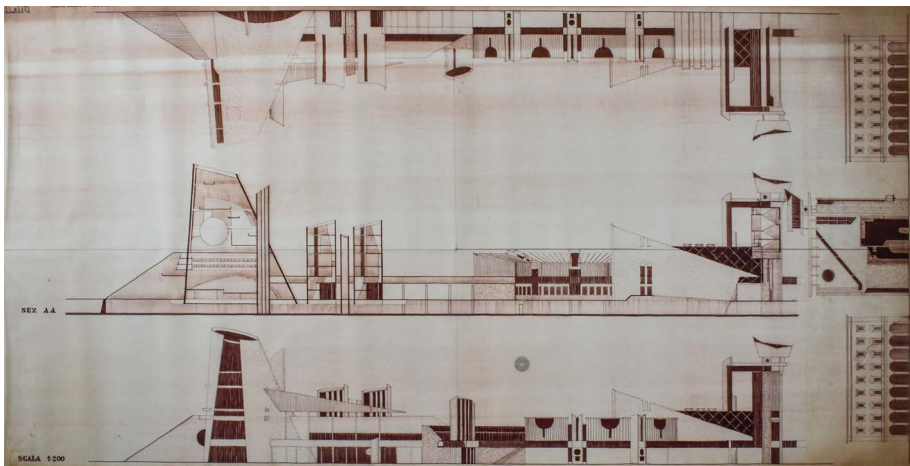
Fig. 76
Project for "La Terza Porta",
territorial framing, Casa
Studio Ricci.

Fig. 77
Project for "La Terza Porta",
study for the cultural center,
scale 1:200, Casa Studio Ricci.

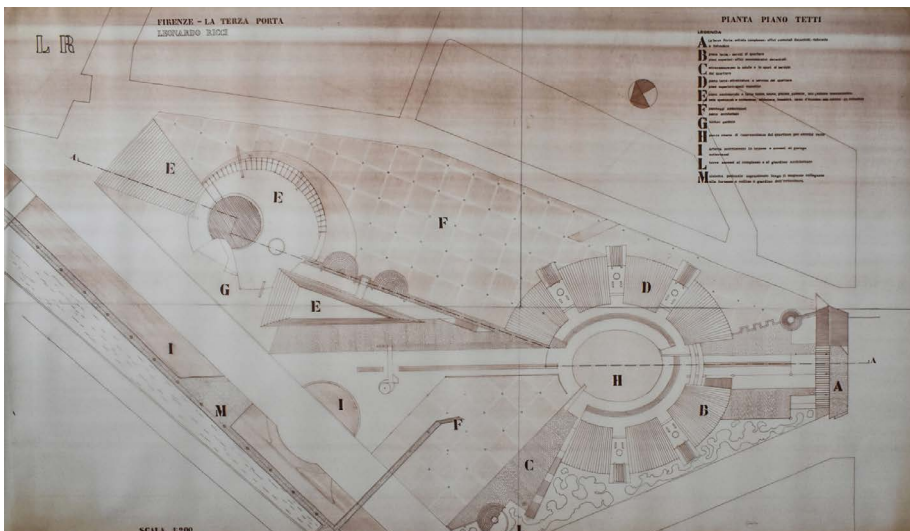
Fig. 78
Project for "La Terza Porta",
plan of the ground floor, scale
1:200, Casa Studio Ricci.



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Fig. 79

Project for "La Terza Porta", section, south elevation, north elevation, plan of the lower floor, ground floor, plan of the upper floor, scale 1:200, Casa Studio Ricci.

Fig. 80

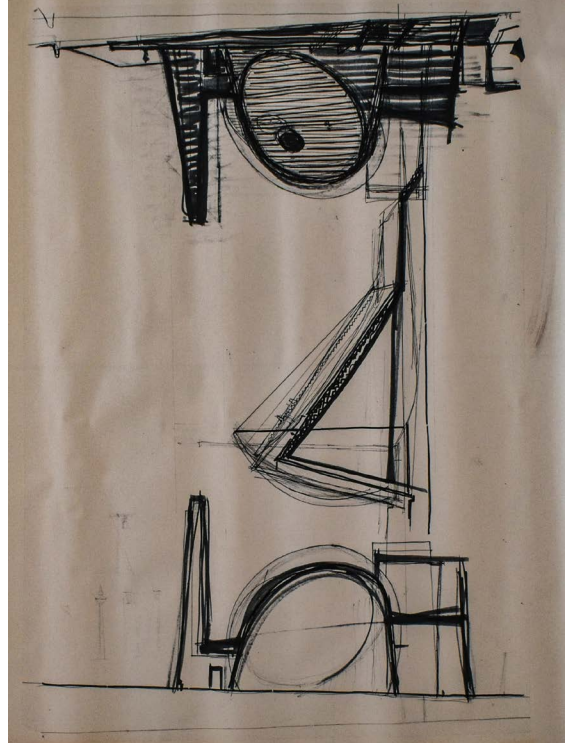
Project for "La Terza Porta", sections and elevations, scale 1:200, Casa Studio Ricci.

Fig. 81

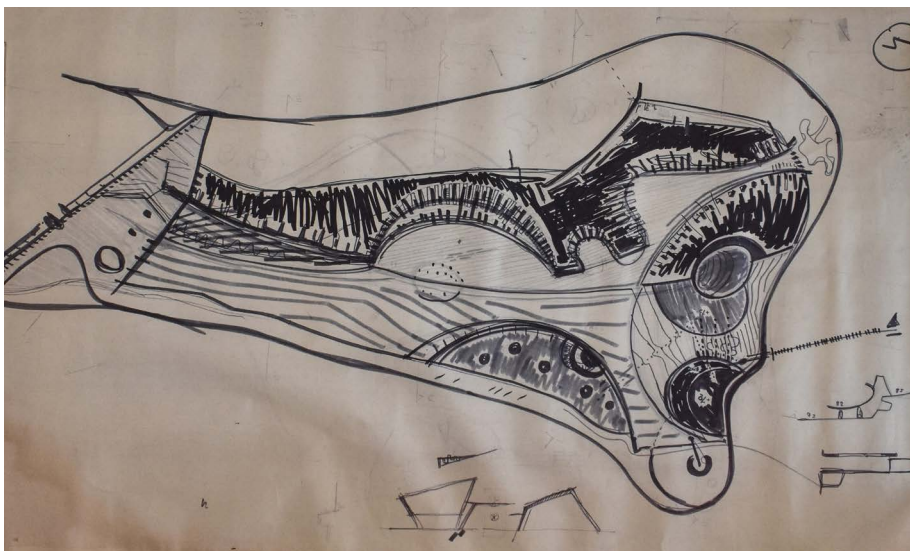
Project for "La Terza Porta", section, south elevation, north elevation, plan of the roof, scale 1:200, Casa Studio Ricci.

One of the last projects by Ricci for Florence was the project for the new cemetery of Scandicci of 1984, designed with Maria Grazia Dallerba and Andrea Ricci. The drawing for the cemetery in Scandicci, dated 1984, was inspired by the theme of the “great mother” that also returned assiduously in his pictorial production. The earthen walls created no clear separation with the landscape, while the heart of the project was the “head” of the woman, still reminding the Village “Monte degli Ulivi” Ecclesia: a “home for all”. This part was shaped as a truncated cone, upside down, facing the sky, Ricci led back to a memory of the eye of the Pantheon in Rome [Fig. 82, 83, 84, 85, 86].

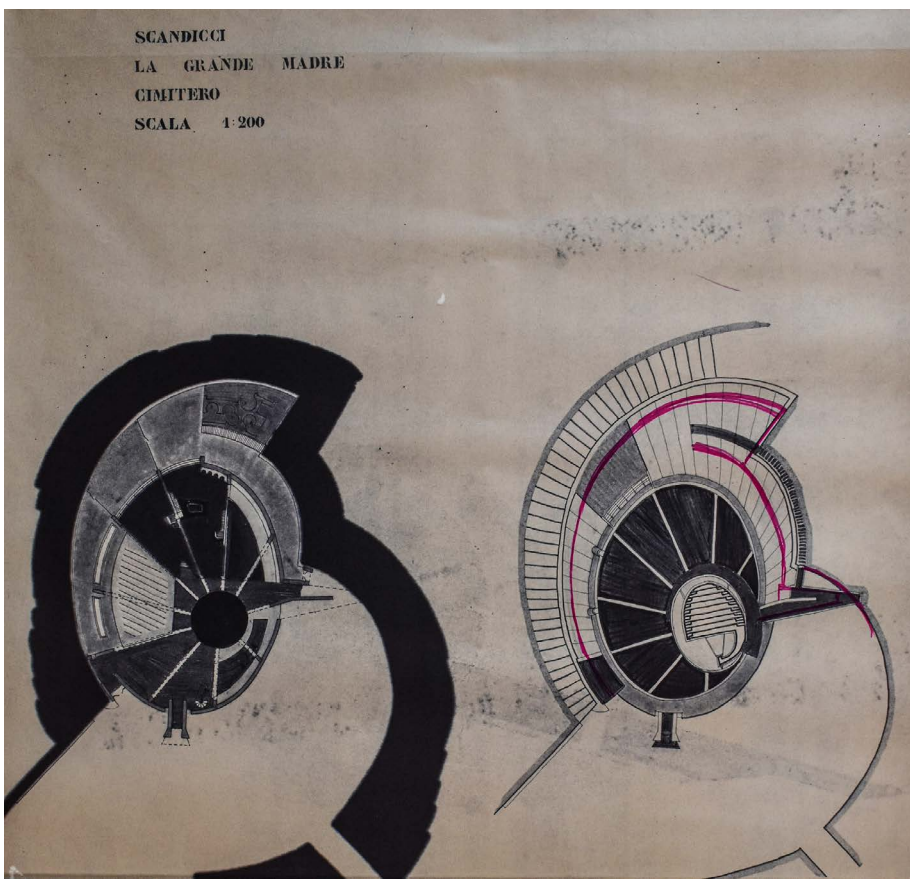
Franco Borsi analyzed these aspects by comparing Ricci and Michelucci’s drawings: in Michelucci’s drawings Borsi



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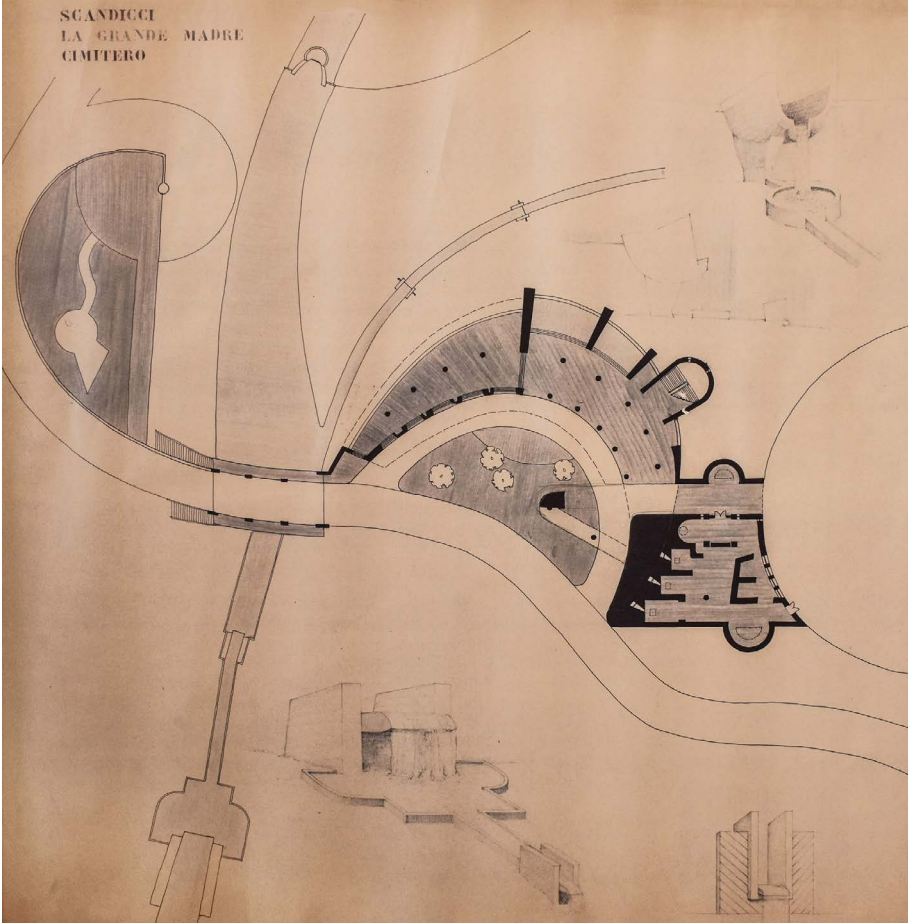


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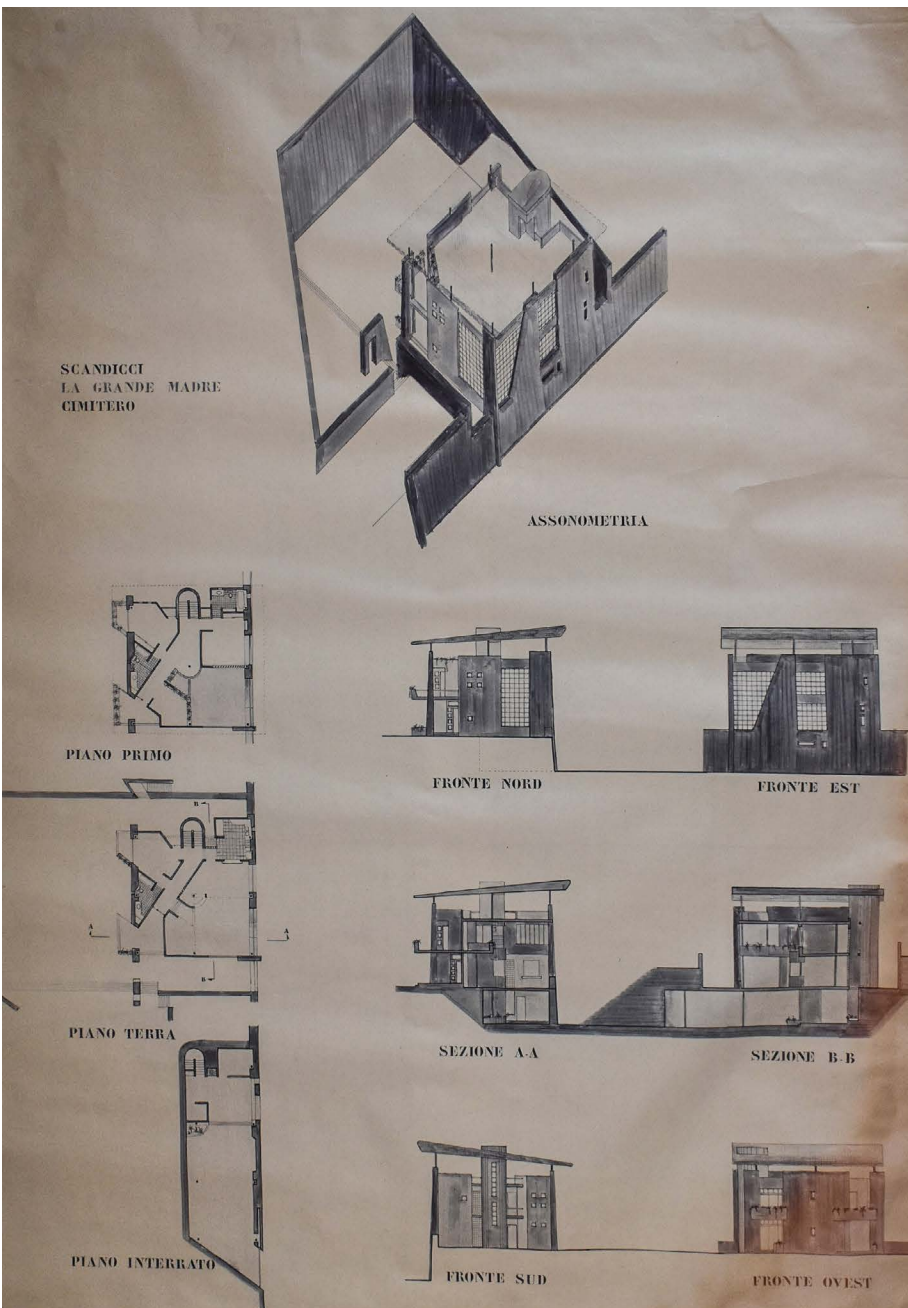
Fig. 82
Project for the Scandicci Cemetery, study sketches of the elevations, Casa Studio Ricci.

Fig. 83
Project for the Scandicci Cemetery, study sketches of the general plan, Casa Studio Ricci.

Fig. 84
Project for the Scandicci Cemetery, general plan, scale 1:200, Casa Studio Ricci.



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Fig. 85
Project for the Scandicci
Cemetery, plan of the
ground floor, Casa Studio
Ricci.

Fig. 86
Project for the Scandicci
Cemetery, axonometry and
elevations, Casa Studio
Ricci.



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saw “the modesty of form as an initial condition of his possession”, in Ricci’s ones for the “Monte degli Ulivi” village instead the impetuosity of the artist’s gesture, also approximate, similar to that of Michelucci, which turned into a more decisive sign in the sketches for the new cemetery of Scandicci in ink and felt-tip pen. In these drawings both wanted to abolish the form but showed that they knew it thoroughly in the creation of the works. This did not happen neither in the Chiesa della Collina by Michelucci nor in the village of Agàpe by Ricci⁸³.

The last half of the 1980s see a series of unrealized projects as the complex in di Novoli road (1985-1990)⁸⁴, the integrated residential and commercial center in Figline Valdarno (1988 - group leader Leonardo Ricci, with Maria Grazia Dallerba, Sergio Mazzoni, Andrea Ricci, Enrico Manzini)⁸⁵, and the project for “Casa Protetta” (definitive project 1988-1992 - with Andrea Ricci, Enrico Manzini).

This last project was commissioned by U.S.L.. Updated in March 1988 and in 1992, converted into a residence for the elderly, Ricci’s design remained on paper until, following a competition in 1999, the construction of the work passed to others⁸⁶ [Fig. 87, 88, 89, 90].

In 1988 Leonardo Ricci with Andrea Ricci and Maria Grazia Dallerba also drew up a feasibility plan for the equipped park area of the City of Scandicci in

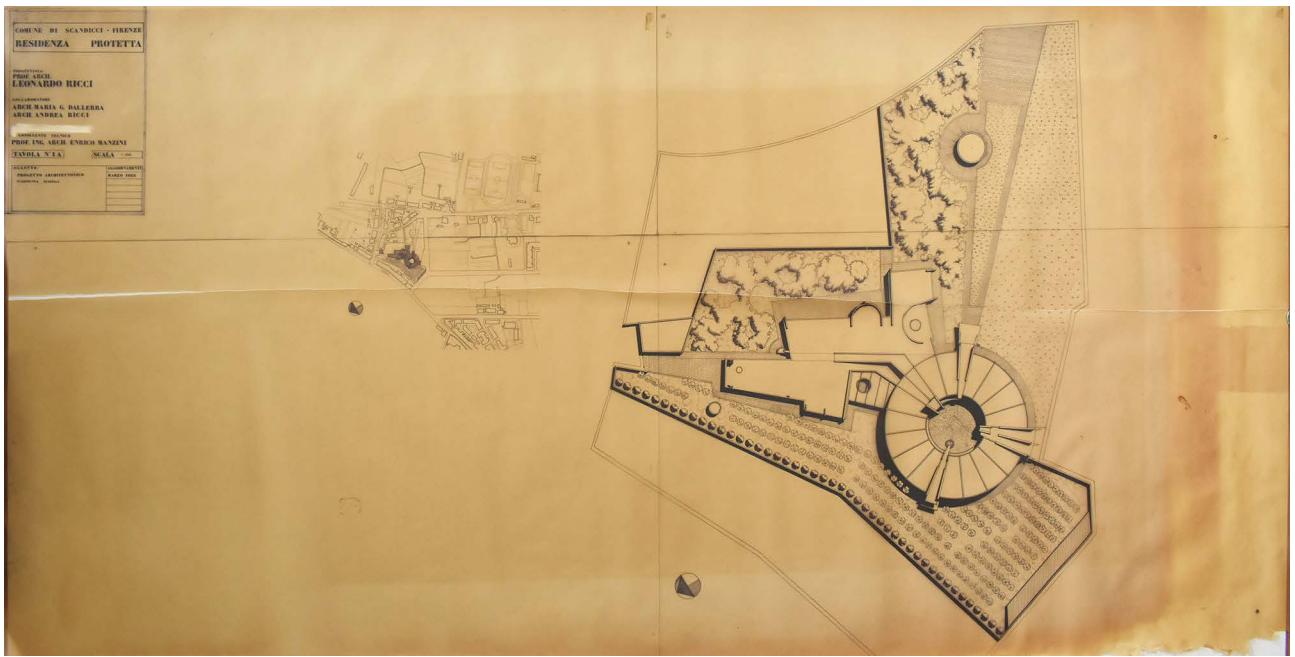
83 Franco Borsi, *Michelucci. Il linguaggio dell'architettura*; Giovanni Klaus Koenig, *Leonardo Ricci e la "casa teorica"*: 9-12; Antonio Nardi, ed., *Leonardo Ricci: testi, opere, sette progetti recenti di Leonardo Ricci* (Pistoia: Edizioni del Comune di Pistoia, Italia Grafiche, 1984): 95-98; Vasič Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci: architetto "esistenzialista"*, 48, 49; Fabio Fabbrizzi, Loris Macci, and Ulisse Tramonti, *Opere e progetti di scuola fiorentina, 1968-2008* (Florence: Alinea, 2008): 130-143.

84 Vasič Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto "esistenzialista"*, 51.

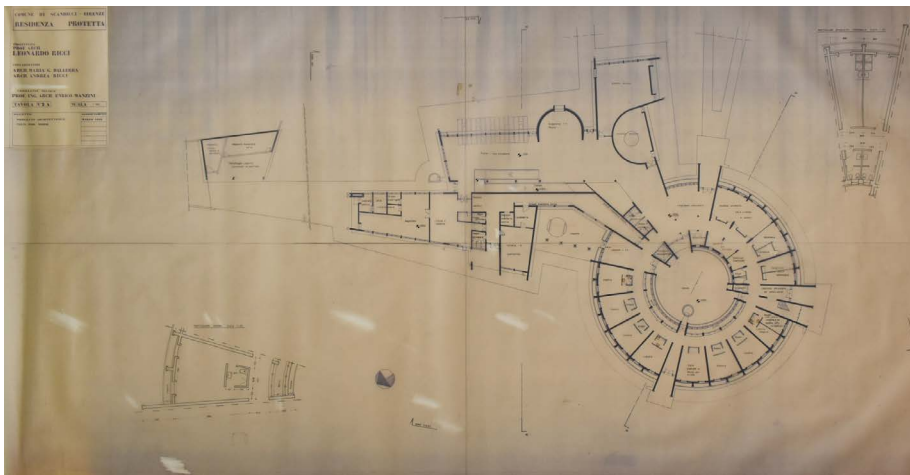
85 Luca Zevi, “Complesso residenziale e commerciale, Figline Valdarno,” *Housing and commercial complex, Figline Valdarno*, in *L'architettura. Cronache e storia*, n. 485 (1996): 134-40.

86 Vasič Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto "esistenzialista"*, 51.

Fig. 87
Project for “Casa Protetta”,
General view, Casa Studio
Ricci.

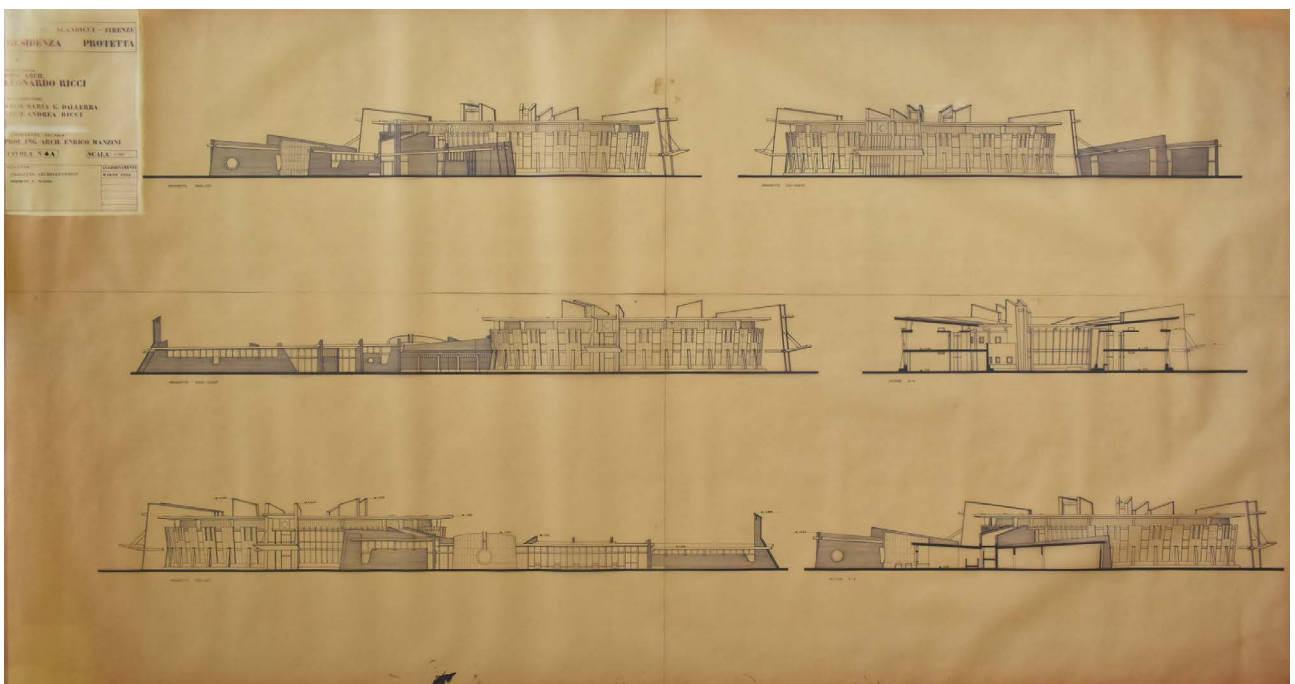


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Fig. 88-89-90
Project for "Casa Protetta",
planivolumetric, plan, elevations,
Casa Studio Ricci.



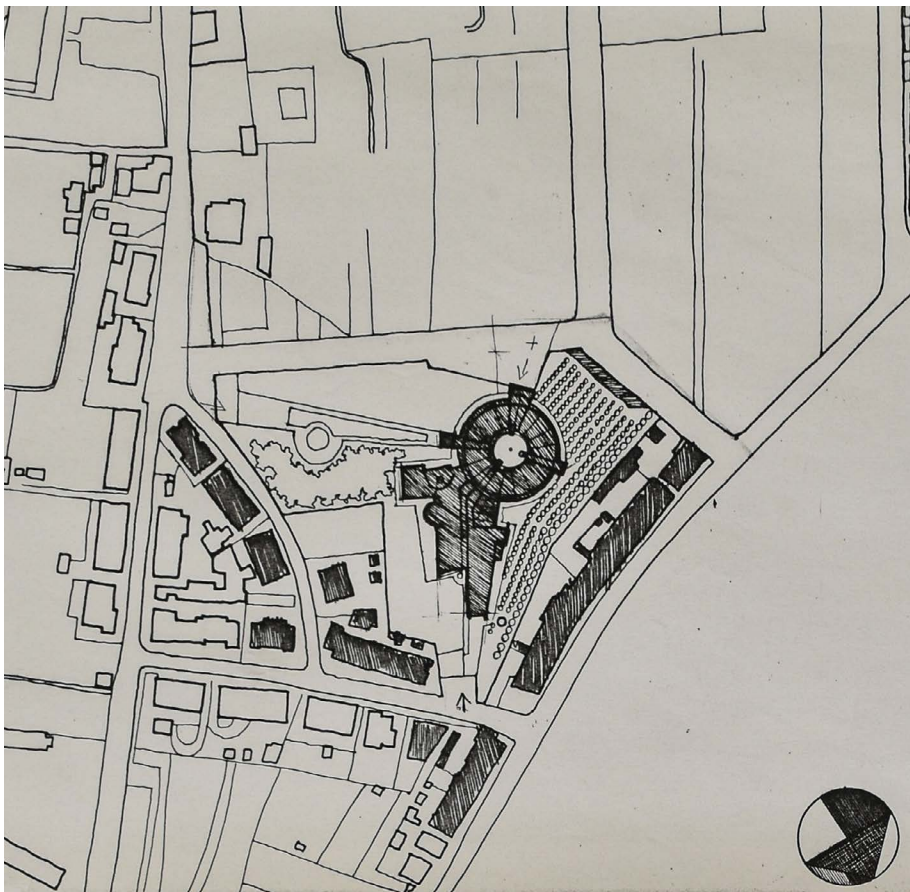
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the area between Via dei Turri and Via Facibeni, an extended area crossed by an artery that connected the two limits. The equipped park included several structures arranged over the entire area, including “la porta”, a communication center, marked with the letter “A” in the general plan, positioned on the front of Via Facibeni. It had a circular main park and three arms, one of which crossed the main thoroughfare. The other planned facilities were an indoor and outdoor swimming pool, a minigolf course, a children’s play area, showers, a funfair, a soccer field, a gymnasium, an aviary, a fountain, multipurpose spaces for exhibitions and market, and a sheltered residence. General plans, pen sketches with preliminary ideas, then pencil and ink drawings on transparencies of the communication center and swimming pool with gymnasium are kept in the archives. The two main parts, detailed by the drawings, featured pure volumetries. The swimming pool was a parallelepiped that housed one of

Fig. 91
Feasibility plan for the equipped park area of the City of Scandicci, general plan, Casa Studio Ricci.



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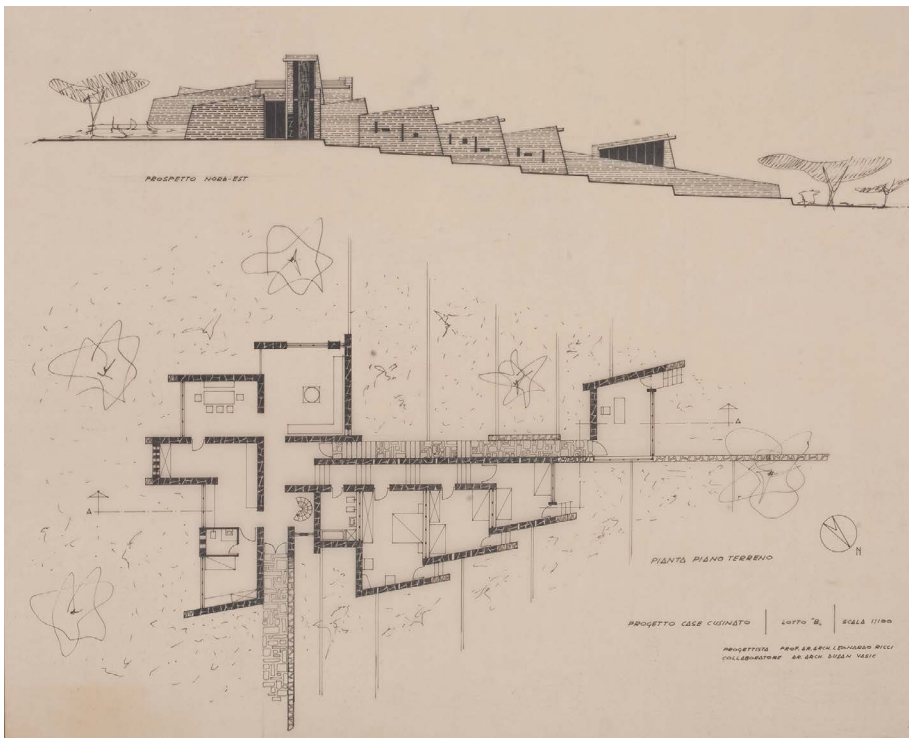
two large pools, locker rooms on two sides, two saunas, an equipment room, and a gymnasium for free exercise. On the east corner, another parallelepiped containing another large pool and a children's pool was grafted diagonally. The communication center consisted of three staggered cylindrical volumes on three different floors; on the ground floor there was an audition room juxtaposed with a club-restaurant. Opposite the entrance to the hall there was a playroom around which services and offices were arranged. The volume on the first level contained a single enclosed part with the library and archive, while the rest of the volume was occupied by a large terrace. One of the arms from this level led to a café. The third volume, which constituted the second floor, housed a television studio [Fig. 91, 92].

In the last years, from 1989, when the detail plan for the Novoli area and the detail plan of Novoli and Castello were under definition, to Ricci's death, happened in 1994, there are a few interesting undated projects found in the archival documents to be described. For instance, the project for "Case Cusinato", done with Dusan Vasić⁸⁷: the houses were to be built in the Florentine hills, more precisely on Viale Michelangelo, between Via di Santa Margherita a Montici and Via San Bernardino da Siena, and they show two solutions proposed by Ricci, different both in size and overall composition. They portrayed, with the Monterinaldi Village and the project for the village of Montepiano, the efforts made by the

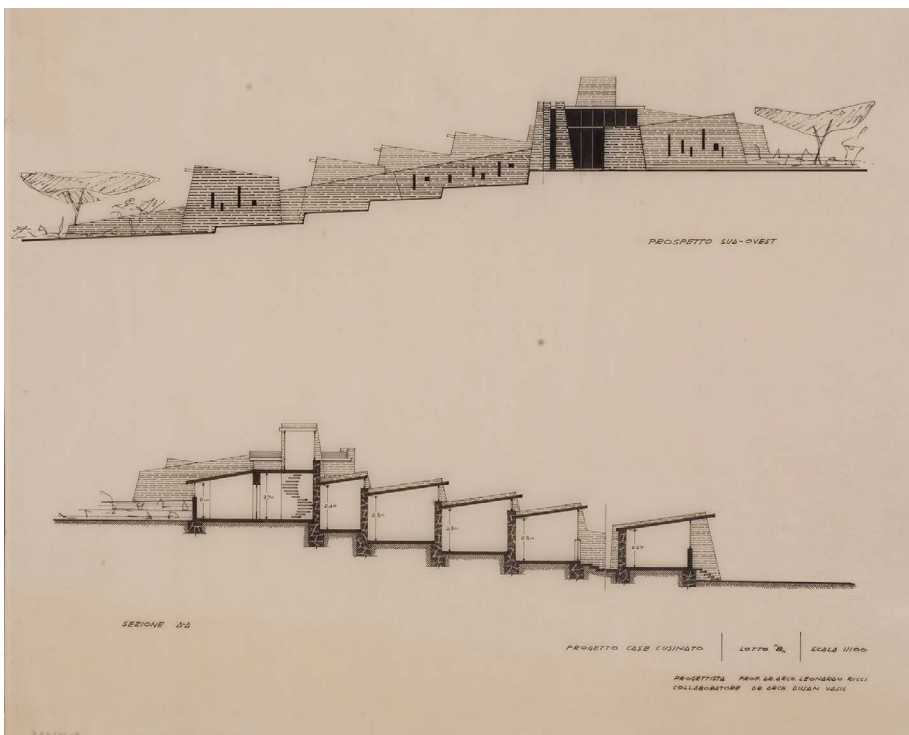
87 Beatrice Conforti, *Le forme dell'abitare nell'opera di Ricci*, (PhD dis., Sapienza Università di Roma, 2021), 137-142.

Fig. 92

Feasibility plan for the equipped park area of the City of Scandicci, sketch of the general plan, Casa Studio Ricci.



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architect during a strenuous "rapprochement" with his city, which could lead to the last hopeful project of the Sorgane neighborhood, located on the outskirts towards Bagno in Ripoli. With these works, concerning villages or allotments, Ricci faced the theme of the "search for a system" in dwellings. One can hardly consider this set of three houses a village, but it is, because of the compositional tone that the design depicted. The plan of these dwellings achieved an extreme formal synthesis that connected the interiors and exteriors with the extension of stone wall baffles toward precise, balanced directions. [Fig. 93, 94]

Fig. 93
Project for Case Cusinato, north-east elevation and ground floor plan, CSAC, B001083S.

Fig. 94
Project for Case Cusinato, south-west elevation and section A-A, CSAC, 038593S.



In the elevation there were extremely different solutions, while the walls extended upward and at an angle to chase the slope of the land with a grounding that was unprecedented as the single-story houses remained low and quiet in the hillside. Large terraces on the rooftops, reached by small spiral staircases, would have offered breathtaking views of Florence. In the project Ricci succeeded in paying attention to the study of space even with small simple gestures: the sloping roofs that descended in sequence like steps allowed soft light to enter from the northwest in addition to the view of the sky from the bedroom.

The same search for a systematic solution is traceable in the subdivision plan for the “Società Immobiliare Colle degli Ulivi” at Colle dei Mocoli, an undated project Ricci did with Lionello De Luigi. In the project it was visible the leap in scale implemented through the articulation of a system of spaces that were those already experienced in the single-family house, here connected all around the highest part of the hill. The stone baffles embedded in the ground, which fanned out towards the landscape, formed and structured an organic *continuum* around the two pre-existing buildings, almost recalling an ancient fortification system. [Fig. 95]

The floor plan could be compared to that of the Monterinaldi Village with a more mature design in its relationship between volumes. While the elevations were comparable to those of the Cusinato Houses, the appearance was that of a single, continuous monomaterial basement, which made the whole building perfectly integrated into its context. The reason why this design appeared so “balanced,” both in plan and elevation, was that the project was intended for a still small number of inhabitants. Moreover, the intervention was not to result in affordable housing but in what would still appear to be a collection of independent houses, however harmoniously aggregated⁸⁸.

Fig. 95
Subdivision plan for the
“Società Immobiliare Colle
degli Ulivi”, Colle dei Moc-
coli, general view, CSAC,
B001109S.

88 Beatrice Conforti, *Le forme dell'abitare nell'opera di Ricci*, (PhD dis., Sapienza Università di Roma, 2021), 142-143.

Leonardo Ricci

Exploratory Research in Urban Form and the Future of Florence (1967)

This lecture was given by Leonardo Ricci, at the time Director of the Institute of Architectural Design and of the Institute of Town Planning of the University of Florence, on January 17, 1967, in Los Angeles in California as a benefit for the Committee to Rescue Italian Art. It was co-sponsored by the School of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and the Architectural Panel of Los Angeles.

Leonardo Ricci thought that the decentralization of powers in megastructures or in public life was the right tool to regulate collectivity in all its parts: modern men as citizens of the future city, administration, university and the existing institutions, environment, all the different activities and systems of the modern society. He saw in the university and especially in the educational offer the concrete possibility to solve the problems of the society, because, in the university rooms the social debate could have been switched on and the generation of those who lived the uncertainties and the crisis of values caused by World War II, belonging to the bourgeois class, could have faced the problems of the mass society as well as the architectural and urban problems concerning that matter.

In 1967, immediately after Florence flood of 1966 and one year before the revolt of 1968, Leonardo Ricci strengthened his theories about the City of the Earth and saw the concrete possibility to realize it on new damages caused by the flood, as, in the postwar period, his master Giovanni Michelucci saw the opportunity to build a New Town by looking at people walking on the ruins of the same city. Ricci wrote about the disaster of the flood in 1967 in the text republished here-below titled "Exploratory Research in Urban Form and the Future of Florence". The text, also published in Arts and Architecture (no. 2 (February 1967): 25, 32-34), reports Ricci's lecture given on January 17, 1967 in Los Angeles California as a benefit for the Committee to Rescue Italian Art. It was co-sponsored by the School of Architecture and Urban Planning at UCLA and the Architectural Panel of Los Angeles. The typescript of the conference is kept in Casa Studio Ricci. 1967 was the year of the Montréal Expo and the exhibition Ten Italian Architects by Esther McCoy, which was advertised next to Ricci's article columns on the pages of Arts and Architecture.

The damages left by the flood could have been the right chance for building the desired Earth City. Leonardo Ricci indicated three main aspects that should have been considered to solve the disaster: rebuilding the artisan workshops and workplaces of the Florentines, focusing on the restoration of ancient artifacts, reconsidering in the reconstruction all the territory of the Arno Valley which included other important cities such as Pisa and Arezzo. The whole area should have been reconsidered to design a new city, a new megalopolis, in which the contradiction between man and nature no longer existed, where man and nature could have become a single entity, a city open to all men and all possible experiences.

Ricci suggested this project theme to the students of the courses of Urban Planning II and Architectural Composition in 1969 with the aim of designing the Arno Valley as a megalopolis for two million inhabitants.

The notion of "territory" and its complexity if seen as an organic whole composed of related property funds, the knowledge of the territory in its multilayered structure, fundamental to revise urban rules and laws, was an issue discussed during the INU conference in May of 1965 Ricci took part in. He was hoping to find new possible applications and solutions to the urban problem, even though it was not possible to realize his project. Ricci planned to build the new Earth City in the whole Arno Valley and to see the center of Florence as one of the greatest infrastructures of all humanity, not only as the home of the most famous works of art, since Florence represented the past of all mankind, its roots, and the tangible proof of the evolution of man.



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Ladies and Gentlemen:

Perhaps the audience will feel deceived about the subject of my lecture.

Probably most of you would like to have an eye witness impression of the terrible flood which hit Florence; you would like to know of the loss of masterpieces, of paintings and sculptures, of the damage to the doors of the Baptistry, of the thousands and thousands of precious manuscripts completely gone, or to be restored with great difficulty and with improbable success, of the many masterpieces of architecture encrusted with mud, silt, and oil, and of hundreds of shops completely destroyed.

It is a fact that the flood was terrible. It is a fact that only those who were present during those days can imagine what really took place. No one who was not present could measure the totality of the destruction. No photograph, no movie could represent sufficiently the situation of a town suddenly hit so violently in a moment of economic expansion in our civilization of producer and consumer; a town suddenly reduced to a more depressed condition than after the War.

It is true. It is difficult to imagine a river 9, 10, 12 feet deep, moving at the speed of 40 to 50 miles per hour, through the squares, the streets, and the buildings of a city which was getting ready for the Christmas holidays.

It is hard to imagine cars hanging from trees, looking like strange fruits of a mechanical civilization, to imagine most beautiful objects of art, pieces of furniture, jewellery in their ornate cases, and fashionable dresses floating through the streets and the square. It is difficult to visualize the night in a totally dark town where you can only hear the shouting of isolated people calling for help.

But these facts, although very impressive and almost unbelievable, are not the facts which interest me as an architect, as a town-designer.

As an architect, as a town-planner, I am much more impressed to note that in the year 1966 a town, an old town as important as Florence, and not only the city of Florence but the Arno Valley, with other important towns such as Arezzo and Pisa, in other words a vast territory inhabited by more than a million people, can be put in a worse condition than it was by a similar accident during the 13th Century.

This means that all the urban structures of a territory as civilized as Tuscany, that towns as marvelous as Florence are no longer fit for the life of modern man. This means that all the historical centres do not satisfy any longer all the needs of a modern man, and that the new urban organisms which we have built are certainly very far from those that we could and should build.

It means that we, modern man, are not able to maintain the high testimonies of what mankind has given to us as a heritage nor to create our towns according to modern urbanism.

If my lecture succeeds in making a contribution in this direction I shall have reached my goal.

The urgent problems which we have got to solve in Florence and in the entire territory of the Arno Valley are of three kinds:

1. To restore as fast as possible and wherever possible the inestimable values of culture (paintings, sculptures, manuscripts, etc.) and to restore as fast as possible an entire economy which has been destroyed; that is, to help artisans who no longer have workshops, merchants without their stores, industries without machinery, and so on. But this problem is not of my specific competence. As a matter of fact, to the solution of the first part of this problem the entire world, and particularly the United States, has been giving great attention and is doing its very best. To the solution of the second part of the problem, I trust that political, social, and economic powers will also do their best.

2. The second problem consists of how to face the situation of an old city, as important as Florence, which belongs not only to the Florentines but to the entire world, and how to face a new urbanistic problem directly connected with historical cities and a territory which was shaped by centuries of human activities. It is clear that if we do not arrive at the definition of what are the values still alive for us and what is the total organism of the old cities and of their particular masterpieces of architecture, it is absolutely impossible to decide what to do in and for an old town. To maintain this town as a museum? To transform it little by little into a modern city? To keep the exterior aesthetic aspects of its monuments? To transform, however, the interior when certain functions have become obsolete? Critically speaking, to conceive of the beauty of a town only for the aesthetic value of its architecture? Or to conceive of its beauty in the context of the dimension and scale of the whole organism? Or to conceive of the town and its beauty in the largest aspect of its total culture and of its population? And I consider the meaning of the word culture to cover the social, historical, traditional, and anthropological significance.

There could be many answers—many choices. But in my opinion they will be arbitrary, gratuitous, and subjective, if we do not analyse the real significance of what a town is as a whole and in all its details. In the case of Florence, what is the meaning to us of its cathedrals, its domes, its wonderful churches, if by chance a large part of Florence's population were no longer to be Catholic?

What is the meaning to us of the Palazzo Vecchio, Palazzo Pitti, and of all the other palaces, of princes, bankers, and merchants, when the Medicis do not exist any longer and the civil power is represented in a different form?

What is the meaning of the Piazzas, of the streets which once provided the possibility of communication among people, places in which to work, to rest, to play, to talk but which have been transformed into parking lots for automobiles?

What is the meaning to us of the old city walls and of the old gates when we no longer must defend ourselves from neighbouring enemies?

In synthesis what is the meaning to us of the morphology of this town, and of the typology of its organisms when almost all the functions for which they

were once built have become obsolete?

And if we are being honest, and if we recognize that almost all real functions are obsolete, and only the rhetorical ones remain, still valid for a particular¹ kind of tourist, can we find real existential qualities for which we have to conserve this town?

Because if we do not recognize real and fundamental values, we should not care to conserve anything at all, but should courageously transform the organism in the same way that our ancestors did, before our incapacities, our and lack of phantasy, our weakness in vitality², forced us to forego the power to transform and to shape the world as we want it, but on the contrary compelled us to conserve in a poor way³ the treasures of a lost world. If we find existential qualities we must clarify what they are and must behave accordingly.

I have had for a long time definite opinions in this matter; opinions which were expressed in my book "Twentieth Century Anonymous" and in my articles and lectures. They are also expressed in my new book now being published. But if I had no opinion I think that the answer was given to me just now, during the flood and after the flood, by all people of high education and of low education, by people all over the world whose opinion coincides completely with mine.

Many floods indeed and natural tragedies have happened everywhere in the world. But never have we heard such a cry as for Florence, As if, instead of a city, it were a person, a loved one who in a way belongs to everybody and without whom it is impossible to live.

From this point of view I was very happy, indeed, that the help sent to Florence was for the conservation and the restoration of the town rather than help for the economic damage.

Indeed, there are in the world people who are much poorer than even the Florentines today and need much more help, but there is only one Florence in the world.

What was, in essence, the significance of this spontaneous answer⁴?

It meant that Florence, as with certain other towns in the world, represents the past of mankind, our roots, the signal of an evolution of man on earth, which transformed man from an animal into something which is still almost unknown to us and about which no one knows the future, neither in life nor in death.

This means that Florence belongs to mankind and not only to the Florentines nor only to the Italians. It means that if Florence were to be destroyed, mankind would lose a part of its blood, of its life.

1 In the original typescript "peculiar" was corrected with "particular".

2 Here the text could be corrected as follows: "lack of phantasy and vitality".

3 Here "in a poor way" could be corrected into "ineffectively".

4 Here "answer" could be corrected with "response".

Translated into urbanistic terms, it means that the historical town of Florence represents a "public facility" for all the world. Because (to use a phrase that I really do not like but which I am obliged to use in order to make myself clear) Florence is a "public facility" for the "leisure time" of mankind. I would prefer to use instead the phrase "free experience of the world."

These public facilities, if considered as a hearth for mankind and not only for the Florentines, would not be so expensive to maintain and would not be an absurd dead museum for tourists but a live experience for all man.

In fact, if we compare the number, the capacity, and the potential of the towns in the world which so intensively represent our background in this way, they certainly are -in comparison with the billions of men, and the billions of acres, and the billions of dollars which the totality of human settlements represent today and will represent in the future- not too many nor too large to save.

The new means of communication on the other hand will allow more and more the full fruition of these existential qualities of the ancient towns.

Fruition which could be completed not only in their urbanistic and architectural aspects, but also through the relocation of certain functions at present completely alien to their true functions. We could, for example, hear again the music of Bach in its original context, the cathedral, or of Mozart in the chambers of the palaces where it was supposed to be played and not, for instance, completely out of scale and measure in the Bowl of Los Angeles. Or we could hear the plays of Moliere, Shakespeare or Goldoni, in the theatres which saw the birth of their art. We could walk in a Renaissance Piazza having the marvelous sensation of being the subject of the objects around us, the focal point of the perspective created for us, or we could have the exalted sensation of an eschatologic experience in an old Gothic church.

And at this point I would like to launch the idea to Americans to help, if they really want to help Florence, to do a plan of Florence, arrived at scientifically and by interdisciplinary studies, in which the different needs are related to different cultures and populations. But about this I will say more at the end of my lecture.

Now I must speak of the third problem: The problem not of the new Florence but of the new organism which could comprehend the valley of the Arno River of which Florence is the historical center, though of only one aspect. Because if we really wish to save the old center, we must see to it that the old center is not made the heart of the new organism. Otherwise we automatically destroy the old town.

Since man already has new needs, new aspirations, new technological possibilities, new customs, and since he is nearing more and more accelerated and dynamic transformations of patterns of life, we must lay the foundations of a new town which could be in itself capable of containing the new needs and have at the same time the potential to contain the yet undetermined needs of men.

But what does it mean to build a new town, city, or megalopolis, in this case

in the Arno Valley?

Does it mean, for instance, to design a beautiful form over the whole valley without really knowing the necessity of men in the future life? Or does it mean to create through urbanistic standards, resulting from the statistical analysis of the life of a population and knowledge of some of the faults of the present urbanism, but still without knowledge of the real needs of this population because we would be using as models the social and economic standards of an obsolete society?

Or does it mean to plan only an economic, rationalistic structure which if it were possible, could only resolve some of the mechanical aspects of our life? Or does it mean to create, to invent a Utopian kind of living which would allow us to escape from the reality of the real evolution of mankind? Or doesn't it mean something else, which we do not exactly know but about which we can create certain hypotheses, verify them under the complex aspect of human organization, then match them to the experiences which can permit the creation of new alternatives for man? Doesn't it mean to create models which can represent a confrontation with the obsolete organism in which man lives today?

I think that today man has sufficient knowledge of the enormous deficiencies of our human settlements and sufficient knowledge of the probable new paths to lay the foundation of a new city, which I call the "Earth City."

At this point of the lecture perhaps I should synthetically give a panorama of the basic directional lines of the interdisciplinary research I am doing for a new urbanism, starting from the statement that no one city of the world can today actually satisfy the needs of man who has achieved a new dimension. But this would represent too big a departure from what I said before and it would be frivolous to attempt to explain briefly the process of research which is the result of a very long study and which will never be finished, because the more the research advances the more one will discover new problems to face and resolve.

So I return to the problem of Florence. First of all, we have to admit that if a flood were able to endanger the life of this territory and another day of rain might have been able to totally destroy it, this clearly indicates that the whole urbanistic structure is obsolete.

Shall we engage all our efforts in the restoration of something which does not work? Or should we try to create a new structure which could represent an alternative mode of living—a new organization of human acts and activities and, as a consequence, a new town?

Having studied for many years the principal problems of the territory of the Arno River Valley, I have convictions which in certain aspects or certain details have achieved a form. But I prefer to show the method with which we could operate.

In the Arno River Valley, there live almost two million inhabitants.

These people are living, more and more, in a chaotic and alienated situation; some in the beautiful, historical towns like Florence, Lucca, and Pisa; some in horrible peripheries which increasingly devour the plain like a cancer; some in little villages in the hills or on the edges of the river. In any case, they live absolutely different lives as if they were persons of different historical periods, different cultures with different possibilities of choice. But none of these people can be at ease in relation to our own times. This happens in a territory only about 100 miles long and 20 miles wide.

All the newborn and arising needs of man create new situations which are increasing the chaos and rapidly destroying one of the most beautiful landscapes of the world, not only its natural qualities but also the beauty created by man through the centuries of work which transformed this valley. Roads are built at random to serve new settlements casually built.

Factories or tract houses are built upon land which perhaps should be allotted to flood water control basins. Beautiful hills are being defaced to construct any kind of building where the owner is not interested in maintaining trees and forests which could be utilized as watersheds. In synthesis, communication, transportation, habitats, public facilities, and services are mixed together without any principle of logic.

In this way in a few years not only will the territory be destroyed but also the historical centers, because they cannot support the growth of the towns, like the heart of a man could not pump blood to a body 10 or 20 times larger. This is the situation. Then a flood arrives and brings destruction.

But who is responsible for this flood? God? The devil? We are responsible because we have not yet understood that the organization of a territory can no longer go uncontrolled. Today the complexity of the organization needs programs. I don't say dictatorial and abstract plans which force man to a certain kind of living. I say programs which offer to the inhabitants the maximum possibility of choices and beauty.

It is not enough that the political man provide food, cars, refrigerators in a civilization of producers and consumers. The political man has to understand the importance of the environment in which men live. With food, cars, refrigerators we can satisfy the mechanical exigencies of our life but with food, cars, and refrigerators we can also remain alone, alienated in a life without meaning for which it is not worth living.

How to proceed? First, being the Arno River Valley territory, is one territory which could be considered homogeneous, though it has different qualities from the mountains to the sea; we could consider the whole territory as only one town of two million inhabitants. Only one town without distinction and separation between country and town, without alienation in different zones (residential zones for high, medium and low income, industrial zones, agricultural zones, commercial zones, and so on) which morphologically speaking mirror exactly the alienation of man of today.

One town in which all the human acts and activities are integrated giving everybody the same chances, offering to everybody the total sensation of a process of what men do, destroying the “anxiety of the unfinished” of which Marcuse speaks and the anxiety of the “foreign bodies” of which I speak, intending by this to say that we live not only in a foreign world among persons but also among the objects which men make.

A total new organism and dynamic structure which can evolve in time as natural organisms grow, which permits an exchange of functions as some become obsolete, which permit a global life of a unique society.

We have to start again. To start as if the Arno Valley territory was a virgin land. What now exists, historical centers included, has to be considered as objects: a hill, a river, a forest, which we have to put in relationship to each other.

To start again means starting to study the vocation of the territory. The real, intrinsic one. To find the places in which man can live better.

To find where the ground is better for foundations. To find where a new organized culture can live, where a new three-dimensional system of communication and transportation can exist, where certain points of concentration can be for what we call today infrastructures or public facilities. To find how to regulate the waters.

In synthesis to create the objective, open scientific realities upon which we can start to work, and from which -with awareness and not by chance- derives the background for a natural process that will bring us to a new natural form of town that we should no longer call a town, because in this new organism there can not exist the dualism of city and country, of workman and farmer. Thus I use the name “Earth Town” which means that there doesn’t exist any longer a contradiction between nature and man because man and nature have become a unity in reality: a wonderful town open to all the experiences, to the presence of all men. The product of a new civilization.

What I am trying to say is that I think the problem of saving Florence is not only the problem of saving some masterpieces of painting, sculpture, and manuscripts. This, of course, is important and we have to thank every country for their help, especially the United States, and in my case, here tonight, your Committee to Rescue Italian Art. But perhaps most important is to create in the Arno River Valley a new town which represents the real life of men who live in the 20th Century, who have hope for the future, and to consider the old center of Florence a public facility for mankind.

To reach this goal, not a Utopian one but one capable of realization, it is certainly not enough to have the concepts of a single man or a few men. We need the collaboration and participation of the most advanced minds in every discipline to permit us to construct models which really represent alternatives to the actual situation today in Tuscany.

Alternatives which we must study, prepare, design, experiment, test. But to

do this the normal operative channels of planning, and implementation in Italy are absolutely insufficient. At this point, I think that the duty of men of culture, seriously concerned with the future of Florence, is to study an objective and interdisciplinary plan (if we still can use this word) which, after being tested from all points of view, could become really operative. A plan to offer to Florence and its citizens, but also to Italy, to the other nations, to the entire world, to mankind. I would like to say -if these last words do not sound rhetorical- a plan which could demonstrate that the best way to repair the disaster of a flood is to prevent the flood.

To predispose the territory in such a way that this cannot happen again. To save masterpieces of architecture, paintings, and sculpture, we must act not in a sentimental way; rather we must find new existential meaning for all of us.

In sum, to conserve and save Florence the only way is to build a new one of which the old Florence represents only one aspect which belongs to everybody and not only to the Florentines.

What could be the real destiny of such a plan? Nobody knows and nobody can know.

At best it could happen very swiftly in a fast social transformation if the political powers could be made to understand the importance of this kind of experiment and make possible in whole or in part the activation of this new organism.

At worse it could happen that such a plan would be considered a Utopian and theoretical prophecy of intellectual men. But one thing is sure. This is our duty as intellectual men.

Our duty is not to say from an ivory tower, "You politicians are conservative, and we advanced." Not to make prophecies of a still unknown future. Not to become dictators of the life of others when we are able to acquire a certain power or to be slaves when we don't succeed. Our duty is to put ourselves at the service of the society to which we belong. To offer her the results of our research, studies, capacities. In synthesis, to tell to the centers of power. Now towns are built by chance in an absolutely chaotic and arbitrary way. Nothing is built according to scientific possibilities. Nothing is built with imagination and hope for the future. Nothing is built to eliminate the loneliness and anxiety of man. We offer a possibility, scientifically tested from all points of view -social, economic, aesthetic- which represents a better environment.

"If you don't permit the birth of these new possibilities it means that you have not yet understood that to offer an environment in which man can live in well being is not a private responsibility but a collective and political one. It means that your outlook is old and you will survive for only a short time (and the phenomenon will be stronger than you)."

Returning to the problem of Florence I think that this lecture could become the beginning of this new plan.

Before coming to the United States, at the kind invitation to do this lecture, I had intended to create such a plan with my assistants, and students of my Institute of Urbanism at the University of Florence.

But as professional planners and architects can understand, the result of such a study would remain abstract and could not represent a real alternative to the existing situation because to do such a plan we need experts in every discipline. We have to arrive at a model which can be compared with the existing urbanistic structure also in an economical way.

When Dean Dudley, who had invited me in the program of his school to lecture to architects and students, called me in Montreal and asked me to change the program and give a talk in conjunction with the CRIA program, for a moment I was in a fix. How was I to combine a lecture on the town of the future with a lecture on how to save Florence? But I believe in happenings.

This fact suggested to me that such a plan could be created as an experiment which could be the beginning of a new kind of planning through new methods and different channels from those in which normal plans are done.

If among the beautiful efforts which the American people are making to help Florence, giving millions of dollars for Florence, they also could offer the chance to do such a plan, it would represent a very little sum compared with the total being raised and be very effective in every sense, practically and culturally. I cannot, in concluding this lecture, offer a program.

I can only launch the idea. But it would be really marvelous if we could in one or two years prepare a new model of urbanism. This might be done directly in connection with Los Angeles, which could give us also its experiences in a world that is technologically very advanced.

Tonight perhaps, while we are joining together in contributing to the rescue of the art of Florence, we could at the same time start something which also represents a spontaneous act of love for Florence, a gift of the intellectual to the culture, and a solid help to Florence. Everybody who will work practically for this effort or will sponsor this effort certainly will have the joy of being at the service of society and of making a very strong contribution in the direction of a better life for man.