

# HPA

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## **Giancarlo De Carlo at 100 (1919-2019)**

edited by

**Antonello Alici  
Filippo De Pieri**

**John McKean  
Francesco Ceccarelli  
Adam Wood  
Benedict Zucchi  
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Alberto Terminio  
Luigi Mandraccio  
Stefano Passamonti  
Francesco Testa  
Matteo Sintini**





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n.5 2019 vol.II

## Giancarlo De Carlo at 100 (1919-2019)

edited by  
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**/ EDITORIAL**

Antonello Alici, Filippo De Pieri,  
**Encounters, Writings, Domesticity, and Places:  
Evolving Interpretations of Giancarlo De Carlo's Legacy** .....4

**/ INVITED PAPERS**

John McKean,  
**Domestic Action: Living in a House for Jumpers  
Giancarlo De Carlo's House for Sichirollo:  
Ca' Romanino** .....13

Francesco Ceccarelli,  
**A House in the Form of a City.  
Casa Ceccarelli in Bologna (1962-63)** .....49

Adam Wood,  
**Giancarlo De Carlo's Concept of Architecture  
– a Powerful and Inclusive Tool for  
Thinking about Educational Space** .....64

Benedict Zucchi,  
**Learning from Giancarlo De Carlo:  
Interview with Benedict Zucchi, by Antonello Alici** .....76

**/ FOCUS**

Virginia De Jorge-Huertas,  
**Ca' Romanino. A Dialogue among Architecture,  
Philosophy and Landscape** .....89

Rita D'Attorre  
**"Questioni di architettura e urbanistica".  
Giancarlo De Carlo and the Unity of Disciplines** ..... 104

Alberto Terminio,  
**From the 'Aesthetic of number' to the 'Great number':  
Giancarlo De Carlo and Aldo van Eyck between  
Order and Contradiction** ..... 113

Luigi Mandraccio, Stefano Passamonti, Francesco Testa,  
**Giancarlo De Carlo and the Industrial Design**.....139

Matteo Sintini,  
**Criticism of the Architectural Culture since 1978  
in "Spazio e Società" Magazine**..... 161

/ Erratum,  
Correction to: **"DEAR ALISON" The Diffusion of J.A.  
Coderch's Work through his Participation in Team Ten**.... 176



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**Antonello Alici, Filippo De Pieri**

## **Encounters, Writings, Domesticity, and Places: Evolving Interpretations of Giancarlo De Carlo's Legacy**

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This essay originates from a discussion between the two authors, whose mutual work it remains. The introduction as well as paragraph 1 are however due to Antonello Alici, while Filippo De Pieri produced paragraphs 2 and 3, and the conclusions are signed by both.

The reasons for dedicating a monographic *HPA* issue to Giancarlo De Carlo lie primarily in the hope that the centenary of his birth can revive interest in a protagonist of the history and culture of the 20th century. The idea of a call for papers was conceived within the Committee for the Centenary that was established in October 2018 at the National Academy of San Luca, an institution which De Carlo was president of in 2001-2002. The centenary has given rise to numerous projects that have alternated and intertwined in a free spirit that reflects the character of Giancarlo De Carlo. The initiative responded to the need to reflect once again on a very complex and layered legacy, both in time and in space, to be shared with the latest generations of architects and students in a dialogue between witnesses and collaborators of GDC and those who are getting to know him for the first time.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A map of the main initiatives organised in 2019 as part of the centenary can be found on the website <https://www.giancarlodecarlo2019.com>.



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Until some time ago, examining Giancarlo De Carlo meant delving into studies on a troublesome figure, observed with suspicion in many university classrooms and the subject of a limited number of studies.<sup>2</sup> The fact that the situation has changed in the years following his death is demonstrated both by the numerous initiatives dedicated to him and the collection of essays published in this issue of *HPA*. Indeed, the texts that follow document the strong interest that De Carlo's trajectory has inspired in contemporary architectural culture, along geographical pathways that have a strong international dimension, outlining a legacy that touches both the plane of theoretical research into architecture as well as that of the spatiality of his buildings, not to mention a political and ethical commitment to the transformation of the environment.

This issue has a dual origin. On the one hand, the call published in March 2019, which sought to collect wide-ranging studies "capable of broadening the palette of existing interpretations and re-conceptualizing De Carlo's contribution to postwar architecture": our text welcomed "direct investigations of built and unbuilt works that were overlooked by previous studies" and papers focusing "on a close analysis of available archival sources". On the other hand, some results of the international seminar promoted by the Department of Architecture of the University of Bologna at the National Academy of San Luca on 13 November 2019 ("Giancarlo De Carlo at 100"). Papers presented on that occasion are collected in the opening section.

The texts gathered from these two initiatives document the strong continuity over time of some research topics concerning De Carlo but also their inflection in specific directions and the emergence of issues hitherto rarely frequented by the literature. In particular, it seems to us that three key concepts emerge: domesticity, the role of writing, the space for meetings and exchanges. These are complemented by a fourth cross-cutting theme, that is, the importance of places. In many ways this is a schematic distinction that captures points of interest that often overlap and intertwine. However, it may be useful to discuss it in more detail, also because it lends itself well to contextualising the collection within a broader context of recent initiatives focused on De Carlo.

## 1. Domesticity

The three essays by John McKean, Francesco Ceccarelli and Virginia De Jorge Huertas observe De Carlo from a perspective – the design of the single-family home – that has not been prominent in the literature on the architect in recent decades. While the topic of residential models has often been at the centre of critical writings on the architect, as has the construction of privileged relationships with exceptional clients, rarely have such views been applied to the study of small buildings such as those discussed here. It is a shift that signals

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<sup>2</sup> Bibliographies of the writings on Giancarlo De Carlo until 2004, the year of the exhibition dedicated to him at the Centre Pompidou, can be found in John McKean, *Giancarlo De Carlo: Layered Places*, Stuttgart, Axel Menges, 2004; Francesco Samassa (ed.), *Giancarlo De Carlo. Inventario analitico dell'archivio*, Padua, Il Poligrafo, 2004.

at least two noteworthy changes. First, a widespread trend in contemporary architectural research to adopt micro approaches as a strategy to renew the study of broader issues.<sup>3</sup> Second, a different attitude towards De Carlo's biography, now observed from an angle that favours the relationship that is established between architectural research and the construction of a network of personal and familial exchanges.

Two of the three articles examine Ca' Romanino, the house designed by De Carlo in 1967-1968 in the hills of Urbino for Livio Sichirollo and Sonia Morra, and for some time also inhabited by De Carlo himself.<sup>4</sup> This building was preserved and made accessible in 2002, assuming a central role in architectural research by virtue of this heritage strategy. A second residence enters the De Carlo literature for the first time thanks to the piece by Francesco Ceccarelli, who lives in it and safeguards its memory.

John McKean proposes a refined journey through the history of Ca' Romanino and brings out its playful and public dimension. The house is the true protagonist thanks to its ability to interpret the landscape, in its remote dialogue with Renaissance Urbino in the years when the architect and the philosopher-client defined the strategies for its future, in its representation of both their personalities and their cultural affinities. Sichirollo never lived in these spaces, so the story shifts to Sonia Morra, his wife, and to her decisive will to make it a public place, for spending time with friends, and later a centre of culture that for 50 years has kept alive the expertise of De Carlo's project. This house for "jumpers" facilitates "the philosopher's mental gymnastics" thanks to its vertical projection, the multiplication of paths and the openings that connect the interior landscape with the exterior. The building confirms the primacy of the section as a recurring element in De Carlo's designs, a memory of his youthful experience with naval architecture.

The house as a pathway through the landscape and as a projection into the sky also characterises the project for Marcello Ceccarelli in the Bologna hills, which precedes the house for Sichirollo by a few years. There are many similarities in the two projects, the first being the designer and the client themselves, an architect and an astrophysicist in the most important years of their careers: while De Carlo was shaping the house, Ceccarelli was working on one of his masterpieces, the Northern Cross radio telescope. The sectional project and the vertical design of the spaces reach their pinnacle in the observatory: "a place to observe the sky" away from the light pollution of the city. The home of the scientist who looks at the stars and that opens up at the bottom to the landscape of Bologna offers precise stimuli to the architect's study of space. Francesco Ceccarelli accompanies us for the first time through his father's home, underscoring the immediate rapport between his father and De Carlo thanks to their

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3 Gaia Caramellino, Filippo De Pieri, "Private generalizations: the emergence of the micro scale in historical research on modern housing", in Anne Kockelkorn, Nina Zschocke (eds.), *Productive Universals/Specific Situations: Critical Engagements in Art, Architecture and Urbanism*, Berlin, Sternberg Press, 2019, p. 295-313.

4 Associazione Culturale Ca' Romanino (ed.), *Ca' Romanino. Una casa di Giancarlo De Carlo a Urbino*, Urbino, Argalia, 2010. See also the Foundation's website, <https://www.fondazioneucaromanino.it>.

mutual energy and free, independent spirits. The certainty of being able to establish a frank, creative dialogue with the client, of being able to conceive the space in harmony with those who will inhabit it, appears in fact to have been a precondition for Giancarlo De Carlo before accepting private projects.

Returning to Ca' Romanino, Virginia De Jorge Huertas' analysis focuses on the dialogue between architecture, philosophy and landscape, suggesting spatial and temporal relations with the tectonic dimension of the city of Urbino and its Ducal Palace, to the point of attributing the inspiration of the "democratic" circular study to Federico's studio. The house is investigated and sectioned in its constructive and material dimensions, in the interaction between the square and the circle, in the multiple intersections between vertical paths and horizontal crossings. The interplay of interpretations includes the detail of daytime and nocturnal sources of light, from the "eyes" that connect the rooms with the sky, with the moon and the stars, to the simple and imaginative array of lamps. Thus, spatial and immaterial constellations are defined that foster a multiplication of experiences and the appropriation of space for the individual visitor.

These three essays are accompanied by a series of other studies that in recent years have touched on the question of De Carlo's approach to residential architecture from a wide range of perspectives. On Villaggio Matteotti, an icon of post-war Italian architecture, works such as Alberto Franchini's doctoral thesis today allow for a more documented understanding of the controversial question of the role of participation in the project.<sup>5</sup> Significant contributions to research on De Carlo and housing also come from the observations of less canonical works within the consolidated corpus. An example is Federico Bilò's work on the three seaside holiday villages designed in 1961 (the marine colonies of Riccione and Classe and the holiday housing complex in Bordighera), taken as a paradigm of a way of working on space for cumulative and combination processes.<sup>6</sup> Worth mentioning is also Lorenzo Mingardi's research on the Pineta complex in Urbino, an "experimental" project for a private promoter that lends itself to being understood as a contrast with the choices made in the zoning plan for the ducal city.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. Writings

De Carlo's writings have always been a privileged key for accessing his work, well represented by the "official" monograph edited by Angela Mioni and Etra Connie Occhialini and featuring a systematic combination of images of

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5 Alberto Franchini, "Giancarlo De Carlo y la participación. El caso del villaggio Matteotti. Terni, Italia, *Arquitextos*, 24, 32 (2017), p. 9-26; Id., *Il Villaggio Matteotti di Giancarlo De Carlo. Storia del progetto e genealogia dei temi*, doctoral thesis, tutor Luka Skansi, IUAV, PhD in Architecture, City and Design, 2019.

6 Federico Bilò, *Tessiture dello spazio. Tre progetti di Giancarlo De Carlo del 1961*, Macerata, Quodlibet, 2015.

7 Lorenzo Mingardi, "I torricini di Giancarlo De Carlo. Il quartiere Pineta e il Piano regolatore di Urbino", *Storia urbana*, 164 (2019), p. 95-119.



his projects and short extracts of the architect's texts.<sup>8</sup> Three of the articles published in this issue – Adam Wood's text on the notion of architecture with respect to Giancarlo De Carlo and those of Rita D'Attorre and Matteo Sintini, respectively dedicated to the volume *Questioni di architettura e urbanistica* of 1964 and to the magazine *Spazio e Società* from 1978 – propose reflections on De Carlo's writing and on his fertility as a theorist and cultural promoter.

Starting from the perspective of the social sciences, Adam Wood explores the potentials of De Carlo's conception of architecture to acquire new ways of conceiving space. His primary interest is in the design of educational spaces. De Carlo's holistic vision can help overcome the traditional absence of intersections between architecture, planning and education and foster more democratic forms of organisation of educational processes. Wood underlines the value of GDC's direct commitment to education, from the CIAM summer school to ILAUD, from teaching at IUAV to his American experience. Commitment and interest that are also reflected in his writings, from the first articles for *Domus*<sup>9</sup> and fundamental texts such as "Why/How to Build School Buildings" and the Thomas Cubitt Lecture.<sup>10</sup> His lesson lies in the foundation of an innovative approach to the design of schools based on a review of the educational process.

Rita D'Attorre's essay, which rereads *Questions of Architecture and Urban Planning* through subsequent editions, also focuses on the breaching of disciplinary boundaries. A book still largely overlooked by the international literature on De Carlo, which allows us to reflect again on his fundamental contribution to the debate on the relationship between architecture and urban planning in the years of his academic commitment to IUAV and his professional commitment to urbanism.

Matteo Sintini reviews the journal *Spazio e Società* focusing on its early years, those engaged in the construction of a "tentative" editorial line subject to constant re-assessment. The open character of the journal and the very definition of an audience beyond the professionals for whom it was intended underscore its distance from other Italian periodicals, as well as the desire to build an international observatory open to developing countries and post-colonial architecture, a choice consistent with De Carlo's call for pluralism in the languages of architecture against the risk of a new eclecticism in the burgeoning postmodernist trend.

The three texts reflect a view of De Carlo that in recent years has focused very much on his publications and his method of writing, a topic that is undoubtedly central in the case of an architect for whom exchanges with the literary

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8 Angela Mioni, Etra Connie Occhialini (eds.), *Giancarlo De Carlo: immagini e frammenti*, exhibition catalogue, Milan, Electa/Triennale di Milano, 1995.

9 Giancarlo De Carlo, "La scuola e l'urbanistica", *Domus*, 220 (1947).

10 Giancarlo De Carlo, "Why/How to Build School Buildings", *Harvard Educational Review*, 39, 4 (1969); Id., "Reflections on the Present State of Architecture", the Inaugural Thomas Cubitt Lecture, *Architectural Association Quarterly*, 10, 2 (1978).

world were frequent and significant. In turn, such a critical approach reflects a broader international debate on architects' writings as a field of action characterised both by its autonomy and a particular relationship with design research.<sup>11</sup> Significant work has been done recently on the republication and critical reissue of De Carlo's main writings, in particular thanks to the efforts of his daughter, Anna De Carlo, and the publishing house Quodlibet. Here we find unpublished texts such as the travel diaries in Greece (2010) or the transcriptions of the four lectures on the city held at the Faculty of Architecture of Genoa in 1993 (2019).<sup>12</sup> Quodlibet has also made available new critical editions of some key texts published by De Carlo in the 1960s and 1970s on the relationship between architecture, power and participation, in particular the essays "La piramide rovesciata" (1968) and "An architecture of participation" (1972).<sup>13</sup> Alongside this systematic work – which also includes the publication of essays such as *La città scritta* by Stefano Boeri, in part dedicated to the study of De Carlo<sup>14</sup> – there are initiatives related to the re-edition, sometimes updated, of texts such as the book interview with Franco Bunčuga, the novel written under a pseudonym *Il progetto Kalhesa*, or the two works subject to specific attention in this collection, *Questioni di architettura e urbanistica* and the editorials of *Spazio e Società*.<sup>15</sup>

The initiatives carried out as part of the centenary deserve a separate space in the examination of De Carlo's writings, in particular the resumption of the marathon project of reading his texts that had initially been launched in 2014-2015 by the Ca' Romanino Foundation of Urbino. The centenary marathon, led once again by the Foundation together with the Polytechnic University of Marche and Turin Polytechnic, was transformed into a virtual event due to the dramatic pandemic of 2020. The initiative built a community of readers distributed among Italian and foreign schools of architecture and engineering who are tracing their own itineraries in time and space capable of bringing out the central themes of the literature on De Carlo and spreading the refined lessons of the city's history and the narration of the places he crossed through in fifty years of work.<sup>16</sup> Of the main events held for the centenary celebrations, of particular note is the first public exhibition of the *Quaderni* manuscripts, hitherto unpublished, written by

11 Béatrice Bouvier, Jean-Michel Leniaud (dir.), *Le livre d'architecture, XVe-XXe siècle. Édition, représentations et bibliothèques*, Paris, École Nationale des Chartes, 2002; Catherine de Smet, *Le Corbusier: Architect of Books*, Baden, Lars Müller, 2005; Laurent Baridon, *Raisons d'écrire: livres d'architectes, 1945-1999*, Paris, Éditions de La Villette, 2013; Carlo Olmo, "La storia dell'architettura contemporanea: il punto di vista e la presa di distanza. Esiste un'etica della ricerca?", *Lexicon*, 26-27 (2018), p. 7-18.

12 Giancarlo De Carlo, *Viaggi in Grecia*, edited by Anna De Carlo, preface by Stefano Boeri, with 40 drawings by the author, Macerata, Quodlibet, 2010; Id., *La città e il territorio. Quattro lezioni*, edited by Clelia Tuscano, ibid., 2019.

13 Giancarlo De Carlo, *La piramide rovesciata. Architettura oltre il '68*, edited by Filippo De Pieri, Macerata, Quodlibet, 2018; Id., *L'architettura della partecipazione*, edited by Sara Marini, ibid., 2013.

14 Stefano Boeri, *La città scritta. Carlo Aymonino, Vittorio Gregotti, Aldo Rossi, Bernardo Secchi, Giancarlo De Carlo*, Macerata, Quodlibet, 2016.

15 Giancarlo De Carlo, *Questioni di architettura e urbanistica*, preface by Paolo Ceccarelli, Santarcangelo di Romagna, Maggioli, 2008 (first ed., Urbino, Argalia, 1964); Franco Bunčuga, Giancarlo De Carlo, *Conversazioni su architettura e libertà*, Milan, Elèuthera, 2015 (first ed., ibid., 2000); Ismé Gimdalcha [Giancarlo De Carlo], *Il progetto Kalhesa*, preface by Edoardo Salzano, s.l., Edizioni di Storia e Studi Sociali, 2015 (first ed., Venice, Marsilio, 1995); Isabella Daidone, *Giancarlo De Carlo. Gli editoriali di Spazio e Società*, Rome, Gangemi, 2017.

16 The virtual marathon is on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2115897955371943> and Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/gdccentennial1919\\_2019](https://www.instagram.com/gdccentennial1919_2019).

the architect from 1966 until his death: a rich body of notes and travel diaries that sheds new light on how his intellectual laboratory operated.<sup>17</sup>

### 3. Dialogues, influences, exchanges

A final corpus of essays reflects on a topic that historiography has always devoted attention to, namely the dense network of exchanges, dialogues and influences involving Giancarlo De Carlo both in Italy and abroad. The centrality of the matter requires no debate in the case of one of the Italian architects who was most visible on the international scene after WWII, first through the exchange circuits developed and institutionalised by 20th-century modernism – CIAM, Team X – and subsequently through the construction of a series of personal, intellectual and institutional relationships that have yet to be fully fleshed out in all their complexity. Research in this direction now seems all the more appropriate considering the increasing weight given to the issue of the transnational circulation of experiences and models by a broad stream of studies on urban planning and architecture of the 20th century.<sup>18</sup>

Antonello Alici's interview with Benedict Zucchi, Alberto Terminio's article on De Carlo and van Eyck and finally the text by Luigi Mandraccio, Stefano Passamonti and Francesco Testa on industrial design address the issue from three different points of view.

Benedict Zucchi, in retracing his meeting with De Carlo – first through his research and then with a brief collaboration in his Milanese studio – underlines De Carlo's affinity with Anglo-Saxon culture and the allure that his lesson continues to exert on British architects for his conception of architectural design as a process and discipline, which prefers "substance over style, clarity of structure before detail". Zucchi also underlines the central role of De Carlo's writings, insisting on the contemporaneity of some of his fundamental texts of the 1960s and 1970s.

Relations with Anglo-Saxon culture are continuously intertwined with those with the Dutch members of Team X. Alberto Terminio addresses a subject that has been much discussed by critics, namely the relationship between De Carlo and Aldo van Eyck, examining the two designers' common interest in the architecture of large numbers. Recalling the influence of the North African grid presented at CIAM IX in Aix-en-Provence, Terminio retraces the main stages of the experimentation of an additive process of modular units towards the open form in the different oscillations of De Carlo and van Eyck between order and freedom of expression.

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17 *I quaderni di Giancarlo De Carlo 1966-2005*, exhibition curated by Gatto Tonin Architetti, Triennale di Milano, January-February 2020. The critical edition of the Quaderni is in the process of being published by Quodlibet.

18 See for example Paolo Scrivano, "Architecture", in Akira Iriye, Pierre-Yves Saunier (eds.), *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 53-56, and for Italy Id., *Building Transatlantic Italy: Architectural Dialogues with Postwar America*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2013; Lorenzo Ciccarelli, *Il mito dell'equilibrio. Il dibattito anglo-italiano per il governo del territorio negli anni del dopoguerra*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2019.



Mandraccio, Passamonti and Testa offer an original interpretation, dissecting De Carlo's work as a designer of objects and furnishings and investigating his relationships with the production and industry sectors. Without contradicting the unity of architectural design at the various scales claimed by De Carlo, the essay examines lesser known experiences such as the design of metal tubular chairs exhibited at the 8th Milan Triennale, the design of the first-class cabins of the Lucania ship from which arose the collaboration with Arflex, the furnishings in the projects for the University of Urbino and finally the urban lighting system in blown glass globes designed first for Urbino and then in Mazzorbo and Colletta di Castelbianco. Even in this particular area of design consolidated relationships such as the one with Franco Albini and with the Milanese cultural context and meetings such as the one with Fernand Léger for the Lucania project appear central, not to mention the long-distance dialogue with the Scandinavian masters in the use of plywood to complement curved tubular metal.

This variety of subjects and references lends itself to being usefully accompanied by other works published for the centenary, retracing in various ways the threads and textures that lead back to De Carlo. This is the case of the publication edited by Paolo Ceccarelli on ILAUD (International Laboratory of Architecture and Urban Design), which traces the history of this original teaching experience from its founding in 1976. The volume proposes a perspective that, in addition to covering the years of De Carlo's direct participation in the laboratory, also extends to activities after 2006, when ILAUD opened up to global settings such as China, Japan and Israel. In this case the memory of De Carlo is associated with Etra Connie Occhialini, the first secretary of ILAUD who died in 2019.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion: places and archives

There is a line of research on De Carlo that cuts across all those discussed so far, particularly evident in all the articles of the issue: the architect's special relationship with some cities that represent the background for reflections gained over an entire career. Two collective works, one edited by Emanuele Piccardo on De Carlo "architect of Urbino", and one edited by Antonietta Iolanda Lima based on a reconsideration of the experiences in Palermo and Catania, have recently reaffirmed the centrality of the issue and the way in which a reflection on places can still represent a useful starting point to trigger a critical debate on the relevance of De Carlo's trajectory.<sup>20</sup> Of particular interest today are studies capable of systematically mobilising sources – both those referring to the architect and his studio as well as those related to many institutions and figures with whom his work intertwined – showing greater attention to the nuances and questions

19 Paolo Ceccarelli (ed.), *Giancarlo De Carlo and ILAUD: A Movable Frontier. The International Laboratory of Architecture and Urban Design from 1976*, Milan, Fondazione OAMi, 2019. The catalogue accompanied an exhibition held at Fondazione OAMi in 2019.

20 Emanuele Piccardo (ed.), *Giancarlo De Carlo. L'architetto di Urbino*, Busalla, plug\_in, 2019, 2 vol.; Antonietta Iolanda Lima (ed.), *Giancarlo De Carlo. Visione e valori*, Macerata, Quodlibet, 2020.

they pose with respect to some consolidated topics: this is the case of Lorenzo Mingardi's documented work on the relationship between architecture, planning and politics in Urbino during the 1960s.<sup>21</sup>

The existence of a solid, rich archive related to De Carlo, made possible by the architect, his family and his studio and their awareness of the importance of preserving the material, is in fact one of the reasons why De Carlo will remain a fertile subject of study, even in the future. An important part of the documentation concerning his activity has been widely accessible for some years now thanks to the valuable work done by institutions such as the IUAV *Archivio Progetti*, directed by Riccardo Domenichini, which received De Carlo's professional archive from the architect himself so that it could be made available to scholars. Both the essays published here and the vitality of recent public initiatives related to De Carlo show how the recently concluded centenary can be a starting point for a new season of study that will hopefully be able to combine the potential of documentary exploration with the reasons for a new critical interest.

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21 Lorenzo Mingardi, *Sono geloso di questa città. Giancarlo De Carlo e Urbino*, Macerata, Quodlibet, 2018.

# Domestic Action: Living in a House for Jumpers Giancarlo De Carlo's House for Sichirollo: Ca' Romanino

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*Urban Design; Physical Geography; Urban Planning; Giancarlo De Carlo; Urbino*

## /Abstract

This essay interrogates domesticity in a rare example of a dwelling designed by Giancarlo De Carlo.

What makes a Modernist home? Le Corbusier was horrified at how the dwellings of his idealised alpha males contradicted their active lives, being stuffed (as he saw it) with sham and bric-a-brac.

So how does De Carlo represent domesticity for his academic philosopher client? Is Schindler's paradigm 'Shelter or playground' a useful caption for this De Carlo house outside Urbino?

If philosophy is seen as mental gymnastics (the trope of Stoppard's play *'Jumpers'*), is this realised in the literal gymnastic 'climbing frame' of Casa Sichirollo? De Carlo scorns an interior design which 'completes' or forms a role for the client. Here, designing with a humanist, phenomenological focus more on events than objects, his client becomes active subject rather than the passive object of his dwelling.

Philosophical ideas from the *sessantotto* times which produced Casa Sichirollo underpin the argument developed here, particularly philosopher Roger Poole's *Towards Deep Subjectivity* which the author found in De Carlo's library.

Adolf Loos' wariness of photographs was a sense which De Carlo shared, turning architectural experience in the complexity of space and relying on bodily movement in time, into visually beguiling surfaces. This essay, largely without pictorial imagery, is followed by a gallery of images without verbal explanation.

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I have lectured widely across Europe and regularly with Giancarlo De Carlo at ILAUD (1979-2000). Recent exhibitions have been of photographs (in Italy 2018, 2015) and drawings and photographs (in England 2017, 2016). Various books have won awards (on CR Mackintosh, The Crystal Palace, Stirling & Gowan); that on De Carlo, published in French was Centre Pompidou's book for their De Carlo exhibition 2004, remains in print in English with Axel Menges, Stuttgart). Current artwork centres on shared mixed-media projects with artist Ruthie Martin; current writing centres on two books on German-English architect Walter Segal, one with Alice Grahame.



## Preface

The relationship of men to modern domesticity was the central theme of an academic conference called 'Men Making Homes'<sup>1</sup> where I first talked about this building 15 years ago. 'Domestic' is not an adjective readily associated with Giancarlo De Carlo. He enjoyed a certain spartanness in his life; his gastronomy was straightforward and unsophisticated: his favourite food cous-cous.<sup>2</sup> How does he, then, 'make a home'?

De Carlo really only designed two houses, and of these only the first, early in his long career, was and remains a family home<sup>3</sup>. This essay explores the other, Casa Sichirolo through the ideas embedded in its design, and it tries to move away from an unhelpful producer-consumer paradigm in considering the making of this home.

## Domestic action : living in a house for jumpers

In the mid 1960s, two men, a city architect-planner and the politician in charge of that city's planning, were colleagues-in-arms in the social and environmental struggle to renew the historic but tiny city of Urbino in the Marche region of eastern central Italy. At this moment these two began another, joyful and less embattled project. Giancarlo De Carlo, leading Italian intellectual architect of his generation, designed a house for his friend, the philosopher Livio Sichirolo.

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1 The two-day closed conference, with contributions, for example, from Alice Friedman on Mies and Edith Farnsworth, and on 'queer space', Johnson's Glass House and Rudolph's Beekman Place penthouse in New York, among others, was co-curated by Dr Lesley Whitworth and Dr Elizabeth Darling, University of Brighton, England, January 2004.

2 In 2001, I invited De Carlo to take part in a favourite 19th century parlour game which asked participants a short list of personal questions. (Karl Marx's replies are well known.)

His answers, written in English, are:"

1.	Your favourite virtue:	AMBITION
2.	Your favourite virtue in man:	IMAGINATION
3.	Your favourite virtue in woman:	ELEGANCE
4.	Your chief characteristic:	CURIOSITY
5.	Your idea of happiness:	DANCING
6.	Your idea of misery:	INERTNESS
7.	The vice you excuse most:	RECKLESSNESS
8.	The vice you detest most:	MEANNESS
9.	Favourite occupation:	DESIGNING
10.	Favourite poet:	GUIDO CAVALCANTI
11.	Favourite prose-writer:	STENDHAL
12.	Favourite hero:	ALEXANDER THE GREAT
13.	Favourite heroine:	ARIADNE
14.	Favourite flower:	DAISY
15.	Favourite colour:	VIOLET
16.	Favourite name:	ANNA *
17.	Favourite dish:	COUSCOUS
18.	Favourite maxim:	GARBAGE IN, GARBAGE OUT
19.	Favourite motto:	HIC SUNT LEONES

\* *In Italian. In French or English it loses its intrinsic magic.*

3 Casa Giuseppe Zigaina, Cervignano del Friuli, 1958, recently studied by Dr Alberto Franchini; see his "Un tipo particolare di committente. Zigaina e l'architettura domestica", in *Atti della Giornata di Studi dedicata a Giuseppe Zigaina*, eds. Francesca Agostinelli and Vania Grainsinigh (Udine, Accademia udinese di Scienze Lettere e Arti, 2018).

The extraordinary result was so idiosyncratic it might seem inhabitable only by that one man.

Paradoxically, the philosophical position of the architect (resonating with that of his client, professor of philosophy at Urbino University) centred on a role for architectural design as backdrop to creative action. For De Carlo, the designer's role was far from either determining behaviour or representing, far less 'decorating', his client. To De Carlo, domesticity - as inhabitation generally - is an action to be enabled by the setting. The focus is on events and not on objects.

This essay, exploring Casa Sichirolo through the ideas embedded in its design, must first be contextualised. What did this architect mean by 'design', what was he offering his friend, and how was the client expected to engage with it? Where did these ideas about domestic architecture come from.

### Context within the Modern

I first presented these thoughts alongside Lesley Whitworth's 'Anxious Homes' issue of *The Journal of Design History* <sup>4</sup>. Margaret Ponsonby starts that journal's opening essay with a well-known pair of images by Humphrey Repton; I use them, alongside the bedroom of Le Corbusier, as two windows into my thoughts on the possibility of a 'Modern domesticity'. [Fig. 1]



11

In the Repton pair – 'before' and 'after' as with the flip-ups in his famous 'Red Books' - we see an almost moralising pair of good and bad, of Puginian 'Contrasts'. Ponsonby's text describes them as displays of changing decorative taste in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. I read them quite differently, as images of *actions*. She talks of the 'specific uses' being 'expressed through furnishings.' She says Repton's contrast is of the 'bare [masculine] interior' with the 'new, softer, feminised' room. To me, Repton's polemic is much more between, on the one hand, the past: the unified, paternalistic space - 'functional' in the sense of being adequately lit, purposely grouped seating, offering no place for disagreement or individualistic behaviour. And on the other hand, the future: the new perspectival space which is to do with atomised individualisation, with spectacle and separation.

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Ponsonby, "Ideas, Reality and Meaning", *Journal of Design History* 16, no. 3 (2002): 201-214.

Fig. 1

Humphrey Repton 'Cedar parlour and Modern living room' 1816



Here is an archetypal 'Modern' image. Indeed it is precisely replicated in a contrast of pre- and post-Second World War British schools, for example. Windows to let light in are replaced by windows to look out from. The focus is on the separated groups in multi-polar space, on private social varied interactions taking place within sight of each other; and indeed there is a central notion of creative play.

So what I see in these Repton images are intimations of two types of *activity*, and the possibility of spatial configurations to encourage different events. They don't show me an argument about decoration or consumer commodities, but are about constructing an interior landscape as a background which encourages varied play. That is exactly how I see De Carlo approaching the Sichirollo project; forming a play structure for the serious business of the modern *homo ludens*. [Fig. 2]

The second image which came to my mind is Le Corbusier's bedroom. With the surface-mounted plumbing, the extraordinary, high 'hospital' bed, the bidet under the Leger, the whole ensemble is almost seen as a surrealist installation. Here we see the 'Modern' interior as an extremely sophisticated, idiosyncratic collage of commodities and equipment become art form. Corbusier's wider aim was for the domestic setting to represent the individual, asserting his identity; and the play here is certainly a 'high game' (to borrow the phrase from Lutyens criticism).

One of the more perceptive obituaries of Le Corbusier in September 1965 said 'His amenity was not the amenity of upholstered and cosy comfort, nor, indeed was it austerity in the common sense. He dreamt of light, of the warmth of the sun, of an unforgettable view...'<sup>5</sup> Not only are De Carlo and Sichirollo sophisticated intellectuals, but Le Corbusier was the youthful De Carlo's aesthetic and cultural inspiration, so this dominant tradition in Modernism cannot but resonate. As we know, Le Corbusier idealised male engineers as 'healthy and virile, active and useful, balanced and happy in their work,' as he revered 'big business men,

5 Walter Segal, *The Architects' Journal*, September 8, 1965, 526-530.

Fig. 2  
Bedroom of Le Corbusier, 24  
rue Nungesser & Coli, (1931-4)





3 |

bankers and merchants.' And he was horrified by how their houses contradicted their existences, their homes being stuffed – as he saw it - with sham and absurd bric-a-brac. In Le Corbusier's own home, the purist interior is austere as a gallery – to an extent expressing the 'théorie du "vacuum cleaning"' espoused by his colleague Amédée Ozenfant. (Yet 'Other cleaners only reach this far', as Richard Hamilton's vacuuming image from a later generation notes, looking ironically at domestic meanings which *can* be layered and applied as collage.) [Fig. 3]

Rather than be represented by this stuck-on consumption, better – they argued – for modern man to have a clean slate. Casa Livio Sichirollo was originally designed, and drawn, without a kitchen. The myth of the men descending from the forest trees, with food to cook on the

Fig. 3

Richard Hamilton 'Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?' (1956)  
The white message on the black arrow in the stair reads: 'Other cleaners only reach this far.'

campfire (under its great red cylindrical 'flame') round which the family eats, is barely beneath that surface of consciousness.

The 'cultural vacuuming' strain in the proselytising Modernism under whose mantle De Carlo grew up, was neatly put in 1930:

We are the creators of furniture for modern times, for the modern man, who, instead of weighing himself down with useless objects, moves freely around his sun-filled rooms, with his mind unhampered by troubles.

We are back to the Modernism of Repton in 1820, and the new English schools in 1950 all over again, here quoted from the trade literature of manufacturer Standard Möbel<sup>6</sup>.

The bric-a-brac and 'useless objects' embodying the layers of meaning of inhabitation were what held man down – let's be frank, by man they really do usually mean just that, men as distinct from women. Man is held back like Gulliver in Lilliput by the myriad little threads of domesticity from fulfilling his true nature; he must, with the aid of Modern architects, come out from the decorated shell into the nature's light.

Alice Friedman's tale of Edith Farnsworth is well known. Waking one morning in the house Ludwig Mies van der Rohe made for her, Farnsworth rises to find herself ogled at by a crowd of Japanese tourists<sup>7</sup>. Modernism allows no room for any anxiety around transparency – nor for being the object of spectacle. In this land of purity and transparency, there are no corners to hide in. We think of Terragni's (1932-6) 'glass-house into which everyone can peer; no obstacles, no barriers, nothing between [people]...' or Meyer and Wittwer's (1926-7) proposed building 'with no back corridors for backstairs deals, but open, glazed rooms for negotiation of honest men...'<sup>8</sup>

One might say there is an intimation of anxiety in the concealment implied by Repton's open door, none in the icy perfections of the merely exposed perspectival clarity with which he contrasts it.

The Modernist strain leading to De Carlo is much more subtle, of course, than any arty minimalist aesthetic. Rudolf Schindler, Frank Lloyd Wright's one-time assistant, argued for example that while traditional shelter's role had been to offer safety from earth, sky, neighbours – described in Schindler's English as 'frightful' - this fright, this anxiety, still remains implicit in our thinking about the home, he argued, and it can and should now be abandoned. Even Schindler's essay title 'Shelter or playground'<sup>9</sup> could caption the contrasting Repton images with which I began. It might also be a headline for casa Sichirollo.

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6 Brochure from 1930, quoted in Klaus-Jurgen Sembach, Peter Gössel and Gabriele Leuthäuser, *Le design du meuble au XXème siècle* (Colonia: Editions Taschen, 1989), 110.

7 Alice T. Friedman, "Domestic Differences: Edith Farnsworth, Mies van der Rohe and the Gendered Body", in *Not at Home*, ed. Christopher Reed, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1996).

8 These quotations are each architect's own description; Terragni of his built Casa del Fascio, Como, Meyer & Wittwer of their competition project for The League of Nations.

9 Rudolf Schindler, "Shelter or Playground", in *R. M. Schindler, Architect*, ed. August Sarnitz (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1988): 46.

Modernism's domestic aim is nicely encapsulated by Schindler in that essay. There should, he says, be 'private spaces for each to gain a background to life, instead of dens into which to herd the family', at the same time the shared family space should be for group play. He proposes that houses have a 'work and play' room, the space for a new approach to cooking, and that the bathroom now incorporates a gym<sup>10</sup>. And he builds on Wright's notions of inconspicuousness and unobtrusiveness, and interiors 'making no special claim upon attention'. This Modernism offers a place for varied action, in contrast to the projection of that 'complete world', the *Gesamtkunstwerk* which was caricatured by Adolf Loos in his essay 'Poor Little Rich Man'; the man who, thanks to the architect, is made complete<sup>11</sup>.

In the post-war years, after a pre-war Modern generation which built houses as elegant geometric domestic objects, De Carlo follows Loos in being much less interested in the emblematic object (seen from outside), much more interested in spaces for occupation, for convivial living, while allowing, as Loos said, tradition to supply the equipment of the domestic interior.

In a domus where man can express his individuality, furnishings recede, spaces remain. This house, therefore, becomes an intimate landscape - not to dominate and yet be 'shaping' behaviour inasmuch as it is almost nature, a natural setting. It is the natural thing to sit round Zigaina's hearth - the sunken *fogolar* in the house De Carlo designed for him. It is where we sat when I first met him there. It is the natural instinct to climb the rungs set in the wall of Sichirollo's soggiorno. It was the instinctive, first response of the man who unlocked the door and introduced me to this house where he had spent much of his childhood<sup>12</sup>. It is the natural thing to sit around around the Sichirollo hearth. At this great red cylinder, Andrea De Carlo nostalgically recalls Sonia Morra grilling him food when a teenager. [Fig. 4]

Enough hints. Let me introduce the building.

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10 He of course repeats the mantra: "It must be a basic principle of all interior decoration that nothing which is permanent in appearance should be chosen for its individual charm or sentimental associations, but only for its possible contribution to the room concerned as an organic entity, and as a background for human activity." Rudolph Schindler, quoted in *The Furniture of R M Schindler*, ed. M C Berns (Santa Barbara: Art, Design & Architecture Museum, University of California, 1996): 39-41.

11 Adolf Loos, "Poor Little Rich Man", *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, April 26, 1900, reprinted in Adol Loos, *Spoken into the Void*, (New York: Oppositions Books, MIT Press, 1987).

12 Andrea De Carlo, friend of the owner, is son of the architect.





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## Glancing at the house

This essay need not divert into a pictorial guided tour. Although largely unknown when I first shared these thoughts, the imagery of Casa Sichirollo is today easily found, in *Ca' Romanino: una casa di Giancarlo De Carlo a Urbino*<sup>13</sup>. Architectural drawings and details, many photographs and analytic diagrams describe it well and display it and its moods, elegantly in this book freely available online.

Nor do we offer a formal architectural analysis here. De Carlo's characteristic themes are well known: The power of vertical movement gripped him from childhood, as did the connected spaces and views within ships.<sup>14</sup> He loved to bury deep and to reach up to the sky. If this is most virtuosically demonstrated at Il Magisero,<sup>15</sup> it is brilliantly intimated in miniature a few kilometres from there at

13 *Ca' Romanino: una casa di Giancarlo De Carlo a Urbino*, produced by the associazione culturale Ca' Romanino at the end of 2010 can be downloaded free at <http://www.fondazione-caromanino.it/pdf/Ca-Romanino-Una-casa-di-Giancarlo-De-Carlo-a-Urbino.pdf>.

14 See John McKean, Giancarlo De Carlo: *Layered Spaces*, (Stuttgart: Edition Axel Menges, 2003) and John McKean, *Giancarlo De Carlo: Des Lieux, Des Hommes* (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2004), 144-149.

15 John McKean, "Space and society: Il Magistero", in *Masters of Building series, The Architects' Journal* (London), February 13, 2003, 19-35; another version "Il Magistero: De Carlo's dialogue with historical forms", *Places* 16, no. 1 (Fall 2003): 54-63.

Fig. 4

Up: Giuseppe Zigaina, conversing by his fogolar. Down: Andrea De Carlo, gymnast at Ca' Romanino. Both photos John McKean 2000

Casa Sichirollo.

At the same moment as they planned this house, De Carlo's ground-breaking book *Urbino. La storia di una città e il piano della sua evoluzione urbanistica* was completed – the book published in 1966<sup>16</sup>, the house finished in 1968. Sichirollo, the university professor and active politician in that city, was 'councillor for town planning', and as such was De Carlo's strongest supporter in this plan and for the proposed projects within Urbino. His house is at Romanino, almost invisible from any direction, on an isolated, wooded crest outside Urbino<sup>17</sup>. In 1958 De Carlo had built the home and studio for the painter Giuseppe Zigaina, at Cervignano del



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16 Giancarlo De Carlo, *Urbino. La storia di una città e il piano della sua evoluzione urbanistica* (Padova: Marsilio Editori, 1966), 248-259; Giancarlo De Carlo, *Urbino, the History of a City and Plans for its development* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1970). See also McKean, *Giancarlo De Carlo: Layered Places*.

17 This work [De Carlo Project no. 110] was known as 'casa Livio Sichirollo'; not, for example, casa 'Livio e Sonia Sichirollo'. Very little known until now, it was published in A+U, No 48, December 1974. It has been, throughout its existence, the house of Sonia Morra, former wife of Livio Sichirollo. The house today is known today as Ca' Romanino. (Its location is called 'Cavallino' in Benedict Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1992).)

Fig. 5

Ca' Guerla. Photos John McKean 2000



Friuli in Italy's far north-east<sup>18</sup>. In 1980 he reconfigured, Ca' Guerla, as a bolt hole, his own family retreat outside Urbino and quite close to here<sup>19</sup>. Between these, this house - Casa Sichirollo, soon to become known as Ca' Romanino - completed his forays into domesticity. [Fig. 5]

First a few snapshots.

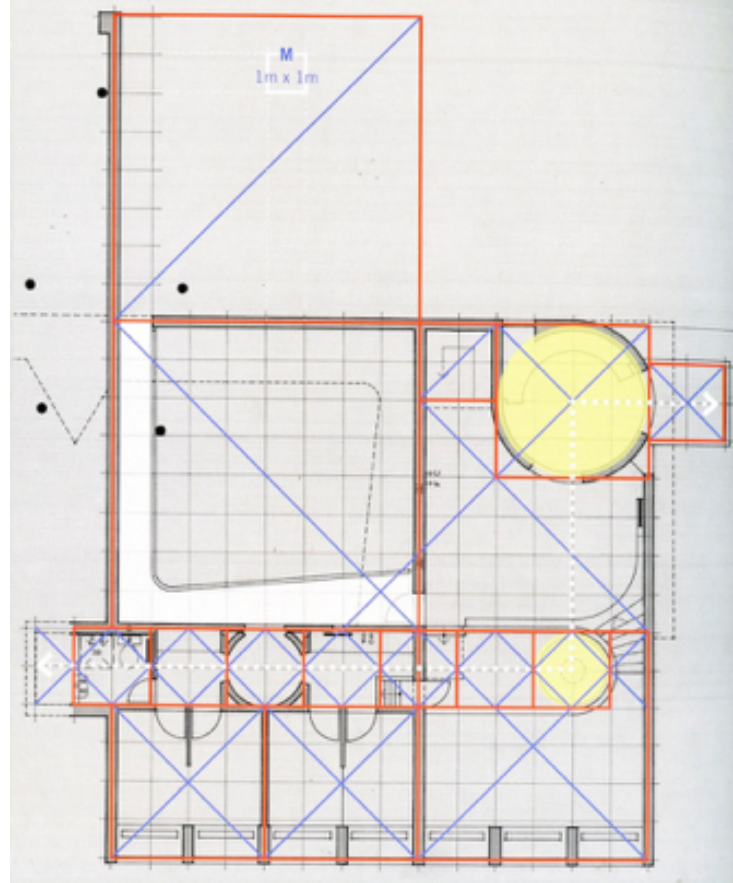
- We climb steeply through the wood until it opens up and a window-wall is glimpsed over the top end of a rising vineyard to the left of the track. Finally the climb eases as we pass close to a blank brick wall, then a curved sheet of blue metal in it before the hill encloses the building, continuing to slope to its wooded summit now close above us. Into this, a narrow, blind crevice is cut which, once entered, turns and we reach two doors. Alternatively if we continue past that crevice, beyond the hilltop to our left, the relief of a tiny green plateau is revealed and here a car can stop. Turning back towards the hilltop, the house now presents itself as an ancient cantina, blue doors and gate to caves dug into the tufa, over which a flight of narrow steps rises to the highest trees, on the hilltop with 360° views to far vistas. Once up these steps, a little path leads round the battlements of this tiny ancient fort. We glimpse the entrances below but are lead directly to another door at this level and, beyond it, onto the gravel of a precipitous roof edge and amazing panorama south towards Urbino. Even before penetrating it, we have met the most complex and ambiguous tiny building imaginable.

- Below, on entering the main door, to our left the study is a calm rotonda, with built-in bench seating and central circular table. Its great curved metal door, as you slowly pull round its weight, can choose to shut off either the main house or the outdoor landscape. The hollow form is echoed to our right in the solid central hearth of the soggiorno (*both are yellow in the plan*), a great 1.5 m diameter red cylinder which provides a focus for cooking the convivial meals – a facility only supplemented by a tiny, top-lit, galley kitchen excavated from the tufa of the hilltop behind us (*a late addition, not on this earlier plan*). [Fig. 6]

- But the plan, with its rigorous geometry is a secondary conceit. The place exists in section. From the entrance, this dining area, we glimpse two concealed descents to the soggiorno, one very steep flight and a curling if more normal one. There are also two ascents from here to the main bedroom level, a very steep ladder and a dog-leg stair. And there are rungs up a wall to reach the shelves of the *brise-soleil*. [Fig. 7]

18 Casa Giuseppe Zigaina, 1958, [De Carlo Project no. 55, collaborator Matilde Baffa] was originally at the edge of this small town. Now surrounded by suburban development, its privacy strengthened as Zigaina was able to buy up surrounding plots.

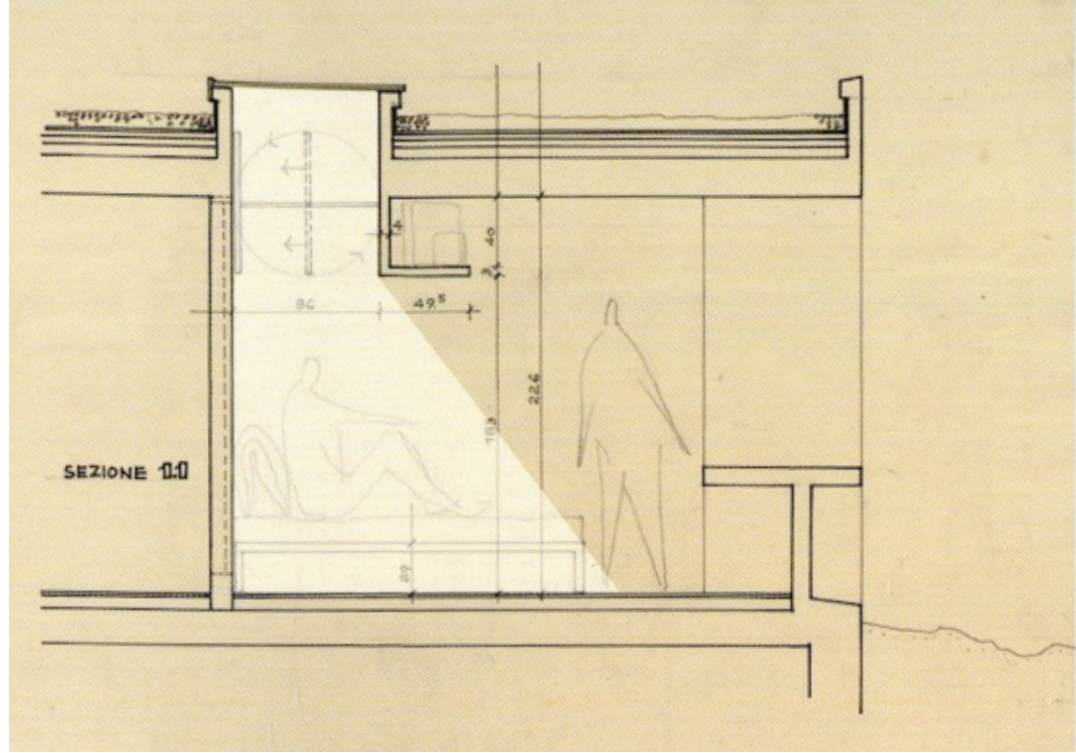
19 Ca' Guerla, on a wooded hillside near to Casa Sichirollo, is built round an ancient outlook tower. The tower is one of a string across the countryside between S. Leo and Urbino. There is a beautiful outlook; De Carlo's Collegi can be seen in the distance.



6

Fig. 4  
Plan at entrance level – from  
Ca' Romanino book





very particular range of inhabitations. It is, after all a most idiosyncratic building – with nearly vertical stairs, walls like climbing frames, rooflights over beds. It is a luxury villa where even the bath itself is clad in raw brick. It is not a luxury of accoutrements, nor are the *arredamenti* reduced to functional ‘necessities’.

### Philosophy round the house built on a dynamic balance

That Sichirollo was a philosopher brings to mind *Jumpers*, Tom Stoppard’s play about philosophers, which was built on the conceit of a word-play between the ‘mental gymnastics’ of philosophy and physical exertion in a gym<sup>20</sup>. For this building is a wonderful playground for both. Literally: red rungs on the living-room wall let one climb up to and between the deep concrete window-shelves, high on the *brise-soleil* wall; these attractions, and the varied staircases and vertically sliding door which separate this world from sleeping quarters, are hugely fun for exploratory occupation by agile monkeys. It is a domesticity of ideas, jumping and creative; where colorless green ideas might sleep furiously.<sup>21</sup>

Having glanced at the constructed interior landscape – the ‘climbing frame’ one might say – of Ca’ Romanino, we can now look more closely at the ideas of architect and client. Onto the Modernist threads I sketched, De Carlo’s personal philosophy builds a humanist, phenomenological perspective. He sees his client as far from being ‘completed by his architect’ (as Adolf Loos’s ‘Poor little rich man’). Here he is active subject rather than the passive object of his dwelling.

20 Tom Stoppard, *Jumpers* (London: Faber, 1972); First performed at The National Theatre, London, 1972.

21 Chomsky’s famous phrase, being grammatically correct while semantically magical



Fig. 8  
Bedroom rooflight photo John McKean, GDC dwg from book



De Carlo's spaces are always formed by their centres rather than their edges (though often circle and cylinder are used to imply centralised, gathering spaces), and they are structured by the routes moving between them. They become places - in this case we can say a 'home' - when they act as a stimulus to social activities; when, as De Carlo says, 'people begin to acknowledge the physical configuration as fitting their memories, expectations, needs and imagery, and they enter upon an intense exchange of experience'.<sup>22</sup> Thus communication and meeting points are privileged as the 'social condensers' in all his architecture<sup>23</sup>, where 'recognisable groups of individuals can recognise themselves, their thoughts and actions, *among other people*'.

De Carlo was convinced that three-dimensional, physical space is the most important reference we have as a human being, to understand and to address our being. 'How could we remember, how tell a story, without reference to the physical space which surrounds our action and our thoughts?'<sup>24</sup> While architecture's concerns with the organisation of space involves rationality, method and coherence, he notes that 'it is also a question of form, which requires intuition, invention, evocation, prophecy.'<sup>25</sup> And while it will always be deformed and transformed as people take it over, the designed space continues to speak, always leading a continuous dialectic of how it might be used.

Remembering that this house is for a philosophy professor, I refer to one book of that moment which seems to offer some useful hints. In De Carlo's office library, I stumbled across Roger Poole's *Towards Deep Subjectivity*<sup>26</sup> came out in 1972, after the house was built of course, and after *les événements* of '68. It was probably bought by De Carlo then; but it was not kept at his home, with all the rest of his cultural memory, with his French and American novels, his copies of the *New York Review of Books*, his intellectual garden. It is the only book I've seen in the whole office library (where it has a number on the spine and is carefully filed and categorised<sup>27</sup>) that would not be found on the architecture or planning shelves of a university library.

This important philosophical essay offered a damning critique of both the prevailing positivist philosophy and behaviourist psychology dominating Anglo-Saxon thinking at that time. And, developing an exegesis on Husserl, it is much more sympathetic to a phenomenological position, perhaps coming from the author's having taught at the Sorbonne alongside Levi-Strauss, Lacan, Barthes and Ricoeur.

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22 Giancarlo De Carlo, *Introduction to ILAUD's second course, ILAUD Second Annual Report* (Urbino: Residential Course, 1977), 8.

23 He uses this Constructivist term happily, at all scales, and most explicitly in the plan for Rimini.

24 Being means being somewhere, as Merleau-Ponty and phenomenologists continually insist. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 1962).

25 Giancarlo De Carlo, Interview, in Benedict Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo* (Oxford, Butterworth-Heinemann, 1992), 159.

26 Roger Poole, *Towards Deep Subjectivity* (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Books Ltd, 1972).

27 under 'class' it said 'vari'

He describes the dominant paradigm in the '60s as treating human beings as mechanisms – as machines governed by rules. This was the paradigm of reductive objectivity from Wundt to Titchener to Pavlov to Watson to B. F. Skinner and the behaviourism of the 1960s. Within its attempts to measure all behaviour and thus allow people to be controlled, it saw surprise and freedom as aberrations to be reduced and eventually eliminated. And thus they would have us understand the human phenomenon: no whole greater than the sum of its conditioned reflexes. Poole quotes Konrad Lorenz in 1970: 'If ... one observes the mental and emotional resistance which the behaviourists have for everything which is not conditioned reflex, one finds, I think, in the background, the ideology of all the current political doctrines...'<sup>28</sup>.

Now all this fitted very well with De Carlo's political and philosophical position, predicated on the dignity of the active subject who operates intentionally and unpredictably – someone who cannot be controlled, for example, by architectural determinism – and certainly not a client waiting to be 'completed' by his architect. De Carlo began to visit the USA in the mid-'60s, and took part in radical campus debates, alongside professors like Chermayeff and Chomsky (who of course had famously attacked behaviourism in his critique of Skinner<sup>29</sup>). Poole slams into behaviourist approaches to spatial design, for example accusing Edward Hall<sup>30</sup> of allowing no 'possibility that the individual might use space contrapuntally, in such a way as to counter received cultural expectations. The question doesn't arise [in Hall's 'proxemics'] because, objectively, there is no conceptual difference between the signalling resources of animals and men.'<sup>31</sup>

Such consistent reduction only allowed the broken-down and measurable bits of human life to be recognised, with the subjective and unquantifiable data ignored<sup>32</sup>. Gestures are fitted to a presumed code, '*parole*' to '*langue*' as they said around 1970, rather than a new '*parole*' being allowed its own signifying creativity – as Chomsky argued – being allowed to set up a new signifying nexus in its own creative terms, to stand as the first member of a new '*langue*' which it is trying to constitute and bring into being.

This is where the radical De Carlo and Sichirollo were in the mid 1960s: proposing that towns, just as dwellings, be enabling frames for creative, unpredictable, un-programmed activity. De Carlo's rigorous critique of Modernist reductive determinism underscores his major writings of this period 1966-72. Criticising, for example, the CIAM Congress at Frankfurt in 1929, he lets the 'Frankfurt kitchen' stand for the whole position; and his critique stands at a tangent to

28 Konrad Lorenz, *L'Express*, June 1970.

29 published in Jerry Fodor and Jarrold Katz, *The Structure of Language* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1964).

30 Edward Hall's *The Silent Language* (New York: Doubleday, 1959) and *The Hidden Dimension* (New York: Doubleday NY, 1966) were influential texts in architectural circles in the 1960s when I, as a student, read them.

31 Poole, *Towards Deep Subjectivity*, 60-61.

32 My personal engagement with this issue at that time is seen in the parallel publication of two lengthy building studies, an 'objective' scientific one (of a Glasgow hospital, by environmental (and later leading UK forensic) psychologist David Canter) and my 'subjective' humanistic one (of The University of Essex), and the subsequent lively debate in the pages of *The Architects' Journal* (London) between September 1972 and January 1973.



the received feminist one which we now all know. Close focus on the 'how' of cooking an omelette more economically, with minimum ergonomic movements and thus in the shortest time, he argues, inverts subject and object. The person cooking becomes objectified, the omelette the subject<sup>33</sup>.

We can see the attraction of the philosophers of 'deep subjectivity', a term favoured by phenomenologists, which in '68 became aligned with a widespread revolt against the contemporary control structures – with De Carlo at its Italian centre in IUAV, Venice's architecture university. Their processes of objectifying were no longer satisfactory, but were now resented for offending, diminishing and de-humanising us. Their objectivity was old, right-wing, entrenched; its positivist philosophy and behaviourist psychology excluding the thinker from the thought.

Subjectivity on the other hand, which questioned the status of data and its quantifiability, considered wholes not just parts, was life-centred, based on reality and operated in an 'ethical space' (to quote Poole). We would become subject again not an object.

## Interrogating the house

We make one last journey through the actual building.

'Those who have no table manners, find it easy to design new forks,' said Adolf Loos. We could argue that, with both Sichirollo and De Carlo, we are dealing here with men of exquisite manners – manners in the sense of Castiglione's courtier (or of his English contemporary William Horman whose motto was 'manners maketh man'); men of integrity and powerfully independent character.

De Carlo scorns 'interior design' as the purveyor of settings, the provider of a wrapping that defines and completes the client. He senses, in undertaking domestic work, a certain stigma attached to it, as it is expected to be offering this kind of stylish dress. For De Carlo, the designed house might allow – even suggest – forms of inhabitation his occupants could never have imagined.

First, it is the opposite of a safe nest. There is nothing safe here at all – from the almost nautical, precipitous array of stairs to the bedrooms which themselves are through routes. It is one thing actively to encourage what Poole calls "contrapuntal behaviour" – ways of acting not going with the established grain. But here the *spatial rules dissolve* – as bedrooms become part of the circulation system, thus dissolving safe privacies. It is a planning shock repeated at Ca' Guerla and even more extremely with the student flats in the Tridente college<sup>34</sup>. And the

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33 It is not irrelevant that De Carlo was no cook and, perhaps Livio Sichirollo likewise. Of course Sonia Morra had a tiny but essential galley kitchen at Ca' Romanino. She quotes De Carlo: '... the dwelling must guarantee a fast omelette, but also the possibility of being able to cook a kebab, couscous, or vermicelli. ... the definition of housing must become much more flexible, and much more adaptable.' (in *Ca' Romanino: una casa di Giancarlo De Carlo a Urbino*, 2010).

34 In the Tridente student housing, each flat, with its group of bedrooms, has a wash room with a suite of WCs, showers and basins – at the far end of which is a blank door, which in fact leads into a different apartment whose main entrance is far from the entrance to the first one, but with which it shares the same washroom.

*visual rules dissolve* – in a fair-face brick bathroom, door openings cut from floor to ceiling (concrete slab to concrete slab) or all services being surface-mounted, as in Le Corbusier's bedroom. This forms an architecture just as paradoxical as Mies van der Rohe's house with two bathrooms and no bedroom. While De Carlo may claim to be providing the stage for unscripted action rather than for controlled performance, his 'structure' is quite unforgiving of other world views.

Of another building on which he worked at very much the same moment (the Urbino University Law Faculty), he said 'I hope that those contradictions stimulate people and make them think. I believe one goal of architecture is to generate thinking rather than mindless happiness. In a significant space, people must understand that being in there needs to be kept in balance all the time - and there is no definite balance. Each moment of balance is open to another of imbalance, and then balance again, and so on.'<sup>35</sup>

In his thoughts, the images of flux, of event, of dynamism are ever present.

This house is also assured of not being a safe nest by the exaggerated importance of vertical movement in space – between nearly every room. Vertical movement is so much more active an experience than horizontal movement, as, in this physical action of moving up or downwards, space becomes revealed. De Carlo retained a very clear memory of a first sensory experience of three-dimensional space at the age of six<sup>36</sup>, and : 'From then on the idea of stair was impressed in my mind and still now it keeps filling my dreams and my thinking. I don't get stimulated by flat places as much as I do by places with different levels.'<sup>37</sup>

This approach to space is to do with stimulation, being dynamic rather than static, centred rather than edged, space for action rather than passive spectacle. Is stress on identity through action not through things, invested with significance by the active body, is this particularly masculine?

In *Getting back into Space*, the phenomenologist Edward Casey talks of 'two ways to dwell'<sup>38</sup>.

The one being static and centred he relates to Hestia (female goddess of the hearth), the other being dynamic he relates to Hermes (male prankster, messenger of the gods). One might imagine this house as being particularly dedicated to that male deity, the dynamic Hermes. But then the vast red cylinder, which seems to fill its main space, stares us in the face, its glowing chimney the only totem of the house visible from afar. This is the very Wrightian 'heart', the central hearth. Now here, in essence, is a very primitive, primal, house. It reaches for these pri-

35 De Carlo in recorded conversation with me.

36 One day, aged six and living in a 5th floor apartment in Genova, he suddenly encountered an animal on the stair landing. Appearing like a dog with very long legs and a cat's head, a straight moustache and greenish eyes, it may have been a lynx.

The animal's presence forced young De Carlo to take in his surroundings carefully, to measure the space around him as he tried to find a way to escape. Although no-one believed his story of the lynx, 'that was the first time I had a conscious feeling of the height and width of a place, of the horizontal and inclined planes, of going forward and backward, up and down on a stair.' Quoted in McKean, *Giancarlo de Carlo, Layered Places*.

37 De Carlo in record conversation with me, quoted in McKean, *Giancarlo de Carlo, Layered Places*, 146.

38 see Edward Casey, "Two Ways to Dwell", in *Getting Back into Place* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 107 - 145.

mal feelings: washing under that shower, crouched on that window shelf as if up a tree, sleeping under the stars, and congregating round the fire on which meals for family and friends are visibly being prepared.

De Carlo exaggerates the elements to broaden the range of feelings. The hearth – pumping heart, fire and oven – is vast and red, the actual kitchen a tiny galley. The house's centre speaks of a dynamic conviviality. But this great red cooking fire? While we may be wary of talk of 'gendered space', there is an unavoidable archetype here: the image of later 20<sup>th</sup> century men who dominate the barbecue but would never be seen cooking in the kitchen. So a virtual outdoors, this space a landscape again: unlike the woman's tiny kitchen (very enclosed, lined with shelves and cupboards and packed with *things*).

The rotonda can isolate itself, as indeed can the guest suite to become an autonomous dwelling. But in the continuous tension between individuality and conviviality, the architect always seems to privilege the social over the individual – the single bedrooms are linked, the privacy of the main bedrooms is contradicted by their being enfilade spaces. (Ca' Guerla, De Carlo's own house nearby, shows the same duality: a clear definition of separate domains. To enter bedrooms you must step over kerbs, and yet they can be through routes.)

De Carlo argues that architecture requires that individuals and groups take responsibilities in the initiation processes, in the production processes, and in the inhabitation processes. Indeed buildings are not so much inhabited, he adds, as 'corrupted by use. And the way use corrupts is the most interesting part of architecture. Positive corruption, the addition of people using architecture as a system of communication, as self-representation - this is the highest goal.'<sup>39</sup>

Yet, where, in this house, is the space for memory? For the sedimentation of the past – for example, for a non-utilitarian wedding present to be displayed? Are traces of personal affect, beyond the moment of its first inhabitation, in fact removed?<sup>40</sup>) Home making, being the locus for that delicate knitting of relationships which enable household members each to develop creatively and yet hold together, perhaps gets little support from a place so positively encouraging each actively to fly off into their various plays. This thought is pictured, directly, in the Repton double images where I began.

Here, in these forms, was to be the dream house of Livio Sichirollo and Sonia Morra. In 1968, as building work ended, so did their marriage and Livio Sichirollo was never to return here again. That balance of Hestia and Hermes was broken.

## Postlude

When I first told this tale, the house was very private and unknown. De Carlo gave me Livio Sichirollo's phone number, but he died before I could make contact. I

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39 De Carlo, quoted in McKean, *Layered Places*.

40 Sonia Morra displays fading posters from the *Sessantotto* as if the building were still then.

knew the house a little, thanks to Andrea De Carlo, but had not yet met Sonia Morra. These musings remain alive but are, of course, of their time, floating out on the sea of history, released by subsequent waves. Casa Sichirollo has now lived half a century as Ca' Romanino, the retreat unimaginable as separate from the powerful personality of Sonia Morra. Over a decade, Sonia then became a generous host and a good friend to my wife Mary and to me. Ca' Romanino, even more idiosyncratic than its owner, became an even closer friend when we stayed there, sometimes with Sonia more often on our own, in its hilltop tranquility for continued periods through long summer months, and also at times in winter.

Asked a few years later, I might have worked a rather different story. One about the experience of Ca' Romanino and my body: meals on the shaded picnic table by the steep edge or the private naked summers on this secret hilltop; viewing the stars above my pillow in the little cells or the wonderful landscapes seen from waking in a spacious bedroom upstairs; the sharp shower's angled wall and rooflight or a steamy winter bath in the warm enclosing brickwork; lighting the great fire in winter rain (and happily paying for the much needed replacement central heating boiler); afternoons sitting reading on a high window ledge in the soggiorno, and once watching in astonishment as the great tanker reaches the hilltop and disgorges its oil into the underground tank; watching the stars from the roof and the glorious autumnal colours on the slopes opposite; throwing one door up vertically to retreat to a study or pulling another in a great curve to open the circular table to the landscape. And enjoying all the different routes through this tiny city, so varied and not one of them horizontal. Just as they echo, in microcosm, the famous tiny city nearby. The city, the building, the body, are representations of each other, as Francesco di Giorgio Martini showed in a famous drawing; 'the city is like some large house and the house like some small city', as Alberti echoed.

But time must flow on. Sonia discussed the future of Ca' Romanino with her sister and with friends, and from the eventual decision there came the Associazione Culturale now the Fondazione. Now, over a decade or more, it has become a very different place, as different meanings, seeded by Sonia, layer it anew. Our beloved, so secret, hilltop lawn has become today's unkempt carpark, while the building is somehow reified, become of public value as objet d'art, and inscribed by many enriching readings. Ca' Romanino, open to overnight bookings and written up in the press, is perhaps about to achieve the badge of 'icon'.<sup>41</sup>

In 2017, by chance one evening we joined the committee sitting round the dining table – the table of happy memories of laughing with Sonia, her tasty pastasciutta and the rough wine Adriano made from her grapes. But now an iPhone is propped up among papers and glasses of wine on the table between us all. As we talk, Sonia's disembodied head appears, and we greet her again. She is speaking to the committee which cares so well for her house; it is a voice from Milano, but it comes through the ether from a more distant existence.

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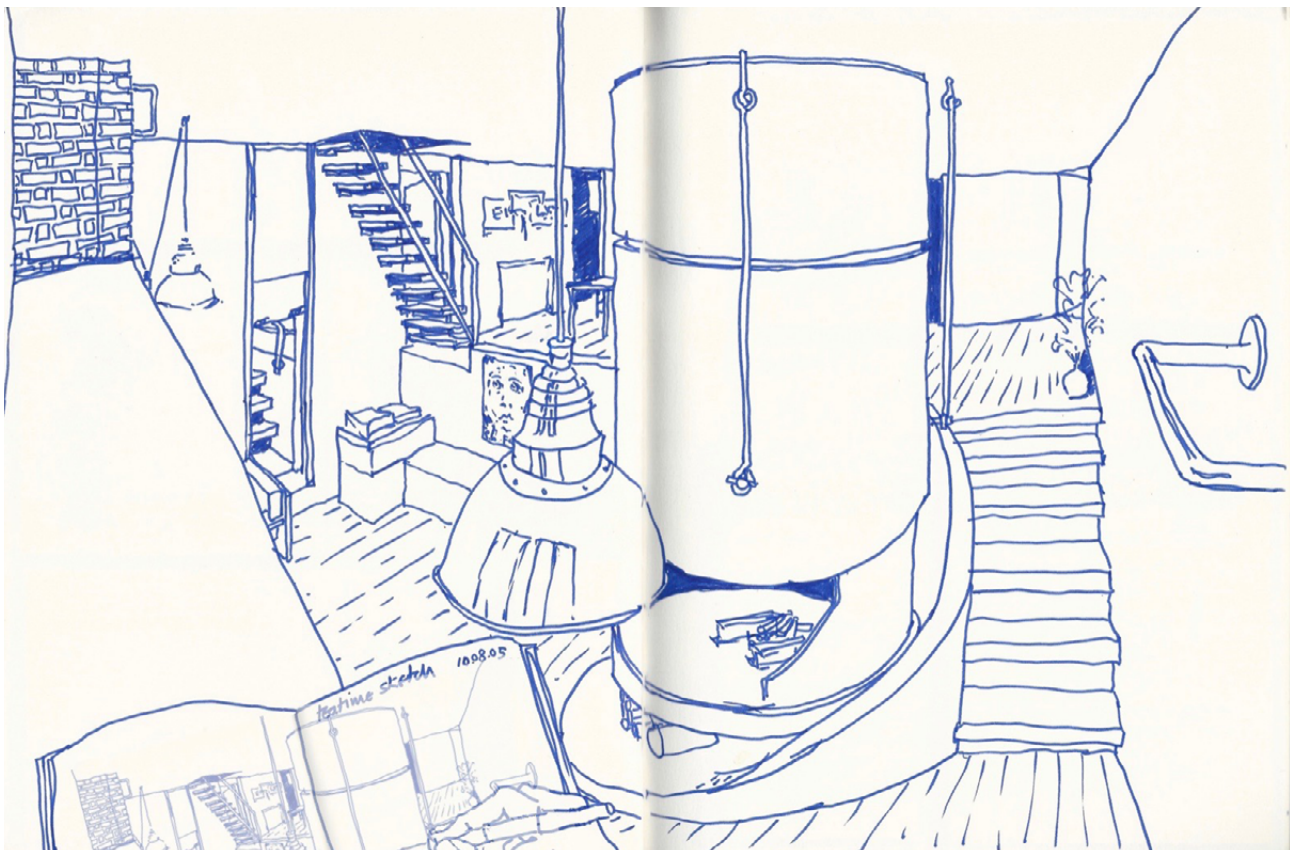
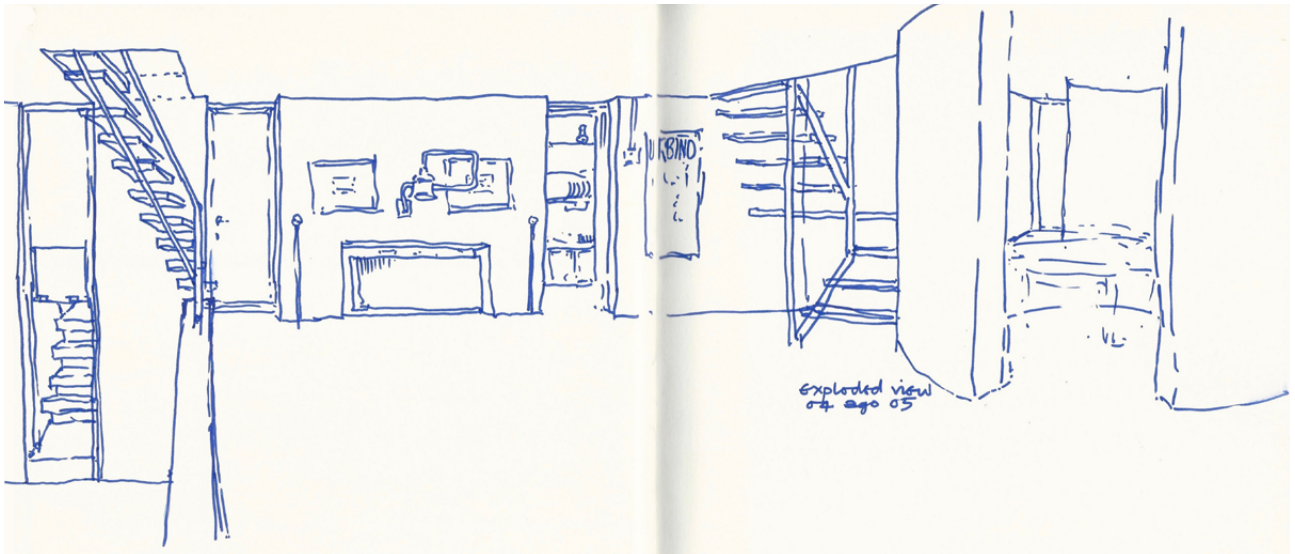
41 It is described by Alessandra Laudati, *Icon Design*, September, 15, 2017.

Ca' Romanino has been her world for half a century, but deep underneath there remain the jumping men, the philosopher and the architect, and their disruption of domesticity. Leon Battista Alberti, it was said, could jump over a standing man. Tatlin's ornithopter bewitched Giancarlo De Carlo in the dream of man-powered flight. Late one summer night I watched Bengt Edman and Giancarlo De Carlo duelling in the street, high up in Urbino, near the palazzo's hidden Alberti façade, elderly architects bouncing on their toes, thrusting with their imagined rapiers. Blink, and the steep cobbled street is dark and silent. The disembodied head on the table also fades. Hestia of the hearth and Hermes the fleet of foot return to their own world. And the frame for contemplative climbing remains pinned to the Romanino hilltop by its bright red omphalos.

A gallery of photographs and sketches by John McKean.

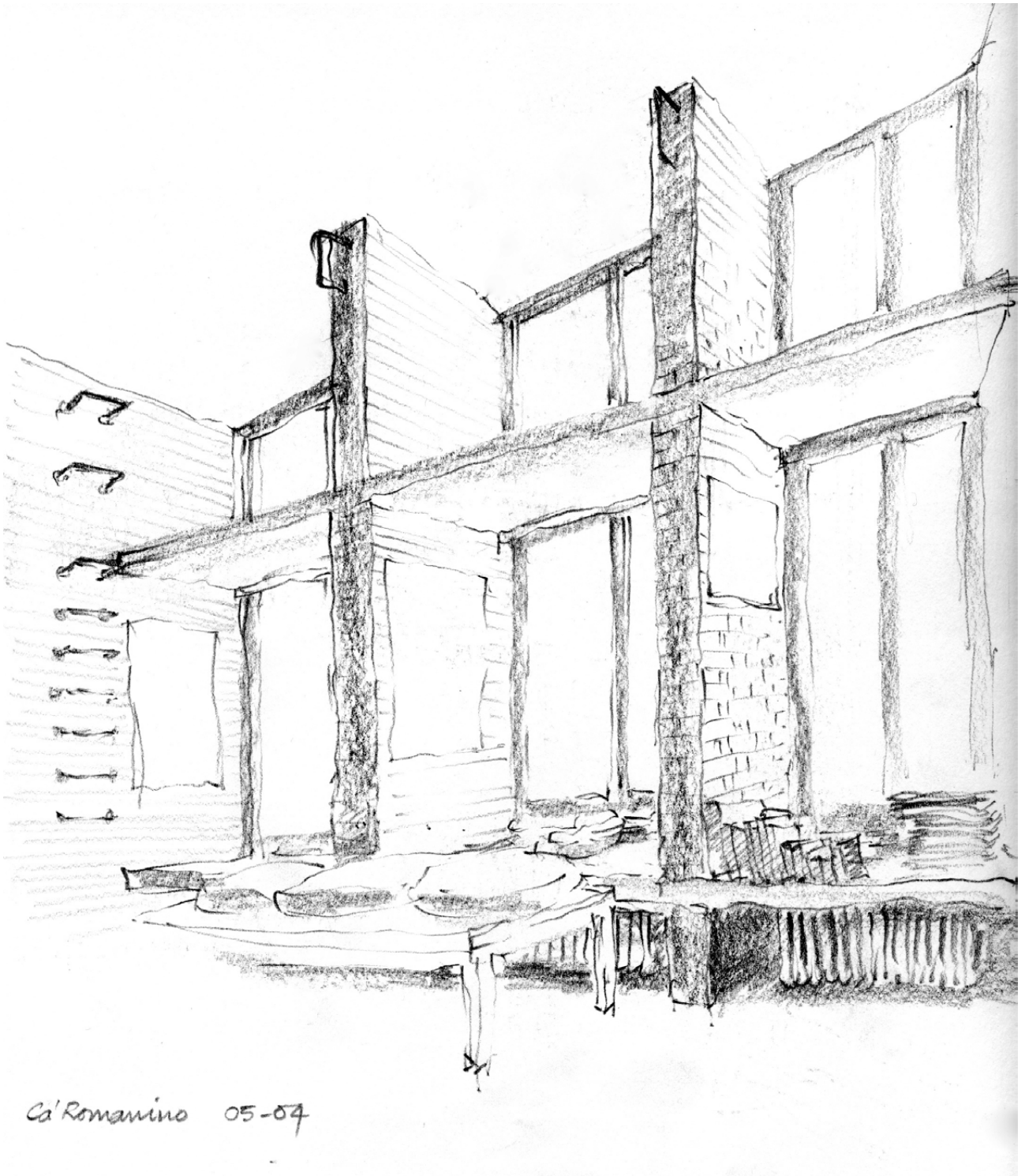
Giancarlo De Carlo's sketch from the bedroom window in 1983 has been kept by Sonia Morra in the bedroom of Ca' Romanino.

## Sketches



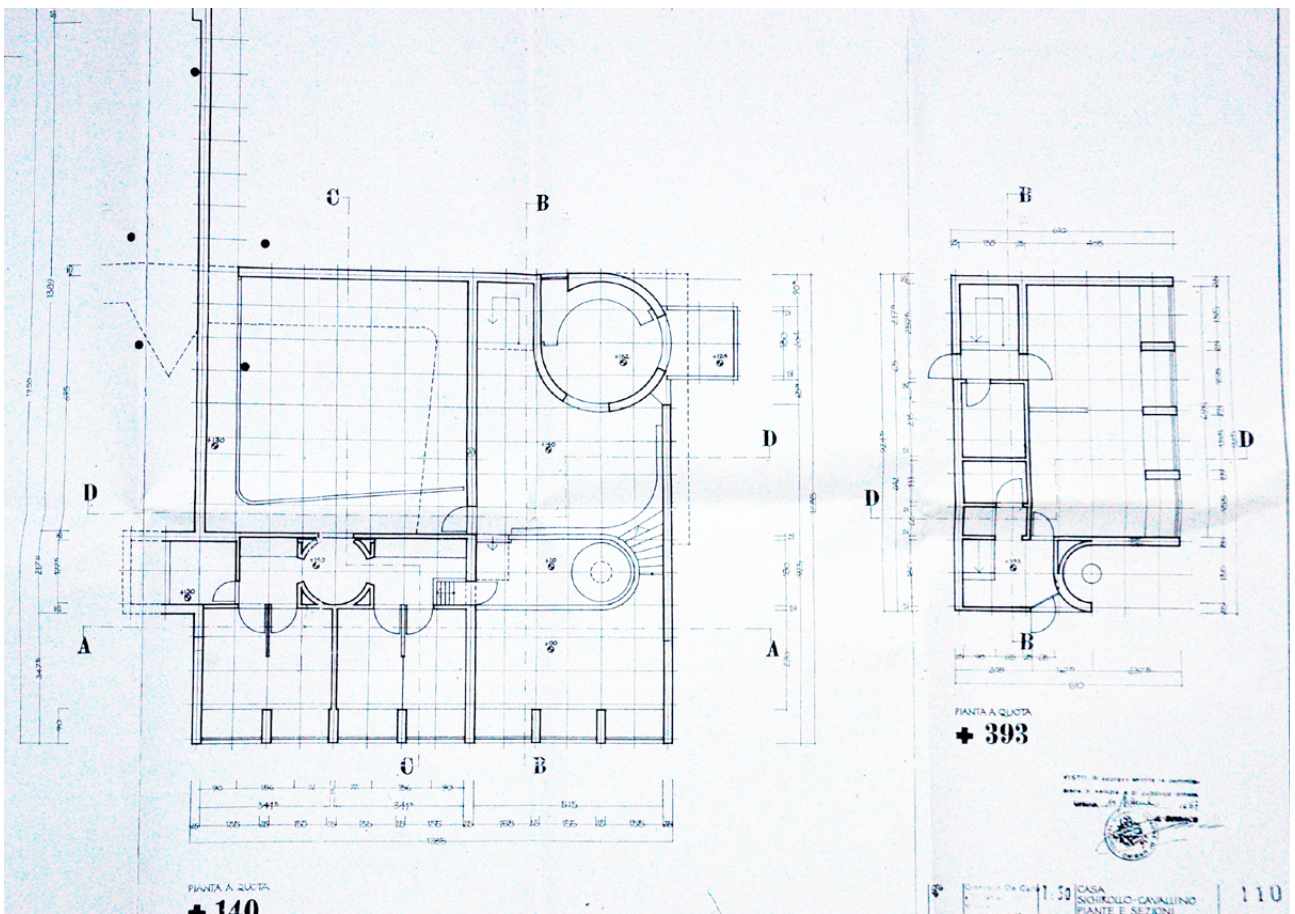




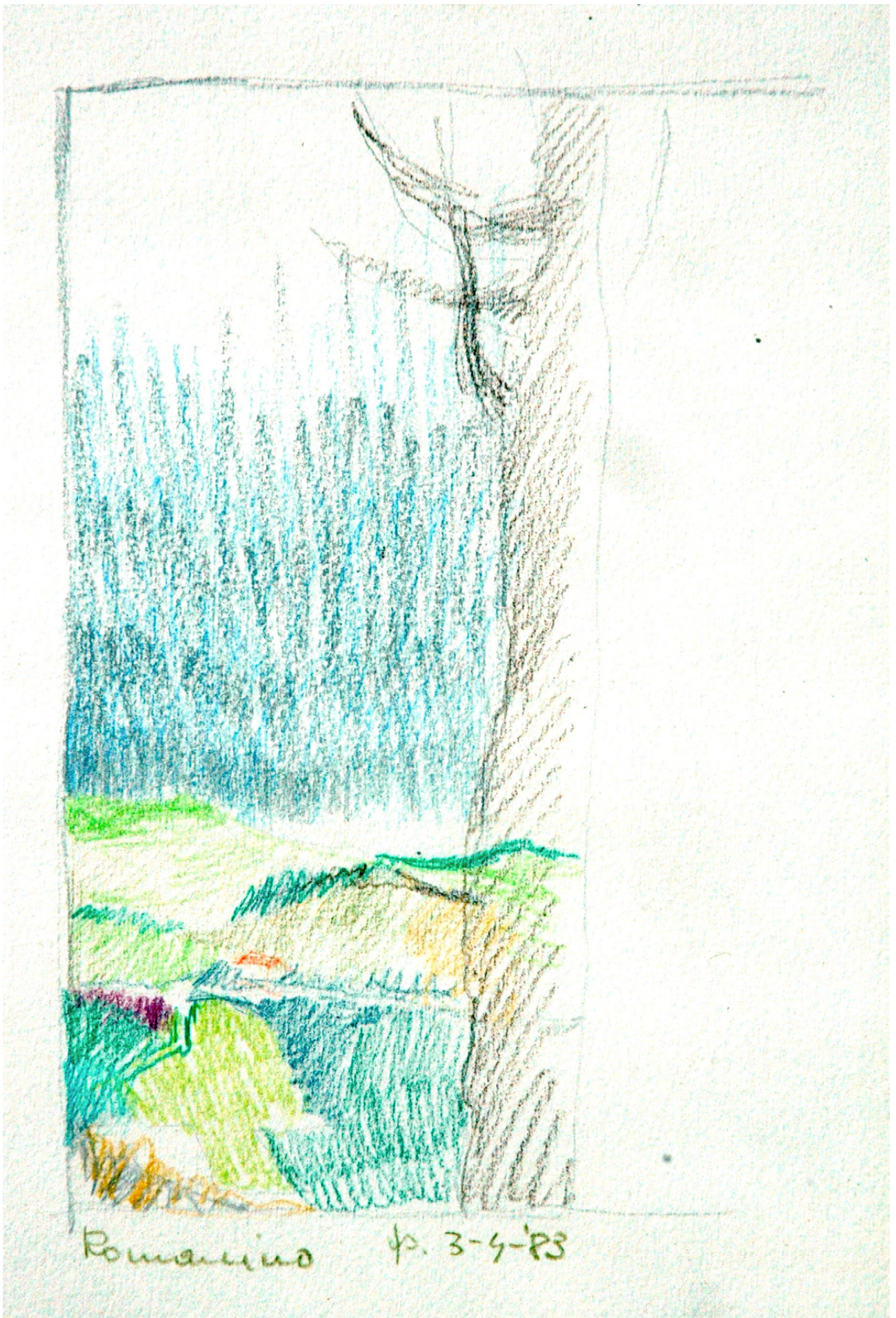


Ca' Romazzino 05-07

Project

















Hall

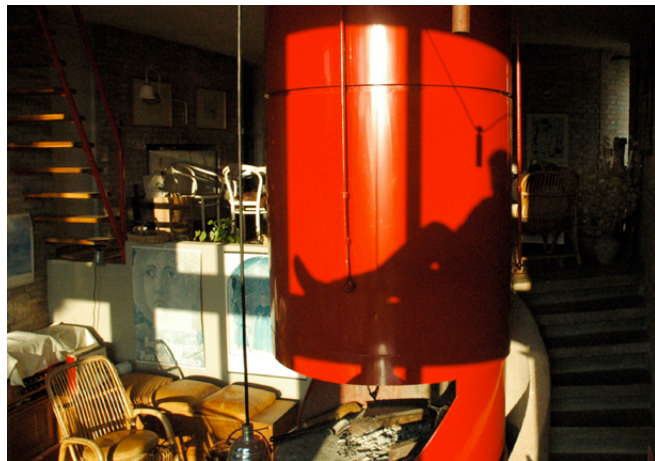




Living room









Drum





Kitchen



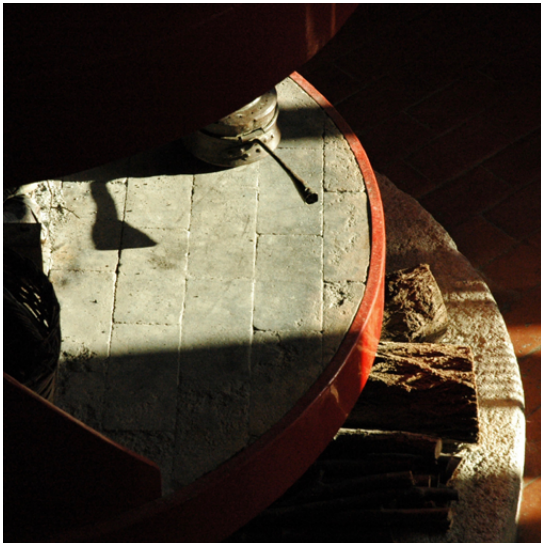
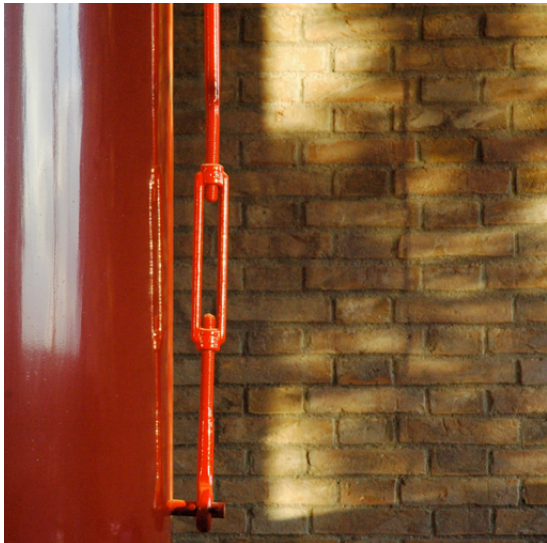


Stair



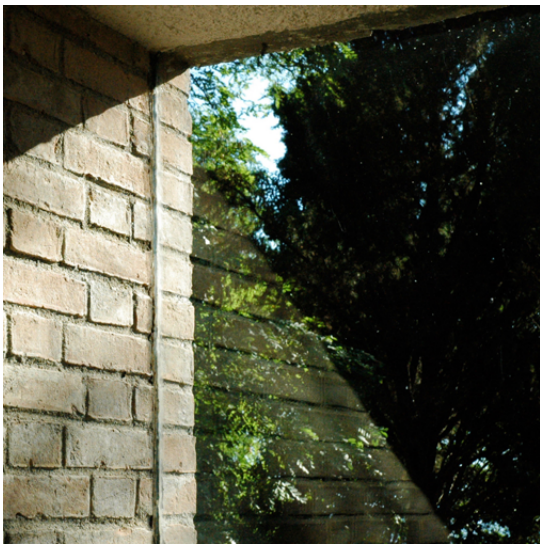
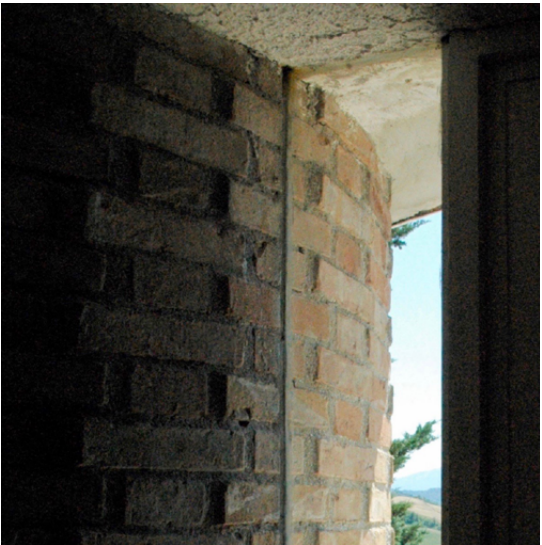


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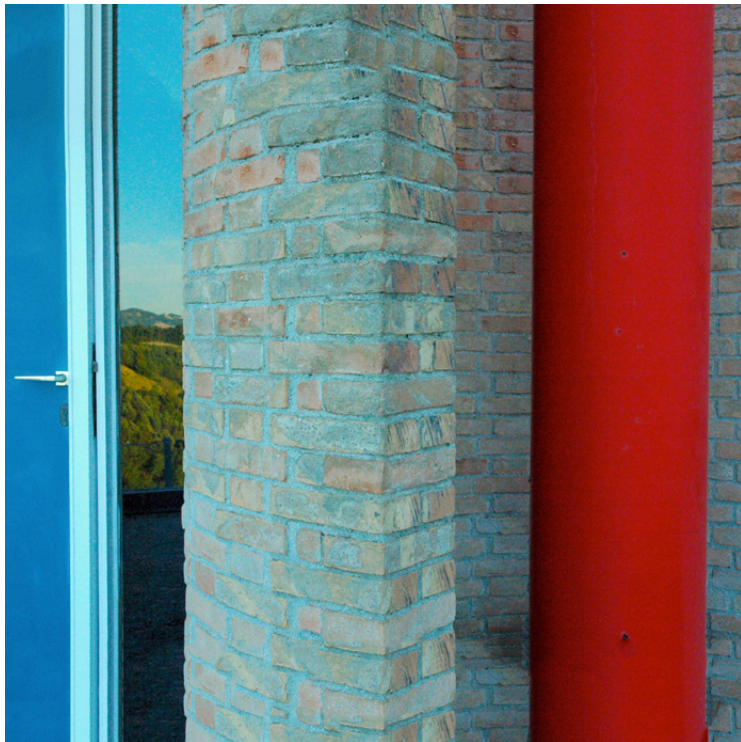
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# A House in the Form of a City. Casa Ceccarelli in Bologna (1962-63)

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*Giancarlo De Carlo; Marcello Ceccarelli; Bologna; Urbino; Private Home*

## /Abstract

The Casa Ceccarelli in Bologna was designed by Giancarlo De Carlo for the astrophysicist and educator Marcello Ceccarelli in 1961-62, a time when the architect was working on the university settlement Collegio del Colle in Urbino, while his patron was completing the Croce del Nord (Northern Cross) --the first Italian radio telescope--in the Po valley. Born as a sort of experiment between two like-minded and unusual intellectuals, this building was, in De Carlo's words, "a flagrant case of a project-process, or in other words, of architecture" but also a laboratory for studying and testing new spatial inventions in a playful way. The author of this essay has lived in the house since he was a boy, experiencing it as a miniature city surrounded by its countryside and populated by numerous friends who were always there.

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Francesco Ceccarelli is Associate Professor of architectural history at the University of Bologna. The focus of his research is the early modern and modern Italian city, from the Renaissance through Neoclassicism. He has written numerous studies on Italian architects active between the fifteenth and the nineteenth centuries, from Leon Battista Alberti to Giovanni Antolini, and curated international exhibitions in architectural history, such as *Une renaissance singuliere. La cour des Este à Ferrare* (Brussels 2003 and Ferrara 2004). He has also organized a section of the Museo per la Storia di Bologna on the historic representations of the city in the early modern period and the "Sala Bologna" in the Vatican. He has also co-edited volumes on Giovan Battista Aleotti, on villas and gardens in Renaissance Ferrara, and on Bolognese art and architecture in the age of Pellegrino and Domenico Tibaldi, as well as contributing significant chapters to Electa's series on the history of Italian architecture. In the last three years he has worked on the figure of the ferrarese architect Biagio Rossetti, on the architectural theories of the scientist Ulisse Aldrovandi and on the hydraulic architecture in Renaissance Italy.

When my father Marcello Ceccarelli decided to build a house for himself and his family in Bologna in 1961, he had just recently moved to the city to teach experimental physics and to “look for something to make us talk about the atoms and the stars”.<sup>1</sup> He was just over thirty years old and had already made a name for himself in the field of elementary particle analysis. He had graduated from the University of Padua, where his experiments with measuring the decay of radioactive potassium had provided one of the world’s first observations on the non-conservation of parity, providing evidence for redefining the age of the universe, at least doubling it. From there he had moved to England and Germany to work closely with two Nobel laureates, Cecil Powell and Werner Heisenberg, and then finally returned to Italy to face new challenges in the field of cosmology. It was precisely at the University of Bologna between 1959 and 1962 that a research group of physicists formed around the figure of my father, the experimental scientist, focusing all their energies on the exploration of the universe through radio astronomy, a field in which they were among the most adventurous pioneers in our country. This gave rise to a project in Medicina, near Bologna, to create a cutting-edge tool for exploring the sky and mapping the universe through radio sources. It was the “Northern Cross”, a transit radio telescope unique in Europe, that would establish itself as a centre of excellence for scientific research worldwide shortly after its activation, when its first surveys confirmed the assumptions regarding the expanding universe formulated in Cambridge by Sir Martin Ryle.<sup>2</sup>

The Northern Cross project, remembered in retrospect as “an immense work, beautiful and full of despair”,<sup>3</sup> absorbed most of Marcello Ceccarelli’s professional and creative energies from 1961 to 1964, the exact years when his new domestic universe was also taking shape—the architectural microcosm of the house that had to reflect his personality as well as meet his private and family needs. These were the years in which observing and listening to the interstellar space came into dialogue with the redefinition of his own, existential one and of the architecture that was needed to represent it. Hence the need to find the most suitable interlocutor who could share in and interpret his quest. Marcello turned to an architect driven by the same experimental energy and endowed with a solid scientific background, equally free and independent in his judgments and able to discuss concrete problems in search of innovative and highly personalized solutions.

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1 For more on Marcello Ceccarelli (1927-84), see *Marcello Ceccarelli. Biografia epistolare di un fisico (1950-1980)*, edited by L. Fabbrichesi Ceccarelli (Bologna: CLUEB, 1994); M. Ceccarelli, *L'avventura di vivere* (Bologna: Pendragon, 2004); M. Hack, *Marcello Ceccarelli: Un esempio difficile da dimenticare e da imitare*, celebratory opening ceremony for the awarding of the Archiginnasio d'Oro in memory of Marcello Ceccarelli, Bologna, 2 February 1984. The quote is taken from M. Ceccarelli, *Qualcosa per farci parlare di atomi e di stelle*, illustrations by C. Leoni (Bologna: Cappelli, 1977).

2 A. Braccesi, “Tra ricordi e documenti. Astronomia e cosmologia a Bologna, 1959-1969”, in *Memorie della società astronomica italiana*, vol. 68: 521-542, and M. Ceccarelli, I. Tricario, “Il grande radiotelescopio italiano”, in *Costruzioni Metalliche*, n. 1 (1965): 86, 94. For more on the architectural design of the radio telescope in Medicina, see F. Ceccarelli, “Cygnus A e le cicogne”, in *d'A-d'Architettura*, no. 30 (2006): 154-161.

3 M. Ceccarelli, *Viaggio provvisorio* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1977), 21.

Giancarlo De Carlo was introduced to Marcello by his brother, Paolo Ceccarelli, who was at the time De Carlo's young student and collaborator. Paolo was able to envision the great potential value of this encounter. De Carlo was always reluctant to accept projects for private clients, except for those few cases where he believed he could establish a sincere creative dialogue on the basis of intellectual and personal affinities. He was certainly not a celebrity architect in search of commissions from wealthy clients. To the contrary, he was increasingly becoming a rigorous, incisive designer driven by ethical values and sensitive to the most authentic principles of civil architecture with public and social aims. In this specific case several factors contributed to the success of the joint venture, some personal and others logistical. For one, both De Carlo and Ceccarelli were atypical intellectuals of exceptional stature in their fields. Also, the project benefited from the geographical position of Bologna, situated halfway between Milan and the building sites where De Carlo was at that time busy with some of his most demanding projects. The reference here is, of course, to Urbino and the drafting of the city's general master plan (which occupied the architect between 1958 and 1964)<sup>4</sup> as well as the design of the complex of university colleges on the Colle dei Cappuccini (1962-64).<sup>5</sup> For De Carlo those years were also distinguished by design experimentation that would turn out to be decisive in his career, shaping his professional destiny and earning him a notable place in the history of architecture of the second half of the twentieth century. It thus comes as no surprise that the design of the Casa Ceccarelli brought together intangible values such as expectations, desires, and memories and the more concrete architectural elements derived from the reworking of volumetric and spatial concepts and detail motifs taken up from that decisive experience in the Marche that he was living through at that time.

Apart from a few brief remarks in the catalogue of De Carlo's works, the Casa Ceccarelli has never been published, let alone studied. The project drawings are still extant, at least for the crucial phases approved by the client and authorised by the municipality, but much of the preliminary correspondence, as well as the original wooden model, have been lost. Sixty years since its construction, the house is still well preserved, thanks mostly to constant maintenance performed over the years, which has so far forestalled the need for significant restoration. Over the decades the many trees in the surrounding garden have also grown, helping to bring the pre-existing agrarian terrain in line with the original intent of the project, which had sought to insert a contemporary architectural structure into the natural landscape with studied views of the historic city and the Po valley, as well as of the surrounding hills of which it is an integral part.

In fact, the house is located in the foothills of the Apennines behind the city, on the western side of the valley of the Ravone stream, along the Via di Casaglia,

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4 G. De Carlo, *Urbino. La storia di una città e il piano della sua evoluzione urbanistica* (Venice: Marsilio: 1966)..

5 Much has been written about the Colle colleges, the first complex of residential buildings for students of the University of Urbino. These include Giancarlo De Carlo. *Le ragioni dell'architettura*, edited by M. Guccione and A. Vittorini (Milan: Electa 2005) 130-133, and L. Mingardi, *Sono geloso di questa città. Giancarlo De Carlo e Urbino* (Macerata: Quodibet, 2018), 59-78.

a couple of kilometres from the Saragozza Gate, in a wooded position from where it is difficult to see other buildings other than for the city skyline to the north. The plans to safeguard the hill, approved by the municipality of Bologna shortly after the construction of the house, have contributed to preserving the surrounding environment, keeping it practically unchanged since the middle of the twentieth century.

The reason for this isolation from the more densely populated areas was due to the need to for a home-observatory, a place from which to study the sky away from the sources of nocturnal light pollution, but without losing sight of the urban context and still continuing to participate in the cultural life of the city, which was actually emphasized in the design. This initial need necessitated an ascending system of stairs and terraces, from the garden to the panoramic studio located at the building's apex, where the scientist, educator and science communicator (Marcello Ceccarelli was one of the most popular Italian science communicators during the 1960s)<sup>6</sup> could immerse himself in his theoretical and literary work, while maintaining a place from which to observe both the celestial vault and the city in the distance. All residential parts and practical functions were to be housed at intermediate levels. The house also had to adapt to the steep inclination of the lot's sloping terrain, compensating for the incline through a system of external and internal staircases that ensured the connection between the different horizontal levels into which the residential core had to be subdivided, and adhering as much as possible to the morphology of the site without intervening with extensive digs and deep substructures.

Starting with the first drawings from November 1961, the overall architectural concept was thus developed around a system of multiple ramps onto which the various living spaces were grafted. These were conceived as interdependent cells on several levels, integrated with each other and open to the outdoor landscape thanks to large windows, terraces, and loggias. The central staircase served to establish order in the internal distribution, creating a balanced division between the more private are (in the upper part of the building) and the common ones (in the lower part and in contact with the garden). Those spaces were further divided through less pronounced differences in levels, through passages and walls, applying the *Raumplan* principles in an unprecedented and refined way to diffuse a system of shared spaces that De Carlo was particularly interested in introducing into his architecture. The materials used were the same as those employed for the colleges of the Colle in Urbino—that is, concrete and bricks (which, however, were laid in header bonds)—and the window frames were painted white, with large windows designed to allow both the sunlight to come in during the day (filtered through the vegetation and mitigated by the oak shutters), and the moonlight at night, which could penetrate deep into the rooms.

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<sup>6</sup> Among his best-known publications are: M. Ceccarelli, *Una betulla per la Pio* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1968), and *Il bambino e la scienza* (with L. Fabbrichesi Ceccarelli) (Bologna: Zanichelli 1981). He also conceived and conducted the television program *Planetario* for RAI 2 in the late 1960s.



In the first versions of the project, designed between November 1961 and April 1962 and very similar to each other, the general layout of the house—as can be seen from the 1:50 scale drawings initialled LM (Luigi Magarelli)<sup>7</sup>—showed a more complex organism than what was later built, where De Carlo proposed to make the most of the available surface, expanding the living area on the eastern slope and creating a system of towers with small spiral staircases starting from the ground and then connecting parts of the interior spaces with the large outdoor terraces overlooking the valley below. The model (whose disappearance from De Carlo’s studio he personally regretted, as he told me himself almost thirty years later)<sup>8</sup> perfectly illustrated the three-dimensional complexity of the whole, which can now be easily reconstructed through digital modelling.

The design of this very rational labyrinthine building consisting of many small living spaces, the garden, and terraces connected to each other through ramps and spiral staircases (as actual towers that echoed the Ducal Palace of Urbino) not only linked to the design principles that the architect was developing in those years, but above all revealed its deeper and radical meaning as a “house in the form of a city”. Inspired by an ideal Montefeltro model,<sup>9</sup> the project was also influenced by other narratives, as well as by the vibrant playfulness and a sense of libertarianism shared by the two men.

The final version agreed to by De Carlo and Ceccarelli reflects this solution, which was presented to and approved by the municipality of Bologna on 21 September 1962. Once the work began, under the direction of the Bolognese engineer Francesco Mazzanti, Ceccarelli came to believe that the building was slightly oversized with respect to the family’s needs and suggested that the volumes be scaled down, especially those to the east, also considered the most critical from a structural point of view given their position exposed to the hidden dangers of the landslide-prone slope. Changes were implemented on the body of the building facing the valley, where two rooms and a part of the lower loggia were removed, and above all the “small towers”, which originally gave visual sense to the whole, were eliminated. The site drawings document this delicate passage and also record the decision to move the garage, initially connected directly to the house and later built in a separate position, as a precaution due to the unstable terrain.

In March 1963 the works were likely at a good point; this date also corresponds to the only letter from Ceccarelli still found in the De Carlo archive. There was a problem related to the construction of the roof, the construction manager wanting to use an extension that protruded more than what had been anticipated. The response from the architect does not survive in the archive, but from

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7 In the Università Iuav di Venezia, Archivio Progetti, fondo Giancarlo De Carlo there are eight 1:50 scale floor plans for Casa Ceccarelli in Bologna, marked by the following progressive numbers in the original order: floor plans (78/1150-78/1153); sections (78/1154, 78/1155); facades (78/1156, 78/1157) dating from a second draft of the project from 24 March 1962 and updated on 9 April 1962.

8 Università Iuav di Venezia, Archivio Progetti, fondo Giancarlo De Carlo. Letter from F. Ceccarelli to G. De Carlo, written in Milan on 10 April 1988.

9 See D. Pisani, “La città come la casa, la casa come la città. Breve storia di un topos”, in *Territorio*, 88 (2019): 157-163.

the perimeter of the current roofs it can be deduced that nothing was changed and the original solution was maintained. In the same letter there is very positive feedback on the last stages of the construction, including the comment that the house “is very elegant and the first to be truly pleased with it are the masons who are building it. The supervisor told me that he even comes to see it on Sundays, ‘as if it were a beautiful woman’”.<sup>10</sup> The building was completed in May of the same year, and the family moved in shortly after the summer.

Next, it was time for the trees. After planting a birch near the entrance to the garden to celebrate the birth the daughter Paolina, countless other species followed, all with tall trunks, planted in generous numbers to solidify the downward slope and to create a small grove, which would spread over time, also extending toward the uncultivated fields nearby. The growth of these trees (cedars and beeches, but also ginkgo bilboa and white poplars) added a rhythm to the seasons of the house and helped soften its presence in the landscape. Today, their tops rise above the roof, shading the outer walls during the hot summer months and providing shelter to many species of birds. The branches intertwine with the walls of the house, revealing its entire organic structure carefully grafted onto the hilly environment. Finally, the greenhouse is situated in a corner of the garden, shifted from the original position where De Carlo had planned it (next to the house, near the kitchen). This small, transparent building is also worth mentioning, not so much for its formal characteristics as for the materials that were used to make it. In fact, the structure consists of the metal from the construction of the radio telescope in Medicina, some of whose evocative fragments were transplanted into the house’s garden to underscore the emotional link between those two places.

De Carlo never had the opportunity to see the house in the following years and his growing commitments kept him from following its developments, at least until 1988, when, after my father’s death, I had the chance to write to him and tell him about my personal experiences of living in the house. The memory of the project moved him greatly, and he declared that it had been “a flagrant case of a project-process, or in other words, of architecture”<sup>11</sup> and regretting that he had lost most of the working materials because of certain iconoclastic choices he had made: “at some point in my life, out of fury with the custom of circulating every sketch ever made in contemporary architecture, I destroyed a good third of my archive. This includes the house in Via di Casaglia, and so I no longer have any drawings or photos”.<sup>12</sup> Fortunately, however, some of the plans have re-emerged, and with them the satisfaction with a job that, almost for fun,

10 Università Luav di Venezia, Archivio Progetti, fondo Giancarlo De Carlo. Letter from F. Ceccarelli to G. De Carlo, written in Bologna in March [1963]: “è molto graziosa e i primi ad essere veramente felici sono i muratori che la costruiscono. Il capo mi ha detto che se la viene a vedere anche la domenica, ‘come se fosse una bella donna.’”.

11 *Ibid.*, Letter from G. De Carlo to F. Ceccarelli, written in Milan on 10 September 1988: “un caso flagrante di progetto-processo o, in altre parole, di architettura”.

12 *Ibid.*, Letter from G. De Carlo to F. Ceccarelli, written in Milan on 10 April 1988: “A un certo punto della mia vita, per furore verso quell’uso di mettere in circolazione ogni schizzo che è dilagato nell’architettura contemporanea, ho distrutto un buon terzo del mio archivio. Nella distruzione è incappata anche la casa di via di Casaglia e perciò non ho più né disegni né foto”.

De Carlo had been very enthusiastic about and found to be successful: "I had designed his/your house with affection because I really liked and admired Marcello and enjoyed your family. The windows had been carefully calculated, and now knowing that you have elaborated on this calculation and have expanded on it with external and internal perspectives [...] has given me the sense (unfortunately rather rare, I have to say) of having done something that turned out well".<sup>13</sup> I was touched to hear that my feelings for those spaces aroused in him "the discovery of a part of myself through the feelings of a person who experienced it",<sup>14</sup> confirming once again, as if it were even necessary, how important participating in the definition of one's own living space was for him. And I also understood why De Carlo, according to a family legend, never wanted any payment for designing our house. He had done it out of fun, friendship, or maybe just for the pleasure of finding out how this story would end.

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13 *Ibid.* "La s/tua casa l'avevo progettata con affetto perché avevo grande simpatia e ammirazione per Marcello e mi piaceva la vostra famiglia. Le finestre erano state accuratamente calcolate e adesso sapere che hai elaborato ulteriormente questo calcolo e hai arricchito di prospettive esterne e interne [...] mi ha dato il senso (assai raro, devo dire, purtroppo) di aver fatto una cosa che è andata a segno".

14 *Ibid.*: "il ritrovamento di una parte di me stesso attraverso i sentimenti di una persona che ne ha fatto esperienza".



1

Fig. 1  
Marcello Ceccarelli



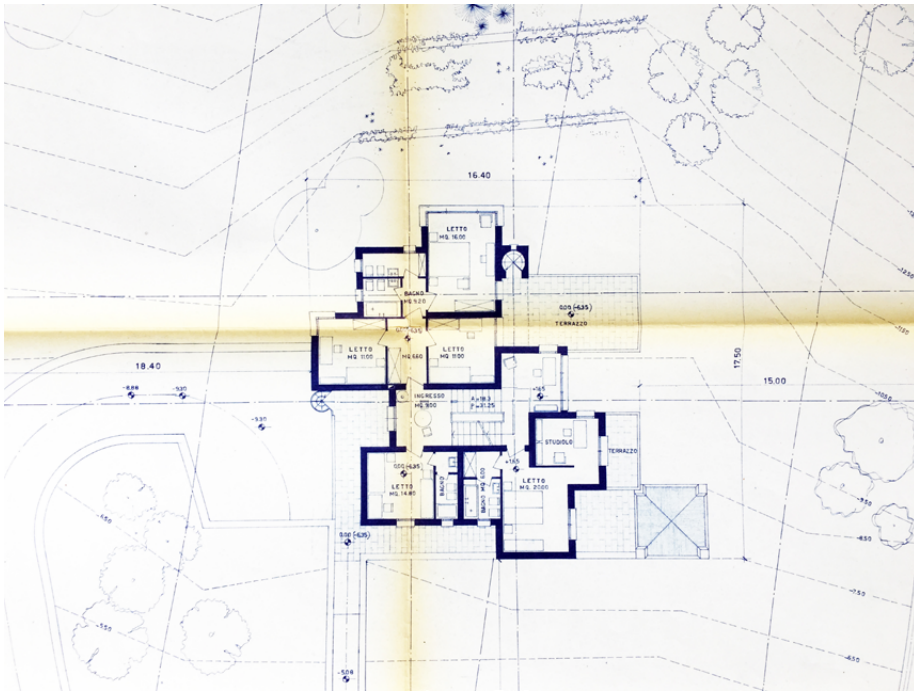
2

Fig. 2  
The Medicina Radio  
telescope (Ph. Paolo Monti)

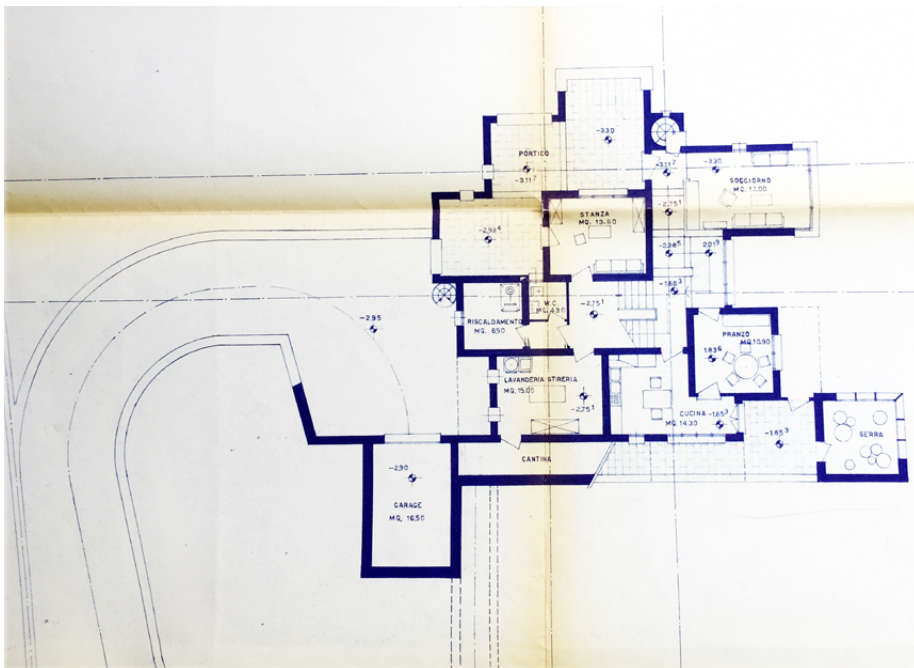




Fig. 3  
Ceccarelli House (1963)



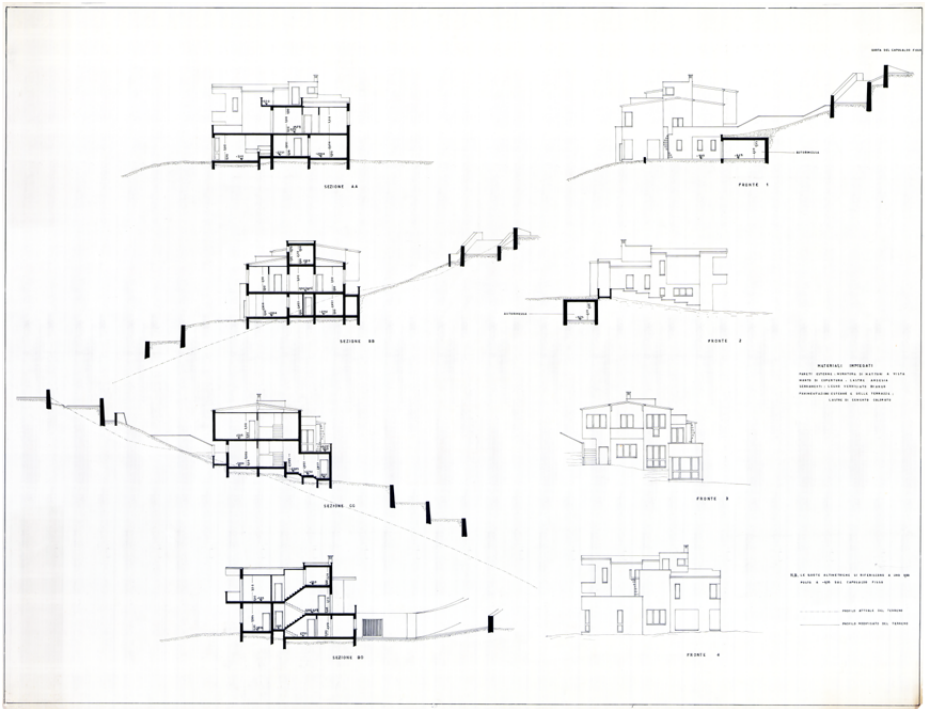
4



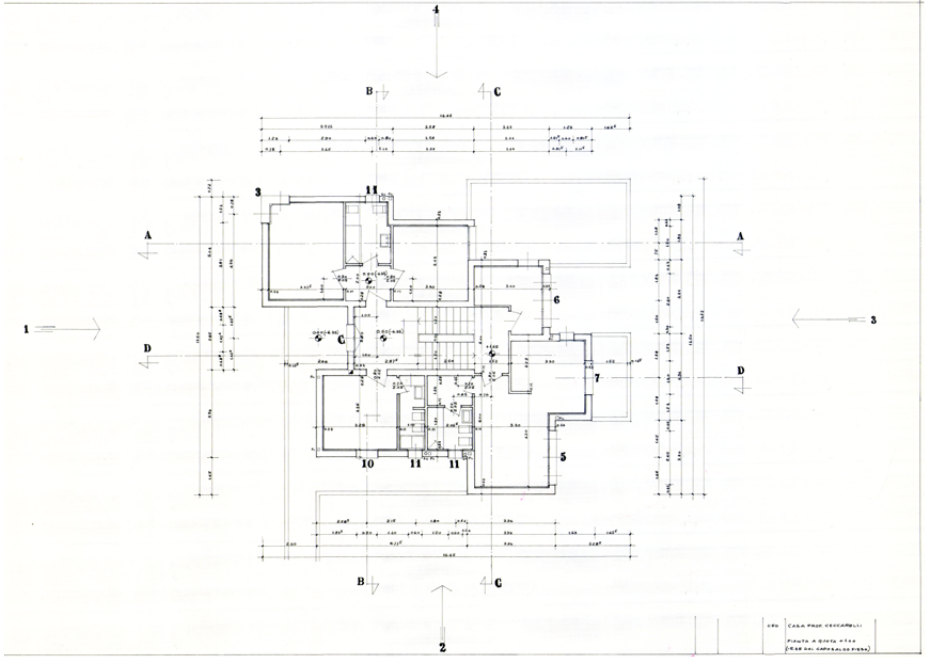
5

Fig. 4  
Ceccarelli House, plans of the lowest levels in the solution of the first project (1961-62)

Fig. 5  
Ceccarelli House, plans of the upper levels in the solution of the first project (1961-62)



6

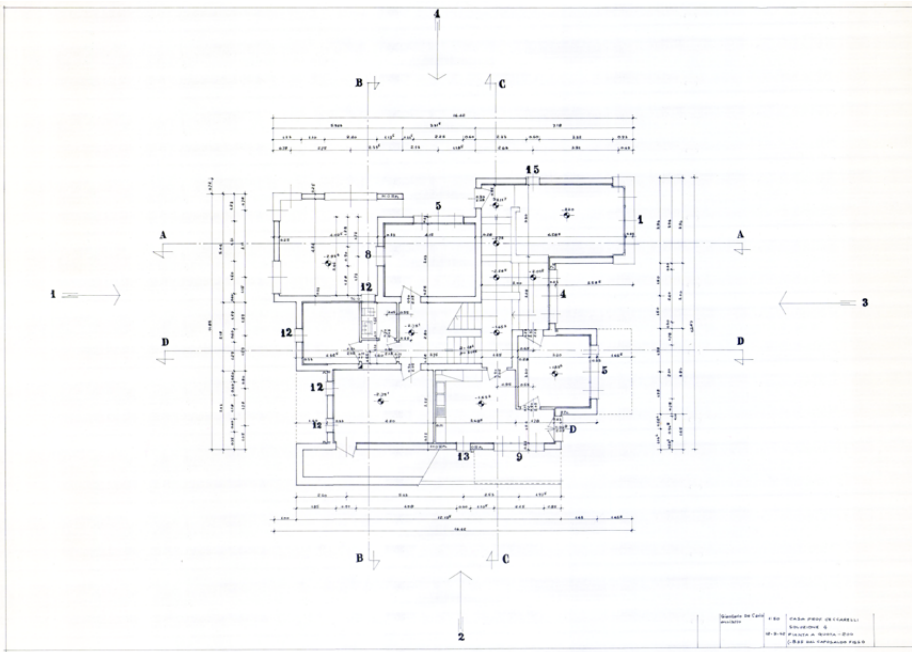


7

Fig. 6  
Ceccarelli House, elevations  
and sections of the definitive  
project (1962)

Fig. 7  
Ceccarelli House, plans of the  
lowest levels of the definitive  
project (1962)





8

Fig. 8  
Ceccarelli House, plans of the  
uppers levels of the definitive  
project (1962)



Fig. 9  
Ceccarelli House (south  
elevation)





Fig. 10  
Ceccarelli House (interior)

# Giancarlo De Carlo's Concept of Architecture – a Powerful and Inclusive Tool for Thinking about Educational Space

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*Giancarlo De Carlo; Architecture; Architect; Education; Schools*

## /Abstract

This paper explores Giancarlo De Carlo's concept of architecture as discussed in his writing and argues that it offers a particularly inclusive way of thinking about educational space. Drawing also on the work of Mieke Bal for whom concepts can act as common languages across disciplines, the paper shows how De Carlo's "architecture" achieves openness through expanding the categories of "designer" and "project" and so might be especially helpful as a common language among architects and educationalists. Illustrating some of the contemporary challenges facing education as well as De Carlo's personal interests in schools and universities, the paper applies the architect's concepts to open up discussion about the future of schooling.

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Adam Wood is an interdisciplinary social scientist researching educational spaces and the future of schooling. He is a Research Fellow at UCL (University College London) where he works in the Centre for Teachers and Teaching Research, part of UCL's Institute of Education. Since 2000, Adam has worked in a variety of educational roles, including as a secondary school teacher in London. In 2013, he began a 3-year ethnographic research project exploring teachers' use of space in a newly designed Academy school in the north of England and has subsequently researched school architecture and school-building programmes in Italy and Australia, and written about changing trends in education and architecture in publications from *Harvard Design Magazine* *Journal of Education Policy*. With his colleague Dr Emma Dyer, Adam edits [architectureandeducation.org](http://architectureandeducation.org) and with Professor Catherine Burke is co-editing an open access book, *Educational Aims and Values through Architecture*, which will reprint Giancarlo De Carlo's provocative 1969 essay on the spatial organization of education, *Why/How to Build School Buildings*.

## Introduction

How can Giancarlo De Carlo's architecture help us think better about education and educational spaces? In this paper I explore this question and suggest that it is De Carlo's ontology of architecture – what architecture is – that makes his work so useful. Through a developed and coherent elaboration of architecture as “the organization and form of physical space”<sup>1</sup>, school users as designers<sup>2</sup> and an extension of what counts as ‘project’,<sup>3</sup> De Carlo draws attention to the politics and potential of building for education. In the process, he provides a powerful set of thinking tools for re-examining the spatial instruments and processes of education, and opening these to richer and more democratic forms of organization.

I am not an architectural historian and offer little in the way of contextualisation vis-à-vis other architects and architectures. Instead, I write from the perspective of the social sciences and with an interest in how concepts of space are defined, mobilised and then put to use in the field of education, particularly schooling. My aim here is to consider the implications of De Carlo's ontology for thinking about space and educational spaces.

“Ontology” is a fancy word and I hesitated about using it for something as ordinary as physical space. Nonetheless, it does seem to be the right word since De Carlo does more than provide a definition of architecture. His writings (and designs) return again and again to the question of what buildings and spaces are, who they are for, why we make them as we do, why we even need them and whether any of these activities are appropriate without a deeper consideration of “what it means to be human in physical space”.<sup>4</sup> One way to approach the definitional and classificatory work De Carlo undertakes to establish this ontology is to borrow from the social theorist Dave Elder-Vass who argues that general ontologies (i.e. descriptions of being, of what is, together with explanations of the properties composing things that exist and the relations between them) can usefully be broken down into regional or domain-specific ontologies and applied “to the needs of particular disciplines or groups of disciplines in combination with the specific empirical knowledge of those disciplines [to] generate domain-specific ontologies. Such domain-specific ontologies... identify the sorts of elements that populate the domain”.<sup>5</sup> Why is such a move important?

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1 Giancarlo De Carlo and Franco Bunčuga *Conversazioni su Architettura e Libertà* (Milano: Elèuthera, 2014), 125.

2 Giancarlo De Carlo, “Why/How to Build School Buildings,” *Harvard Educational Review* 39, no. 4 (1969): 32.

3 See, in particular, Giancarlo De Carlo, “Reflections on the Present State of Architecture - the Inaugural Thomas Cubitt Lecture,” *Architectural Association Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (1978): 36–37. Inverted commas appear in the concept of ‘project’ as well as its temporal extension is called into question.

4 Giancarlo De Carlo and Franco Bunčuga, *Conversazioni su Architettura e Libertà*, 252.

5 Dave Elder-Vass, *The Causal Power of Social Structures: Emergence, Structure and Agency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 68.

The main reason is that “the social world cannot be theorised or explained successfully without paying explicit attention to its ontological foundations”.<sup>6</sup> For the immediate purposes of this paper, knowing about these ontological foundations matters on two levels. First, so that our theory-building (of which design is one manifestation) is coherent. Second, so that we can consider what and how the conceptions we build of the world in- or exclude or otherwise position other “parts” e.g. people or time, for instance, and their relative roles in making architecture happen. It is worth remembering a point often made by the geographer, Doreen Massey: “the way we imagine space has effects”<sup>7</sup>. Effects come about through concepts forming the underpinning background to our decisions, orienting and framing values, helping us to decide what is important in our worldviews, and orienting our action in the world itself.

An architectural-historical precedent supports my approach. Here Federico Bilò’s recent argument regarding the work of Giuseppe Pagano parallels mine since Pagano “proposed extending the perimeter of architecture, so including the rural built environment, and this extension brings important conceptual and practical consequences that need to be examined”.<sup>8</sup> De Carlo too proposed extensions to the perimeter of architecture and, similarly, the conceptual and practical consequences should be explored. This then is the methodological component: we study De Carlo’s approach to architecture acknowledging that it is a way of building the world and, simultaneously, of stating that the world is a certain way.

Once I have explored De Carlo’s ontology in more detail, I look at it from a different perspective using Mieke Bal’s notion of “travelling concepts”. Bal’s is a social, relational take on concepts: “Concepts are the tools of intersubjectivity: they facilitate discussion on the basis of a common language” and as “miniature theories”<sup>9</sup>, they help to show that the way in which De Carlo constructs his “architecture” reveals a particularly open and travelable concept that can increase participation at a discursive level.

Four further sections follow this introduction. In Section 2, I focus on education, exploring current concerns and contemporary research cross-overs from architecture and planning to education (and vice-versa). In the final part of this section I look at De Carlo’s education-specific architectural writing. Section 3 turns to De Carlo’s ontology proper: I explore the definition of architecture, project and a version of “users-as-designers” and how these help to think about architecture and education. In Section 4 I discuss these in relation to education and also return to Bal’s “travelling concepts” and how De Carlo’s way of thinking offers an open and democratic means to critically explore school space. Section 5 is a brief conclusion. The sources

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6 Ibid: 69.

7 Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2005), 4.

8 Federico Bilò, *Le Indagini Etnografiche Di Pagano* (Siracusa: LetteraVentidue, 2019).

9 Mieke Bal, “Working with Concepts,” *European Journal of English Studies* 13, no. 1 (1 April 2009): 18, 19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13825570802708121>.

used range from an early (1947) contribution of De Carlo's on schools and planning in *Domus* to comments on participation written as late as 2002. Less evident perhaps, the universities and schools designed by De Carlo and which I visited in San Miniato (Pisa), Catania, Urbino, Osoppo and Buia, were nevertheless fundamental for the argument put forward here.

## 2. Education

I use this section to briefly explore some of De Carlo's interests in education and show how his thinking fits with contemporary issues facing schools as well as research interests intersecting across architecture, planning and education. However, first it is worth spending a little time exploring some of the immediate demands on and for education.

### 2.1 Contemporary Intersections: Architecture, Planning, Education...

Notwithstanding the very significant local differences and traditions that continue to shape education, it is important to recognise broader trends and the powerful mechanisms shaping them:

Spaces of education in Europe and all over the world are being reshaped by complex transformations. These may be partly related to the dominance of the neo-liberal agenda and to the effects of the financial crisis, and partly to inherent changes either connected to the diffusion of the new technologies of information and communication, or to the repositioning of the nation state and its modernistic education project.<sup>10</sup>

This is certainly a broad overview but I think useful to see the overall educational landscape and the many different kinds of change shaping it. If we want to understand how these transformations interact across scales (and across different kinds of space), it is essential to keep their connections visible and so available for analysis. In practice, this will require understanding *across* domain-specific ontologies of space: knowing what constitutes them, their scales of operation and how we tend to categorise their production e.g. whether we associate them with architecture, planning, forms and tools of international educational governance such as PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), 'Code/Space'<sup>11</sup>, capital and social relations more broadly, or particular assemblages of these. In 'Built Policy'<sup>12</sup>, I outlined one way of doing this by borrowing from Lascoumes and Le Galès' sociology of policy instrumentation.<sup>13</sup>

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10 Paolo Landri and Eszter Neumann, "Mobile Sociologies of Education," *European Educational Research Journal* 13, no. 1 (2014): 1. <https://doi.org/10.2304/eej.2014.13.1.1>.

11 Rob Kitchin and Martin Dodge, *Code/Space: Software and Everyday Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011).

12 Adam Wood, "Built Policy: School-Building and Architecture as Policy Instrument," *Journal of Education Policy* (20 February 2019): 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2019.1578901>.

13 Pierre Lascoumes and Patrick Le Galès, "Understanding Public Policy through Its Instruments - From the Nature of Instruments to the Sociology of Public Policy Instrumentation," *Governance* 20, no. 1 (2007): 1–21. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0491.2007.00342.x>.



But De Carlo – ever fighting against the “idiocy of specialisation”<sup>14</sup> – was *always* clear about the need for a holistic approach to space, advancing the then unfashionable, seemingly unprofessional<sup>15</sup>, view that “...city planning and architecture [are] interdependent scales of the same problem”.<sup>16</sup> I will return to this idea but it is important now because it can help to think about *which* kinds of space we might need to consider and *how* given that we are encountering new kinds of space and physical space is modulated in new ways.<sup>17</sup>

These interacting spaces have real effects in the world, explored here in two brief examples. The so-called ‘vertical schools’ in Australian cities that generate a great deal of press attention are certainly influenced by both architectural and planning interest in densification and the advantages afforded by increasing social infrastructure in inner city areas. But the story is always broader and we need to ensure that connections to what Megan Nethercote sees as part of verticality’s broader allure, namely ‘an emphasis on land ownership for value-creation and rent-extraction’<sup>18</sup> remain visible. The traditional lack of communication across architecture, planning and education means that stories such as these are often dealt with as if an either/or logic applies, i.e. that either educational or planning concerns define the narrative. Similarly, a 2018 Guardian article explored the ‘Death of the school staffroom’<sup>19</sup> in new school designs in England. If this is the case (data are hard to come by), it seems wise to retain an open stance and see this disappearance as *potentially* connected to the financialisation of space *and* reduced school building budgets *and*, as my own research showed, the use of email to deliver information to teachers so making physical space seemingly redundant and more costly relative to email.

These are just two examples but they (and more extensive studies<sup>20</sup>) illustrate the need to see spaces of education broadly: not only as classroom or as buildings, or tools of urban planning, or performance-based, international comparative frameworks of attainment, or parts of policies for developing human capital but to insert “and’s” in place of those “or’s”, to see and think *across* all of these disciplines, fields and scales. They interconnect and the kind of holism De Carlo argued for will be increasingly useful as more forms of space are more tightly imbricated and implicated.

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14 De Carlo, “Reflections on the Present State of Architecture,” 37.

15 Luigi Prestinenza, “Architetti d’Italia. Giancarlo De Carlo, l’isolato,” *Artribune* (4 September 2018). <https://www.artribune.com/progettazione/architettura/2018/09/giancarlo-de-carlo-storie-italia/>

16 De Carlo and Bunčuga, *Conversazioni su Architettura e Libertà*, 104.

17 For example, “software matters because it alters the conditions through which society, space, and time are formed” Kitchin and Dodge, *Code/Space*, 66.

18 Megan Nethercote, “Melbourne’s Vertical Expansion and the Political Economies of High-Rise Residential Development,” *Urban Studies* (31 January 2019). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098018817225>.

19 Nicola Slawson “Death of the School Staffroom – Lack of Space or Divide and Conquer?,” *The Guardian* (13 March 2018). <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/mar/13/school-staffroom-england>.

20 The following is a very developed example of research crossing urban studies and schooling: Pauline Lipman, *The New Political Economy of Urban Education: Neoliberalism, Race, and the Right to the City* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

## 2.2 Renewed Interest in Spatial Questions of Education?

De Carlo's architecture provides an effective means to stir up thinking about space and education at a time when educational aims and governance have narrowed, restricted through the language and medium of numbers as the dominant form of control. Attempts to look forwards and broaden the ways we educate reveal an "evisceration of a progressive imaginary"<sup>21</sup> while looking back, a "repression of public memory takes place"<sup>22</sup> and so we are maneuvered into an artificially restricted present.

Thankfully, some signs of change are beginning to show and re-engagement with De Carlo's work is timely. Within and across disciplines, questions of architecture, space, the urban and education are being asked. Keri Facer and Magdalena Buchczyk, for example, have shown how cities and learning are together helping citizens "adapt to contemporary challenges from economic inequality to sustainability"<sup>23</sup> complementing new forms of learning extending beyond the school<sup>24</sup>. Formal connections between urban planning, buildings and education are weak but developing through, for example, research in Germany exploring education as a "component of the city".<sup>25</sup>

And there are an increasing number of historical examples to draw on that connect to De Carlo and his peers e.g. Federica Doglio's 2018 exploration of Shadrach Woods and Cedric Price's radical forms of spatially continuous education<sup>26</sup> and Selina Komers' 2019 use of De Carlo's writings to investigate how the school might be opened up physically and democratically.<sup>27</sup> At this point it would be worth exploring De Carlo's own educational work in more detail.

## 2.3 De Carlo and Education

De Carlo was intimately involved in education throughout his professional career, designing almost twenty schools and universities. He taught in the CIAM summer school and later his own ILAUD (International Laboratory of Architecture and Urban Design), researched architectural education, taught in a technical

21 Bob Lingard, "Policy as Numbers: Ac/Counting for Educational Research," *The Australian Educational Researcher* 38, no. 4 (1 November 2011): 355. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-011-0041-9>.

22 Henry A. Giroux, *The Violence of Organized Forgetting: Thinking Beyond America's Disimagination Machine* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2014): 30.

23 Keri Facer and Magdalena Buchczyk, "Towards a Research Agenda for the 'Actually Existing' Learning City," *Oxford Review of Education* 45, no. 2 (4 March 2019): 151. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2018.1551990>.

24 Julian Sefton-Green and Ola Erstad, eds., *Learning Beyond the School: International Perspectives on the Schooled Society* (London: Routledge, 2018).

25 Angela Million, Anna Juliane Heinrich and Thomas Coelen, *Education, Space and Urban Planning: Education as a Component of the City* (New York, NY: Springer, 2017).

26 Doglio, Federica. "The School as a City and the City as a School'. Shadrach Woods and Cedric Price: Experiments to Rethink the University," *Territorio*, no. 86 (2018): 7–16. <https://doi.org/10.3280/TR2018-086001>.

27 Selina Komers, "Beyond The 'Walls' Of The School: Opening Up Education", Masters of Philosophy of Education Thesis, UCL Institute of Education, 2019. [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Selina\\_Komers/publication/336678984\\_M\\_A\\_Philosophy\\_of\\_Education\\_Beyond\\_The\\_'Walls'\\_Of\\_The\\_School\\_Opening\\_Up\\_Education/links/5dac77d54585155e27f76634/M-A-Philosophy-of-Education-Beyond-The-Walls-Of-The-School-Opening-Up-Education.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Selina_Komers/publication/336678984_M_A_Philosophy_of_Education_Beyond_The_'Walls'_Of_The_School_Opening_Up_Education/links/5dac77d54585155e27f76634/M-A-Philosophy-of-Education-Beyond-The-Walls-Of-The-School-Opening-Up-Education.pdf).

college after the war and then in tenured in Venice and Genova and as a visiting professor at MIT, Berkeley and elsewhere.

In writing too, the personal and intellectual interest in education is clear. De Carlo saw educational institutions as more than mere outputs of planning processes and as tools in their own right as the following quotation from a 1947 *Domus* special edition on schools indicates: “The school today is no longer a building where we accidentally spend a period of our lives; it is a nucleus around which the life of the whole collectivity orbits”.<sup>28</sup> As is typical of De Carlo, new terms are not dropped in to spice up the text but worked carefully into a larger system of thought. For instance, “nucleus” and “orbit” will reappear, refined, in a 1969 paper on educational and school design for the *Harvard Educational Review*. There, as two key elements in a dynamic movement, the orbit would expand through activities and occasional connections with other physical infrastructure into the urban fabric and working lives, so complementing the specialised and more formal knowledge-based work taking place in a static nucleus. In this way and in conjunction with the city itself, nucleus and orbit might enable education to become “an omnipresent pattern, capable of penetrating everywhere and of being continually penetrated by the happenings of society”.<sup>29</sup> The holistic attention to educational space, activities and the life of the “collectivity” prefigure recent interest in social infrastructure.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, one advantage of infrastructure-as-lens is its ability to escape containment in architecture, planning or other disciplines – a feature that may well have appealed to De Carlo, as we shall see.

These comprehensive interests in education are important to acknowledge – they not only mark out an area of application for De Carlo’s professional life; they are integral to it. Hence, we can think both *about* De Carlo as an educationalist and *with* him, i.e., as a theorist of education by virtue of his work on educational space. His architectural ontology, to which I turn now, is central to this.

### 3. A Particularly Inclusive Architecture

De Carlo offers a particular account of architectural reality, of what architecture *is*. This account is more comprehensive than a one-off definition; it elaborates particular understandings of ‘project’ and ‘designer’, for example, as well as the relations between them. The account is also coherent; its constituent parts and the narrative it provides tie logically together, constituting what can be called, after Elder-Vass (cited earlier), a domain-specific ontology.

Seeing De Carlo’s interests and activities as outcomes of a larger ontological project mitigates the risk of over-emphasising the surface features or particular

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28 Giancarlo De Carlo, “La Scuola e l’Urbanistica,” *Domus*, no. 220 (1947): 17.

29 Giancarlo De Carlo, *Why/How to Build School Buildings*, 27.

30 For a thorough account, see Latham, Alan, and Jack Layton, “Social Infrastructure and the Public Life of Cities: Studying Urban Sociality and Public Spaces”, *Geography Compass* 13, no. 7 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12444>.

methods of his approach and a further, consequent risk of failing to understand how these features relate to the more radical structure underneath. For example, De Carlo was often called on<sup>31</sup> or chose<sup>32</sup> to write about participation and it clearly is important in his practice. However, participation seems really to be a necessary outcome of the ontology he proposes – it flows from how he chooses to define and build “architecture”, that is, as a spatial practice “involved with everybody ... everyone’s involved with its creation, people can’t do anything but be part of its creation.”<sup>33</sup> More concrete examples will help to show why this is so.

I turn now to De Carlo’s recurring (and particularly tight) definition of architecture: “Architecture is – and can’t be anything but – the organization and form of physical space.”<sup>34</sup> I have commented on this definition in relation to people elsewhere and so point the reader there<sup>35</sup> for further detail. The key point for this paper and the significance for education is that *organization* must be seen as continuous with the life of the building and an activity associated with *all* who inhabit and use it. Organizing space cannot be the preserve of architects and planners only but, on the contrary, a fundamental and necessary activity of humans in general.

Following Bilò, such an extension to the perimeters of architecture brings consequences and requires examination. One practical consequence is to extend also the boundaries of the category “designer”; the organisers of physical space produce architecture but clearly not all organisers of space are architects. In his *Why/How to Build School Buildings*, De Carlo makes this explicit: “The most important thing is that structure and form leave the greatest space for future evolution, because the real and most important designer of the school should be the collectivity which uses it.”<sup>36</sup> Note that De Carlo is not merely expanding the category of “designer”, however, but is doing so in a particular way. He moves the designer-as-single individual to designer-as-collectivity. The fiction of isolated authorship is broken. The economic liberal desire for identifiable and so attributable reward for production is rejected. And yet, this does not need to flatten and package up all forms of spatial organization as the same since different types of organization involve different types of resources and skills.

The above statement is part of an interlocking set of propositions. It follows that if organization and form of physical space (architecture, in De Carlo’s ontology) are to be adaptable either in themselves or in the ways in which spaces might be appropriated and their uses re-invented, then organisation cannot be limited to a moment in or discrete period of time (just as “designer” cannot be

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31 Giancarlo De Carlo, “La Progettazione Partecipata” in *Avventure urbane. Progettare la città con gli abitanti*, by Marianella Sclavi, Iolanda Romano, Sergio Guercio, Andrea Pillon, Matteo Robiglio, and Isabelle Toussaint (Milano: Elèuthera, 2002).

32 Giancarlo De Carlo, “An Architecture of Participation,” *Perspecta*, 17 (1980): 74–79. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1567006>.

33 De Carlo and Bunčuga, *Conversazioni su Architettura e Libertà*, 252.

34 *Ibid.*, 125.

35 Adam Wood, “A Useful Definition of Architecture,” *Architecture and Education* (27 November 2018). <https://architectureandeducation.org/2018/11/27/a-useful-definition-of-architecture/>.

36 De Carlo, *Why/How to Build School Buildings*, 32.

limited to an individual, official architect.) And if organisation is ongoing, then the boundaries of “project” also require an extension. In his 1978 lecture to the Royal Institution in London, this is exactly what De Carlo does. In the written version, scare quotes around the term further help to indicate the critical distance he was keen to gain: “it is assumed that the ‘project’ concerns only a specific moment corresponding to a few intermediate states [of the overall building programme. However,] even the moment of use is ‘project’, because it involves changes suggested by critical evaluation.”<sup>37</sup>

I now explore the above points in relation to education more directly.

## 4. Discussion

In discussing the shift in philosophy around the time of Socrates, Foucault introduces us to his concept of problematization, a new orientation towards exploring not whether a particular concept works in its own terms, but the conditions in which those terms come to appear as proper to the concept under examination. He uses the example of truth and how, towards the end of the 5th century BCE, new questions about truth came to be asked. These questions focused not solely on whether a given statement *x* was true or not but on “truth-telling as an activity – who is able to tell the truth, about what, with what consequences, and with what relation to power...”.<sup>38</sup> The ontology De Carlo offers is, I suggest, a similar kind of problematization, in this case of architecture. Specifically, it provides a questioning of the boundaries regarding who is able to produce architecture, when architecture is produced (indeed, questioning if a ‘project’ can be finished), and particularly the relationship between architecture and power. These are concerns fundamental to education too and so how these questions overlap to challenge our thinking about and practices in educational spaces is worth a little investigation.

### 4.1 Centring students and teachers

Once the architectural project has exploded beyond the remit and temporal control of the architect, students and teachers inevitably ‘return’ to a central position in what counts as architecture. This self-organization of space recalls De Carlo’s anarchist interests and concern to limit the ability of some to decide space for others. This has the effect of privileging more immediate social and educational local interests making them more responsive and adaptable in turn. Rather than fix what schools are and make cuts to form boundaries around who has the right to establish such fixes and when, we can perhaps leave such questions as prompts for ongoing engagement.

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<sup>37</sup> De Carlo, *Reflections on the Present State of Architecture*, 36-7.

<sup>38</sup> Michel Foucault, “Conclusion: Discourse & Truth, Problematization of Parrhesia – Six Lectures given by Michel Foucault at the University of California at Berkeley, Oct-Nov. 1983” *Michel Foucault, Info*. (Accessed 5 January 2019). <https://foucault.info/parrhesia/foucault.DT6.conclusion.en/>.



This is also an attempt to return politics (explicitly) to questions of space and education rather than pretend those spheres can be cleansed either by claiming their neutrality or acting as if they can be excluded from political concerns on the grounds of efficiency and/or effectiveness. Such claims are *a/ways* attempts at definition and control, always “battles over the power to label space-time, to impose the meaning to be attributed to a space”<sup>39</sup> and so always political. Far better to acknowledge that and the contestation involved. Indeed, as De Carlo argues in a comment directly about schools, this is a potential site for creativity:

The work of the architect should be limited to the definition of the supporting framework—which is not neutral but full of tensions—on which should be able to develop the most disparate organizational modes and the formal configurations which stimulate the richest disorder.<sup>40</sup>

This ‘richest disorder’ has educational and social potential as I explore now.

#### 4.2 A variegated approach to schooling, of meeting places and the ‘richest disorder’

When reading De Carlo’s writings about architecture and educational spaces, I am reminded of something the Italian educationalist, Lamberto Borghi, wrote. Borghi, like De Carlo, was keen that education should not be over-institutionalized and so crushed by the weight of its own structures. For both, schools inevitably stand for more than learning (understood in a narrow and individualistic sense) and are open, diverse and (diversity-producing) spaces:

School is not only the meeting place of different students and their different cultures but the instrument by which those differences come to be valued with the aim of creating a richer and more articulated society.<sup>41</sup>

The irony of a meeting place is that it is never *one* place, the same. It has to change, to be open and porous in order for people to meet and exchange. However, just as a nucleus without orbit signals stagnancy for De Carlo, so orbit without nucleus indicates a permanent instability. Social worlds require time and care. The labour involved in maintaining such places and relationships cannot be delegated to architecture but requires real human effort. These tensions are real and part of what prevents the congealing of disorder and articulation into homogeneity. This is true across a range of educational timescales, from specific activities to the project of schooling itself. At this scale, school offers a formal (if changing) meeting place and project that can help to provide the opportunities for what the philosopher Elizabeth Anderson describes as the need for “cultivating the ability to cooperate across ... differences” so

39 Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994): 5.

40 De Carlo, *Why/How to Build School Buildings*, 32.

41 Lamberto Borghi, *La città e la scuola*, edited by Goffredo Fofi (Milano: Elèuthera, 2000): 182.

that citizens can “both learn to think for themselves and to think together...”<sup>42</sup> More explicitly and more carefully than in many educational and architectural discussions today, De Carlo indicates how this might happen sensitively but also radically.

### 4.3 The importance of open, travelling concepts.

We are now in a position to complement De Carlo’s ontology with Bal’s travelling concepts. If all concepts offer common ground, some offer more than others. De Carlo’s extensions to the perimeter of architecture (i.e. pushing the temporal boundaries of project and users as designers) expand what is “common”. Involving more people over a greater span of time is one effect of De Carlo’s re-working of architecture and one that can make of architecture a potential meeting place in itself. There is now room for people to join the discussion *and the* (shared) linguistic and conceptual resources for them to do so. If concepts can work “as shorthand theories”<sup>43</sup> then it matters how we construct them, who we include and exclude. This has always been an issue at the heart of education too and it is with De Carlo’s reconfiguration of architecture that we have an acceptably and usefully open place for discussion.

Finally, I note that the elaboration of this concept-shorthand theory-common ground is not intended to be a definitive resting place. It is worked at and worked for, a place that requires change. For Bal, concepts are not “firmly established univocal terms but ... dynamic ... While groping to define, provisionally and partly, what a particular concept may mean, we gain insight into what it can do. It is in the groping that the valuable work lies ... The groping is a collective endeavour”.<sup>44</sup> This way of thinking of concepts coheres with De Carlo’s approach to architecture, I believe: tools (for others) to build other tools with; *processes* that trigger events, problematize or open up, rather than the materialisation of beautiful and/or useful objects.<sup>45</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

Architects, it seems to me, inhabit an unusual position with regards to concepts, material resources and causality. The particular concepts they wield have a greater potential than most people’s to bear causally on the world, to move from the discursive to the concrete, the conceptual to the physical, and the imagined to the real. Of course, this is never a determining power since the real is only ever a ground for new iterations of the imagined. Nonetheless, the question, “how to wield power?” is key. De Carlo shows that to consider that question

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42 Elizabeth Anderson and John White, “Elizabeth Anderson Interviewed by John White,” *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 53, no. 1 (2019): 14. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9752.12336>.

43 Bal, “Working with Concepts,” 19.

44 Ibid., 17.

45 De Carlo and Bunčuga, *Conversazioni su Architettura e Libertà*, 108, 134-5.

honestly and genuinely, what is necessary is not fundamentally the adoption of new methods or processes but ways of thinking what architecture is and who it might include. For people to have the capability to engage with architectural questions, they need both the image of an inclusive concept and the resources to adopt that concept as their own. De Carlo creates that space through a particularly open form of common language.

Our thinking about educational spaces should learn from this approach. Schools and schooling are “project” in De Carlo’s ontology, - ongoing organization - requiring reinvention if they are to reflect to those who inhabit them the collective sign of their achievement and both the right and means to take part in new re-organizations.

#### Acknowledgements

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# Learning from Giancarlo De Carlo: Interview with Benedict Zucchi, by Antonello Alici

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*Anglosaxon sensibility; William Morris and Patrick Geddes; "Simulating slow growth"; Stamina; Commitment*

## /Introduction by Antonello Alici

Giancarlo De Carlo's centennial has the merit of bringing the younger generations of students and researchers closer to the work of an extraordinary interpreter of 20th century architectural culture. An uncomfortable and controversial interpreter who has experienced all the seasons of the second half of the 20th century with tenacity and consistency, opposing every form of architecture distant from the experience and needs of society.

In a panorama of studies that up until now has been lacking, two of the most important monographs on De Carlo, capable of fully grasping his complexity and modernity, are by English authors first of them is Benedict Zucchi who approached De Carlo during his studies at the faculty of architecture in Cambridge, and then further enriched his experience with a professional internship at his Milan office. Almost thirty years later, Zucchi confirms the value of that experience and clarifies De Carlo's affinity with Anglo-Saxon culture, but also the influence that his work continues to exert on British architects. Zucchi was able to exploit that experience in building his own professional career.

The relevance of the example or teaching of Giancarlo De Carlo is also evident in Zucchi's way of conducting the interview, with full lucidity of expression. Retracing the salient highlights of his meeting with De Carlo is a way of allowing us to experience the stages of a journey of discovery of architectural design. Design intended as a discipline, as a slow process of adaptation to situations in continuous evolution and open to dialogue with the needs of its users. This is his precious legacy, left not only to students and young professionals, but also to the "public of architecture", a term very dear to Giancarlo De Carlo.

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Benedict Zucchi studied architecture at the universities of Cambridge and Harvard, writing his degree dissertation on the work of Giancarlo De Carlo. This was subsequently published in 1992 as the first comprehensive English-language monograph of De Carlo's work. After a period in De Carlo's Milan studio, Benedict joined Building Design Partnership (BDP) in 1994.

BDP's culture of user-centred, interdisciplinary design was a welcome compliment to his experience with De Carlo, leading to a rewarding sequence of public sector projects across the education and health sectors.

Benedict became a Principal of BDP in 2005 and is now Head of Architecture with responsibility for the overall strategic direction of BDP's 500-strong architect group.

His work has achieved public recognition through a number of prizes, including Royal Institute of British Architects Awards for St Joseph's Hospital in 2003, Marlowe Academy in 2008 and Alder Hey Children's Hospital in 2016 and the Prime Minister's Better Public Building Award (the highest British accolade for a public project) for the Royal Alexandra Children's Hospital in 2008 and Alder Hey in 2016.

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## Interview

### **1. What expectations do you have for the Centennial of GDC's birth? Why and how is GDC's legacy relevant today for young architects and scholars?**

It seems to me that Giancarlo De Carlo is not as well known today as he deserves to be. His writing, teaching and designs mark him out as one of the most significant postwar architects, whose contribution is as relevant today as it was fifty years ago when he published 'An architecture of participation'. This manifesto, in particular, still resonates very strongly because it is essentially a call for a more sustainable approach to architecture, based on a thorough engagement with people and place. This is the only credible antidote to the 'anywhere architecture' that continues to plague the planet with its anonymous formulaic forms, generating equally anonymous urban monocultures. It is obviously too much to hope that this year's centennial can turn things around but I do believe that the debates and encounters it stimulates can make an important contribution to refocusing attention, particularly that of the younger generation, on how architects can make a real difference and respond to the most pressing issues of today like climate change.

### **2. You have suggested that GDC had an Anglosaxon sensibility, and an Anglosaxon quality of 'plain speaking'. Can you explain this?**

I would say that not only aspects of De Carlo's intellectual outlook were Anglo-Saxon but also something in his manner, which by Italian standards was rather reserved. This did not diminish his capacity to convey his views, and very forcefully when required, but it meant that he chose his words carefully and never spoke for speaking's sake. Whilst always supremely able to make a strong case for what he believed in, whether in writing or face to face, he was wary of rhetorical language and verbosity which I think he associated with obfuscation and muddled thinking.

This is what I mean by his Anglo-Saxon quality of 'plain-speaking'; not hiding behind techno-speak, the privileged discourse and codes of a professional elite, but always seeking to explain his ideas and engage with people through clear prose and drawings.

I once read Lucio Costa's description of the genesis of his competition-winning concept for Brasilia, which seems to me to represent the absolute opposite of De Carlo's approach. Costa said that his design for the new Brazilian capital emerged as an act of pure (perhaps divine) inspiration, untainted by any meaningful engagement with the complex realities of the site or brief. This was a 'take it or leave it' top-down architecture, resistant to any form of challenge

or adaptation through dialogue and design development. De Carlo's commitment, on the other hand, was always to a bottom-up approach, what today we might call an evidence-based architecture.

Perhaps it was De Carlo's initial training as an engineer that drew him to this empirical way of designing; or his international upbringing. Whatever its source, his natural affinity with Anglo-Saxon lines of thought, for example the 'enlightened pragmatism' of the American school, marked De Carlo out from most Italian architects of his generation, who were in thrall to the neo-Rationalism of the 'Tendenza' with its canon of Platonic forms and pure, eerily empty urban spaces. Hence De Carlo's opposition to all forms of 'style', whether the International modernism of the immediate postwar years or the Postmodernism of the 1980s, both examples of what he termed 'architecture for architecture's sake'.

### **3. Are the lessons of William Morris and Patrick Geddes still relevant today? What are their messages for contemporary society?**

Geddes and Morris were very different kinds of thinkers, operating at very different scales, but united by a common sense of social purpose and a desire to 'get things done'. Morris had the courage to challenge the technologically driven zeitgeist of the industrial revolution and posit a very different vision, which reintroduced human scale and what today might be called a sense of 'localism' in the face of the prevailing tide of mass-production and globalism.

Again, perhaps because De Carlo was an engineer, he was not sentimental about science or inclined to an uncritical endorsement of technological progress, whatever the cost in social or ecological terms. This was evident in his Royal Gold Medal speech in 1993 when he spoke of unleashing the real creative potential of technology rather than fetishising it as a 'high-tech style'. The key thing for him, as for Geddes, was to harness science and systematic analysis and invention for the benefit of society. I think that Geddes, Morris and De Carlo all had an instinctive feeling for the qualities of place and design that we associate with enduring and distinctive local cultures; qualities that nowadays we would say are fundamental to 'social value' and a place's longterm sustainability. These include, amongst other things, its climate, topography, flora, urban morphology, craft-base and social structure. These local values would inevitably be overlaid in time by specific strands of artistic or architectural culture, locally or internationally derived, but to De Carlo this was a secondary consideration.

I remember asking him once where his formal inspiration came from; how he came to adopt a particular architectural language, for example the stark Brutalist forms of the Urbino colleges. As I recall, the essence of his answer was that architects would always feed off each other's work (as he did from Le Corbusier and Aalto or Morris, Wright and Geddes) but the key was not to let considerations of style eclipse substance. When De Carlo referred to a

'multiplicity of languages' in architecture I think he was alluding to the idea that a strong concept can be expressed in many different ways (just as different languages offer different words and sentence structures) but its underlying meaning and relevance to the context is what really matters. Geddes' Outlook Tower in Edinburgh was a way of encouraging people to engage with their context and take time to understand its 'DNA', what De Carlo called 'reading the city'. This approach underpinned De Carlo's International Laboratory of Architecture and Urban Design (ILAUD), the 'summer school' which for many years immersed a diverse team of academics, students and practising architects in the historic contexts of Urbino, Siena and Venice.

#### **4. What was your experience studying GDC's work and then working with him?**

My first encounter with De Carlo was an interview he gave to the Architectural Review in 1979 about his work in Urbino. I was enthralled by the way he described the historic setting and the almost fairytale story of how he discovered Francesco di Giorgio's spiral ramp whilst restoring the municipal theatre and then brought it back to life, not as the private domain of the prince riding up to his palace on horseback as originally designed, but as a new route within the city open to all.

Intrigued by what I had read, my next encounter was in the early 1980s when I went to Urbino to research my degree dissertation on his work. I remember walking towards the Magistero down the steeply descending spine of the old city, marvelling at Urbino's beauty and coherence and the ways in which man-made and natural were so delicately intertwined. And then spotting a small unprepossessing door in the side of a building that gave absolutely nothing away (apart from a sign saying Magistero). Crossing this modest threshold, I found myself in a quite different realm; a sequence of spaces of unexpected scale and variety, first compressing one's field of view and then opening it up to the light and sweeping panorama of the great concave skylight over the main lecture theatres. I remain fascinated by the quality of this space both internally and externally. Apart from being very ingenious in its versatility (with multiple lecture theatres capable of being used independently or in alternative combinations), it heightens one's experience of the place in surprising ways, hovering as it does between new and old, inside and outside, man-made and natural, light and dark... From the outside it is the only visible sign that a modern intervention has taken place but, whilst uncompromisingly new and of its time, it somehow fits in perfectly as if it had always been there.

I finally met De Carlo in 1987 when I interviewed him for my dissertation. In response to my wide-ranging questions about his work he spoke engagingly without interruption or repetition for well over an hour. The clarity of



thought, which had already struck me in his writings, came across forcefully in conversation as did his subtlety of expression. The range of topics touched on was amazingly broad, from the fortifications of Francesco di Giorgio to De Carlo's conversations with Robert Venturi or his time at CIAM Otterlo when the future members of Team X first started to coalesce in opposition to the International Style.

In 1991, after completing the manuscript of my book on his work (published in 1992), I went to work in his Milan studio. Having by then finished my university studies, I was straining at the leash to give tangible architectural form to the project I was set, a part of De Carlo's update to his earlier local development plan for Urbino. The specific task was to prepare guidelines for a series of small satellite villages connected to Urbino by a disused railway, which he proposed to reinstate as part of a plan to redirect population growth away from the historic centre. De Carlo resisted my repeated 'leaps to form' (with signs of increasing frustration) until I finally understood the essence of the task, which was not to produce a finite formal solution on day one but to identify a set of principles, drawn from the context and the brief, capable of supporting a variety of different (short and longer term) outcomes. Again, substance over style; clarity of structure before detail. And discipline! De Carlo could not abide sloppy thinking or its physical expression: untidiness. I recall arriving at the studio first thing one morning to discover small felt tip notes in De Carlo's crisp distinctive writing on some of the drawing boards, including mine, telling us to tidy up!

## **5. Can you suggest a less studied and less appreciated work or project by GDC worth to be revisited today?**

Without wishing to dodge the question (which I think expects me to name a lesser-known building), I would say that for me the works most worth revisiting are some of De Carlo's classic texts from the 1960s and 70s; I'm thinking in particular of 'Order Institution Education Disorder', 'Architecture's Public' and 'An Architecture of Participation'. All three remain remarkably relevant today and yet are probably largely unknown to the younger generation of architects.

The first text might be said to anticipate the disruptive influence of the internet and the demise of traditional conceptions of education and their architectural counterparts: fixed buildings in segregated academic silos. The second begins with the startling assertion that "architecture is too important by now to be left to architects" because architects' fixation on 'How' (technology and style) rather than 'Why' (the overarching social purpose which was modernism's original driving force) can only be cured by breaking out of academic silos and professional jargon and engaging with people in tackling the multi-faceted challenges of their physical environment. In the third text De Carlo's systematic attack on the International Style prefigures the key tenets of today's sustainability agenda.

Never was there a clearer analysis of the origins of modern architecture's failings, most obviously the way in which it "lost contact with - and even knowledge of - the context in which it wanted to act". The International Style had, he argued, misappropriated the laudable aims of the early modern movement (its social conscience and commitment to man's fundamental environmental rights of *lumiere*, *espace*, *verdure*) and converted them into a dogmatic and over-simplified series of stylistic prescriptions, focusing yet again on the 'how' rather than the 'why'. Hence the origins of the 'cookie-cutter' anywhere-architecture that has become so ubiquitous all around the globe, forms that can be replicated easily without the investment of time required for a more contextually sensitive approach. To this mechanistic, formulaic architecture, which he referred to as the "cool neutrality of techniques", De Carlo associated a contrasting but related phenomenon, what he termed the "hot arrogance of art". In his view, both approaches, the technological and what is now commonly termed 'starchitecture', represented nothing less than a dereliction of duty by architects, whose real commitment should be to the people who use and inhabit their buildings and neighbourhoods - something which can only happen through participation of the users in the shaping of their environment.

In his Royal Gold Medal address De Carlo reaffirmed this view when he said that "the time for vanity and arrogance in architecture is over; architecture is about to resume its responsibilities towards human beings, societies, the physical environment, nature"; a plea for sustainability many years before the term became commonplace and one that recognises that designing sustainably means, above all, creating successful places. As Jan Gehl, the Danish urbanist once said: "Life, spaces and buildings - and in that order please!"

## **6. Can you suggest a correct approach to architecture today from your own experience?**

In my view good architecture springs from the imaginative choreography of three influences: people (not just our clients but the people who use and experience our buildings and spaces); place (the project context in its widest sense, physical as well as cultural and environmental); and process (the way the project's conception, design evolution and implementation are orchestrated effectively and inclusively).

To bring all three together requires great agility, stamina and vision as well as the support of great clients. This last point should not be underestimated. Just like a film director or screenwriter is nothing without a producer and a team of people to assist in the creation of their films, an architect would be consigned to abstract theorising without the opportunities clients bring to implement their ideas. De Carlo's lifelong relationship with Carlo Bo, the head of Urbino University, is a perfect example. It underpinned De Carlo's relationship with

the city for over fifty years and undoubtedly contributed to the originality of approach that he was able to bring to successive projects there. In today's fast-paced world it seems all the more important to me to take time to establish a rapport with clients, users and the project context. These are key to the kind of rootedness that is for me the essential antidote to 'fast-architecture', the ubiquitous forms of a debased international modernism that I mentioned earlier.

I think this is what De Carlo was alluding to when he spoke of the importance in his work of 'simulating slow growth'. In my larger projects I find it very useful to think of them as small cities. It helps to break down the scale into smaller elements: a series of 'buildings within the building' which can be articulated around internal streets and squares, spaces for movement and social interaction that feel like they are outside. The city analogy is not only useful because it resonates instinctively with people and helps them to move around large complexes intuitively (by reference to memorable crossroads, landmarks or vistas) but also because it allows conceptual room for the different 'buildings' to evolve (grow slowly) with a degree of independence from one another. If participation is to be taken seriously, the flexibility this brings is crucial. For example, in the case of a large faculty building, hospital or residential neighbourhood, it allows design conversations with different stakeholders (whether academics, students, medical staff or residents) to evolve in parallel without paralysing progress of the overall vision. The design of each departmental cluster can then respond to the creative inputs of its users and continue to be fine-tuned, just like buildings may change over time within the overall framework of an urban structure. This flexibility is very important during the extended periods of design development (typically several years in the case of large hospitals for example), ensuring that the design that is finally executed is not already out of date on completion. But equally important is the flexibility this brings for future change, allowing the architecture to be adapted (and improved) incrementally, just like a town when cherished and nurtured morphs over time without losing its underlying spirit of place.

I mentioned stamina earlier, which is the natural companion of the other quality architects need to display: commitment. Both are qualities that De Carlo exemplified. His commitment to the places he worked in was absolute. And through that commitment one is able to build up a relationship of trust with client teams and others connected with (or affected by) the projects, including the many people involved in implementing them. De Carlo used to say that he got real pleasure and creative stimulus from discussing details on site with builders and adapting the design to incorporate their contribution. This is another manifestation of the flexibility I spoke of earlier. It is not feasible if the architecture is preconceived and rigid in its prescriptions (in other words a 'style') but, if the architecture is the product of the kind of process I have been advocating, the result I believe will always be richer, more nuanced and ultimately more enduring.





| 1

Fig. 1  
GDC, Lesbo, 1972  
credits Anna De Carlo,  
private collection



2 |

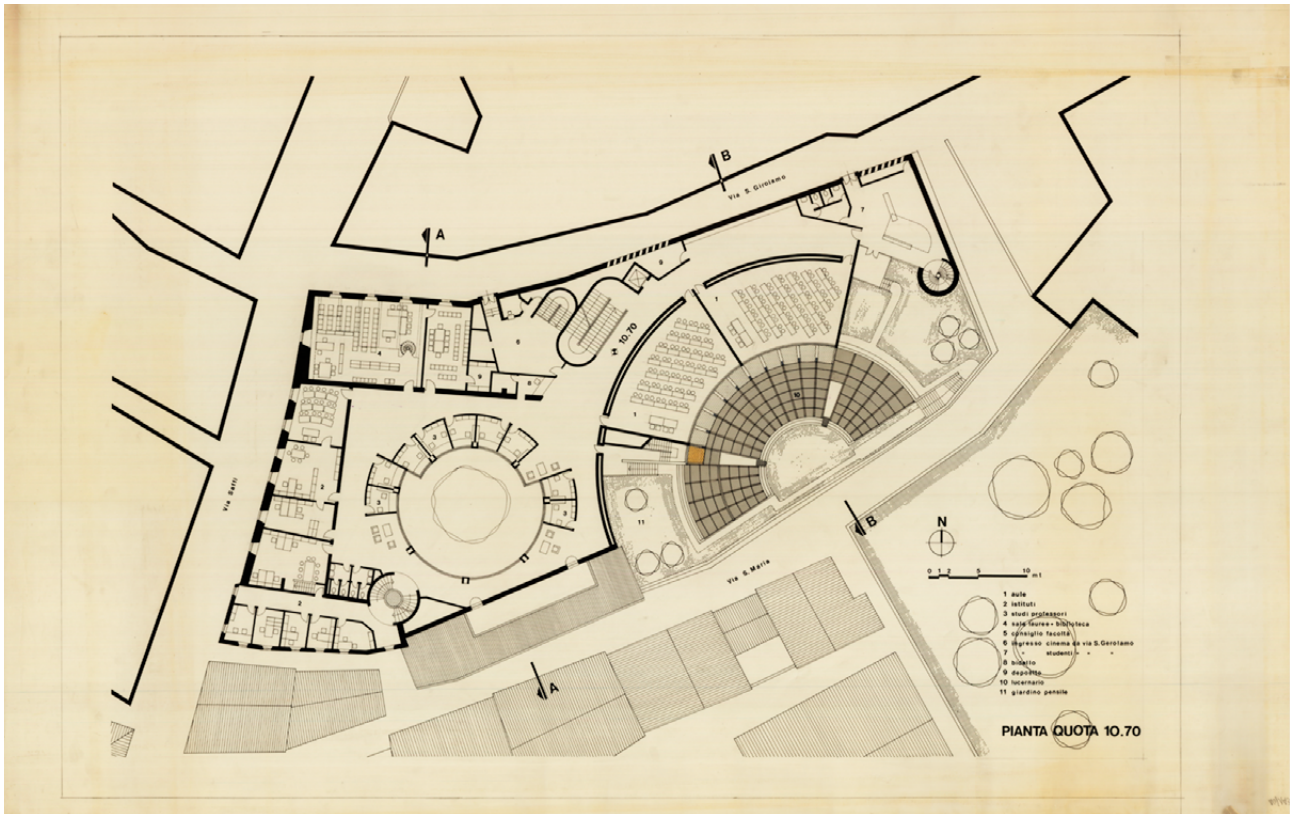


3 |

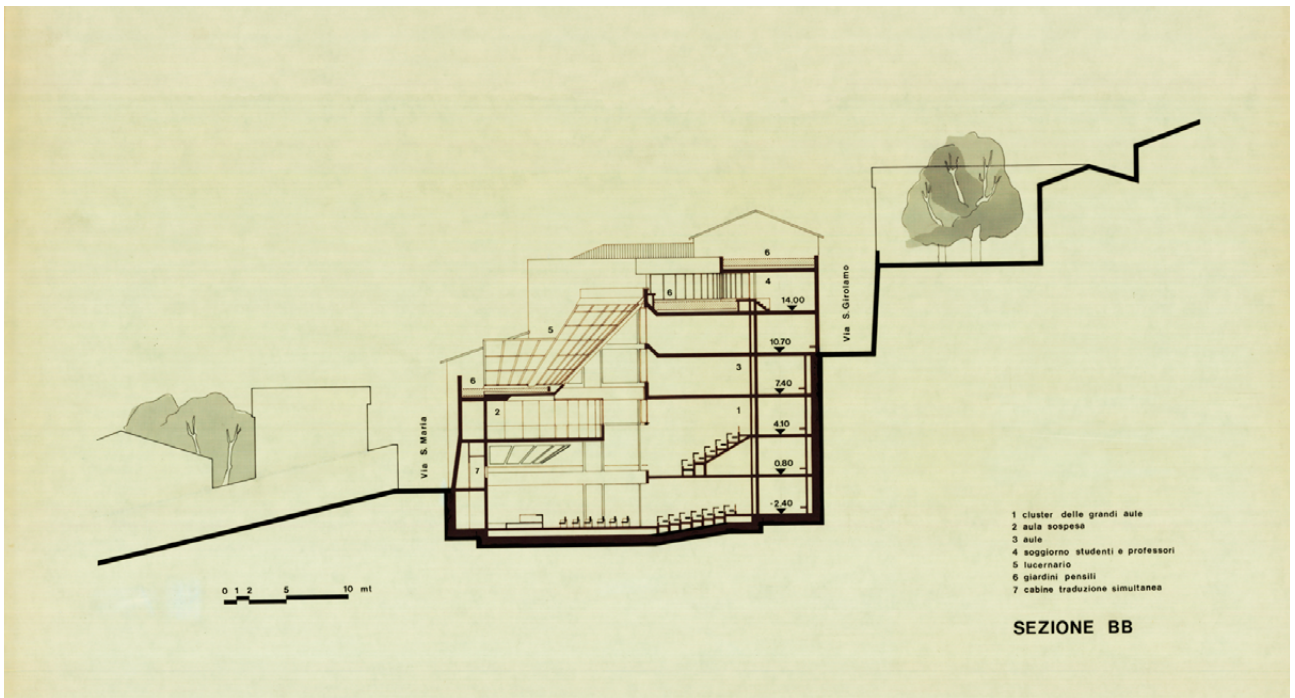
Fig. 2  
Urbino, aerial view, from *Urbino. La storia di una città e il piano della sua evoluzione urbanistica*, 1966

Fig. 3  
Urbino, Magistero Faculty, model, credits Università Iuav di Venezia, Archivio Progetti, fondo Giancarlo De Carlo





4



5

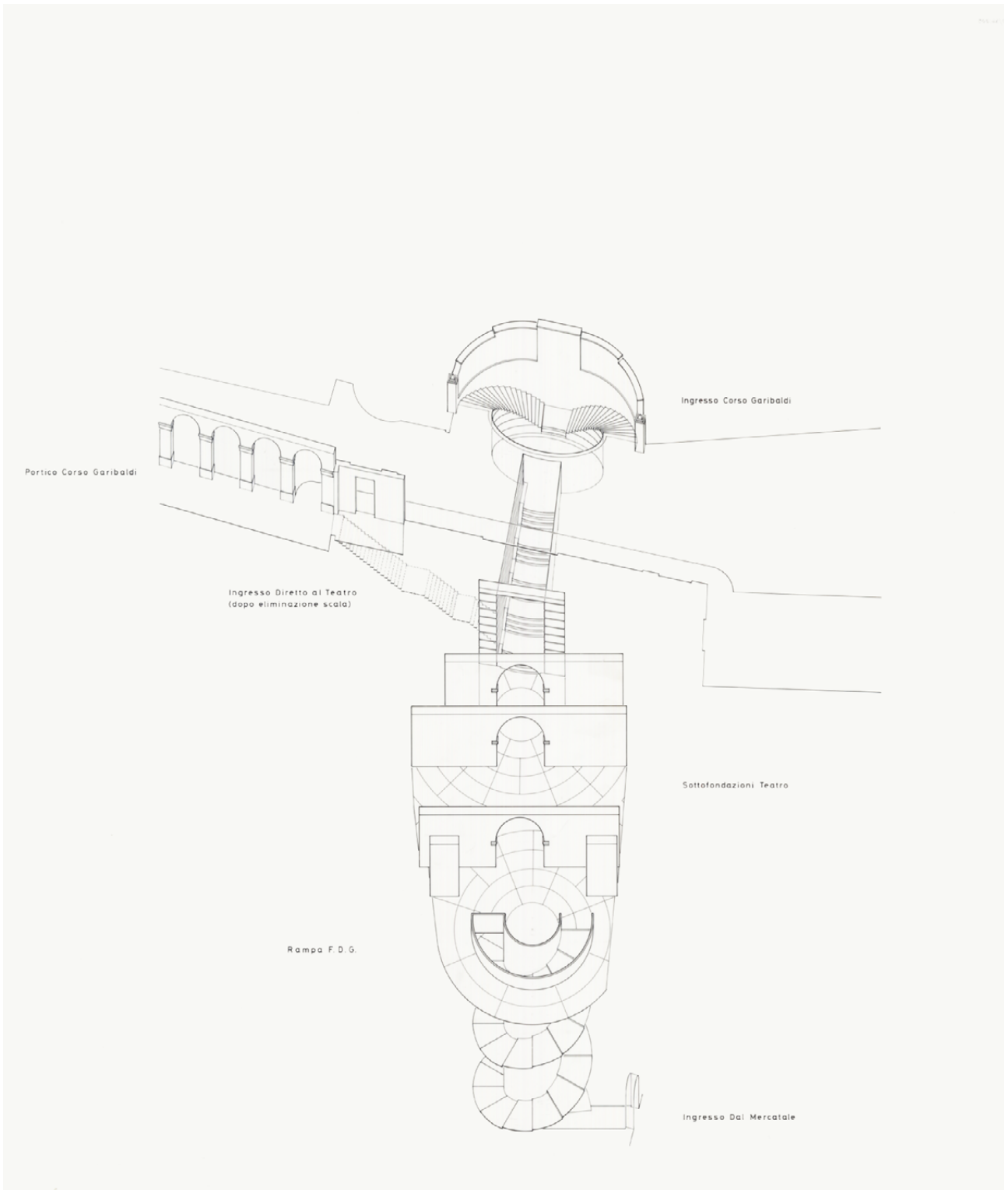
Fig. 4  
Magistero Faculty, Urbino,  
credits Università Iuav di  
Venezia, Archivio Progetti,  
fondo Giancarlo De Carlo

Fig. 5  
Magistero Faculty, Urbino,  
credits Università Iuav di  
Venezia, Archivio Progetti,  
fondo Giancarlo De Carlo



Fig. 6  
Aula Magna, Magistero Faculty,  
Urbino, credits Università Iuav  
di Venezia, Archivio Progetti,  
fondo Giorgio Casali





7

Fig. 7  
 The reopening of the Ramp by Francesco di Giorgio Martini connecting Mercatale with the Ducal Palace, Urbino credits Università luav di Venezia, Archivio Progetti, fondo Giancarlo De Carlo

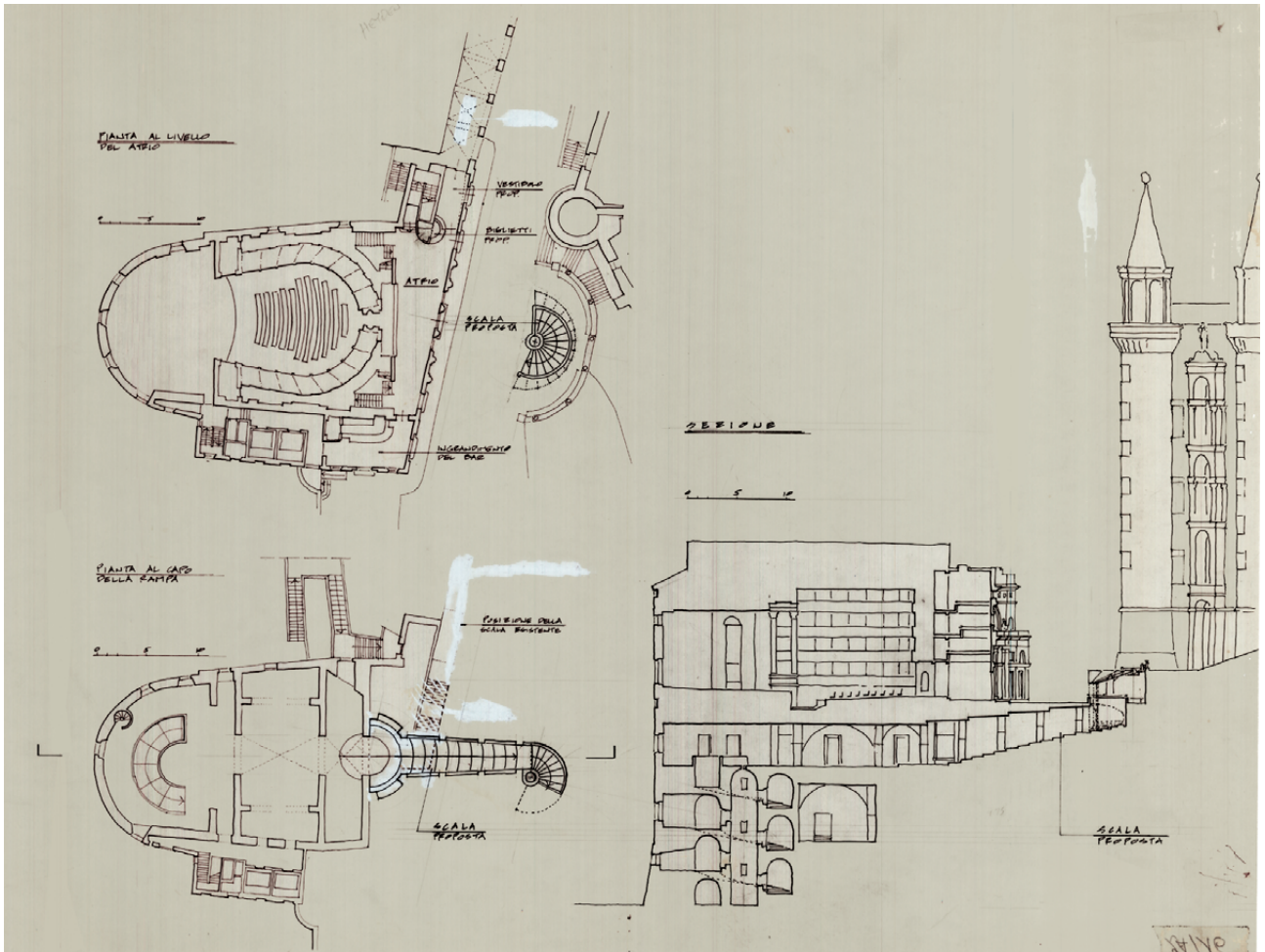


Fig. 8  
 Operazione Mercatale, Urbino  
 credits Università luav di  
 Venezia, Archivio Progetti,  
 fondo Giancarlo De Carlo

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

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

## /Abstract

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

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## Introduction: The inhabited wall of Palazzo Ducale in Urbino.

Urbino is surrounded by a drastic topography which makes the landscape of the Marche and the river Metauro as perimeter protagonists. Location, orography and geography build an organic dialogue of architecture with the landscape. Landscape is the protagonist in the work of the architect of the Italian Renaissance *Quattrocento*, Francesco di Giorgio Martini (1439 - 1502 Siena), who was the career “travelling companion” and inspiration<sup>1</sup> of Giancarlo De Carlo (Genoa 1919 - Milan 2005), according to the Genoese architect who expressed:

“During my long activity in architecture, I have often had to deal with Francesco di Giorgio. Perhaps he is the architect who has had the most influence - I would rather say: he has exerted the most stimulus - on my way of designing<sup>2</sup>”.

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

(...) The Treatise, which I read and reread especially when I needed to run in some of my harsh and rigid hypotheses, I find it one of the most interesting books on architecture: the only one that proposes a synergistic goal to the conception of built space and the only one that, through the concatenated search for models that take on meaning when they are deformed to adhere to circumstances, makes it clear what the “concinntas” of which Alberti mysteriously said is<sup>3</sup>.

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

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

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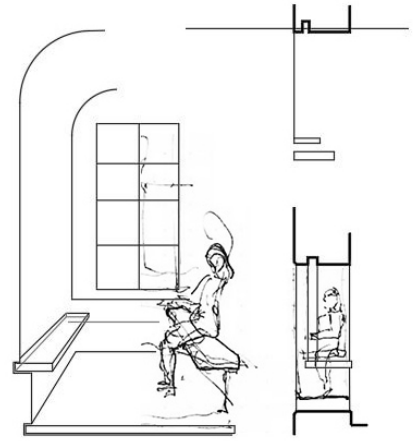
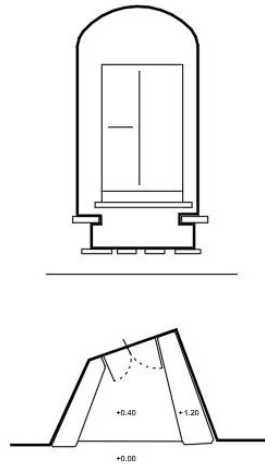
1 GDC, “Gli spiriti del Palazzo Ducale,” in *Gli spiriti dell'architettura*, ed. L. Sichirollo (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1992), 341.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

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

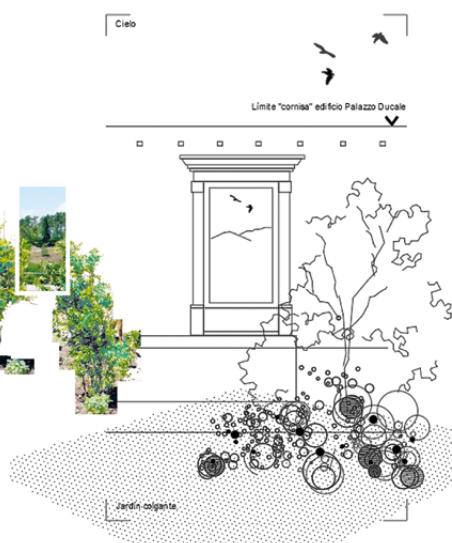
5 Ibid., 348.



1

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

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



2 |

Fig. 1

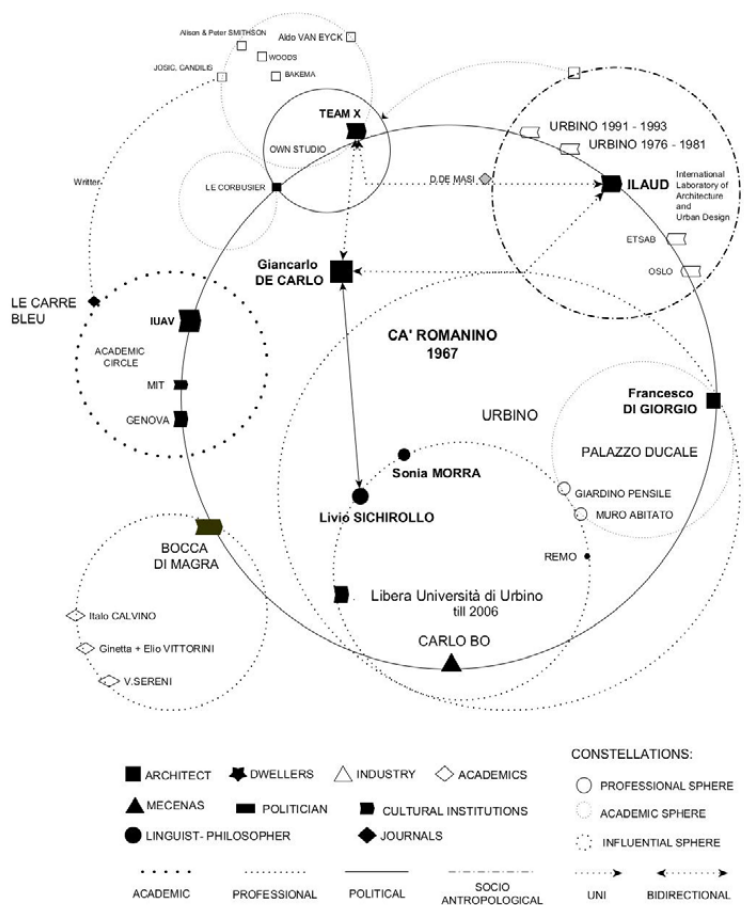
Section through “*Giardino Pensile*” and its empty and full wall in the Palazzo Ducale of Urbino. Source: Drawing by the author from a visit to Urbino.

Fig. 2

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

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

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



3

### Ca' Romanino and its tectonics.

Ca' Romanino<sup>7</sup> (from "Romanin la cima"<sup>8</sup> or Casa Sichirollo), is located between Castello di Cavallino and Urbino itself (figure 4 and 5). It was designed by the architect Giancarlo De Carlo for his friends Livio Sichirollo<sup>9</sup> and Sonia Morra. The house, an ode to the landscape of the vineyards of Urbino, was completed in the time frame of 1967-1968 when the Nuovo Villaggio Matteotti in Terni<sup>10</sup> was in the process of construction under an innovative and pioneering participatory process. [Fig. 3]

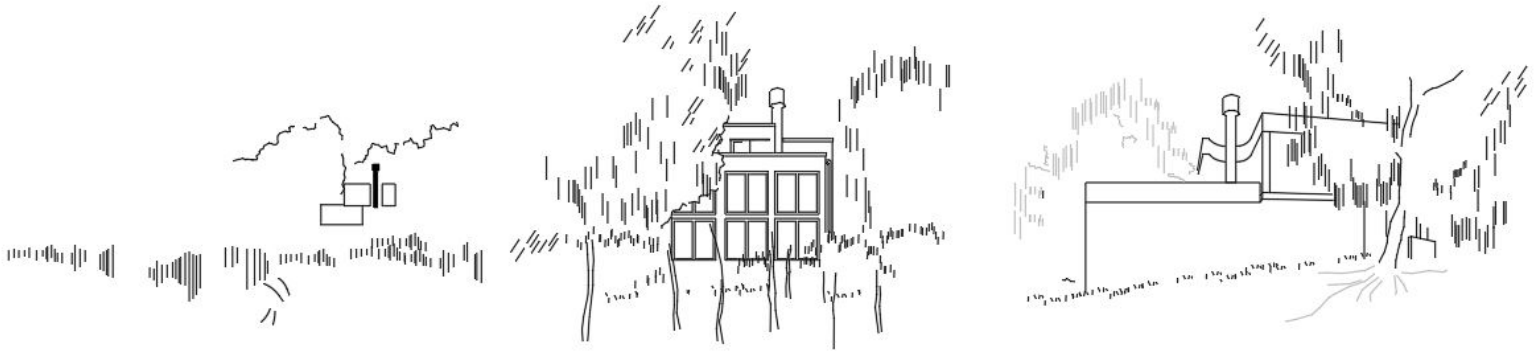
7 A work in which the "clients" (in this case friends) decide to give absolute freedom to design. In this case the participation is transferred in its entirety to the architect, with the only final requirement of a kitchen at the request of Mrs. Morra. This request will allow a greater final expression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

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

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

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

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



**“Verde que te quiero verde”<sup>11</sup>.**

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

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

Among the countless elements or devices (figure 7 and 9) are the chimney<sup>12</sup>, the debate space, the garden terrace, the street in the sky, the boat stairs, the circular “democratic studiolo”<sup>13</sup> with round table<sup>14</sup>, the skylights of dreams<sup>15</sup>, the hiding places behind him, the house in the tree inside the house, the landscape

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

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

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

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

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

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



inside<sup>16</sup>, around and outside Ca' Romanino. Figure 7 represents the hypothesis of a kinetical idea behind Ca Romanino. The interest of De Carlo towards cinema is clear from its collaboration in the short films realized for the X Triennale di Milano in 1954.

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

### **“Platonic state”: The square and the circle.**

The research of a method and not of a form is the rigour with which, as Manfredo Tafuri<sup>18</sup> manifests, one could restore credibility in the discipline together with the tectonic elegance of the *Facoltà di Legge* of Urbino or the residence of students. In that method, the square plan as a spontaneous matrix is based on a constant module of 90x90cm<sup>19</sup>. Ca' Romanino is a sum of a previous structure and a new input respecting the existing nature, trees and landscape (figure 5). It is an interconnected and articulated labyrinth always focused on the landscape of Urbino. Its multiplicity of levels in the manner of “Raumplan loosiano” is isolated and integrated into the topography. There are more than six levels in the space, not built by plants through connections and visuals. Ca' Romanino has a multiplicity of accesses and voices. It allows a wide range of tentative scenarios. The user has freedom of choice and many possibilities<sup>20</sup> to get access to the house. One of them, oriented towards the Northeast (figure 5), is a Roman entrance in a sublime straight line 90 cm wide and around 8 meters long. An entrance to the hyphenous world. [Fig. 5]

The choice is free<sup>21</sup>. You can enter from the sky or from the “hell”, both are an excellent cinematographic *scenario*. You can choose between going through the transition and the threshold<sup>22</sup>, through the air, or, crossing the earth almost “endless” in Kiesler’s way<sup>23</sup>. The second is a direct perforation, while the first sits as a dragonfly on the territory.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



The house understood as a geometry<sup>24</sup> is a volumetric space providing well-being and joy, meditation and recollection, with two articulated bodies turned on themselves with respect to the short perimeter. The *decarliano* space is always three-dimensional<sup>25</sup>, being understood as a physical and spiritual encounter with growth in vertical section. A perimeter of 14 by 14 meters, totally kaleidoscopic. A priori the geometry is based on a module of 1x1 meter (almost a 90x90 matrix cm constructed), then the space is fragmented, diluted, hidden, connected, isolated and folded as an integrated device. The mesh superimposed on the territory is connected to the existing volume as shown in figure 5.

The house allows its limits to be blurred once the terrain is crossed, going from being bidimensional to three-dimensional with the fauna and flora of the place. Architecture is integrated into the topography<sup>26</sup> allowing the dissolution of disciplinary boundaries and dualities, broadening the perception of space as shown in the previous figures 5 and 6. In an analogy with a chessboard<sup>27</sup>, the circles of Ca' Romanino would be placed in the movement of the horse, placed in an "L" from the rooms that we could classify as "intimate", the space to be with

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

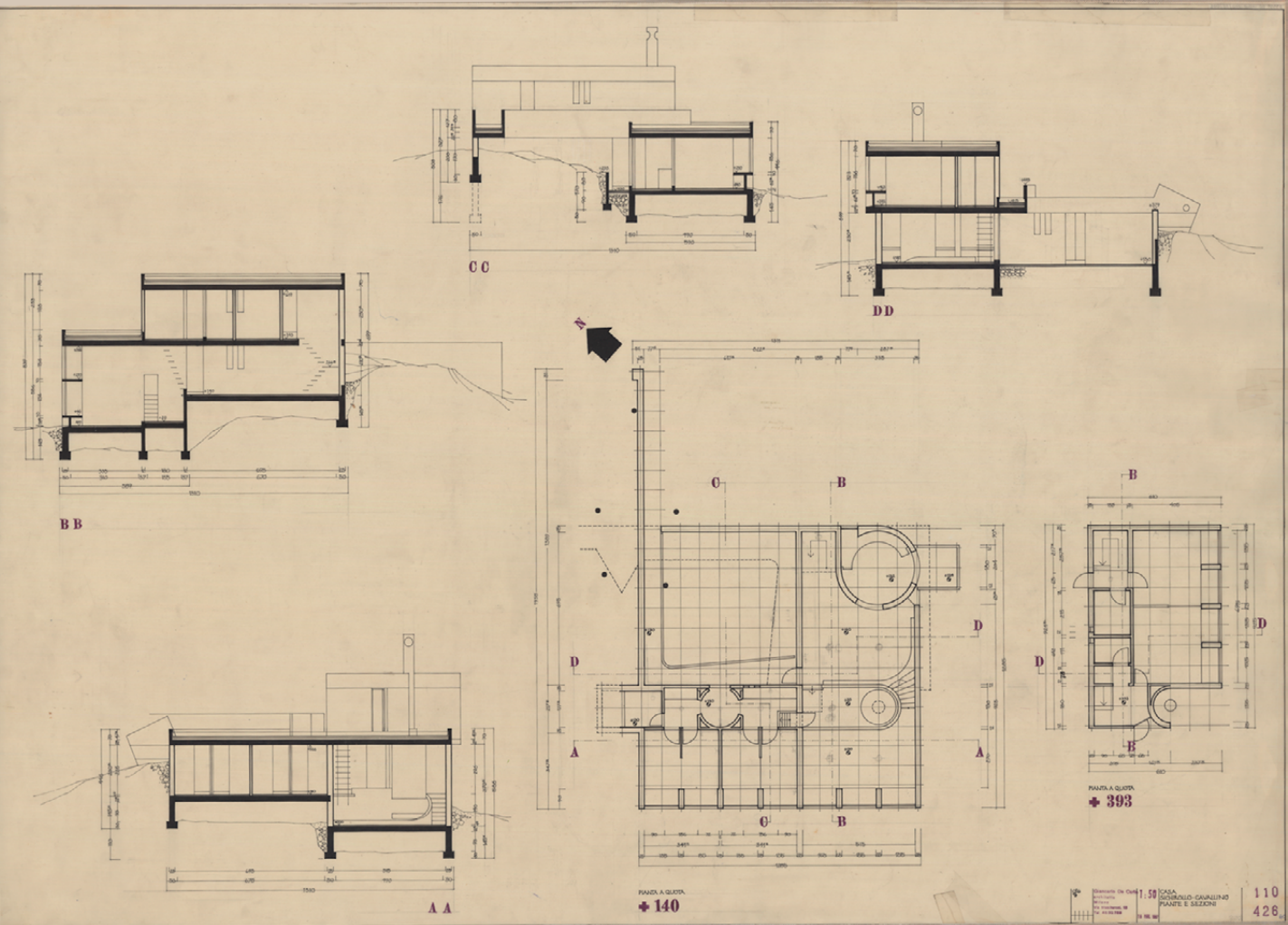
25 Architecture in section. *Collegio del Colle*, Villaggio Matteotti, among other projects.

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

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

Fig. 5

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



the “mouth of fire” in the same axis. An L-axis<sup>28</sup> of circles and cylinders which Di Giorgio would have previously been based on the staircase and tower of the *Mercatale*, in the Palazzo Ducale with the towers of the main façade and the one belonging to the diagonal corner of the *giardini pensili*<sup>29</sup>. In the architecture of Ca’ Romanino this point offers the hinge focused towards the circular *studiolo democratico* formed by four modules of 90° and with 360° views to the house, to the intermediate space and to the landscape of the vineyards. Once again, an ode to his predecessor in Urbino, who would situate the *studiolo*<sup>30</sup>, simulating a plane lowered through an optical effect folded and carved in the tectonics of the wood, in the first cylinder of the Palazzo Ducale. [Fig. 6]

### Logic and dialectics.

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

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

29 See Figure 1, figure 2 and point “D” in figure 7.

30 Iconographic *studiolo* of Federico da Montefeltro.

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



participates of the vineyards<sup>31</sup>. Both also allow a continuous dialogue between the landscape and the interior inhabited space. Giancarlo De Carlo explains specifically how:

These who are excluded from the use of power - and therefore from what is officially recognized as culture, art, architecture - are not larvae waiting for a metamorphosis which will permit them to benefit from the legitimate values of the power structure. (...) these are the manifestations of "disorder", which always leak out into the neighbourhood, into the buildings, mixing with the pathological dregs of "order" with which they are usually confused. But while the pathological dregs of "order" are the result of the exasperation of an authoritarian and repressive condition which outruns its own rules, spreading in a state of amorphous violence, the "disorder" which is opposed to "order" has a complex branching structure of its own which, since it is not institutionalized at every moment images of a reality in transformation<sup>32</sup>.

Sichirollo<sup>33</sup> exposes in his academic work an almost metamorphic mutant journey. A journey based on the variation of the concept of dialectics in a time frame between so-called rhetoric and politics in sophists, the condition of method in the philosopher Plato, the logic of an appearance in Kant, the laws of thought and reality in Hegel or Marx. The philosopher thus has a suggestive dialectical imaginary to understand in a certain way the mental-spatial distribution and the innate capacity of multiplicity of languages in the work of Giancarlo De Carlo. The architect, in his personal enrichment, fused interdisciplinarity allowing it to be transferred to the profession, without differentiating the first from the second. Ca' Romanino is therefore a masterpiece where the tectonic dialectic, the geometric logic or the condition of the landscape will be fervent ingredients for a sublime house. A dialectic house immerse in the landscape, a dialogue between architecture and philosophy. *"An architectural work makes no sense if it is detached from its use and from the way in which it is used, or can be used, because it is one of the fundamental factors contributing to the definition of its quality"*<sup>34</sup>. The existing constellation in Ca' Romanino<sup>35</sup> goes beyond the established limits of a linear trajectory. A place has been re-founded through the new construction, but it has also been a meeting point for families, friends and cultural events where they can participate in the dialogue, favoring the free choice of location-actions. Thus, with continuity and processes, a graphic understood as *"a variable graph, with vertices and edges that change position without ever compromising the coherence of the whole"*<sup>36</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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



## “Promenade architecturale” and constellations

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

It is a house that allows and encourages appropriation, dialogue and encounter. The hinge point is the cabin staircase<sup>38</sup>. It could be read as a static boat like the central staircase in Eileen Gray’s villa E-1027. This cabin connects the living space with the more private space of the guest rooms. This staircase lies buried in the concrete boat submerged in the hillside. At this point two promenades follow one another<sup>39</sup>. One in the three continuous heights, to sleep, to be and to participate, to dialogue. Another one to the outside, in the cardinal point of North, the Roman access is crossed with the street in the air.

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

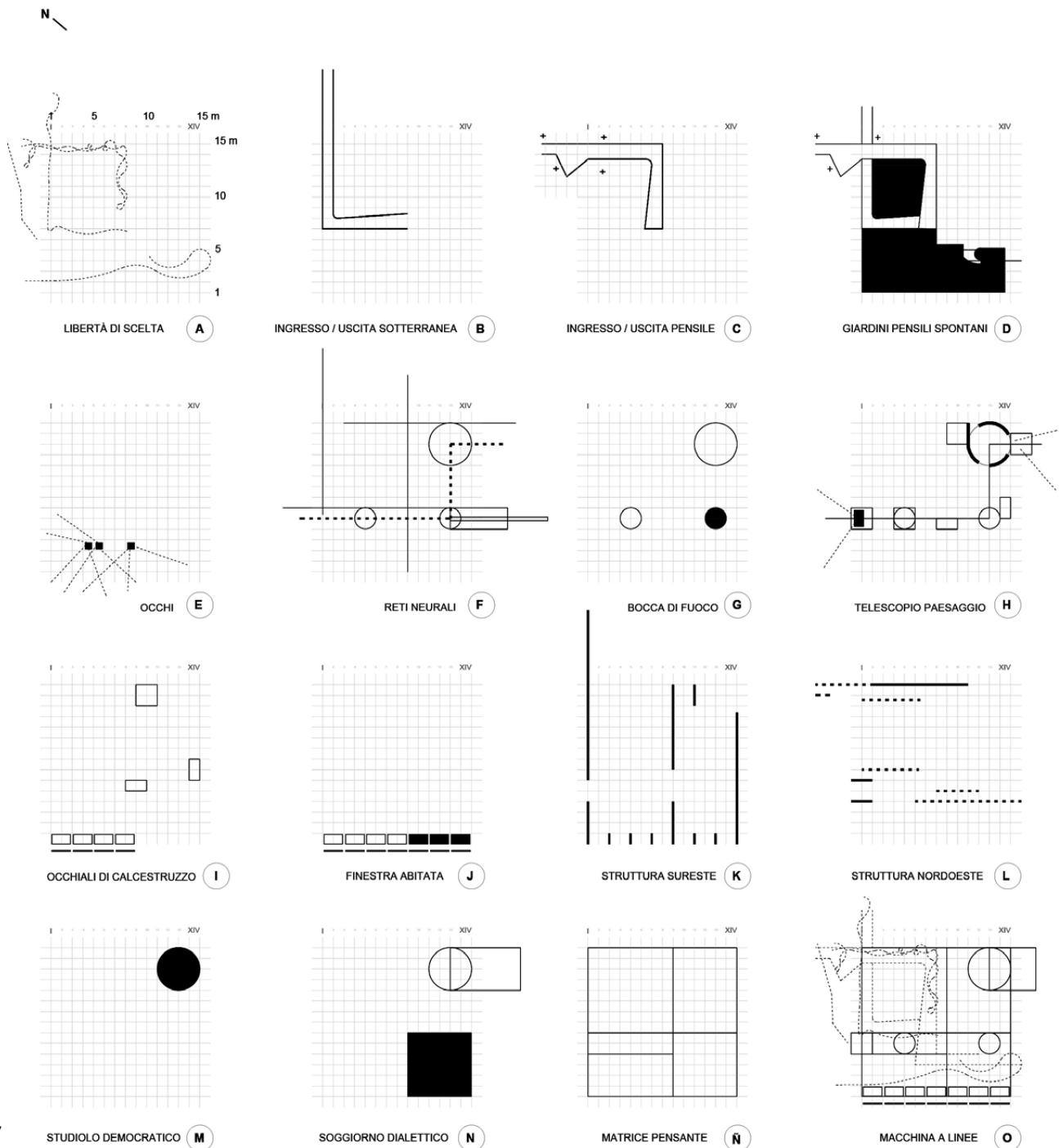
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37 These are “eye” sequences from the “dream sequence” in the film “Spellbound” of Hitchcock in 1945, in which the Spanish painter Salvador Dalí and the film director Alfred Hitchcock collaborated closely.

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

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

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



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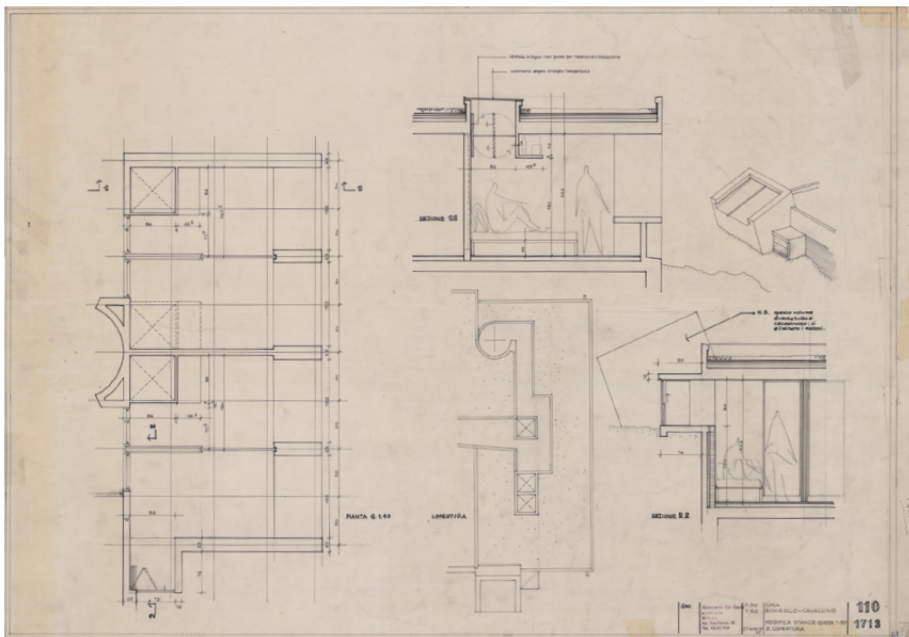
## Lucania and Santa Lucia

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

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

Fig. 7

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



8 |

### Constellations of eyes and skylights.

The “eyes<sup>42</sup> speak” are also present in the wrought to be able to see the white moon<sup>43</sup>. The tectonic is fragmented in De Carlo, transferring the slabs between the apparently private or the building itself and the public street<sup>44</sup>. Architecture dematerializes in dialogue with the anthropized, not the isolated object closed in on itself, but the spatial interrelation creating architecture and city. Both in the *Facoltà di Legge*, in the centre of Urbino, and in *Ca’ Romanino*, the eyes<sup>45</sup> are integrated in a constant dialogue within the place. In both projects, the eyes are opened like skylights in the solid stone sea of the ground<sup>46</sup>. These crystalline orifices allow the spaces to be visually connected, creating a city through a single simple element, a glass eye (figure 8).

In the kitchen, a glass eye illuminates the austere interior, connecting both planes. The living room however is made of three floors with two levels facing the landscape, an appropriate place between the load-bearing walls. De Carlo adds “the positive” of the “negative” excavated if the wall were perimetral<sup>47</sup>. It is a contemporary and reinterpreted analogy of concepts and not of language, with the rooms excavated in the Palazzo Ducale.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



9

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

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

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



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

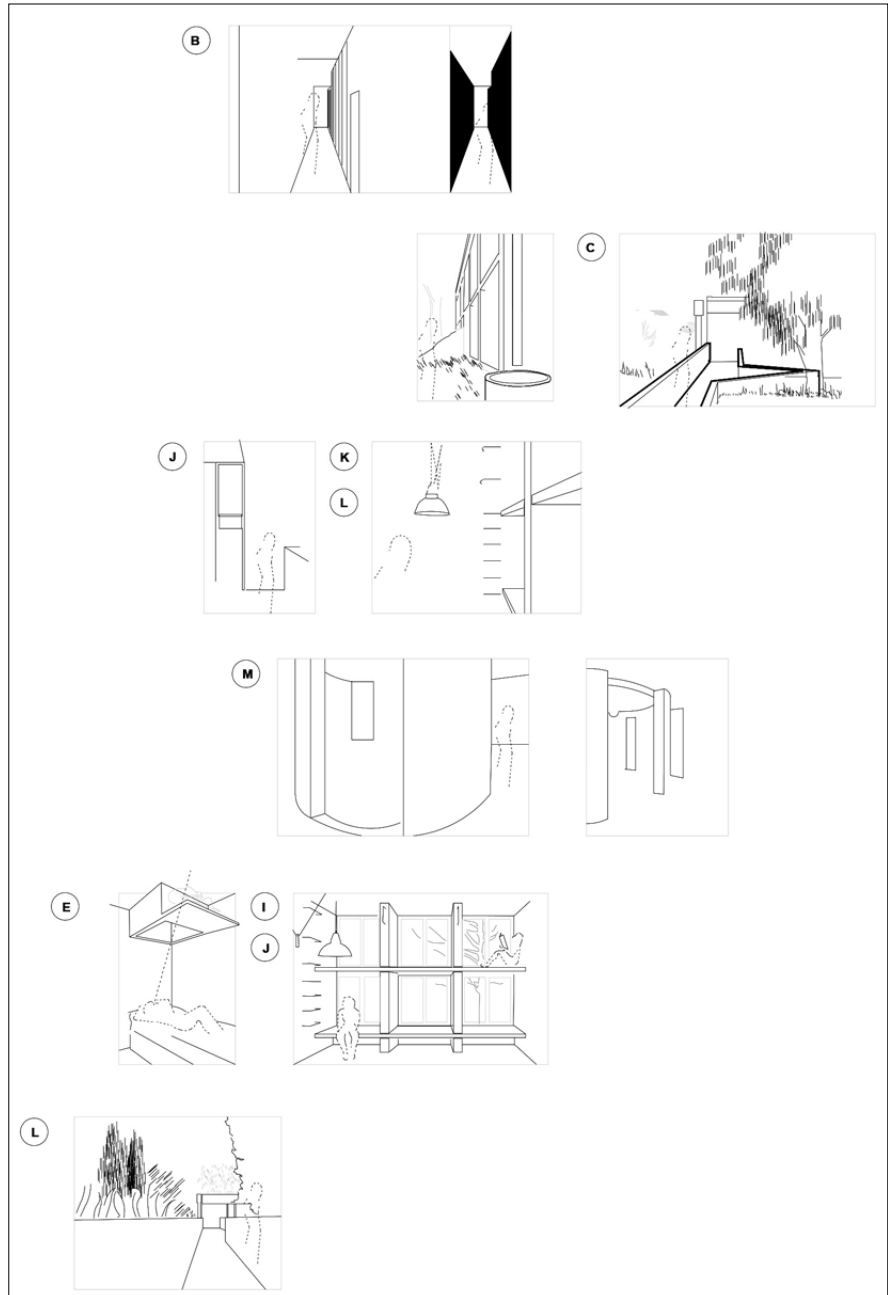
Two geometries and two dispositions are key to understanding the house.

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

### Tentative conclusions.

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

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



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

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

# “Questioni di architettura e urbanistica”. Giancarlo De Carlo and the Unity of Disciplines

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*Urban Planning; Urban Form; Structure*

## **/Abstract**

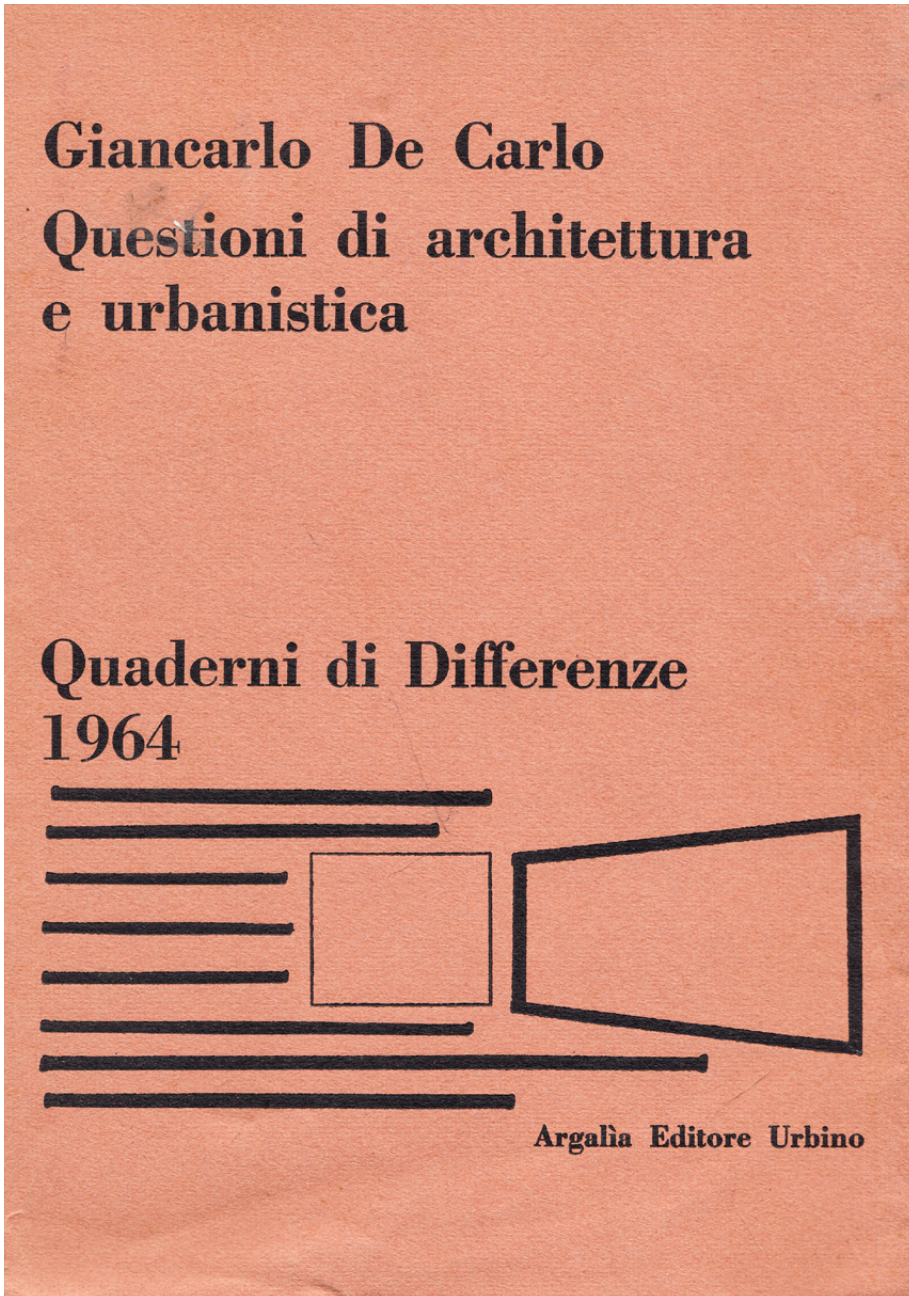
In 1964, when Giancarlo De Carlo published *Questioni di architettura e urbanistica*, was already a well-known figure in Italian architectural culture; a reputation due above all to the professional activity, on which he built his fame. There are at least two orders of factors for which it is necessary to propose today the reading of this book. The first originates from an ever-increasing interest in the “urban space” that inevitably falls on modern urban research, the second imposes a “re-reading” of a book that becomes fundamental in the biography of a character like De Carlo, especially in the years that decree it the success.

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*Questioni di architettura e urbanistica*<sup>1</sup> is a book that Giancarlo De Carlo started writing in the mid-1950s and was first published by Argalia, a small publishing house in Urbino, in 1964 for the Quaderni di differenze” [Notebooks of differences] series.

The volume is made up of three texts that De Carlo wrote at different times. The first one, *Fluidità delle interrelazioni urbane e rigidità dei piani di azzonamento* [Fluency in urban interrelations and inflexibility of zoning plans], is the reworked version of a conference talk that De Carlo prepared for a seminar study that Giulio De Luca organised for the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Naples on 4 June 1964, tackling “Problemi e prospettive dell’urbanistica

1 Giancarlo De Carlo, *Questioni di architettura e urbanistica* (Urbino: Argalia, 1964) (printed on 25 July 1964).

Fig. 1  
Cover of the first edition of *Questioni di architettura e urbanistica*, Argalia, Urbino 1964



contemporanea”<sup>2</sup> [Problems and perspectives in contemporary urban planning]. The second text *Funzione della residenza nella Città contemporanea* [The function of residence in contemporary cities], which provides a connection with the other two texts, resulted from a lecture that De Carlo held at IUAV state university in Venice in 1963, within the framework of the “Elementi di Architettura e Rilievo dei Monumenti” [Elements of Architecture and Monument Survey] course from the first academic term.<sup>3</sup> The last text, *Memoria sui contenuti dell’architettura moderna* [Report on the contents of modern architecture] partially differs from the other two, which should be read “in parallel”, because of the issues here addressed. In this work, De Carlo, who presented the text in Otterlo in 1959 during the 11<sup>th</sup> Ciam – International Congress of Modern Architecture, better defines the details of a piece of research on “urban form and structure”, that is simply the design of contemporary cities according to the architect, a work that had been carried out with a systematic approach from this very moment, thus becoming the starting point for later research.

The highly likely reason why De Carlo had *Questioni di architettura e urbanistica* published in a few month’s time, thanks to the help provided by his friend Livio Sichirolo, a philosopher and councillor of the Municipal Council who moved to Urbino to teach Moral Philosophy, lies in the need to include a book written by the candidate in the application for a job as professor of Territorial and Urban Planning. In fact, some months after the volume was published Miro Allione wrote a letter stating “I’ve heard from Mazza about a collection of essays of yours that came out with the application for the teaching job. May I have that?”.<sup>4</sup>

Once the first edition sold out, the book was reprinted the following year, with two additional texts on the recently approved plan for Urbino<sup>5</sup> as an annex,<sup>6</sup> although De Carlo, who completely revised the speech he gave during the City Council meeting, was initially against its inclusion in the book. He claimed that “this text has got nothing to do with the three essays included in the booklet. In my opinion, if this text were added, it would radically change the tone and contents of the work. This is why my idea would be to have the second edition exactly as it used to be. If you don’t agree, let me know”.<sup>7</sup>

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2 Giancarlo De Carlo, typewritten report of a conference held at the University of Naples - Faculty of Architecture for the special Course managed by Professor Giulio De Luca: “Problemi e prospettive dell’urbanistica contemporanea”, 4 June 1964, Università Iuav di Venezia, Archivio Progetti, fondo Giancarlo De Carlo, De Carlo-scritti/031.

3 The text, which had never been published before, was presented as an original, and the occasion it was written for was not specified. The only piece of information that the author provided was the year: 1963. Thanks to the consultation of Egle Renata Trincanato’s archival collection at the Archivio Progetti [Project Archive] at IUAV, a handout of the “Caratteri” course that De Carlo held in the academic year 1962-1963 was finally found. It contained some reports on the topic of “dimensioning home”, plus this very writing, which was published without any changes even if it was used for a different purpose, Giancarlo De Carlo, typescript *Funzioni della residenza nella città contemporanea*, AP: Trinc. 2. Attività scientifica/2/140.

4 Miro Allione’s letter (Ilse) to Giancarlo De Carlo, Milan, 20 October 1964, AP: De Carlo-atti/018.

5 With reference to Urbino, please see Lorenzo Mingardi’s recent study, *Sono geloso di questa città. Giancarlo De Carlo e Urbino* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2018).

6 *Problemi del P.R.G. di Urbino (da un dibattito consigliare, dicembre 1963 – gennaio 1964. Registrazione) e Edilizia universitaria (Relazione al VIII Congresso nazionale dell’agere, tornata del 29 maggio 1964, Università, Urbino.*

7 “...non ha nulla a che fare con i tre saggi pubblicati nel libretto. Mi pare che il suo inserimento rappresenterebbe un salto di tono e di contenuto, perciò sarei dell’idea di fare la seconda edizione esattamente com’era. Se non sei d’accordo, avvertimi”, Giancarlo De Carlo’s letter to Livio Sichirolo, Milan, 16 April 1965, AP: De Carlo-atti/004.

Even though it was reprinted in its original form in 2008,<sup>8</sup> with a foreword by Paolo Ceccarelli, *Questioni di architettura e urbanistica* is still a fairly unknown book and rarely considered part of the background and the cultural issues it derives from and belongs to. Despite the laudable idea to make an extremely rare book available again, the reprinted edition is more of a missed opportunity than a chance to give new life to the work by an architect-writer in light of the important reflection on the theoretical foundations of architecture and urban planning that De Carlo endorsed in this book.

In fact, the short note written by Andrea Arcidiacono does not add anything to the introduction written by De Carlo in 1964, being simply a brief overview of topics already discussed in the book.

### The architecture of the text

*Questioni di architettura e urbanistica*, as it was conceived and designed, still bears the signs of an intellectual that contributed to the debate about architecture and urban planning at many levels at that time, using a wide range of tools: articles, interviews, academic papers. By reason of the way the book tackles the selected issues and references, it unveils an intrinsically polemic ground, where it reflects upon “issues” that the readers of that time and many who attended architecture schools – where the book was considered a “classic of urban planning”<sup>9</sup> for many years – deemed as emerging. As stressed by Francesco Samassa “This is exactly what Monica Perin attempts to do in a volume (*Urbanisti italiani*) published in 1992, edited by Patrizia Gabellini and Paola Di Biagi. Here De Carlo is numbered among the *Italian town-planners* and studies as such”.<sup>10</sup>

The fact that this book was considered a volume on urban planning, that the need for a complex knowledge as it was expressed by the architect from Genoa was eventually overshadowed and that he was included among the experts of a limited field of design all combined to create an unusual independent definition of “De Carlo the urban planner”, not so convincing per se, thus giving rise to a nemesis of “De Carlo the architect” “...simply because De Carlo makes no distinction between the work of architect and that of the urban planner.... It amounts to betraying one of the staples of De Carlo’s vision of architecture, his personal theoretical framework, a principle that, more than almost any other, has established De Carlo’s position in the field of architecture both in Italy and abroad”.<sup>11</sup> This procedure actually undervalues one of the bedrocks of De Carlo’s

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8 Giancarlo De Carlo, *Questioni di architettura e urbanistica* (Milan: Maggioli Editori, 2008).

9 Patrizia Gabellini, “Giancarlo De Carlo. Questioni di architettura e urbanistica, 1964. Una critica dei dogmi del movimento moderno,” in Paola Di Biagi and Ead. (eds.), *I classici dell’urbanistica moderna* (Rome: Donzelli, 2002), 253-267.

10 Francesco Samassa, “Sezioni trasversali di una fugura complessa,” in Id. (ed.), *Giancarlo De Carlo. Percorsi* (Padua: Il Poligrafo, 2004), 22.

11 *Ibidem*, p. 21.

theoretical view, namely the lack of distinction between architecture and urban planning.

*Questioni di architettura e urbanistica* did not represent the conclusion of a phase in De Carlo's studies and research, to the contrary it developed some interests and reflection that first came forth in the 1950s and would partly come to an end around 1968, the year when *Piramide rovesciata* [Upsidedown pyramid] was published – recently reprinted – and the 14<sup>th</sup> Triennale di Milano was held.<sup>12</sup>

The book was published while De Carlo was playing an important public role, engaged on several fronts such as the design of the Intermunicipal Plan of Milan, an urban planning project that was considered a real case in point at that time, and the finalisation of the Urbino city plan. The debate on urban planning was very lively at the time, still made vibrant by the Italian legislative reform (Sullo Reform, based on the attempt to take away the property of urban building land from the private sector in favour of the public sector), and especially focused on the need to grasp and manage the deep transformation that Italy was undergoing at that time. All of this pushed De Carlo to claim that "My architectural research has mainly dealt with urban planning for some years, since I am utterly convinced that just the scale and conditions that only this field might provide are essential to undertake...the technological, ethical and expressive developments that modern architecture is putting forward".<sup>13</sup>

Thanks to his many publications, the relevant role he played in some institutions and his experiences in terms of urban planning and design on a new scale, the so called *grande numero* [big number], the architect managed to make his views known on a number of occasions. Nevertheless, De Carlo never had the chance to express his reflections on architecture and urban planning in a comprehensive manner and arrange them in a systematic order as in this book.

*Questioni di architettura e urbanistica* covers a range of time spanning from 1959 to 1964, and the moments that each of the three titles tackles are crucial to fully comprehend the several fields of study and research that came to light back then. In this framework, 1964 was a particularly important year in the architect's professional life since he joined the public debate, endorsing a leading role around the idea of the city, which evolved rapidly at that time due to the fundamental research by the Istituto Lombardo per gli Studi Economici e Sociali (Ilse),<sup>14</sup> his work as a teacher of Urban and Territorial Planning at the University of Venice and his contribution to the "Struttura e forma urbana" [Urban structure and form] collection of which he was director, published by *il Saggiatore*.

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12 Giancarlo De Carlo, *La piramide rovesciata* (Bari: De Donato, 1968), see Id., *La piramide rovesciata. Architettura oltre il '68*, Filippo De Pieri ed. (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2018).

13 Id., "Il Piano Regolatore di Urbino" (interview), *Marche Nuove*, 3-4 (1959): 108.

14 Ilse was an institution that was funded by the Municipal Council of Milan and, to a lesser extent, by the Provincial Council and two banks deeply rooted in the Milanese territory. Its main aim was to carry out economic, sociological and urban planning studies in the Milan area.

The date De Carlo started writing his work becomes particularly relevant, underlined by the 7<sup>th</sup> INU conference entitled “Il volto della città”<sup>15</sup> [The face of the city] in Lecce, which opened the way to harsh criticism towards local governance models, especially the so-called garden cities. That very year other major events raising a great deal of interest in Italy also took place: the call for tenders for the design of the Cep neighbourhood in San Giuliano, Mestre,<sup>16</sup> for the renovation of its late 1950s architecture, and the publication of Giuseppe Samonà’s book *L’urbanistica e l’avvenire delle città negli stati europei*.<sup>17</sup> These events happened right when the city was becoming a topic that particularly interested De Carlo’s theoretical survey. This juncture between architecture and urban planning in Italy provided the background the book originated from.

### The publishing context

The size, structure and graphic design of the book demand some observations: a short-length book consisting of 99 pages, which would become 105 in its second edition. It was a pocket-size book with no images, tables, bibliography or, above all, notes, with a monochromatic cover. The book is short, consisting of three brief texts, which cannot be identified as essays, as the author claimed more than once, “I do not like the idea of writing an ‘essay’, and the word alone gives me the shivers. I do not even think I can write definitive things, and don’t think I want to either”.<sup>18</sup>

The graphic design of the “Quaderni di Differenze” series is undoubtedly interesting for being so out of the ordinary and immediately recognisable. How the book was actually drafted is a purely technical matter, mainly a Publisher’s task, with some details – whose analysis is omitted – agreed to with the author. However, since the book is an object of communication, the way it looks is an element to be taken into account in its general examination, since it is the first thing that readers notice about the book and may impress them. It also conveys hints that represent an essential part of the book itself.<sup>19</sup>

The volumes from the “Quaderni di Differenze” series all have the same covers, designed by Albe Steiner, a teacher at ISIA (Istituto Superiore per le Industrie Artistiche – Higher Institute for Artistic Industries), resulting from a set of linear measures dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century and located in the Town Hall of Urbino,

15 “VII Convegno dell’Inu «Il volto della Città», Lecce, 14-16 November 1959, the topic was the “Code of urban planning”.

16 Please see the long article to present “Concorso per un quartiere residenziale Cep in Venezia-Mestre, Barene san Giuliano,” *L’architettura. Cronache e storia*, 57 (July 1960):168-182; F. Tentori, “Un piano urbanistico per Mestre,” *Il Contemporaneo*, 27-28 (1960): 124-137; Manfredo Tafuri, *Ludovico Quaroni e lo sviluppo dell’architettura moderna in Italia* (Milan: Comunità, 1964), 158.

17 Giuseppe Samonà, *L’urbanistica e l’avvenire delle città negli stati europei* (Bari: Laterza, 1959). Ludovico Quaroni reviewed Samonà’s book in *Casabella-continuità* in 1960 and he called it the “first Italian book on urban planning”, in Ludovico Quaroni, “L’avvenire della città”, *Casabella-continuità*, 236 (1960): 19.

18 “Non mi piace l’idea di scrivere un ‘saggio’ e già la parola mi mette inquietudine. Non credo neanche di essere capace di dire cose definitive, né penso che lo vorrei fare”, in Giancarlo De Carlo, “Viaggi attraverso il mondo 3: L’urbanistica”, interview by Francesco Karrer, *Mondoperaio*, 11 (1987): 104-122.

19 Gérard Genette, *Soglie. Dintorni del testo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1989), in particular the chapter “Il paratesto editoriale”, pp. 17-36, [English translation, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997].



which were reworked in a stylised manner. The colour scheme of the front and back cover is characterised by colour continuity, the name of the series is placed in the centre, the author's name and the book title are on top, all with the same font, while the name of Publisher is on the bottom left.

The book's publishing background, which might be considered a niche, goes beyond the limited boundaries of the field involved. The presence of this book in the "Quaderni di Differenze" series of a small publishing house from Urbino goes against the tide, to say the least, in comparison with other contemporary architecture and urban planning publications. In fact, De Carlo availed himself of a publishing strategy that was perfectly in line with the will to attract privileged readers that might not be necessarily architects or urban planners,<sup>20</sup> since "architecture is way too important to be entrusted only to architects".<sup>21</sup> As a matter of fact, the Argalia publishing house had a strong connection with Urbino's cultural scene including Carlo Bo, chancellor of the University of Urbino, Livio Sichirollo himself and Albe Steiner, who designed the covers of the Ilse books for De Carlo.

"The title of the book is *Questioni di Architettura e Urbanistica*.<sup>22</sup> This is the blunt statement with which De Carlo opens (and closes) any discussions on the book title, whose preciseness and authoritative tone is perfectly consistent with his peculiar writing style, spontaneous, with no second thoughts and crossing out very few sentences. On the one hand, this attitude highlights extremely pristine thinking, but on the other it makes analysis of the writing process very hard.

### **Architecture versus urban planning**

The title immediately detects, defines and enhances the contents that one might expect to find in the book by stressing their inconclusive and uncertain nature, where "questions" are open to discussion by their own nature and the relation between architecture and urban planning makes clear one of the foundations of De Carlo's thinking: the unity of the two disciplines. As a consequence, De Carlo strongly denied their independence. "This distinction between architecture and urban planning is meaningless. It seems to me (but no one believes so) that there are three different practices covering the wide range that is unrealistically tackled by architecture and urban planning, mashed together. The first one is design, whose task is to design elements defining the physical space. The second one is architecture dealing with the design of the physical space (those structures and shapes by which human activities get organised

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20 A trend that was also confirmed when he started working on the "Struttura e forma urbana" series, in collaboration with Vittorio Sereni, for the publisher il Saggiatore.

21 Giancarlo De Carlo, speech at Apiaw Colloque d'Architecture (1969): "L'architecture est-elle trop importante pour être confiée aux architectes?" *Environnement*, 3, (1970): 55-60; Id., "Il pubblico dell'architettura," *Parametro*, 5: 4-13. [partially republished in English as "Architecture's Public", in Charles Jencks and Karl Kropf (ed.), *Theory and Manifestoes* (London: Academy Editions, 1997) and as "An Architecture of Participation", *Perspecta*, 17 (, 1980): 74-79]

22 "Il titolo della pubblicazione è 'Questioni di Architettura e Urbanistica'", Giancarlo De Carlo's letter to Livio Sichirollo, Milan, 1 July 1964, AP: De Carlo-atti/004.

and take shape in the physical space). This second practice makes use of some items from design and the information that the third practice develops – planning”.<sup>23</sup> Architecture and urban planning tend to coincide in the only inseparable form-structure issue of space.

De Carlo’s point of view regarding the highly debated architecture/urban planning dichotomy stresses the architect’s interest in topics and issues resulting from the major crisis that the ideology of the modern movement was experiencing by then as well as the bewilderment that the regular failures generated by rationalism triggered, not to forget declensions inspired by Adriano Olivetti’s community. Another major element to take into account in this context was the ongoing disciplinary practice generally embracing architecture, urban planning and planning.

A sentence from a De Carlo’s article that was published in 1961 presents all the elements that not only contributed to defining the title, but also the very topic of the book “A number of totally new issues is being raised and the way these issues are further elaborated might radically change the current state of architecture by upsetting its field of interests and establishing new cultural arrangements that are absolutely in contrast with the current ones. Now that architecture and urban planning have been integrated, the cycle of the architectural practice from Industrial Design to territorial planning basically represents a wide range of possibilities where each single activity sprouts from a common root”.<sup>24</sup>

The link between the various practices this “range” is made of does not imply the chance to create architecture by means of a single methodology, according to De Carlo. This recognition has some consequences on the work of architects. They are not required to choose a specialisation over another, but the option is between two different orientations for their own career path: architecture or urban planning. Whatever the choice, architects must always consider that the large scale they are going to operate on, whether designing objects or “urban structures”, has such a number of consequences for the final users and the design itself in terms of taste, the most immediate aspect, and cultural comprehension, a much more elaborate concept, that all the foundations of the idea of quality would be overturned.

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23 “In realtà questa distinzione tra architettura e urbanistica è senza senso. A me sembra (ma nessuno lo vuol credere) che ormai esistano tre attività distinte che coprono tutto il lungo arco oggi velleitariamente investito dall’architettura e dall’urbanistica confuse insieme. La prima è il design che si occupa della progettazione degli elementi che definiscono lo spazio fisico. La seconda è l’architettura che si occupa della progettazione dello spazio fisico (le strutture e le forme attraverso le quali le attività umane si organizzano e si materializzano nello spazio fisico); utilizza gli elementi definiti dal design e le informazioni messe a punto dalla terza attività. Che è la pianificazione (planning)”, Giancarlo De Carlo’s letter to Giorgio Pecorini (*L’Europeo* magazine, on a meeting at Circolo Cattaneo on 21 April 1966), New Haven, 17 April 1966, AP: De Carlo-atti/012.

24 “Si pongono numerose questioni del tutto nuove la cui elaborazione potrà mutare profondamente la situazione attuale dell’architettura sconvolgendo il suo campo di interessi e determinando schieramenti culturali del tutto diversi da quelli esistenti. Con l’avvenuta integrazione tra architettura e urbanistica, il cerchio dell’attività architettonica dall’Industrial Design alla pianificazione territoriale corrisponde a un ventaglio dove ogni attività particolare ha la stessa radice”, Giancarlo De Carlo, “Tre interviste per Milano, hanno risposto gli architetti Samonà, De Carlo e il collettivo di architettura”, *Superfici*, 4 (1961): 19.

## Conclusion

Despite the large number of books and publications by De Carlo, the “confusion” around such an important book is inexplicable. *Questioni di architettura e urbanistica* is surely relevant both for the personal and professional side of the author, therefore the confusion around it is even more inexplicable considering the many used and mostly abused references and words that are far better defined here than elsewhere, references and words that are mainly connected to an interpretation based on words-topics used as a ritual. This practice gives rise to convincing but puzzling interpretations, seeing as what lies “beyond De Carlo” is not explored at all.

On one the hand these writings finalised some research that De Carlo had started some years earlier, and on the other opened up to design practices that contributed to the building of cities from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the 1970s.

The high number of topics dealt with clearly outlines the “issues” that stand “outside” those being raised, that actually place the book on a broader background consisting of other facts. Nevertheless, an initial reading must start “from the inside”, following an increasingly complex trend. A “vertical” reading is also required, where every title reveals itself by presenting reasoning that is organised in several steps: the territory, the place of urban structures and the real subject of urban planning, the city with its building artefacts [*manufatti* in the original version] where residences are the “urban structure par excellence”,<sup>25</sup> and eventually the questioning of those principles that have ruled and regulated the development and rise of contemporary cities until that time.

The pathway starts from urban planning to ultimately reach architecture, where the central writing provides a linkage. However, in contrast with their sequence in the book, the chronological order of the titles is reversed as is the path followed by the thoughts. A path that, as the author stated in the introduction, is deeply connected to his professional experience and aimed at clarifying the “reasons” for his dual nature as architect and urban planner.

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25 Please note that Aldo Rossi considered “manufatto” [artefact] as the “human item par excellence”, in Aldo Rossi, *L'architettura della città* (Padua: Marsilio, 1966). [English translation, *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 1984].

# From the 'Aesthetic of number' to the 'Great number': Giancarlo De Carlo and Aldo van Eyck between Order and Contradiction

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*Aesthetics Of Number; Great Number; Additive Process; Relationships; Identity*

## /Abstract

In a series of interviews with Clelia Tuscano in the 1990s, Giancarlo De Carlo revealed his admiration for Aldo van Eyck and the influence the Dutch architect had on him. Albeit starting with a disagreement during the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) that took place in Otterlo in 1959, the relationship between the two will subsequently evolve in a crescendo of mutual esteem and exchange, until reaching a sort of ideal mutual understanding that will strengthen one of the most oriented lines of research within the variegated Team 10 group. The central issue into which the two architects channelled most of the energies they spent at the international level responded to the challenges posed by mass society, or to what has been called 'architecture of the great number'. This theme acquired international relevance within the CIAM, starting with the success of the North African grids presented at CIAM IX (1953), and then accompanied the evolution of Team 10 until the XIV Triennale di Milano (1968), dedicated to the "Grande numero".

This essay intends to analyze in parallel the evolution of the design thinking of the two architects, De Carlo and van Eyck, around the theme of 'great number'. In doing so, the attempt is to highlight the affinities and influences, especially those taken by the Italian architect, and to investigate a part of the 'Team 10 thinking' seen from the perspective of two of its most active protagonists.

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In 2018, he obtained a Master's Degree in Architecture at the same University, with a dissertation on the history of contemporary architecture entitled: "The birth of Team 10: alternatives for an urban theory 1947-59" (speakers prof. Alessandro Castagnaro and Fabio Mangone, co-rapporteur prof. Massimo Pica Ciamarra). On that occasion he began to carry out studies on Giancarlo De Carlo, also through archive research at the De Carlo Fund preserved at the IUAV. Since May 2017 he has been a member of the editorial board of the journal *Op. cit.*, directed by Renato De Fusco.



## Towards a 'casbah organisée'. From Aix-en-Provence '53 to Dubrovnik '56.

Everything that can be related to the similarities and the elements that, before the last Ciam in Otterlo (1959), eventually led to the agreement between Giancarlo De Carlo and Aldo van Eyck, concerns what can be defined as 'indirect exchanges'. This is because before that date there were no concrete opportunities of interacting between the two architects.

Since 1953, De Carlo's admission to the Italian Ciam group<sup>1</sup> – whose delegates, starting from that year, were Ignazio Gardella and Franco Albini – enabled him to become aware of the main events that characterized the Ciam and the international architectural scene. If one considers that in the same year De Carlo, together with Marco Zanuso and Vittorio Gregotti, was introduced into the new editorial committee of *Casabella-continuità* by Ernesto Nathan Rogers – already a leading member of the Ciam who held leading positions within the organization – it is possible to understand the extent of his attention to the major events of contemporary architecture.

In the same year, the ninth Ciam took place in Aix-en-Provence, and it was the first in which younger generation of architects, although not with a leading role, obtained a certain degree of involvement in the dynamics of the congress: from the inclusion of some of its representatives in the Ciam Council to the possibility of drawing up the minutes of the various commissions, even to the exhibition of projects in an updated edition of the Ciam Grid, thus testifying an unprecedented freedom of interpretation of the presentation methods. There, for the first time, the theoretical and design contributions of some of the future members of the Team 10 'core group' coalesced, with the sole exception of Giancarlo De Carlo. However, as van Eyck himself noted later on, what attracted the attention of the youngest architects were the two North African grids entitled "Bidonville Mahieddine Grid" and "Habitat du plus grand nombre Grid"<sup>2</sup>, presented by the Ciam-Alger and the GAMMA (Groupe d'architectes modernes marocains) groups respectively<sup>3</sup>. In particular, the second grid [Fig. 1] showed the phenomenon of Moroccan mass housing through a photographic comparison between existing cities and new neighbourhoods, focusing on the analysis of the urban question, as well as of the economic, social and climatic conditions to take into consideration for new types of housing, as in the project for the Carrières

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1 See Sara Protasoni, "Il Gruppo Italiano e la tradizione del moderno," *Rassegna* 52 (1992): 28-39.

2 On this topic and, in particular, on the influence of African grids, see Zeynep Çelik, "The ordinary and the third world at CIAM IX," in *Team 10 1953-81. In search of a utopia of the present*, ed. Max Risselada and Dirk van den Heuvel (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2005), 276-279. See also Jean-Lucien Bonillo, Claude Massu, and Daniel Pinson, *La modernité critique: Autour du CIAM 9 d'Aix-en-Provence* (Marseille: Imbernon, 2007).

3 Both groups arose in the late 1940s with the aim of expanding the range of interest in modern architecture beyond Europe. The CIAM-Alger group was led by Pierre-André Emery, while the GAMMA was led by Georges Candilis, who had already taken on the same role within ATBAT-Afrique, the African branch of the interdisciplinary research centre Atelier des bâtisseurs (ATBAT), founded in 1947 by Le Corbusier, Vladimir Bodiansky, André Wogensky and Marcel Py. On these topics see Jean-Louis Cohen, "Il Gruppo degli Architetti Marocchini e 'L'Habitat du plus grand nombre,'" *Rassegna* 52 (1992): 58-67; Marion Tournon Branly, "History of ATBAT and its Influence on French Architecture," *Architectural Design* 35 (1965): 20-24.



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Centrales in Casablanca in which Vladimir Bodiansky, Georges Candilis, Henri Piot and Shadrach Woods took part in the framework of the overall plan drawn up by Michel Ecochard, approved in 1952. The latter's contribution was based on the research already initiated by Ecochard himself a few years earlier, as the director of the Department for Urban Planning of the Protectorate from 1946 to 1952. He developed an interest in large-scale planning as a result of his American experience, introducing this approach into North African politics through experiments that would influence the members of the GAMMA, especially in an attempt to rethink local habits and the specific housing conditions of rural people who had approached cities. In this regard, in line with the character of ATBAT<sup>4</sup>, the study of local culture was conducted according to an interdisciplinary approach through real *in situ* surveys carried out by sociologists and ethnologists. At the level of neighborhood, Ecochard worked by juxtaposing 'neighborhood units', thus generating the continuity of the 'housing grid' through the use of a 8x8-meter modular unit, which could be expanded according to different needs. This grid, which implied geometric rules that could be reproduced at different scales, was based on the model of the 'patio' responding to the customs of the inhabitants of the *bidonville*, in line with the traditional Arab living models. The underlying idea was to redevelop the *bidonville* formed around the existing cities, recovering the traditional housing models. The basic unit of 8 meters per side consisted of two or three rooms arranged in an 'L' shape around an outdoor space. When the juxtaposition of several units formed a larger complex, larger public areas were included and several services appropriate to the scale so defined (such as schools, commercial facilities, administrative buildings, etc.) appeared. Ecochard's method, despite its faith in functionalism and full adherence to the four functions of the *Athens Charter*, contained elements of great openness that would be taken on and developed by members of the Moroccan Ciam group. The grid thus conceived showed a combination between the permanence of the plant order and the flexibility inherent in its possibility of extension.

The plans for the three collective buildings arranged in a 'U' shape designed by Bodiansky, Candilis, Piot and Woods – then members of ATBAT-Afrique – for the

Fig. 1  
Fragments of the 'GAMMA grid'. From: Francis Strauven. Aldo van Eyck. The Shape of Relativity. Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura, 1998.

4 See previous note.

Carrières Centrales in 1951 were grounded on Ecochard's work<sup>5</sup>. The peculiarity of their contribution was expressed through an alternative model of housing distribution. This model of collective dwelling, once again based on the reinterpretation of local conditions and shapes, transposed the sequence of patios in elevation, giving rise to a vertical composition in compliance with the needs of land consumption and the desire to reduce the indefinite horizontal extension of the urban fabric. The GAMMA grid presented in Aix was another connecting element between those who would soon be commonly recognized as Team 10 members, as revealed by the Smithsons two years later in the pages of *Architectural Design*:

We regard these buildings in Morocco as the greatest achievement since Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation at Marseilles. Whereas the Unité was the summation of a technique of thinking about 'habitat' which started forty years ago, the importance of Moroccan buildings is that they are the first manifestation of a new way of thinking. For this reason, they are presented as ideas; but it is their realization in built form that convinces us that here is a new universal.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, the importance of the Moroccan and Algerian grids was to be found not only in the distance from the general principles of the Ciam and, in particular, from the rational-functionalist interpretation of the housing typology as an abstract entity, but also in the focus on the 'collective dimension of living'. In addition, the emergence of the African paradigm, which gave rise to a model of analysis that looked above all at the typical local living conditions, led to a growing attention towards what was called 'minor' or 'spontaneous' architecture. This theme was a further commonality between the two architects well before they took part in Team 10. As early as 1947, van Eyck went on a series of trips to discover the settlement patterns of the indigenous peoples mostly from North African villages, with a particular interest in the Dogon culture and in the relationship between inhabitants and their living conditions<sup>7</sup>. From this he drew his interest in dual phenomena, in the relationship between the individual and the general, between the house and the village, and in the beneficial effects of the combination of harmony and disorder; in short, in all the concepts that would inform his 'configurative disciplines' in 1962.

De Carlo's interest in minor architecture developed thanks to Franco Albini and Giuseppe Pagano, whom he met during the years of the Resistance. The two architects – together with Rogers – were his primary architectural references, even before he got his degree in architecture in 1949. He trained with

5 On these projects see Michel Ecochard, "Habitat musulman au Maroc," *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 60 (1955): 36-40; Cohen, "Il Gruppo degli Architetti Marocchini e 'L'Habitat du plus grand nombre,'" 58-67.

6 Alison and Peter Smithsons, "Collective Housing in Morocco," *Architectural Design* 25 (1955): 2.

7 As evidenced by the photos and sketches made by van Eyck, between the late 1940s and early 1960s, he travelled to the North African villages of Tademaït, Timimoun, Aoulef, Sidi Aïssa, Timoudi, Ogol and Banani. He also visited the Taos Pueblo in New Mexico. See Francis Strauven, *Aldo van Eyck. The Shape of Relativity* (Amsterdam: Architecture & Nature, 1998); Aldo van Eyck, "L'interiorità del Tempo" in *Il significato in architettura*, ed. Charles Jencks and George Baird (Bari: Dedalo, 1974), 204-55; Aldo van Eyck, "Architecture of the Dogon," *Architectural Forum* 115 (1961): 116-121.

Albini from 1947 to 1949<sup>8</sup> and, thanks to the interests and studies of Pagano, with whom he had an intense relationship, he acquired a certain sensitivity for spontaneous architecture<sup>9</sup>. Thus De Carlo had the opportunity to study the urban fabric of minor centres, coming into contact with natural additions and with the interstitial spaces formed by them; so with this work he noticed that spontaneous architecture was a way of trying to understand the nature of the link between architecture and the environment. In 1954, in regard to the papers published in *Casabella-continuità* on the trulli of Alberobello and the villages of Cameroon, De Carlo showed interest in the diversity of these settlements and in the coherence of the relations established between the inhabitants of those territories and their spatial configuration, stigmatizing the interventions of new construction:

*“La somiglianza sta nelle case che le amministrazioni coloniali o i vari enti per le zone depresse sostituiscono a questi villaggi e a queste case con l'intento presuntuoso di civilizzarne gli abitanti e col risultato di ridurli a quell'inerte livellamento che costituisce l'unico apporto di cui è capace l'organizzazione burocratica delle nostre civiltà.”*<sup>10</sup>

Returning to the theme of the 'great number', this was at the centre of the theoretical contribution that van Eyck made in Aix-en-Provence on the basis of what had been published in *Forum* in the previous June, in which the Dutch architect drew on the compositional process of the paintings *Konkretion I* (1945-46) [Fig. 2] and *Konkretion III* (1947) by the Swiss painter Richard Paul Lohse, whom he met during his stay in Zurich from 1942 to 1946<sup>11</sup>. As reported by Jos Bosman<sup>12</sup>, in the journal *TEAM*, founded after Hoddesdon congress, in November 1952 Lohse explained the expressive quality of numbers, focusing on the fact that by imparting a rhythm to similar elements it is possible to understand the conditions of equilibrium of the plural: “the individual (the singular) less circumscribed within itself will reappear in another dimension as soon as the general, the repetitive is

8 See Francesco Samassa, “«Un edificio non è un edificio non è un edificio». L'anarchitettura di Giancarlo De Carlo» in *Giancarlo De Carlo. Percorsi*, ed. Francesco Samassa (Padova: Il Poligrafo, 2004), 131. It is also interesting to note that in those years Albini was working on the hotel-refuge Pirovano in Cervinia. See Fabrizio Brunetti, “Dal QT8 al P.I.M. Dagli anni della ricostruzione a quelli della ‘grande speranza’”, in *Giancarlo De Carlo*, ed. Fabrizio Brunetti and Fabrizio Gesi (Firenze: Alinea, 1981), 33-70.

9 As it is known, Pagano organized the “Mostra dell'architettura rurale” at the VI Triennale di Milano in 1936, which influenced De Carlo when he curated the “Mostra dell'architettura spontanea” with Ezio Cerutti and Giuseppe Samonà at the IX Triennale di Milano in 1951.

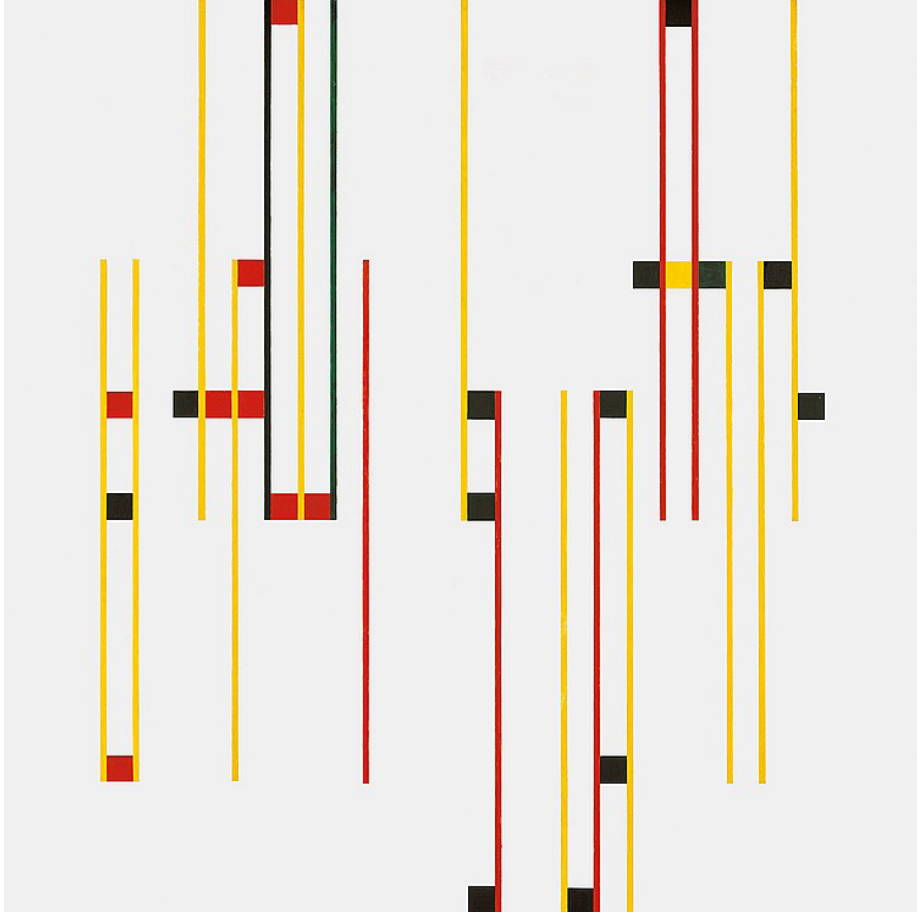
On the first exhibition see Giuseppe Pagano and Guarniero Daniel, *Architettura rurale italiana* (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli Editore, 1936); on the second exhibition see Giancarlo De Carlo, “Mostra dell'architettura spontanea” in *Nona Triennale di Milano. Catalogo*, ed. Agnoldomenico Pica (Milano: S.A.M.E., 1951), 89-97. Moreover, Van Eyck was also actively involved in this Triennale. In fact, together with Jan Rietveld – son of the more famous Gerrit – he designed the layout of the Dutch section, based on the presentation of the main works responsible for the development of *Nieuwe Bouwen* before the war, with a second part dedicated to the continuation of this strand after 1940.

10 “The similarity lies in the houses with which the colonial administrations or the various bodies in charge of depressed areas replace these villages and these houses with the paternalistic intent of civilizing their inhabitants and with the result of reducing them to that inert levelling which is the only contribution the bureaucratic organization of our civilizations is capable of [Translated by the Author].” It is interesting to note, moreover, the underlying criticism of Western civilization, unable to interpret and enhance the peculiarities of those settlements. Giancarlo De Carlo, commentary to Enzo Minchilli, “I Trulli”, *Casabella-continuità* 200 (1954): 19.

11 See Francis Strauven, *Aldo van Eyck*, 95-99.

12 Cf., J. Bosman, “I CIAM del dopoguerra: un bilancio del Movimento Moderno”, *Rassegna* 52 (1992): 6-21.





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subordinated to the laws of dynamic equilibrium, i.e. harmony in motion.<sup>13</sup> The problem concerned the control of 'great quantity', i.e. the possibility of organizing multiplicity in order to avoid the risk of monotonous and unidentified aggregations such as those responding to the 'accumulative nature of today's cities'. In these terms, van Eyck reopened the matter at CIAM 9:

In order that we may overcome the menace of quantity now that we are faced with *l'habitat pour le plus grand nombre*, the aesthetics of number, the laws of what I should like to call 'Harmony in Motion' must be discovered. Projects should attempt to solve the aesthetic problems that result through the standardisation of constructional elements; through the repetition or grouping of such housing units, similar or dissimilar; through the repetition of such housing groups, similar or dissimilar (theme and its mutation and variation).<sup>14</sup>

Until the date of the Aix Congress, Giancarlo De Carlo had approached the question of 'great number' autonomously, without international references. In the first half of the 1950s, most of his projects were for the INA-casa. As part of those projects, he began to investigate the possibilities of additive compositional method, based on the iteration of cellular units. In particular, it was in the project for a nucleus of residences in Cesate (1953) [Fig. 3] that De Carlo took a step forward in this sense, albeit in a way that was still too abstract from the context. Here emerged the desire to respond in a similar way to problems

<sup>13</sup> Aldo van Eyck, "Lohse and the aesthetic meaning of number. Translation of a Statement published in Forum, June 1952," in *Aldo Van Eyck Writings. Collected Articles and Other Writings 1947-1998*, ed. Vincent Ligtelijn, Francis Strauven (Amsterdam: Sun Publishers, 2008), 56.

<sup>14</sup> Aldo van Eyck, "Aesthetic of Number. Statement at CIAM 9, Aix-en-Provence, 1953," in *Aldo Van Eyck Writings*, 56.

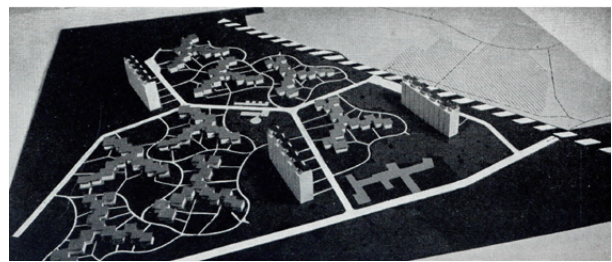
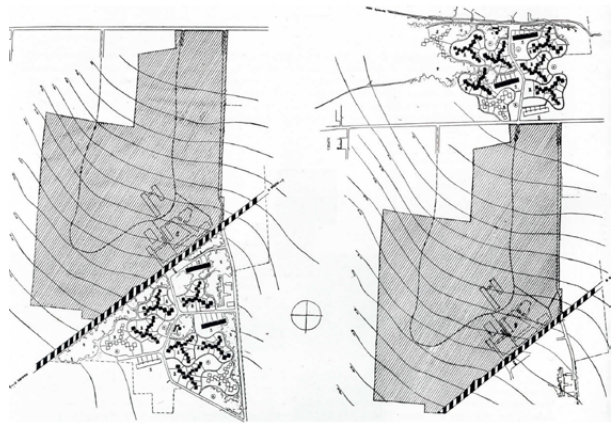
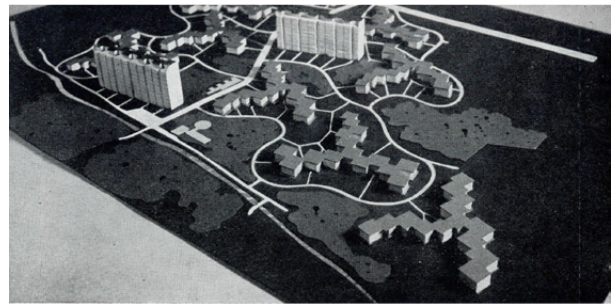
Fig. 2  
Richard Paul Lohse, *Konkretion I* (1945-46).

related to housing and urban planning, according to a principle of inseparability between the two disciplines that would characterize an important theoretical trace of both architects. This project was based on the adoption of elementary building types, aggregated according to different associative modalities, but responding to an open and elastic scheme, so that it could be modified for a precise definition in the application phase. The most interesting thing is the passage from a housing unit to its repetition to form a neighborhood anticipating, albeit in an embryonic way, the 'reciprocity' theorized by van Eyck between the structure of the house and that of the city, and thus the inseparability between architecture and urban planning. Moreover, in De Carlo's description of the project there already were the first elements of the theme of 'participation', in line with what was being formulated in the Ciam, in particular by van Eyck, regarding the need to take into account potential future expansion in the design of urban settlements ('growth and change'):

*Il lavoro di progettazione non si risolverà nella creazione di un organismo astratto per una immaginata generalizzazione dei gruppi umani, ma nell'adeguamento elastico di un metodo e di una concezione formale alle reali esigenze di abitanti veri. Gli abitanti stessi con le loro scelte e la prerogativa di far giocare il peso delle loro esigenze, contribuiranno direttamente a determinare la forma finale dell'organismo nel quale vivranno.*<sup>15</sup>

The description of Cesate's project, reported on the pages of *Casabella-continuità*, followed those of previous housing projects in Sesto San Giovanni and Baveno. The transition from the project in Sesto San Giovanni to the second one in Baveno marks a decisive turning point in the approach to the housing theme. In the article dedicated to them, the architect criticized the 'rational cornerstone' on which the first intervention rested - challenged moreover, by the changes made by the inhabitants themselves - whose primary concern was to "provide objective conditions of habitability". With regard to the subsequent project, De Carlo argued that:

*"Conta l'orientamento e conta il verde e la luce e potersi isolare, ma più di tutto conta vedersi, parlare, stare insieme. Più di tutto conta comunicare.*



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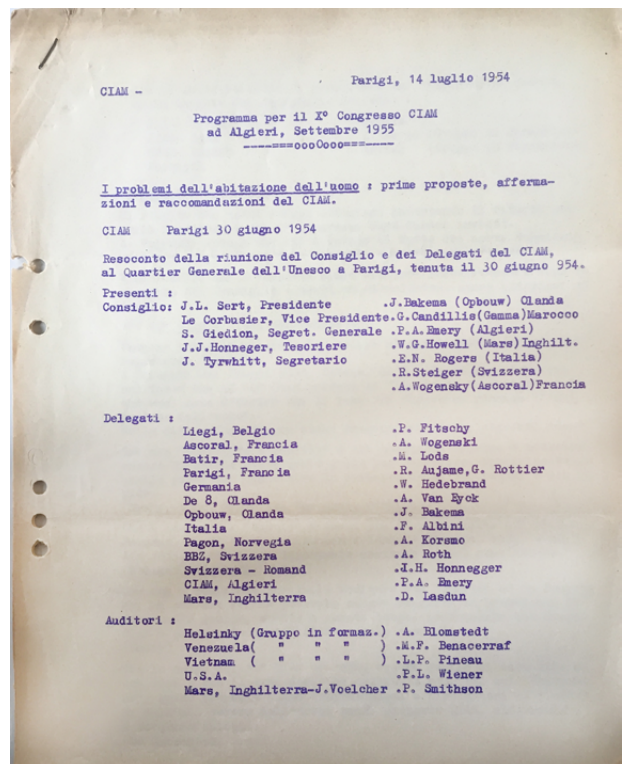
15 "The design work will not result in the creation of an abstract organism for an imagined generalization of human groups, but in the flexible adaptation of a method and a formal conception to the actual needs of the actual inhabitants. The inhabitants themselves, with their choices and the prerogative have their needs factored in, will contribute directly to determining the final form of the organism in which they will live [Translated by the Author]." Giancarlo De Carlo, "Studio per un nucleo residenziale," *Casabella-continuità* 201 (1954): insert between pp. 32-33.

Fig. 3  
Giancarlo De Carlo, Studio per un nucleo residenziale a Cesate, 1953. From: *Casabella-continuità* 201 (1954).

Con questa esperienza ho progettato la casa di Baveno.<sup>16</sup>

This statement anticipated what De Carlo would explain much later in Franco Bunčuga's well-known book interview, in which the explicit reference to van Eyck is intended to highlight a tangible common intention between the two architects:

*In particolare van Eyck si preoccupava di configurare lo spazio in modo da favorire la comunicazione. Ripudiava le codificazioni del Movimento Moderno (a casa l'uomo mangia, cucina e dorme, mentre invece lavora e gioca da un'altra parte) e cercava le basi di un modo di abitare complesso in luoghi dove tutte le attività possano intersecarsi, come accade nella vita, come deve accadere nella vita. Nella sostanza il nostro era un atteggiamento contro la specializzazione – dello spazio come della vita umana – che consideravamo pericolosa perché appiattisce gli individui e genera disgregazione sociale.<sup>17</sup>*



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After Ciam 9, the preparatory phase of Ciam 10 began, which took place in Dubrovnik in 1956, during which Team 10 was formed, or rather was recognized as such<sup>18</sup>. The success of the African paradigm – fuelled, in particular, by van Eyck's position – proved so successful that Algiers was initially chosen as the venue for the for Ciam 10 [Fig. 4], a possibility was later ruled out due to the onset of the Algerian War of Independence. Also in this preparation phase there were important points of convergence between van Eyck and the Italian Ciam group<sup>19</sup>, as both rejected the classification of the Smithsons based on the

16 "Orientation, green spaces, light, and the possibility to isolate oneself do matter, but what matters the most is to see each other, to talk to each other, to be together. Communication is more important than anything else. With this experience I designed the house of Baveno [Translated by the Author]." Giancarlo De Carlo, "Casa d'abitazione a Baveno," *Casabella-continuità* 201 (1954): 29.

17 "In particular, van Eyck was concerned with configuring the space in such a way as to facilitate communication. He repudiated the codifications of the Modern Movement (at home man eats, cooks and sleeps, while instead he works and plays elsewhere) and sought the foundations of a complex way of living in places where all activities can intersect, as happens in life. In essence, ours was an attitude against specialization – of space as well as of human life – which we considered dangerous because it flattens individuals and generates social disintegration [Translated by the Author]." Franco Bunčuga and Giancarlo De Carlo, *Conversazioni su architettura e libertà* (Milan: elèuthera, 2010), 78.

18 It was during the preparation phase for Ciam 10, in which De Carlo did not participate, that he, representing young Italians, took part in a preliminary meeting held at La Sarraz in 1955 together with Rogers, representative of the historic group, and the other Ciam delegates. On this occasion, De Carlo said: "Team X officially never existed. He has never drawn up a birth certificate or written a manifesto. [...] But if at least one wanted to know when it was born, my version is that it was born at the pre-conference that had been held in 1955, in the Castle of La Sarraz [...]. On the morning of the first day the elders – Giedion Max Bill, Tyrwhitt, Wogenscky, Rogers, maybe Roth and a few others – had locked themselves in a room and by mid-afternoon had not yet come out to tell us how they had decided to discuss it. Then we, fed up, began to argue on our own and, who had them, to show others some heliographic copies of their work. That's how Team 10 was formed [Translated by the Author]." Lamberto Rossi, *Giancarlo De Carlo. Architetture* (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1988), 239.

19 The contribution of the Italian group was of great importance for the organization of Ciam 10, in particular as regards the presentation methods of the projects. Specific information can be found in: *Proposte del Gruppo Italiano*, pp. 1-3, Università Iuav di Venezia-Archivio Progetti, fondo Giancarlo De Carlo, seg. De Carlo-atti/030, fascicolo: CIAM 1955-1966.

Fig. 4  
"Programma per il X Congresso CIAM ad Algeri, Settembre 1955". From: Università Iuav di Venezia-Archivio Progetti, fondo Giancarlo De Carlo.

'four levels of association', illustrated in the "Doorn Manifesto" of 1954. This is the well-known 'city-town-village-isolate' diagram borrowed from Patrick Geddes' "Valley Section" and intended to replace the principle of functional zoning expressed in the *Athens Charter*. In particular, in the document entitled *Orientalion* drafted by van Eyck in October 1954 as an alternative guideline to the English approach, some themes emerged that would enter, shortly thereafter, De Carlo's theoretical and design imaginary. Among them, the most important are: 'the great reality of doorstep or in-between', i.e. the need to recognize human relationships and those between people and things as the main aspect of design; 'the aesthetic of number' which, as already mentioned, represented a strategy to address the threat of mass society and to respond 'architecturally' to the problem of standardization; 'growth and change', i.e. the introduction of time as a positive factor of a project, to be understood as the possibility of providing flexible planimetric schemes so as to allow its development by virtue of the needs of the inhabitants and of natural transformations.

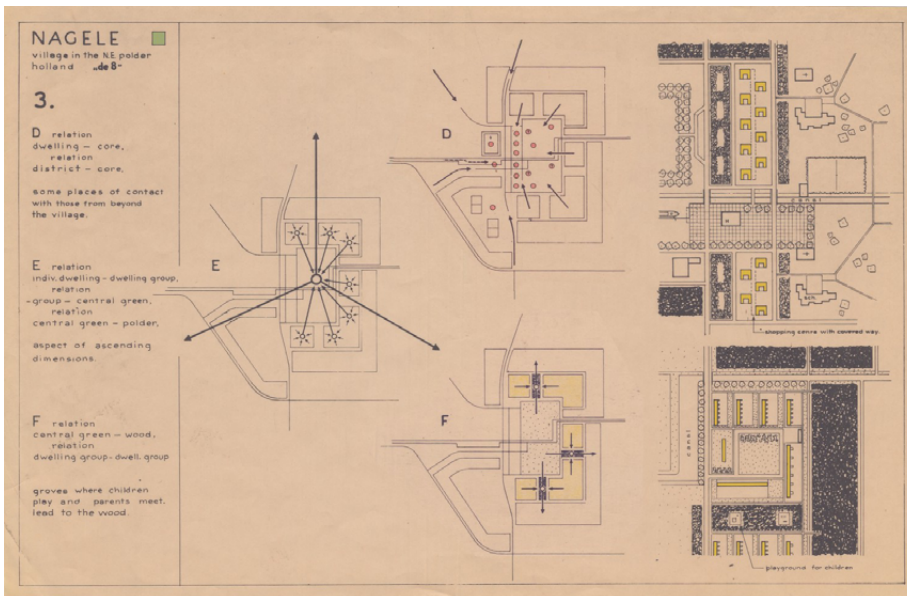
On arriving at Ciam 10 in Dubrovnik, which took place between August 3 and 13, 1956, the division between the old school and the new generation in command became immediately clear, not only because they were each on the respective congress commissions, but also because of the absence of some of the historical protagonists of Ciam such as Le Corbusier, Gropius and van Eesteren. On that occasion, van Eyck presented two groups of panels: one for himself and the other together with his group, the De 8 from Amsterdam<sup>20</sup>. The latter case, represented in the "Nagele Grid", concerned the construction of a new village in the Noordoostpolder, the largest single drained strip of land in Holland after the Second World War. From the very first moment, van Eyck's contribution was distinguished by a non-hierarchical conception of the different classes of workers included in the plan and by a more general aspiration to a level of social equity to be expressed through the spatial composition of the project. Thus, he gave shape to his ideals through a concept he defined as "a space within space", a settlement with a predominantly spatial character capable of standing out within the boundless, flat space of the polder. Here too, as in the project for Pendeucht II, presented in Hoddesdon in 1951 by the Rotterdam-based Ciam group, Opbouw – of which Jacob Berend Bakema was one of the leading representatives – there was a cross-reference between the common open spaces created within the individual 'units' and the larger one containing the core of public activities<sup>21</sup>. The substantial difference between the two projects lies in the different way in which the harmonic relationship of the parts is

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20 See Dirk van den Heuvel, "Lost Identity Grid, 1956", in *Team 10 1953-81*, 56-57; Max Risselada, "Nagele Grid, 1956", in *Team 10 1953-81*, 58-59. See also Annie Pedret, *Team 10: an archival history* (London – New York: Routledge, 2013), 179-191.

21 For Bakema, relationships between things were more important than things themselves. He developed this 'relational conception' of architecture from the early 1940s onwards. Within projects such as Pendeucht I and II he pursued this objective through a principle of spatial continuity aimed at connecting people. His conceptions had some influence on Van Eyck's thinking: "The 'Social-Cosmic-Spatial Composition' he has in mind is the three-dimensional expression of social relations between liberated individuals in an open society. The spatial openness and flexibility of architecture must give expression to human liberty [...]." Francis Strauven, *Aldo van Eyck*, 218.





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experienced, between them and as a whole, as explained by Francis Strauven:

*“Le unità di Pendrecht erano identiche tra loro e coordinate in aggiunta, mentre le unità di Nagele erano tutte diverse e unite secondo un modello più complesso e non ripetitivo. Le diverse strisce residenziali erano unite a formare da luogo a luogo versioni nuove dello stesso tema: l’unità centrifuga, il cui spazio interno era via via risolto come giardino o come piazzetta.”<sup>22</sup>*

Particularly significant was the third of the four panels on display, specifically dedicated to the representation of the types of relationships that the project intended to foster, such as the one between the core and the housing groups or between the latter and individual housing units [Fig. 5].

His individual presentation, entitled “Lost Identity Grid”, again composed of four panels, was focused on some of the Playgrounds projects scattered across the city of Amsterdam, in which the issue of the identity of the citizens with respect to their urban context was raised, starting from the privileged relationship that children establish with it. At the date of the tenth Ciam, 10 years after his involvement in the Urban Planning section of the Amsterdam Department of Public Works, van Eyck could already boast the realization of about twenty projects for children’s outdoor play and experimentation with different compositional techniques. The photographs expressed a desire to bring back fragments of real life that testified to the concrete results of his work. The focal point of the presentation was the human interrelationships and the different ways in which they occur. The photographs depicted general views and some details of playgrounds – Zaanhof (1948-50), Frederik Hendrikplantsoen (1949), Saffierstraat (1950-51) – whose compositional aspects have a two-fold reference: on the

<sup>22</sup> “Pendrecht’s units were identical with each other and coordinated in addition, while Nagele’s units were all different and united according to a more complex and non-repetitive model. The different residential strips were joined together to form new versions of the same theme from place to place: the centrifugal unit, whose interior space was gradually resolved as a garden or a small square [Translated by the Author].” Francis Strauven, “Il contributo olandese: Bakema e Van Eyck,” *Rassegna* 52 (1992): 53.

Fig. 5

Third panel of four of van Eyck’s ‘Nagele Grid’ as presented at Ciam 10. From: Max Risselada and Dirk van den Heuvel, ed. Team 10 1953-81. In search of a utopia of the present. Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2005.

one hand, those from the artistic avant-garde, with particular reference to the works of the sculptor Constantin Brancusi and the couple Hans Arp and Sophie Taeuber, whose elementary simplicity, the use of biomorphic forms and decentralized symmetry, as well as the complex composition of regular three-dimensional forms such as the cube and the cylinder, were appreciated by van Eyck; on the other hand, a further source of inspiration can be found in the primitive forms observed during visits to African villages, such as those of the Dogon, from which van Eyck drew the inspiration for the fusion of biomorphic and geometric forms in a 'dynamic order'. All this almost always taking advantage of the opportunities arising from those 'in-between spaces', i.e. those interstitial places resulting from the damage of war and characterized by prolonged underutilization, which qualified as 'privileged relationship spaces'.

These projects, such as the Children's Home mentioned below, include the main points of contact between the Dutch architect and Giancarlo De Carlo, in particular with regard to the primacy of 'open space as a privileged place for social relations', together with the theme of 'identity', which De Carlo pursued in other ways, more oriented towards the history of places and the reinterpretation of the space-formal characteristics of the built environment.

### **Designing the 'great number'.**

#### **The last Ciam and the start of the personal path of Team 10.**

Immediately after the Dubrovnik Congress, a long period of thinking on the future of the Ciam and the need for its reorganization ensued, which resulted in the choice to keep the old name with the addition of the subtitle "Research Group for Social and Visual Relationship", so as to evoke the new paradigm on which it was based. This choice was accompanied by the termination of the national groups, the Council and the standing committees, setting the new model on a non-hierarchical structure in which participants presented themselves in their personal capacity. Thus, Ciam 11 – later renamed 'Ciam '59' to mark the difference between the old and the new organization – saw the Netherlands as the host country and the Kröller-Muller Museum in Otterlo as the venue of the meeting held in September 1959.

Among the most significant events, one in particular played a pivotal role in the Congress and saw the members of the Italian group as protagonists: Giancarlo De Carlo, Ignazio Gardella, Vico Magistretti and Ernesto Nathan Rogers. This is the controversy raised by Smithson and Bakema about the criticality of the Velasca Tower designed by BBPR and presented by Rogers. The project in Milan offered the opportunity to tackle one of the most important theoretical outcomes of the anti-functional protest, namely the reinterpretation of local specificities. The accusation that Peter Smithson made against Rogers consisted of a supposed desire for historicist formalism, full of both aesthetic and ethical meanings, which according to the English architect were incapable of expressing the nature and ambitions of the new society. The same criticisms

involved the work of all the four Italian architects, thus also including De Carlo's contribution. He presented the project of a building for housing and shops built in Matera between 1956 and 1957, in the main street of the "Spine Bianche" district, whose overall plan was led by Carlo Aymonino. It should be noted that this building represents an isolated episode since De Carlo had participated in the national competition with a proposal – which was discarded, but which earned him the collaboration with the winning group – based on the neighborhood unit<sup>23</sup>, in the wake of the Cesate intervention. Also in this case, the spaces obtained from the repetition of modular cells take on a fundamental role in the aims of the project, having a more communal connotation<sup>24</sup>.

The language used in the aforementioned building showed the reworking of some local characteristics, albeit with some innovative accents concerning the spatial distribution. This reworking, in Peter Smithson's accusation, put De Carlo and Rogers together on a similar conservative view. To van Eyck Matera represented an example of 'casbah' that De Carlo was unable to interpret "because he saw it as a symbol of oppression and poverty."<sup>25</sup>

The Italian architect responded to the accusations of betrayal made by Bakema and Peter Smithson with criticism of their work concerning the "sociological rigorism" and "figurative utopianism" of the former, and the "ideological schematism" of the latter. He was also critical of van Eyck, despite the positive opinion expressed on the Orphanage project<sup>26</sup>. This aspect is of great importance for the interpretation of the formal similarities that will emerge, as we will see later, in some projects made by De Carlo after Otterlo.

Perhaps more important than his design contribution is the report he presented at Otterlo entitled *Memoria sui contenuti dell'architettura moderna*. In it, De Carlo unveiled his willingness to overcome the contradictions of the Modern Movement, immediately aligning his position with that of the other members of Team 10, albeit from a different angle, as can be seen from this passage: "What is really needed is the direction of modern architecture towards new 'national paths' which allow it to become part of the active context of the Society it must serve, and to carry forward that same progressive action which the internationalism of the twenties proposed doing by other means."<sup>27</sup>

23 See Giancarlo De Carlo, "Il risultato di un concorso," *Casabella-continuità* 231 (1959).

24 On these project see Fabrizio Brunetti and Fabrizio Gesi, *Giancarlo De Carlo*, 97-99; Federico Bilò, *Tessiture dello spazio. Tre progetti di Giancarlo De Carlo del 1961* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2014).

25 Clelia Tuscano, "Everybody has his own story. Interview with Aldo van Eyck," in *Team 10 1953-81. In search of a utopia of the present*, ed. Max Risselada and Dirk van den Heuvel (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2005), 328.

26 "A convinced follower of Neoplasticism and a strong supporter of the autonomy of form – to which he attributed magical virtues and meanings – he unintentionally carried the toughest attack on those rationalist assumptions which, together with his Dutch colleagues, he declared he wanted to support. It should be noted, however, that, despite the contradictions, the project he presented for a children's home in Amsterdam was certainly one of his most valuable. [...] His personality has been considerably consolidated in recent years and the contribution he has made through his work [...] and the dissemination of his ideas have placed him in the forefront of contemporary architecture [Translated by the Author]." Giancarlo De Carlo, "L'ultimo convegno dei CIAM. Le conclusioni," in *Questioni di architettura e urbanistica*, ed. Giancarlo De Carlo (Urbino: Argalia, 1964), 96.

27 Giancarlo De Carlo, Report given at the Otterlo conference – 7th – 15th Sept. 1959, p. 13. Università Iuav di Venezia-Archivio Progetti, fondo Giancarlo De Carlo, seg. De Carlo-atti/030, fascicolo: CIAM 1955-1966. Trad. it. Giancarlo De Carlo, "L'ultimo convegno dei Ciam con una «Memoria sui contenuti dell'architettura moderna»,» in *Questioni di architettura e urbanistica*, ed. Giancarlo De Carlo (Urbino: Argalia, 1964), 88-89.

Unlike De Carlo, who was participating for the first time in an official capacity in Ciam, van Eyck came to Otterlo with a series of panels that encompassed a theoretical and design experience already capable of expressing some of the main theoretical issues that would inform his subsequent experiments. But before discussing the merits of his individual contribution, it is necessary to dwell on an initiative that saw the Dutch architect among its greatest protagonists and that found in the venue of the Congress of Otterlo a first important opportunity for dissemination. This is the relaunch of the Dutch journal *Forum* in 1959<sup>28</sup>. The journal, which produced a strong impact on the Dutch architectural culture of those years, was immediately characterized as the main tool to spread the paradigm shift brought about by Team 10<sup>29</sup>, specifically based on the contribution of the Dutch members of the group modelled on van Eyck's vision. As Hertzberger would say a few years later:

*"Lo scopo era di dimostrare che le possibilità derivanti dal mutamento e quelle basate sulla permanenza non sono necessariamente in contrasto, ma possono anzi potenziarsi a vicenda."*<sup>30</sup>

At Otterlo, a pre-publication of the seventh issue, entitled *The Story of Another Idea*<sup>31</sup>, was presented and distributed to the participants in the Congress, which embodied the spirit of the new editorial series. At the end of the essay, van Eyck illustrated the five Dutch projects capable of expressing the new themes in a concise reasoning: the experiments of the Pendrecht I-II and Alexanderpolder I-II districts of the Opbouw group and a project by Piet Blom<sup>32</sup>.

As for his individual contribution, with his theoretical section entitled *Is Architecture Going to Reconcile Basic Values?* the Dutch architect tried to draw a line of continuity not so much with the tradition of the Ciam, but with a certain mid-century avant-garde segment that to the Dutch architect represented

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28 From No. 7 of 1959 to No. 3 of 1963, the new editorial staff of the magazine, made up of Bakema and Van Eyck, architects Dick Apon, Gert Boon and Herman Hertzberger, pedagogue Joop Hardy and graphic designer Jurriaan Schroferde, produced 17 dossiers. The composition of the group and the informal and non-hierarchical approach of the editorial staff foreshadowed the character of the future meetings of Team 10 and the Otterlo Congress itself, in which only Bakema played a preponderant role by virtue of her organizational responsibilities.

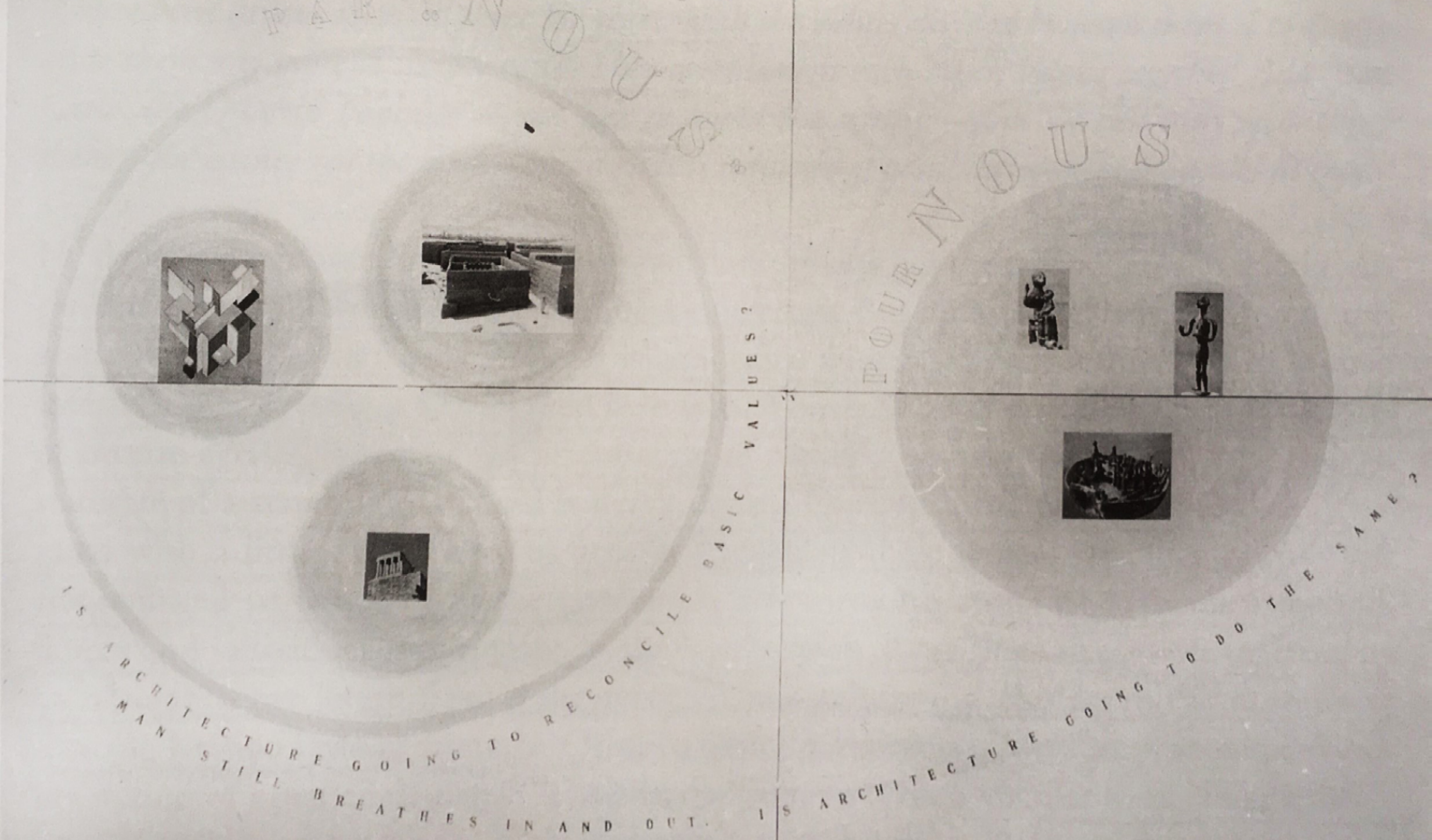
29 Like *Forum*, but with a greater time projection, the same role was taken on by the magazine *Le carré bleu* founded in 1958 by the Finnish CIAM group. Giancarlo De Carlo will actively participate through the publication of articles since 1960.

30 "The aim was to show that the possibilities resulting from change and those based on permanence are not necessarily at odds with each other, but rather can reinforce each other [Translated by the Author]." Herman Hertzberger, "Aldo van Eyck," *Spazio e Società* 24 (1983): 80.

31 The essay retraced in a polemical way the entire parable of the Ciam, tracing, on the one hand, the progressive change of the organization in a more static form and, on the other, the parallel contributions that, starting from the first presence of Bakema and van Eyck at Bridgewater's Ciam in 1947, contributed to the gradual emergence of Team 10. Criticism of the Ciam was carried out in a timely manner, analyzing the consistency of the various meetings that marked its history. Thus, if the account of the 'early Ciams' oscillated between positive judgements regarding a certain degree of interaction with the artistic avant-garde and other negatives regarding the analytical principles and separation of the 'functional city', the history of the post-war Ciams was reviewed in light of the development of what the author defines as 'other ideas'. This expression was intended to summarize the conceptual scope introduced by Team 10 within Ciam, thus producing a Dutch version of the group's ideas and one of the first systematic contributions on the subject. The 'other idea' was based on a relative and not deterministic conception of reality, and considered the city as an 'organism' to be concerned not in functional terms, but in terms of relations at several levels, according to the different scales of human associations. It follows that the architect's aim was to reconnect the inhabitants with their urban fabric, thus assuming the identity parameter as one of the main reference criteria.

32 See Francis Strauven, *Aldo van Eyck*, 346-354; Oscar Newman, *CIAM '59 in Otterlo* (Stuttgart: Karl Krämer Verlag, 1961).





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a constant reference in the development of his theoretical and design activity. The essay opened with the recognition of a 'new consciousness' that had arisen thanks to the contribution of scientists and artists in the beginning of the century, who contributed to the definition of a non-Euclidean vision of reality. This consideration was associated with another one having an anthropological nature, which, evoking the then-contemporary structuralist research addressed by Claude Lévi-Strauss in his *Anthropologie structurale* (1958), was based on the recognition of certain permanent characteristics of the human being, which remain unchanged over time and should be considered in the design phase. In order to satisfy this need, architecture requires the use of certain fundamental values, having an archetypal essence, able to respond to the permanence of certain human constants. Thus van Eyck graphically translated the afore-mentioned theory through a panel entitled "Otterlo Circles" [Fig. 6] – later republished in a second version – with a representation of two circles enclosing, respectively, the space-formal realm of architecture and the social realm of human interrelationships<sup>33</sup>. Van Eyck posited a connection between these two worlds in terms of mutual interaction. Thus, building on the line of thought about the concept of 'doorstep', the new configurative principles had to be oriented towards overcoming the polarity that permeated both the social and architectural spheres, implementing the practice of 'in-between', that is, the process of interaction of dual

33 The first was identified in the set of the three main strands represented, emblematically, through three paradigmatic buildings: the classical one ('immutability and rest') depicted through the Temple of Nike in Athens (first version) and the plan of the Parthenon (second version); the one of the spontaneous constructions ('vernacular of the heart') illustrated through a group of houses in the village of Aoulef in Algerian Sahara (first version) and a plan of Pueblo Arroyo in New Mexico (second version); the modern one ('change and movement'), in both versions embodied by one of Theo van Doesburg's Contra-costructions. The second circle contained, in the first version, three images depicting sculptures from the Bronze Age; in the second, van Eyck replaced the three images with a photograph of a group of Kayapo Indians from the Orinoco basin (Venezuela) dancing in groups.

Fig. 6  
"Otterlo Circles", first version (1959).  
From: Vincent Ligtelijn and Francis Strauven, ed. Aldo Van Eyck Writings. Collected Articles and Other Writings 1947-1998. Amsterdam: Sun Publishers, 2008.

# Vers une „casbah” organisée...



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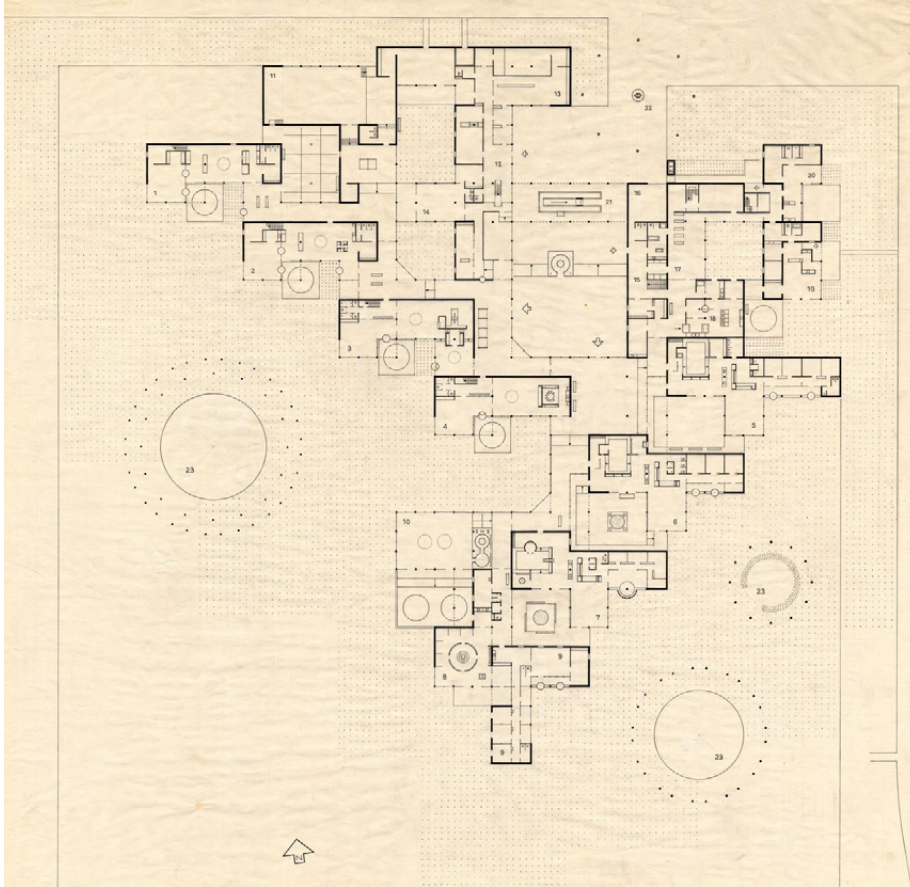
phenomena through the space-formal composition. At the date of the Congress, thanks to his personal evolution as an architect, the three strands highlighted by the Dutch architect were already present in De Carlo's imagination, with the fundamental difference that for the latter the contemplation of the three instances was not aimed at the search for an archetypal condition of architecture.

On the basis of this theory, van Eyck presented four projects that aimed to exemplify the above arguments: the Nagele School (designed 1954-55, built 1955-56), the Congress building for Jerusalem (1958), the Piet Blom's study project "the cities will be inhabited like villages" (1958) and the Children's Home of Amsterdam (designed 1955-57, built 1958-60). The presentation of the projects, also illustrated in a single panel, was marked by two slogans that summarized the theoretical background at the base of the project thinking: '*la plus grande réalité du seuil*' and '*vers une casbah organisée*', the latter also reported in the above-mentioned *Forum* No. 7 [Fig. 7]. This definition is a "poetic image" that expresses a way of organizing space based on a horizontal development with a certain degree of complexity due to the relationship between the underlying order matrix and the variations obtained through modular repetitions. In this model, primacy is assigned to the links between the parts and the open spaces to be generated.

Fig. 7

*Forum* No. 7/1959, p. 248.  
From: Francis Strauven. Aldo van Eyck. *The Shape of Relativity*. Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura, 1998.





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The works presented by van Eyck illustrated a progression in design towards the affirmation of a precise 'configurative discipline' embodied by the Orphanage. The Nagele School showed a compositive approach similar to the one De Carlo adopted in his home in Baveno and in the "Astragalo" housing project in Matera in 1954, although it was characterized by a more dynamic trend. Here the Dutch architect used the same distribution scheme used for the entire composition of the Nagele neighbourhood, presented at Ciam 10. The modules used for the school complex revolve around a main square in a centrifugal fashion, just as the individual classrooms revolve around smaller centers, defining changes in scale that work in a similar way. This project, from a compositional point of view, was still confined to the experimentation of the De 8 and Opbouw groups, as was the Congress building for Jerusalem, also based on the 'centrifugal geometric pattern'. Both projects, despite their anticipatory character, did not yet possess that free development form, but they were rather structured geometrically in an open form typical of the Orphanage. Piet Blom's project<sup>34</sup> focuses on centrifugal composition, which to van Eyck's young pupil was very attracted. The appreciation for Blom's project was such as to earn the publication in *Forum* No. 7. Van Eyck defined it as an actualization of Team 10's ideas and as an evocative combination of harmony in motion, of dual phenomena such as internal-external, individual-collective, etc., which embodied the properties of a 'casbah organis e'.

The Children's Home or Orphanage [Fig. 8], although not an urban-scale project, was characterized by a compositional process capable of adapting even

34 He was one of van Eyck's best disciples, for whom he had great esteem and admiration. The two met during their years of teaching at the Academy of Architecture in Amsterdam (1954-59, coinciding with the design and construction of the Orphanage).

Fig. 8

Aldo van Eyck, Children's Home, ground floor plan. From: Francis Strauven. Aldo van Eyck. *The Shape of Relativity*. Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura, 1998.

to a larger scale, thus succeeding in exemplifying a general theory, an idea of the city at a small scale. Moreover, as Strauven explains, the Orphanage represented the first experimentation with fusion of the three traditions of 'Otterlo Circles' in a new architectural configuration. The whole compositional reasoning was based on dissatisfaction with the old methods based on a simple additive procedure "unable to handle plurality". To it, van Eyck contrasted the method of 'labyrinthine clarity' or 'casbah organisée', which contained both the principle of interaction of dual phenomena and that of 'harmony in motion', concerning the control of multiplicity and the need to prepare a main grid (order) to be transgressed through variations that allow transformation over time ('growth and change') without altering the recognition of the principle of basic organisation. Starting from this basic module, the Orphanage was composed of a series of 'units' which, while respecting the basic orthogonal pattern, were articulated in a very complex internal sequence, in which, however, it is possible to identify the two main diagonals ('roads') along which the eight sections for children of different ages unfold. The rooms are all covered by domes of the same size, while the common areas are identified by larger domes. The entrance of the building is characterized by a real 'in-between space', crossed by a interpenetration of open and closed spaces that articulate the service and administrative areas, including the reception. The relationship between common and closed open spaces, some of which are more reserved, is what characterizes the entire complex and makes visible the compliance with the 'doorstep', in its ability to mediate between the architectural polarities. In other words, here the desired overcoming of the peremptory dualism between inside and outside is realized, generating a flexible and open structure that does not renounce to show an order of implantation. As Herman Hertzberger says:

*Qui per la prima volta troviamo una corrispondenza reale tra i principi enunciati e l'architettura costruita. [...] Nagele conteneva già i germi dell'Orfanotrofo, ma in quest'ultimo la pianta è diventata una vera 'comunità'. L'edificio, con le sue 'strade', le 'piazze' e i corpi edilizi indipendenti, è come una piccola città autonoma. [...] Forse, questa identificazione con una 'piccola città' è già in sé l'atto più creativo e un'innovazione importantissima. Una volta stabilita questa 'connessione', si libera nel progetto tutta una serie di associazioni che danno una nuova dimensione alla qualità degli spazi comuni, 'pubblici'.<sup>35</sup>*

For this reason, van Eyck's work was a sort of manifesto of the Dutch contribution to 'Team 10 thinking'. The need for the limit, albeit articulated as an open form, which characterizes van Eyck's architectural conception, is underlined by Pierluigi Nicolin:

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<sup>35</sup> "Here for the first time we find a real correspondence between the stated principles and the built architecture. [...] Nagele already contained the germs of the Orphanage, but in the latter the plant has become a true 'community'. The building, with its 'streets', 'squares' and independent buildings, is like a small autonomous city. [...] Perhaps, this identification with a 'small town' is already in itself the most creative act and a very important innovation. Once this 'connection' is established, a whole series of associations are released in the project, giving a new dimension to the quality of the common, 'public' spaces [Translated by the Author]." Herman Hertzberger, "Aldo van Eyck," 82.

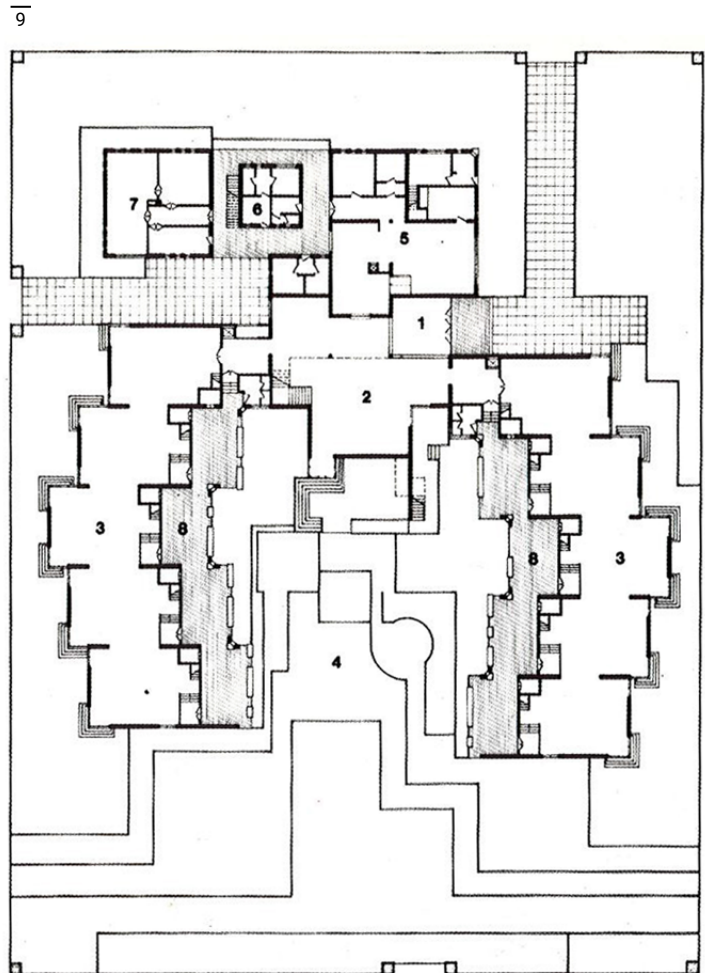


"In questo modo la indefinita accrescibilità, mobilità, flessibilità interna al principio del mat building si chiude in un sistema di relazioni finite e concrete a differenza di quanto avviene nei paralleli tentativi di Candilis, Josic, Woods (Università di Francoforte e di Berlino).<sup>36</sup>"

The influence of the Orphanage was felt immediately after the conclusion of the Ciam, when Team 10 began its autonomous journey, starting from the meeting in Bagnols-sur-Cèze in 1960, where De Carlo immediately established himself among the most active participants. The following year, a more marked design configuration, aimed at accentuating the collective space, began to emerge in De Carlo's work, starting with the projects he developed for the Colonia di Riccione, the Holiday house in Bordighera and the Colonia di Classe (unbuilt). All of the three projects showed a clear additive design process that defines a progression towards the open form, in which "i progetti di De Carlo tendono ad assomigliare sempre meno a degli edifici e sempre più a dei brani urbani."<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, already Lamberto Rossi in 1988 defined the Colonia di Riccione [Fig. 9] as "uno dei primi edifici di De Carlo 'in forma di città' ovvero concepiti come un complesso sistema di relazioni tra attività, strutture e forme."<sup>38</sup> The Holiday house in Bordighera showed a 'centrifugal' pattern of cells around open spaces, while the unbuilt Colonia di Classe, apart from the formal similarities, embodied all those principles defined by van Eyck in *Orientation*. Of course, these projects do not demonstrate an unprecedented design approach on the part of De Carlo, but are a clear manifestation of the assimilation of some of the principles followed in those years internationally, especially by the members of Team 10 and Aldo van Eyck in particular, who gave a more precise direction to what De Carlo had already experienced from his projects for INA-casa. These projects heralded an expansion of his linguistic vocabulary that would only become more mature after the Otterlo meeting.

At Team 10 meeting in Royaumont in 1962, van Eyck presented the diagram



36 "In this way the indefinite increase, mobility, flexibility within the principle of mat building closes in a system of finite and concrete relationships unlike what happens in the parallel attempts of Candilis, Josic, Woods (University of Frankfurt and Berlin) [Translated by the Author]." Pierluigi Nicolini, "Aldo van Eyck. La trama e il labirinto," *Lotus International* 11 (1976): 105.

37 "De Carlo's projects tend to look less and less like buildings and more and more like urban pieces [Translated by the Author]." Federico Bilò, *Tessiture dello spazio. Tre progetti di Giancarlo De Carlo del 1961*, 97.

38 "One of De Carlo's first buildings 'in the form of a city' or conceived as a complex system of relations between activities, structures and forms [Translated by the Author]." Lamberto Rossi, *Giancarlo De Carlo*, 58.

Fig. 9

Giancarlo De Carlo, Colonia di Riccione, ground floor plan. From: Lamberto Rossi. Giancarlo De Carlo. Architettura. Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1988.

containing the analogy “the leaf is the tree, the tree is the leaf; the house is the city, the city is the house”, to correct what he called the false organic city-tree analogy<sup>39</sup>. This was an implicit criticism of the project presented by Candilis for Toulouse-le-Mirail, based on a tree structure. On that occasion, the Dutch architect presented Blom’s Noah’s Ark project to exemplify the analogy in his diagram. This project was criticized during the meeting, especially by the Smithsons, thus generating a rift that saw two opposing ways of understanding the question of ‘large numbers’. In particular, Peter Smithson argued that the city is not a big house and that they were trying to design it in such a way as to allow free development without compromising the functioning of the other elements. Van Eyck’s response was clearly expressed in the same year by the pages of *Forum* 16, No. 3, in which the architect published his famous “Steps Toward a Configurative Discipline”. Here he summed up his ‘configurative theory’ through key words such as ‘reciprocity’, ‘aesthetics of number’, ‘identification devices’, but above all by advocating the need to foresee flexible but controllable urban systems, as emerges from a passage by metabolists Fumihiko Maki and Masato Ohtaka referred to in his essay: “The ideal is not a system, on the other hand, in which the physical structure of the city is at the mercy of unpredictable change. The ideal is a kind of master form which can move into ever new states of equilibrium and yet maintain visual consistency and a sense of continuing order in the long run.”<sup>40</sup>

In 1965 at the Team 10 meeting in Berlin, De Carlo presented the Collegio del Colle (1962-66) built as part of the university projects in Urbino, a city that the Italian architect proposed as the venue for the next meeting in 1966. In the same year, even before visiting the complex, van Eyck reviewed this project in a paper published in *Zodiac*, highlighting its dual nature:

What makes this building so house-and city-like (hence successful) besides the consistent use of the same construction as vocabulary materials and colour throughout is also its major advice. It is at once both places; way of access and communication; both open and closed; both inside and outside; both large and small and has, above all, individual and collective meaning. It belongs to the ‘building’ as much as it belongs to the ‘site’, in fact through it the building is the site, the site the building.<sup>41</sup>

For the first time in a project by De Carlo he saw a way of understanding the project in terms of ‘casbah’ – a consideration also made with reference to the Villaggio Matteotti in Terni (1969-75)<sup>42</sup> – thus recovering, in the eyes of the Dutch architect, what Matera had not been able to arouse: “He has just completed a

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39 Dirk van den Heuvel, “Royaumont 1962. The issue of urban infrastructure,” in *Team 10 1953-81*, 100-101. See also Jacob B. Bakema, “Team 10 at Abbaye Royaumont,” in *Team 10 Meetings, 1953-84*, ed. Alison Smithson (New York: Rizzoli, 1991).

40 Aldo van Eyck, “Steps Toward a Configurative Discipline,” (1962), in *Aldo Van Eyck Writings*, 337. This essay is also published in *Architecture Culture 1943-1968. A Documentary Anthology*, ed. Joan Ockman, (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), 347-360. The Italian translation is in *Le parole dell’architettura. Un’antologia di testi teorici e critici: 1945-2000*, ed. Marco Biraghi and Giovanni Damiani (Turin: Einaudi, 2009), 75-99.

41 Aldo van Eyck, “University College in Urbino by Giancarlo De Carlo,” *Zodiac* 16 (1966): 171.

42 See Clelia Tuscano, “Interview with Aldo van Eyck,” 328-331.

building which [...] demonstrates magnificently that old images, whether Urbino or Matera, can still have real contemporary meaning if architects with insight and integrity respond to their message and interpret them in built form for the benefit of the people of today.<sup>43</sup>

Two years after the Team 10 meeting in Urbino, the theme of the great number found an important opportunity to spread in the 14<sup>th</sup> edition of the Triennale di Milano curated by Giancarlo De Carlo and focused on the need to take into account the mass phenomena and the transformation induced by them in architectural and urban design. In order to control these transformations, as De Carlo said, the development of a scientific basis for the architecture of the great number became necessary:

*"Il controllo delle grandi trasformazioni dell'habitat umano e la produzione pressoché illimitata di oggetti che si collocano nell'ambiente fisico, implica l'adozione di strumenti di analisi e di intervento progettuale precisi, fondati su tecniche complesse e rigorose."<sup>44</sup>*

A rigour similar to that shown by van Eyck in the pages of his "Steps Toward a Configurative Discipline", albeit from a perspective that favoured the compositional dimension of the project, mindful of its past in avant-garde art. The section that the Dutch architect designed for the same Triennale, entitled "The Small Scale for the Large", focused on the contradiction between the overabundance of technological means and the inability of our society to address the issue of large numbers in a balanced way, especially with regard to the environment, both natural and built. As well known, the occupation of the rooms of the Triennale by the demonstrators generated a stasis in the exhibition that reopened to the public almost a month after its inauguration on May 30, 1968. This event had a negative impact on De Carlo who decided to resign from the executive council and suspend his collaboration with the Triennale until 1995. This condition of distrust was amplified in the same years by the hostility he suffered in the academic sphere because of his position against the specialization of disciplinary knowledge, conducted inside and outside the university environment.

The end of the Sixties represented a downward phase also for the history of Team 10, as demonstrated by the results of the Urbino Meeting and the consequent need to re-evaluate the group's intentions at the Paris Meeting the following year, in 1967, which was attended by a small group of representatives. This situation continued also during the Seventies, until one of the last official meetings, that of Spoleto in 1976 [Fig. 10], the second organized by De Carlo ten years after the first. Here the various themes followed one another in a very informal discussion, partly resulting from a visit to De Carlo's latest creation in

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43 Aldo van Eyck, "University College," 171.

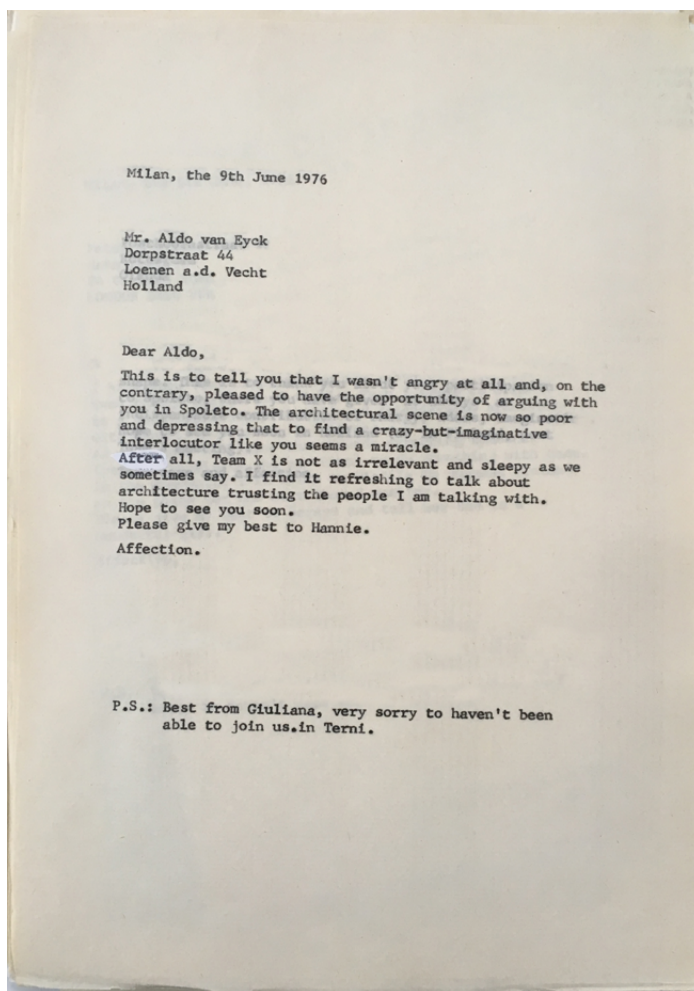
44 "The control of the great transformations of the human habitat and the almost unlimited production of objects placed in the physical environment, implies the adoption of precise analysis and design intervention tools, based on complex and rigorous techniques [Translated by the Author]." Giancarlo De Carlo, *La piramide rovesciata* (Bari: De Donato, 1968), 42.

Terni. It is interesting to note the dissatisfaction with the contemporary architectural landscape and a certain glimmer of hope with Team 10 that emerges from a letter sent by the Italian architect to van Eyck three days after the end of the meeting: "The architectural scene is now so poor and depressing that to find a crazy-but-imaginative interlocutor like you seems a miracle. After all, Team 10 is not as irrelevant and sleepy as we sometimes say."<sup>45</sup>

The IACP housing project designed by De Carlo in Mazzorbo between 1979 and 1985 can be seen as the final point of this evolution as this is one of the last projects in which van Eyck's lesson is visible, in particular with regard to the general organization of the 36 lodgings built. It is expressed through an additive process based on the 'non-identical modular repetition' of housing cells of 45, 70 and 95 square meters aggregated in building units to form small open courtyards in which collective life takes place. The geometric scheme responds to the criteria of typological differentiation and functional integration – on the ground floors there were small rooms for commercial use. The use of some spatial elements from the local tradition made it possible to fine-tune the above organization on the model of the historical fabric of Burano: the spatial *continuum* existing between the main street (*corso principale*), the *sotoportego* and the *campo* constitutes the main 'identity device' of the housing project – a definition used by van Eyck himself. In Mazzorbo, as in Urbino, the use of innovative instances and elements aimed at reinterpreting contextual factors generated an unprecedented complexity which dignified 'contradiction' as a positive factor of the project.

## Conclusions

Through the leitmotif of the 'great number', which accompanies the entire history of Team 10, it is possible to find in the work of the two architects examined a similar recourse to the additive process through the iteration of modular units and a consequent evolution towards the 'open form', albeit with different semantic declinations and linguistic accents. As evoked in the title of this essay, their architectural conception, which inevitably invades the more general ideological sphere, oscillates between a need for order or 'measure' and another capable of



10

Fig. 10

Letter sent by Giancarlo De Carlo to Aldo Van Eyck, Milan, 9 June 1976, single sheet. From: Università luav di Venezia-Archivio Progetti, fondo Giancarlo De Carlo.

<sup>45</sup> Letter sent by Giancarlo De Carlo to Aldo van Eyck, Milan, 9 June 1976, single sheet. Università luav di Venezia-Archivio Progetti, fondo Giancarlo De Carlo, seg. De Carlo-atti/044, fascicolo: Team X (Nov. 1963 - Dec. 1981).



contradicting the former through a reactive force – the term ‘contradiction’ often recurs in De Carlo’s writings and, like van Eyck’s ‘chaos’, is always permeated with a positive meaning. Therefore, the binomial ‘order-contradiction’, or even ‘order-freedom’ – more evocative of the anarchic roots of De Carlo’s thought – expresses a common need for contemplation of this double phenomenon<sup>46</sup>. However, this reasoning contains a gap between the two, consisting in the possibility of controlling this disorder. For the Dutch architect, the principle of order corresponds to the modular frame at the base of the project, while for De Carlo it is expressed mainly in the concept of ‘modesty’ and, in particular, in its etymological meaning of *modus*, i.e. ‘limit and measure’<sup>47</sup>. For van Eyck, the variation is represented by the transgression of the ordering system, while for De Carlo it is embodied by a ‘constructive disorder’ identified with ‘participation’, transferring the reasoning from the design plan to the social one:

*L'architettura è per definizione un'attività che 'mette ordine' [...]. Forse anche Vitruvio quando andava a visitare una città si stancava di ammirare le grandi avenues dell'ordine e perciò scantonava nei vicoli del disordine, dove brulicano le attività, si intrecciano i sistemi organizzativi e fioriscono le forme. La verità è che nell'ordine c'è la noia frustrante dell'imposizione mentre nel disordine c'è la fantasia esaltante della partecipazione.*<sup>48</sup>

Another passage by the same author reads:

*Bisogna precisare che per disordine non si intende l'accumulazione di una disfunzione sistematica, ma al contrario l'espressione di una funzionalità di tipo superiore capace di includere e rendere manifesto il gioco complesso di tutte le variabili coinvolte in un evento spaziale. [...] Sappiamo anche che una città, un quartiere o una strada, e perfino un edificio, ci interessano proprio per tutto quello che riesce a sfuggire ai controlli di queste regole, per le espressioni non ammesse che si insinuano tra le smagliature dell'ordine e si rivelano con tutta la ricchezza di stimoli che è propria delle contraddizioni.*<sup>49</sup>

On the other hand, it is in the acceptance of the contradiction as a positive phenomenon that De Carlo absorbs the teaching from Team 10:

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46 As van Eyck says: “What is of the right measure is at the same time big and small, plenty and few, near and far, simple and complex, open and closed, and will always be at the same time part and all, capable of embracing unity and diversity together [Translated by the Author]”. Aldo van Eyck, “Prassi verso una disciplina configurativa,” 76.

47 See Giancarlo De Carlo, “Della modestia in architettura,” *Spazio e Società* 76 (1996).

48 “Architecture is by definition an activity that ‘puts order’ [...]. Perhaps Vitruvius, too, when he went to visit a city, got tired of admiring the great *avenues* of the order and so he would go into the alleys of disorder, where activities swarmed, organizational systems intertwined and forms flourished. The truth is that in order there is the frustrating boredom of imposition while in disorder there is the exhilarating fantasy of participation [Translated by the Author].” Giancarlo De Carlo, “L'architettura della partecipazione,” in *L'architettura degli anni Settanta*, ed. Peter Blake, Giancarlo De Carlo and James Maude Richards (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1973), 134-35.

49 “It should be pointed out that disorder does not mean the accumulation of a systematic dysfunction, but on the contrary the expression of a superior type of functionality capable of including and making manifest the complex game of all the variables involved in a spatial event. [...] We also know that a city, a neighborhood or a street, and even a building, are of interest to us precisely because of everything that manages to escape the control of these rules, because of the impermissible expressions that creep among the stretch marks of order and reveal themselves with all the richness of stimuli that is proper to contradictions [Translated by the Author].” Giancarlo De Carlo, “Perché/come costruire edifici scolastici,” (1969), in *La piramide rovesciata. Architettura oltre il '68*, ed. Filippo De Pieri (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2018), 113.

*“Ecco, se debbo proprio dire cosa ha inciso sul mio sviluppo di architetto, molto più che ai Ciam dovrei riferirmi al Team 10. Anche il Team 10 è solcato di contraddizioni, ma il tessuto che ne risulta le ammette; si può dire perfino che non potrebbe farne a meno.”<sup>50</sup>*

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50 “Well, if I have to say what has affected my development as an architect, much more than the Ciam, I should refer to Team 10. Team 10 is also full of contradictions, but the resulting fabric admits them; one can even say that it could not do without them [Translated by the Author].” Giancarlo De Carlo, “Conversazione su Urbino con Pierluigi Nicolini,” in *Gli spiriti dell'architettura*, ed. Livio Sichirollo, II Edition (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1999), 281.

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# Giancarlo De Carlo and the Industrial Design

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*Industrial design, Interior, Domestic, Modern, Custom*

## /Abstract

Giancarlo De Carlo is best known for his attention towards themes such as participatory design, the concept of project as a series of attempts, the questioning of the modern tradition in the wake of the last CIAM and of the experience gained with Team Ten, his uncertain and painful anarchic stance, the study of ancient architecture and his sensitivity towards regional and spontaneous modes of construction.

It's important therefore to go beyond a simple understanding of the foundation of his professional experience as an architect, to also grasp the rationale behind the formal outcomes of his work, with their technological and material implications, and behind a workflow that was not only supported by logical thinking.

Still a hundred years since his birth, GDC's professional experience highlights a very modern approach that requires new investigations to be completely understood, as his work spanned from projects for whole urban environments, to the curation of small constructive details for spaces or objects.

The centenary of GDC's birth is also an opportunity to investigate sections of his complex experience as a designer of places, cities, buildings and furniture, that have not been entirely explored yet.

The aim of the paper is to investigate the role of GDC as a designer of objects and furniture, the relation with the production and the industry, the accuracy in detailing and solving construction problem related to industrial design products. The text explores three main episodes of the career of GDC as designer: the debate on modern living with his proposals for the Triennale di Milano, the original design carried out for Arflex and the specificity and universality of the urban lamp for Urbino, Mazzorbo e Colletta di Castelbianco.

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Since 2019 he has been involved within a research on the figure of Giancarlo De Carlo. His more comprehensive reflection on figures of "minor" masters is also expressed by the portraits of emblematic characters such as Bruno Zevi and Giuseppe Samonà, published in collective books. He gained experience in archival research, in particular at the Archivio Progetti IUAV in Venice and the Triennale di Milano archive.

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## Introduction

Giancarlo De Carlo (GDC from now on) is mostly known for his contribution to the debate of the city, generally, for his peculiar interpretation, in anthropological strain, of the places, as a design principle. As a professor, GDC has never conformed with the academic currents and dynamics, bringing his experience and his research methods to the universities where he was invited to teach.

The issues accomplished by GDC are multiple, but the most relevant are the participatory planning, the project as a “process of attempts”, the questioning of modern tradition in the past years of the CIAM and in the Team Ten’s experience, his uncertain anarchic position, the study of ancient architecture and the sensibility towards local traditions and spontaneous ways of constructing.

GDC, an intellectual activist and a prestigious designer, has performed his works following overall a political, social and moral, commitment<sup>1</sup>.

However, there is a consistent part of GDC’s experience that has not been considered. It’s a further aspect compared to his side contribution already mentioned, as “the end of architectures”<sup>2</sup> theory, or the defense of the social and community role of architecture against the danger sorted by too authoritarian or selfish approaches.

According to GDC, architecture is referred to the interactions with people, but not in terms of efficiency or influenced by the logics of capitalism.<sup>3</sup> This is accompanied by the comparison between the issues of shapes and geometries, about the materials and building techniques. GDC thinks that architecture is a complex discipline that depends on many factors, and the concept of a shared project is only a part of these. GDC professional experience as an architect,<sup>4</sup> already analyzed, can be further developed to clarify his complete thought in the formal material and technological aspects of the results of his works.

A further chance to know more about GDC – on the centenary of his birth – refers to his ability and his method to analyze two project scales at the same time: from the city space to the attention to smallest details in the environments and in the objects.

According to GDC, the planning of the project, consists in the transposition of the concept of the idea to different spatial configurations.<sup>5</sup> This can be made by working on different levels, as GDC does showing to feel comfortable by working on the urban and architectural scale as well as on the scale of the objects and details, that are a resource that someone might have forgotten.

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1 Giancarlo De Carlo and Livio Schirollo, *Gli spiriti dell'architettura* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1999).

2 Giancarlo De Carlo, “È morta l'architettura: Viva l'architettura!,” in *L'architettura della partecipazione*, ed. Sara Marini (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2013).

3 Marco Biraghi, *L'architetto come intellettuale* (Torino: Einaudi, 2019).

4 Margherita Guccione, “Giancarlo De Carlo. Le Ragioni dell'architettura,” in *A partire da Giancarlo De Carlo*, ed. Federico Bilò (Roma: Gangemi, 2007).

5 Christian Norberg Schulz, “La terza Alternativa,” in *Giancarlo De Carlo Architetture*, ed. Lamberto Rossi (Milano: Mondadori, 1988).



At the end of the Second World War, the Italian architects who took part to the economic and cultural reconstruction have usually focused on industrial design projects, together with other type of projects. Architecture compared to the art schools was more prepared on this topic, due to a deep partnership with industry and craftsmanship.

At the end of 19th century the technical and technological progress involved in the branches of knowledge and they were succeeding in the evolved industrial production. Traditionally architecture is related to the production that deals with the use of spaces and with living.

The issue of living is one of GDC's most important interests in the different stages of his career always looking for innovative approaches.

Each active architect in industrial design took advantage of the opportunity, according to materials and techniques, offered by the industrial progress following his own objectives and his favorite issues. Many, GDC included, found in the possibility of using industrial production, to serve architecture and design, a way to take action on social issues.

Elena Dellapiana tried to reorder the complicated scene of architects/designers, she came up with two concepts: industrial approach and decorative approach. On one hand the logical research using the newest technological discoveries, on the other hand the attention for the meanings and the results of crafting practice with Marco Zanuso and Gio Ponti in order to embody the two points of view.<sup>6</sup>

GDC is involved in the debate between these two concepts, that don't fully represent the context, as it was better shown in the "Triennali" from the end of the war to the 1950s. There might be a third point of view that involves many designers, for example Carlo Mollino, Roberto Gabetti, Aimaro Isola and Vittorio Gregotti. GDC takes part in these alternative positions with an artisanal approach, but also with attention for technical and technological innovations, both in the materials and in the process. GDC doesn't consider himself a specialist and deals with these projects as if they were cultural issues on the basis of space. He doesn't work as a designer, an architect or an urbanist, but as a profession compared to the project's ranges, trying to find the ideal unification, from the organization of the spaces to the definition of the details. This underlines GDC's specificity compared to the designers who affirmed their own professional personality throughout the quality of the elements and of the finishes. Giancarlo Frattini and Carlo De Carli, G. Ponti's collaborators, are significant, they've worked for Cassina (chair "683" of C. De Carli, first price "Compasso d'Oro" in 1954, and sofa "836" of G. Frattini chosen for the "Compasso d'Oro") or Tecno (the chair "Balestra" presented during the eleventh "Triennale" in 1957 is awarded of Gran Prix). GDC usually worked on a project on pieces of furniture in architectural projects, so he had a way different job. GDC wants to highlight

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<sup>6</sup> Fiorella Bulegato and Elena Dellapiana, *Il design degli architetti italiani* (Milano: Electa, 2014), 9-31.

the connection between the objects and the architectural/urban projects. “*Luca-  
nia*” chair, for example, wasn’t meant to be a specific project based on ARflex’s  
commission, but as a part of the project that focuses on the interior design of  
the homonymous ship.

GDCs activity relates to a continued trial according to the principles, both the-  
oretical and operational, of architecture, in parallel with the researches towards  
other topics. His works related to industrial design have a constant theoretical  
thought and express a new elaboration of the process of production, rising in  
order to reach the other design experiences. GDC’s accuracy while he designs or  
place objects in an environment is sophisticated as the precision that he spends  
to build a new structure in an ancient urban context. The buildings and the fur-  
niture are heavy and are made with respect and enhancement in regard of the  
specific framework.

The basis of this approach come from the experiences that GDC has lived  
during his career, that can be divided in three significant parts: the years of his  
vocational training and the relationship with Casabella, the critical revision of the  
International Style with the Team Ten, the season of Urbino.<sup>7</sup> The comparison  
between the tradition of the Modern Movement with the issues of the house and  
of the new standards of living is a universal factor (fattore trasversale), that has  
always escorted him.

His career began in Milan, thanks to his commitment in the Resistenza with  
Giuseppe Pagano. His beginnings took place in Casabella, in fact with Pagano  
he started working on the rural buildings in Italy. After that he was involved in  
the 8th edition of the Triennale in Milan (1947). The director, Pietro Bottoni, had  
strong social impact on the exposition, that focused on the issues of modern art,  
both decorative and industrial art. GDC has participated in a project on internal  
design, with Franco Albini, presenting design elements created by a group. He  
presented a set that contained a chair and a music stand, both in tubes and  
metallic foils, made by a design agency Veronesi. These two objects are sig-  
nificant for the new projects, both for the material and technical aspects which  
are formal.

During the 8th Triennale he made new friends: Luisa Castiglioni and Franco  
Albini, two important people in the first stages of GDC’s job.<sup>8</sup> It was a very intense  
period of his life, he spent a lot of energy and time on the issue of living: from his  
partecipation to the Triennale, to the two national competitions for the build-  
ings in the QT8 district in Milan, one made in 1946 for the ministry of post-conflict  
assistance and the other one in 1947 organized by the Triennale in collaboration  
with the Italian association “Ostelli della Gioventù”. The project includes building  
residential blocks in the Comasina, as a part of the Fanfani plan.

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7 Marco De Michelis, “In forma di introduzione,” in Gian Carlo De Carlo. *Immagini e frammenti*, eds. Angela Mioni and Etra Connie Occhialini (Milano: Electa, 1995).

8 Fabrizio Brunetti and Fabrizio Gesi, *Giancarlo De Carlo* (Firenze: Alinea, 1981).

In the 9th Triennale in 1951, the convergence between decorative art and design was obtained.<sup>9</sup> GDC was in charge, together with Giuseppe Samonà, Ezio Cerutti and Albe Steine, who will than help with the graphic identity of the city of Urbino, of a part of the exhibition. It merges with a more specific research on spontaneous architecture, made by Giovanni Michelucci, Luigi Piccinato, Roberto Pane and Edoardo Caracciolo. In their work there clearly were some traces from Giuseppe Pagano's research for the Triennale of 1936 based on rural architecture and on common use objects: this is what we would call "design without a designer" or anonymous design.

The interweaving of recurring themes between the first and the second half of the 20th century, characterized both the formation and GDC's professional success.

This essay introduces a bigger research about GDC who made transversal projects compared to the projectual scales, focusing on the issue of industrial design.

GDC is always in the centre of the reasoning. As an architect, apart from being an urbanist, an intellectual and a professor, he also expressed himself in terms of interior design and of the objects, out of a specific professional skill. The research underlines his approach analyzing design from an involved point of view, but still unknown.

If on one side existent publications give us the known outlines of GDC's profile, to insert his experience in industrial design and deepen his figure as a designer we have to, on the other side, retrace the stages and the results of his job. The archive's documents are, and will be, the support on which we will create a critical reflection on the meaning of all of these aspects, both on his professional activity and on the history of architecture, more in general. As an exemplified title we have reported three specific episodes of GDC's activity.

### **De Carlo ante De Carlo – Francesco Testa**

In 1947, after the end of the second world war and after the republican uprising, Italy was a country that was hardly working to provide itself new rules and a new horizon. In this fertile and sparkling context was organized the T8 (the 8<sup>th</sup> *Triennale di Milano*). Giancarlo De Carlo, at the time, was a young man that was running his training both in professional and in academic field: in the years between 1945 and 1948 he made an experience to upgrade his preparation at Franco Albini studio, at the same time he was an editor of *Domus*, and, just an year later in 1949, he completed his studies in architecture.

The 8<sup>th</sup> *Triennale di Milano* cannot be considered like the other Triennale exhibition, it was the *Triennale of the Liberation*, the *Triennale of the expression of*

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<sup>9</sup> AAVV, "1951. IX Triennale di Milano Esposizione internazionale delle arti decorative e industriali moderne e dell'architettura moderna". <http://archivio.triennale.org/>

needs and expectations of a country that deeply will to rebuild itself, so the T8 must be considered as a cultural opportunity that grab on its shoulders these needs, trying to give them a critical interpretation.

The experience was rich in instances, the T8 wants to represent an Italy that reacts to a complex and aristocratic past, proposing itself - no longer- as an interpreter of desires of the upper bourgeoisie class or the nobility, but as agent of the middle and popular classes which have rediscovered, even if they are still provided of limited economic resources, their growth stimulus and their ambitions, after an historical period of enormous financial difficulties and limited opportunities for cultural expression.

The 8th *Triennale* aims to overcome the usual definition of the architect as *arbitrator elegantiarum*, its goal was to bring back the role of the designer to the most original one as the interpreter of the reality of a country that deeply needs competence, knowledge and high skills in the use of materials. The main point about the theme of living and housing design in the T8 was architecture as essential, as expression of primary needs. Even in this youthful phase, Giancarlo De Carlo expressed his receptivity to this way of reading of the role of architect and he will demonstrate in his long career how he was fine tuned to these themes.

This premise on the essential architecture includes, obviously, the need to produce new furnishings to complete the interiors of the new architectures. New furniture must reach everyone, through the simplicity of choices and technical awareness of the use of material. The new goal was to raise the quality of furniture for the common people too. To get that point the most significant factor was the fast development of the industrial sector of furniture manufacturing. This phenomenon supported the diffusion of an higher standard of quality both in terms of design and product reliability level. Another key aspect of the new furniture manufacturing was the great decrease of wastes: this typical aspect of industrial production shaped a relevant gap in the reduction of costs if compared to the traditional artisanal way of craft furniture. This feature of sparing resources was very more relevant in an historical period in which raw materials were rather scarce.

Expressed the basic environmental and cultural principles, it's important to underline how it was decisive, in this "renaissance" contest, defining also design aspect as physical representation of these expectations, that's the reason why the projects' aesthetic was so central. Authors must express themselves and projects were, at the same time, challenges to the principles of physics and the to the formalism of bourgeois culture. Single pieces must have their own autonomous dimension, a physiognomy that emphasizes the intrinsic reasons of their design.

The exhibition, in its furnishings section, was divided into two parts: in the first the individual elements were exhibited singly, the second section exposed samples of compositions of furniture single or based on design purposes of some QT8 houses.



In the section dedicated to individual elements, Giancarlo De Carlo exhibits a chair in iron tube with sheet metal seat (Veronesi production), and in the section "single furniture composed in groups" he exposed a lectern, even that piece was made with iron tube legs, with book support in double chance of finishing: sheet metal in nuance color with the support or in wooden thin panels. [Fig. 1]

The common feature of objects designed by De Carlo for the T8 is the use of a structural system in iron tubular, in both cases the author proposes to minimize the use of the raw material, he intentionally avoids using anything that might be not strictly necessary. For both pieces of furniture the loads distribution is on three points: here it's clear, once again, the will of use the minimum static-geometrical balance configuration. De Carlo takes full advantage of the physic characteristics of the object, he makes his design choices optimizing everything and avoiding wastes.

The use of tubular as a furnishing material has its roots in a rather recent past, for that time, and it was a turning point; again in this case, after about 30 years from the first use, nearly totally in custom furniture, the material of modernity move from the use for the furniture of bourgeois living rooms to the more simple furniture for the houses of the post-war Italy. This transition to the use of tubular has its roots in the late 1920s, the most significant example is probably the one of Thonet factory which acquired, despite his high reputation and professionalism in the bent wood furniture sector, the Standard-Möbel company (to which Breuer had ceded its furniture copyrights in 1929) and in 1930 began the production of tubular steel furniture. So 70 years after the presentation of the "model 14" in bent wood the Frankenberg factory creates a new complete collection in tubular steel having great success, one the most successful sample is the S 32 cantilever chair that's the Thonet best seller.<sup>10</sup>

This attitude to optimization seems to underline how the formal lightness and the use of simple materials, common design choices for the chair and the lectern, they are requirements that have their roots in the difficulties of a recent past, it's a clear metaphor of the sufficiency of the minimum, it's a conclusive of the minimum to spread objects to everybody.

It's interesting, going deeper in architectural reading of the project trying to go beyond the metaphorical aspects, to underline an interpretation of Giancarlo De Carlo works in technical key, under that lens he shows the will to demonstrate

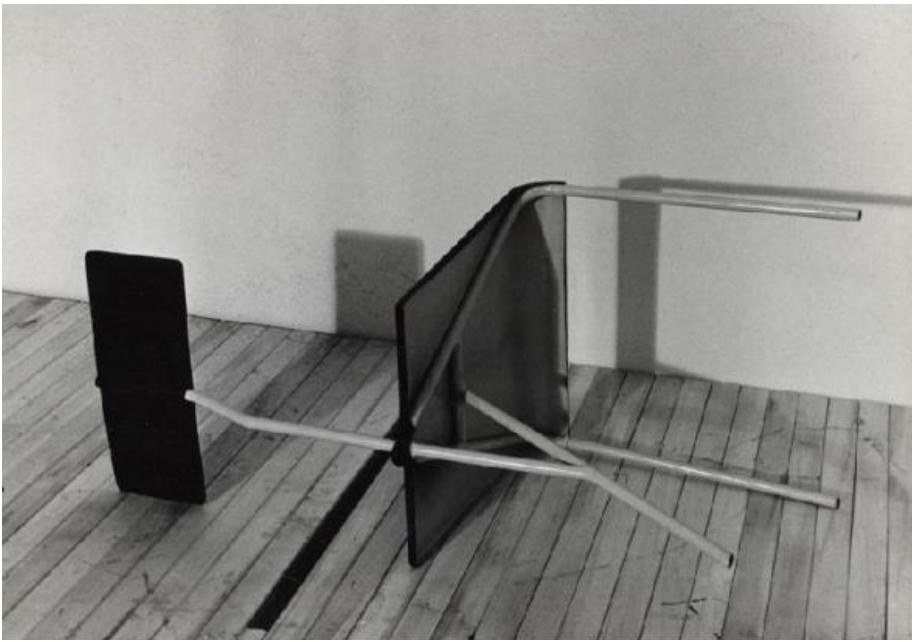


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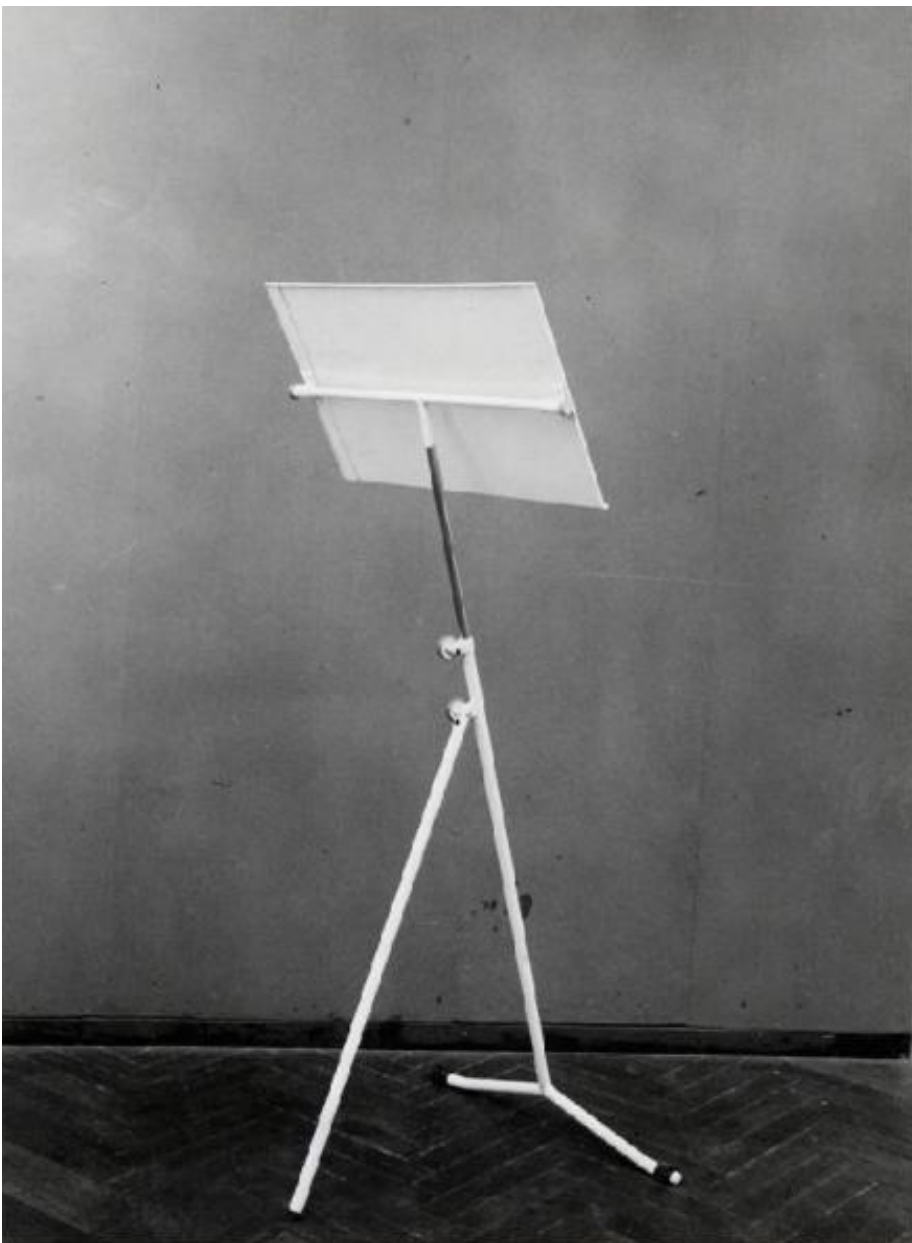
Fig. 1

Side view of the tubular and metal sheet designed by Giancarlo De Carlo (Veronesi production), exhibited in 8th Triennale furniture section, part one, single furniture divided by function. (ph. N.D.) source: <http://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/fotografie/schede/IMM-3u040-0000128/>

10 <http://it.thonet.de/ispirazioni/magazine/thonet-la-storia/i-mobili-in-tubolare-dacciaio-di-thonet.html>



2 |



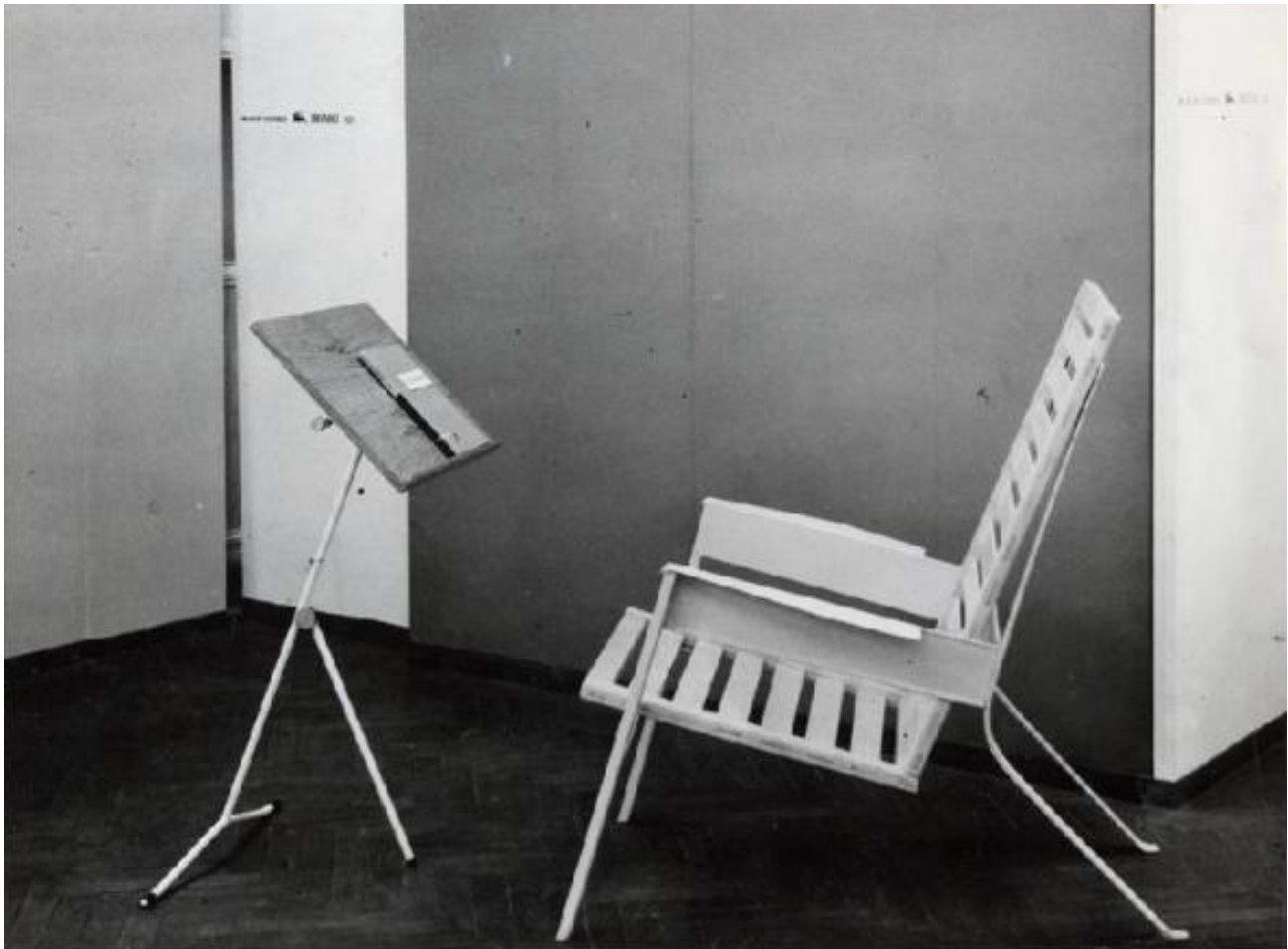
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Fig. 2

Bottom view of the tubular and metal sheet designed by Giancarlo De Carlo (Veronesi production), exhibited in VIII Triennale furniture section, part one, single furniture divided by function. (ph. N.D.) source: <http://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/fotografie/schede/IMM-3u040-0000129/>

Fig. 3

Front view of the lectern designed by Giancarlo De Carlo, exhibited in VIII Triennale furniture section, part two, single furniture composed in groups. (ph. Casali - S.E.M.) source: <http://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/fotografie/schede/IMM-3u040-0000180/>



| 4

the extreme confidence he has with the laws of physics, the impression is that of the search for a formal composition that is pure material expression of the use of the chair.

The tubular frame is organized according to the ergonomic rules of the seat, the position of the unique cross-bar, under the seat, is the one on which the weight of the user is concentrated and it transfer the loads to the ground using the only rear leg. The backrest, very simple is made, as the seat, by a metal sheet sustained by a single tubular, connected in two points to the rest of the structure, the first on the rear vertex of the triangle of tubular on which it encloses the seat and the other half of the rear leg, to which the back is fixed centrally. [Fig. 2]

Even the lectern design is perfectly consistent with the philosophy of the essential composition used for the chair design. The lectern is composed by a main structure that has a compass opening, which can be adjusted by a knob that prevents, using friction, the two legs spreading; to get the third contact point with the floor De Carlo provided a bent crossbar at the end of the frontal leg. [Fig. 3-4]

This solution avoids possible unbalance, for example in case of floors that are not perfectly flat a straight beam might be reason of lack of stability, this precaution is perfectly consistent with De Carlo attitude pursuing very practical approach to design objects. Another peculiarity of the lectern is the adjustable

Fig. 4  
Side view of the tubular and metal sheet designed by Giancarlo De Carlo (Veronesi production), exhibited in VIII Triennale furniture section, part one, single furniture divided by function. (ph. N.D.) source: <http://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/fotografie/schede/IMM-3u040-0000128/>

height of the support for the books. This feature has been got using a chromed steel terminal, the element, that has a smaller diameter than the tubular of the main structure, move inside the structure giving to the user the chance of an height regulation.

### **The Original design of the Arflex seats and custom furnishing for the Urbino projects – Stefano Passamonti**

Since the early 1950s, GDC was busy on several fronts in the industrial design field, as well as in custom furniture projects, both intended as a direct answer to the issue of modern living.

In 1952 GDC was in charge of the refurbishment of the 1st class cabins of the Turbine-powered ship *Lucania*, on behalf of a well-known Neapolitan ship owner. GDC took care of redesigning all the areas above the hull, in other words the domestic components.<sup>11</sup>

The *Lucania* ship project is emblematic of the search for a suitable compromise between novelty and the existing environment. For this work, GDC meticulously designed every interior detail, down to the scale of construction detail and the decorative accessories. Moreover, the project highlights its modern attitude to the total project, based on the idea of crossing over visual and applied arts. Already the previous IX Triennale of 1951 placed at the center of its field of interests the issue of the "Unity of arts", with the express purpose of put in contact researching arts, represented from the latest abstractionist tendencies, with the architectonic culture as well as with the design culture in general.<sup>12</sup> In fact, the exhibition "Form of the Useful," allowed everyday objects, furnitures and more to step into the limelight with the use of new materials and genuine industrial processes.<sup>13</sup> In other words, the display was overtly aesthetic in nature, showing how beautiful the design of functional goods could be.

As a matter of fact, for the Ship *Lucania* GDC involved the French artist Fernand Léger to work on the living room wall decorations. This relationship with the painter was crucial to bring all the perceptive components of space back into play in a consistent operation of deconstruction and restructuring.<sup>14</sup> GDC designed and built every component with meticulousness and accuracy, choosing the more suitable materials for the specificity of each environment, adopting a cross over approach to the project equal to the more celebrated attitude of his masters (Albini) or interlocutors (Rogers), and aiming to a clear formal and aesthetic characterization. The projects range from the design of a veranda with corrugated sheet ceiling and gray rubber floors to beds, chairs and a wall-mounted secretary desk. For the boardroom, GDC designed tables, furniture

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11 AAVV, "Interni della *Lucania*," *Domus*, 287 (Ottobre 1953).

12 Agnoldomenico Pica, *Storia della Triennale 1918-1957* (Milano: Edizioni del Milione, 1957).

13 Alberto Bassi, Raimonda Riccini, Cecilia Colombo, ed., *Design in Triennale 1947-68: Percorsi fra Milano e Brianza* (Cinisello Balsamo (MI): Silvana editoria, 2004).

14 Lamberto Rossi, "*Giancarlo De Carlo Architetture*". (Mondadori, Milan: 1988)



and a chair that bears the name of the ship. The work includes the project of the *Lucania* chair, which was exhibited in 1954 at the X Triennale di Milano.

The research relating to interior design as well as the attempts in housing proposals reveal a deep engagement and devotion towards the problem of *living*, especially if connected to new residential standards. As shown through transversality and complementarity of the projects presented at the 1947's Triennale, the urban figure of the building and the typology are related aspect of the interior dimension of the domestic environment. Unlike Rogers or Albini, GDC is less interested in creating useful and wonderful objects but focused on designing significative spacial events able to express and translate into dimensional values the *zeitgeist*. A proper principle applicable to urban occasions, buildings and objects.<sup>15</sup> The physical quality of space is the design material for the "poor" exhibition set of the VIII Triennale with Albe Stainer as well as for the physical support of the short-film presented to the Triennale of 1954. In fact, the X Triennale is the most important occasion for GDC to exemplifies his ability to range from the urban plan to objects and details. Indeed in 1954 he worked on one side to the exhibition design of the Urbanist show and on the other one on single piece of furniture showed with the prototype of the Lucania Chair. This transversal and multi-scale approach, related to a strong ethic of the design process, is what characterizes the modernity of GDC. As he himself declares, the design process related to the production chain of industrial furniture isn't interesting for the operational aspects but much more for the cultural implication as a phenomena whose understanding can help in reading architectural and urbanistic problems.<sup>16</sup>

The Lucania upholstered chair, designed in 1952, became part of the Ar-flex catalogue, in the collection following the first series of pieces, made in collaboration with Marco Zanuso.

Ar-flex (in Italian, short for 'flexible furnishings'), later Arflex, was born in 1947, when Carlo Barassi, a Pirelli engineer, together with Renato Teani (from Pirelli's financial department), Pio Reggiani and Aldo Bai, involved a young Zanuso to test the first models of seats, innovative for the use of foam rubber in the padding and of elastic tapes. Then, in 1951, Zanuso designed the famous Lady armchair, consisting of a metal frame and a polyurethane foam padding, with a polyester upholstery, putting Arflex in the international spotlight. From 1952 the company started to work with other relevant designers in order to expand its collection. They involved an impressive roster of professionals, from Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni, to Franco Albini, Bbpr, Carlo Mollino, Roberto Manghi, Joe Colombo, Ettore Sottsass, Angelo Mangiarotti, Cini Boeri.<sup>17</sup> Among those,

15 Franco Bunčuga, ed., *Conversazioni su architettura e libertà* (Milan: Elèuthera, 2014).

16 Giancarlo De Carlo, *Dibattito sulla produzione del mobile in Italia*, dattiloscritto originale (Archivio Progetti IUAV, fondo Giancarlo De Carlo, Venezia, 1962).

17 Irene de Guttry and Maria Paola Maino, *Il Mobile Italiano degli Anni 40 e 50* (Bari: Editori Laterza, 2010).



GDC was asked to design a new serial production of the Lucania chair and armchair, respectively from 1954 and from 1957.<sup>18</sup> [Fig. 5]

The Lucania chair, currently out of production, is an extraordinary synthesis of formal consistency, technical awareness, ergonomics, aesthetics, materiality. It's characterized by a spartan but sophisticated aesthetic. The Arflex's edition of the Lucania Chair is a lighter re-elaboration of the robust original patent used to refurbish the motorship Lucania. A project that GDC finalized in partnership with Ezio Mariani, which consists in a structure made of black painted metal pipes, molded curved plywood shell, brass, foam rubber and fabric for the textil covering of the pillows.

The most important constructive characteristics of the Arflex chair is the seat and back in one piece of bent plywood: the structural body and tuboplast elements of the legs are fixed to the seat with brass clamps. The cushion of the back is held up by a band of easily washable fabric attached to the backrest, through a hole that allows to place and fix the covering. The lower part of the shell is padded with a cushion. Keeping the same structure and dimensions (width 43, depth 52, height 75; seat height 49), the chair can be produced in many variations of colors, wood and fabrics.<sup>19</sup>

At the beginning of 1960s GDC is aware of the international industrial design panorama and on the role that industrial design played in the cultural regeneration of many countries. In fact Scandinavian and American production, that gained importance precisely for the Triennale, are the references to which GDC looked critically and that was able to interpret in the context of the Italian production. GDC used plywood with in mind the masterpieces made by Alvar

Fig. 5  
 Technical drawing of Chair and Armchair Lucania, reproduced from Original work drawings by GDC.  
 Source: Università Iuav di Venezia, Archivio Progetti, fondo Giancarlo De Carlo

18 Università Iuav di Venezia, Archivio Progetti, fondo Giancarlo De Carlo.

19 Elena Bellini, Enrico Morteo and Marco Romanelli, "Storie di Sedie Italiane del Dopoguerra," *Domus*, 708 (Settembre 1989).

Aalto, Arne Jacobsen, Charles and Ray Eames<sup>20</sup> or - just to stand into the Italian context - with the series of Carlo Mollino around 1950<sup>21</sup> or Vittorio Nobili<sup>22</sup>. However, the attitude of GDC is substantially different, in the sense that he was less interested in realizing a precious authorial piece and more focused on the social interpretation of the new technique of serial production. In fact, GDC intended the Italian furniture production more as a cultural mandate than as a professional task that wink to a specific social class. For GDC design it's not about stylistic acquiescence or a work linked to taste but a process connected to the practical reasons of furnishing pieces.<sup>23</sup>

With the Lucania Chair GDC combined the wood shell with the metal support and in particular folding the wood piece following three direction in order to determinate a form which needs to be completed by the foam cushion. This essential and efficient chair is a perfect example of the sensitivity and the honesty of GDC's vision, in which nothing is superfluous, redundant, or formalist. His attitude, as he declares<sup>24</sup> underling the gap between author design and furniture's project, comes from the honest interpretation of the production chain, without any rhetoric and that looks to a wider and opportune idea of *living*. A skinny chair, it has essentiality as its main strength. As in any other GDC project, also in this single piece of furniture, you can feel a specific idea of the world and the city. A city before and behind, an inner city that sums up the human effort for life.<sup>25</sup> [Fig. 6]

The chair was followed by the Lucania armchair, presented for the first time at the 11th Triennale, as a section of the International Home Exhibition that took place in Parco Sempione in 1957. The armchair, which was shown in the pavilion dedicated to single furniture components, has a size of width 77, depth 90, height 99 (seat height 42). The main structure in lacquered brass supports a pressed metal sheet from which a single piece element of backrest and armrests is created, in a basin-like shape. The seat, which works as an independent frame, is placed and fixed in position, already covered with cord belts featuring padding and lining – thus appearing like a flying cushion. The basin is equipped with a series of hooks the cord belts of the spring system are fixed on (to support the backrest), and with an external liner that covers the foam-rubber padding. The liners of both seat and basin can be easily removed in order to be washed. The different parts are secured to one another through the use of expansion screws.<sup>26</sup> [Fig. 7]

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20 Christopher Wilk, ed., *Plywood. A Material Story* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2017).

21 Lisa Licitra Ponti, ed., "Nuovi Mobili di Mollino," *Domus*, 270 (Maggio 1952).

22 I. Guttry, M. P. Maino, *op.cit.*

23 Giancarlo De Carlo, *Conferenza sull'arredamento a Venezia*, dattiloscritto con note (Archivio Progetti IUAV, fondo Giancarlo De Carlo, Venezia, 1959).

24 Giancarlo de Carlo, "Il Salone di tutti i Saloni," in AAVV, ed., *Scritti per Domus* (Rozzano (MI): Editoriale Domus, 2005).

25 Stefano Boeri, "Oltre le forme urbane. Una conversazione a Palermo fra Giancarlo De Carlo e Giuseppe Samonà," in *Gian Carlo De Carlo. Immagini e frammenti*, eds. Angela Mioni, Etra Connie Occhialini (Milano: Electa, 1995).

26 AAVV, "Una nuova poltrona," *Domus*, 336, (Novembre 1957).



**Materiale:** compensato curvato, tubo metallico verniciato, ottone, gommapiuma e tessuto.

**Caratteristiche costruttive:** sedile e schienale in un unico pezzo di compensato piegato: le gambe sono due elementi in tubolare, fissati al sedile con mazzetti in ottone. Il cuscino dorsale è sospeso da una banda di stoffa fissata allo schienale.

**Dimensioni:** l. 43; p. 52; h. 75; hs. 49

**Notizie:** la sedia in una versione più robusta è stata utilizzata per gli interni dell'aeroporto Lucania progettati da G. De Carlo con E. Mariani. La sedia fu presentata alla X Triennale di Milano, 1954, sezione «Il mobile singolo».

**Bibliografia:** G. Ponti, «Le arti della Lucania», Domus, 287, 1953. «Il mobile» e di serie: Arflex-Italia, Stile Industriale, 16, 1958. *Architecture and Building*, 3, 1959.

**Materiale:** molded plywood, painted tubular metal, brass, foam rubber and fabric.

**Constructive characteristics:** seat and back in one piece of bent plywood; the legs are two tuboplast elements, attached to the seat with brass clamps. The cushion of the back is held up by a band of fabric attached to the back.

**Size:** width 43; depth 52; height 75; seat height 49

**Notes:** a more robust version of the chair was used for the furnishing of the motorship Lucania designed by G. De Carlo and E. Mariani. The chair was presented at the X Triennale in Milan in 1954, «Il mobile singolo» section.



1952 PROGETTO 1954 PRODUZIONE

**MODELLO:**  
Lucania  
sedia imbottita / upholstered chair

**PROGETTISTA:**  
Giancarlo De Carlo

**PRODUZIONE:**  
Arflex, Limbiate



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With the prototypes for the Triennale and the Arflex's original series GDC expressed through product design the transformation of the Italian society, starting from the courage and enthusiasm of the post-war time, to the lightness of the spirit that marked the years of the economic boom. Without any complacency towards the market or the cult for refined furniture, the approach of GDC was characterized by the right detachment and the lucid critical quality. A frank interpretation of society and industrial progress connected to production techniques, without any trace of rhetoric.

Roughly in the same period of GDC's collaboration with Arflex, he also started working on the project for furnishing and equipment of the University of Urbino, with the complicity of Rector Carlo Bo. He designed every element with great care, from the joineries of the portals that framed parts of the city, to components like blackboards, hangers, mailboxes, seats, tables, and signs.

In this vein, an example of a project that stands in between the concepts of custom and authorial furniture is the Comet armchair. GDC took care of every detail related to the experiences of studying and living, from desks for students to the stately and solemn one of the professorships (formica Domus competition), also including a special chair for the professors' offices. The Comet reclining

Fig. 6  
Descriptive page of Lucania  
Chair. Source: Domus 708,  
September 1989



## Una nuova poltrona

Una nuova poltrona prodotta in serie dalla Arflex è la poltrona Lucania, disegnata dall'architetto Giancarlo De Carlo.

La struttura della poltrona è in lamiera stampata: schienale e braccioli formano un corpo unico, una conca; il sedile è un telaio indipendente, e viene collocato nella sua sede già finito, cioè già ricoperto — su nastri cord — di propria imbottitura e fodera, e ha quindi l'aspetto di un cuscino volante.

La conca è provvista di una serie di ganci cui vengono fissati i nastri cord del molleggio (per lo schienale) e la fodera esterna che riveste l'imbottitura di gomma-piuma.

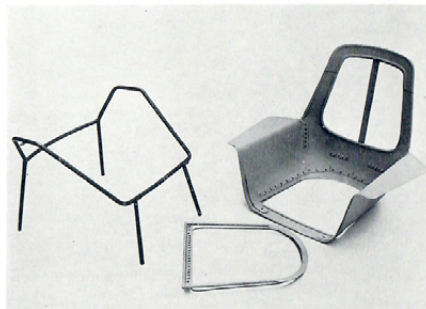
Le fodere sia del sedile che della conca si possono togliere assai facilmente per la lavatura.

Il fissaggio delle diverse parti è ottenuto con viti ad espansione. Questa poltrona è il secondo pezzo della serie Lucania disegnata da Giancarlo De Carlo; il primo è la ben nota seggiolina Lucania in compensato curvato.



Fotogramma

La poltrona Lucania della Arflex disegnata da Giancarlo De Carlo



armchair is derived from the reworking of a backrest seat originally used on British airliners and features a tubular iron structure which supports a plasticized cardboard, combined with leather-covered sheet metal armrests.

In the graduation room, an exedra serves as a backdrop for the space dedicated to teachers, while the stalls are furnished with Chiavari chairs, a significant episode of Italian craftsmanship, which were chosen by GDC and Bo in a joint effort.<sup>27</sup> On the second floor, inside blue ceramic floored aula magna, antique pieces of furniture are juxtaposed with Lucania chairs.

GDC played a decisive role as an intellectual in the debate regarding the specificity of disciplines between architecture and urban planning, but he also consistently acted as an all-round designer, in accord with the modern tradition.

The list of examples of his articulated professional activity is extensive: from the street lamps for Urbino, Mazzorbo and Colletta di Castelbianco,<sup>28</sup> to his

27 Tiziana Fuligna, "Il progetto Urbino," in *L'università di Urbino 1506-2006*, ed. Stefano Pivato (Urbino: Quattroventi, 2006).

28 Luigi Mandraccio, "Original vs. anonymous design: a light for villages", following section of this article.

Fig. 7

Descriptive page of Lucania Armchair.

Source: Domus 336, November 1957

collaboration with Albe Steiner for the graphic identity of Urbino, including interior design and custom furnishings of houses and shops, as the one he curated in Bari in 1954, in partnership with Massimo Vignelli. The organization of the store's main space takes place through an 'infrastructural' system made up of three metal tracks – inserted into the layout of the vaulted spaces. A sort of "exhibition machine" tuned with the season in which "architects on the one hand, stylists and brands on the other join forces to express ideas of personal, social and cultural identity"<sup>29</sup>, and solved just through three simple metal tracks, which intersections distinguish the areas of display from the study and dressing room.<sup>30</sup>

The centenary of GDC's birth is also an opportunity to investigate sections of his complex experience as a designer of places, cities, buildings and furniture, that have not been entirely explored yet.

### Original vs. anonymous design: a light for villages – Luigi Mandraccio

«There is always the sun in Colletta»<sup>31</sup> is the adage commonly repeated by the dwellers of Colletta di Castelbianco – the Ligurian settlement reconstructed by Giancarlo De Carlo in the 1990s. After the sunset, a very special street-lamp lights the village [Fig. 8]. Though, that special lamp was born in Urbino, a very different context, in the 1950s. Notwithstanding its birthplace, it does not look as a stranger nor for the Ligurian village or for all the other contexts in which it is set.

The present essay aims at giving an interpretation of the design of this special street-lamp – both as an autonomous object and in relation to three different contexts in which it is set – and it also tries to suggest how the paradigm of this public furniture/device can express clearly the point of view of GDC about the industrial design.

Shortly later his arrival in Urbino, GDC has been asked to redesign the public lighting system within the historic center of Urbino. The street-lamp was born – between 1954 and 1957 – following this specific assignment [Fig. 9]. The context in which it was born has marked the nature of this lamp, but finally it was not designed as "in adaptation" to the context,



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Fig. 8  
Street-lamp within Colletta di Castelbianco. Photo by Luigi Mandraccio, 2019

29 AAVV, "Domus e la moda", in AAVV, (online) [https://www.domusweb.it/it/notizie/2017/06/12/domus\\_e\\_la\\_moda.html](https://www.domusweb.it/it/notizie/2017/06/12/domus_e_la_moda.html).

30 AAVV, "Giancarlo de Carlo, Massimo Vignelli. Un negozio a Bari", in AAVV, *Domus* 292 (Editoriale Domus, Rozzano: February 1954).

31 Ole Wiig, *Colletta di Castelbianco: From the 13th century to the present day* (Albenga: Rivierahouse, 2019), 17.





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but as a part of it. In the GDC way of designing, to belong to a context does not mean being the outcome of superficial expedients or ephemeral analogies, but it means to materialize a shared cultural matrix: far from every kind of “in style” reproduction – as sample of that way of designing we can consider the greater part of the nineteenth-century lanterns that fill our historical city centers – the GDC street-lamp is a “modern” object. It is designed with a modern language – and it could not be otherwise – but at the same time it is aware of the place in which it is set and conscious of the community’s feelings that lives that place, by showing in this way great margins of flexibility.

The street-lamp designed for Urbino is a rather simple object: a bracket-structure, supported by an arm composed of four sections made by flat iron profiles<sup>32</sup>, where the light source is enclosed in a transparent white blown glass<sup>33</sup> shade for the upper half and frosted in the lower half. The top of the vitreous bubble is closed by a perforated sheet. All metal parts are fire-painted with a matt black finish.

32 The iron bar is 30 mm wide and 2.5 mm thick. The original drawing can be found in Giancarlo De Carlo, *Architettura Città Università*. Disegni (Florence: Alinea, 1982), 65.

33 Overall dimensions: diameter 350 mm, height 380 mm. The original drawings can be found in Rossi, *Giancarlo De Carlo: Architetture*, 49.

Fig. 9

The street-lamp in Urbino, its original context. Photo by Stefano Passamonti, 2019

The composition of the parts is a well-balanced design of forms and materials. It is in continuity with what GDC reports, about the stables of *Palazzo Ducale*, as a pivot that supports the whole urban identity of Urbino: «Francesco di Giorgio had surely defined all the measures of this using as base scale the *divina proportio* [*sezione aurea*], something that the Renaissance architect always did, it was their meter, the use of the *divina proportio* [*sezione aurea*]»<sup>34</sup>.

The street-lamp is surely an autonomous object, but at the same time it is naturally harmonized in its contexts as the result of the designer's work, first of all about the references. The street-lamp, even as first look, appears as clearly inspired by an ancient oil lamp, but it is not only because of a formal similitude. The oil lamp is an object that has been usual and familiar in everyday life, especially in the Italian province – out of the big cities where the electricity has been diffused less rapidly – where it was integral part of life, knotted also with farmer culture. Therefore, this kind of lamp can be considered as one of the progenitors of the category of lamps, including the development of electricity-supplied ones. Furthermore, its original cultural context must not be considered as a limit to bind that to the birthplace, but rather a way to define a kind of place and a type of community the lamp belongs to. The “*borgo*” is, in both cultural and physical senses, its preferred habitat.

Defined and understood the main cultural values, the GDC project of the street-lamp created for Urbino acquire «the Uncommon Beauty of the Common Things.»<sup>35</sup> The everyday objects – such as an oil lamp or a pole lamp – are often “anonymous.” “Anonymous” as a qualifying feature,<sup>36</sup> referring to a set of features that contributed to the affirmation of these objects for their function, beyond the authorship of their design or branding.

The nature of these objects – function, form, accessibility, etc. – guarantees intrinsically their fortune. «Remarkable traits ... are useful, so useful that they have become necessary ... are affordable ... are ingenious and innovative in the way they proposed new solutions or altogether new types of objects ... all these characteristics make them beautiful.»<sup>37</sup> The features of the anonymous design are part of the traditional values that the oil lamp transferred to the GDC street-lamp project.

The *ensamble* of cultural and material references is the result of the process of “reading” the context too. It is a fundamental part of the GDC design method: the street-lamp underlines the importance of the methodological role of reading operation because it enlarges the range of results and the design scales that took their genesis from that.

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34 Giancarlo De Carlo, during the conference “L'architettura tra innovazione e tradizione”, held at the Scuola Normale in Pisa on March 13, 2003.

35 Sergio Polano, *Achille Castiglioni: Tutte le opere 1938-2000* (Milan: Electa, 2001), 10.

36 Alberto Bassi, *Design anonimo in Italia* (Milano: Skira, 2007).

37 Paola Antonelli, *Humble masterpiece: 100 Everyday Marvels of Design* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005), 1-3.





10 |

Since the “reading” process goes beyond a specific place by embracing a broader social and cultural environment, the resulting object acquires a less rigid and specific character.

The street-lamp is used by GDC in two projects after Urbino. The project of a new residential complex in Mazzorbo, commissioned by IACP (*Istituto Autonomo Case Popolari*) of Venice in 1979, born from the idea of creating a close dialogue<sup>38</sup> with the adjacent settlements of Burano and Mazzorbo. The housing project – following GDC’s intent – performs «a gentle invasion»<sup>39</sup> of the agricultural landscape of the island. The first group of thirty-six houses – the only ones built until now – are designed as a reproduction of the Burano’s

38 The analysis about the built environment of Burano and Mazzorbo was so intense and structured that details and elements were registered into a “vocabulary”. This approach expresses a precise intellectual project, interpreting the vocabulary not as a tool for reproduction, but for invention.

39 Giancarlo De Carlo, *Tra acqua e aria. Un progetto per l’isola di Mazzorbo nella laguna veneta* (Genova: Sagep Editrice, 1989), 26.

Fig. 10

An example of the placement of the floor version of the street-lamp in Mazzorbo. Photo by Francesca Berni, 2019.

sequences of one-family-house chains – marked by the interruptions of *calli* and *campielli*. The idea of continuity for GDC lies in the interpretation of urban fabric's structure as the mirror of the spirit of the village and of its social structure. This settlement strategy is also the antidote to avoid the danger of falling back into vernacular style.

GDC employs in Mazzorbo the original version of the street-lamp created for Urbino, but there is also a variant: it is a pole version, fixed to the ground instead of being installed on the wall. The new type of support was originally designed as divided into three supports, but finally it was simplified as a single metal pole. The other parts of the lamp – the glass bubble that shields the light source – are instead unchanged [Fig. 10].

In Mazzorbo, the street-lamps fit perfectly with the specific design line defined by GDC for the whole settlement. They contribute, through their symbolic values, to build the sense of continuity with the context of the island. Meanwhile, they are “contemporary” objects, exactly like the whole architectural design approach.

Moreover, the first version of the pole-model gave a further declination to the issue of continuity, by rethinking the use of the typical Venetian Lagoon chaining points, realized by three large wooden poles joined at the top. It could have further demonstrated the flexibility of this object.

Finally, Colletta di Castelbianco is the third “geography” of the street-lamp. Colletta<sup>40</sup> is an ancient village in the Pennevaire valley, in western Liguria, originally devoted to farming activities. The perspective of a minimum subsistence economy drove the village to the complete depopulation. The refurbishment of Colletta started from the purchase of all the parcels of the village by private investors, who later gave the full project assignment to GDC that – thanks to that circumstances – could work on the design of the complete village.

The interpretation of the character of the place was the starting point for the design process.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, everything in Colletta begins with the ruins. If the renovated village has been built from the ruins of the abandoned village, the street-lamp that lights the pathways is bounded to the dwellers' community both in terms of spiritual heritage and everyday practices. The reuse of the lamp within Colletta takes place into an extremely different context in respect to the previous samples, in many ways. The positive adaptation to the background confirms how it belongs deeply to the system of relationships, conceptual or concrete, recognized in the settlement and in the community.

The street-lamp is relevant due to its potential replicability. It can be duplicated without losing its specificity. A repeatability that comes directly from the anonymous archetype of the oil lamp, which is not aesthetic or stylistic, but formal and conceptual.

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40 “Colletta” is a village in the municipality of Castelbianco (SV). The recovery/transformation (1993-1999) was promoted by Sivim srl, a company based in Alessandria, formed by Franco Riccardi, Gabriele Saggini and Alessandro Pampirio.

41 Giancarlo De Carlo, “Colletta di Castelbianco,” *Places*, 16 (2004).

This remarkable state is not fortuitous, nor the result of “neutrality” understood as a lack of personality or identity. It is not a matter of making the street-lamp “disappear” within the context. On the contrary, to insert something in a framework GDC works on each project in order to create an authentic relationship between it – each parts or components – and the context. This added value can be found in every GDC project, spanning from urban planning to industrial design objects.

Within the debate on the industrial design of the post-war period, GDC established its own original approach: the complete correspondence, also to this scale, with the other leitmotifs of his theoretical reflection and its professional activity. GDC interprets the industrial design project – which is inherently capable to give a result of immediate clarity and efficacy – as a theoretical device, in a way that allows him to complete the expressive forms of its thought, even in this perhaps neglected key.

So, the interdisciplinarity of themes and values proposed by GDC is underlined by prototypes, small series of furniture for specific projects and objects designed in collaborations with prestigious companies.

GDC, as a furniture designer, proves the strength of his philosophy and of his method. His objects verify his approach to the small scale of industrial design, and at the same time give new energy and tools to the critical reading of his general approach. Through industrial design projects, GDC has implemented and partly enriched his experience, so they are not something that is to be evaluated as an extemporaneous circumstance, but on the contrary like something that perfectly fits with his way of thinking.

# Criticism of the Architectural Culture since 1978 in “Spazio e Società” Magazine

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«Espaces et Société»; Postmodernism; Internationalism; Architecture and Power

## /Abstract

Since 1975, the French magazine *Espaces et Société*, directed by Henri Lefebvre and Anatole Kopp since 1970, has been distributed in Italy in an autonomous version consisting partly of translations of selected articles from the French edition, and partly with contributions of authors from Italy and abroad solicited by the Italian editorial staff.

After the first two years of transition, starting in 1978 Giancarlo De Carlo directed the magazine towards a forum for debate and content that this text<sup>1</sup> intends to examine in its first five years of publication through the presentation of some of the most significant articles. This way the critical positions of the magazine with respect to the topics of the day can be framed, also highlighting its originality with respect to some dominant lines that coincided with the thinking of its director, whose advertising and publishing activities are almost indistinguishable from his architectural and urban planning activities. Some of these include: attention to the dynamics of process formation rather than the formal outcome, the construction of a collective space for society rather than the affirmation of an ideological principle, cosmopolitan internationalism opposed to the internationalisation of language, first modernist, then postmodernist. And again, precisely from a review of the Modern Movement based on a critique of Post-Modernism, other important considerations arise regarding crucial issues of the transition between the 1970s and the 1980s, such as the intellectual role of the architect and his/her relationship with power vis-à-vis mass society.

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Research fellow in projects of enhancement of the architectural heritage of the late twentieth century in collaboration with public institutions and universities as: Archives of Communication of Parma (CSAC), Institute of Cultural Heritage of Emilia Romagna (IBC) and Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism (Mibact) for which he cares the national census of the architectures of the Second World War in Emilia Romagna.

Editorial manager of the journal “Histories of Postwar Architecture” (hpa.unibo.it), member of Docomomo International, SAH - Society of Architectural Historians (for 2017 Membership Grant for Emerging Professionals) and Aistarch - Italian Association of history of architecture.

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<sup>1</sup> The text constitutes the contribution presented by the author to the conference: *Theory's History, 196X/199X. Challenges in the Historiography of Architectural Knowledge - Session: Thinking the Social*. Brussels, 8-10 February 2017.



## Structure: an open field to debates

On presenting the journal's new edition in 1978 [Fig. 1], in the editor's note Giancarlo De Carlo stressed<sup>2</sup> the new project's debt to the homonymous *Espaces et Sociétés*<sup>3</sup> which since 1975 has been present in Italy in an edition published by the publisher Moizzi and Spinelli of Milan, already engaged in the dissemination of Henri Lefebvre's thought<sup>4</sup> [Fig. 2-3]. The first two issues of the same year (1 and 2) include a selection of translated articles in the French edition, while the following year (3 and 4) the magazine offered contributions from other authors including Giuseppe Samonà, Carlo Doglio and A+P Smithson<sup>5</sup>, which reveal a desire to propose an independent, autonomous line of interpretation<sup>6</sup>, well identifiable in the cultural fields of the editor-in-chief until 1976 Riccardo Mariani, and the director Giancarlo De Carlo<sup>7</sup> from 1978. With regard to the former, it is useful to emphasise how he can be considered a link between Lefebvre's theory, Carlo Doglio's urban approach (also shared by De Carlo) and the Florentine school. Assistant to Leonardo Ricci, who wrote the preface of the text *Spazio e politica: il diritto alla città*<sup>8</sup>, in those years he shared an interest with the latter in the relationship between new communities and territorial expansion, also in light of the rereading of historical experiences<sup>9</sup>.



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2 Giancarlo De Carlo, "Editoriale," *Spazio e Società* 1 (January 1978): 4. See also, Isabella Daidone, *Giancarlo De Carlo. Gli editoriali di Spazio e Società* (Roma: Gangemi editore, 2018).

3 The original edition of the magazine was directed by Henri Lefebvre and Anatole Kopp from 1970.

4 The creation of the "twin" magazine went hand in hand with the activity of the publishing house for the dissemination of Italian translations of Lefebvre's texts, specifically: *Spazio e politica: il diritto alla città* (Milano: Moizzi, 1976) and *Spazio e Società*, la produzione dello spazio (Milano: Moizzi, 1978). See Francesco Biagi, "La ricezione italiana degli studi urbani di Henri Lefebvre: un fiume carsico a cavallo tra XX e XXI secolo", *Altrionovecento. Ambiente Tecnica Società*, [http://www.fondazionemicheletti.it/altrionovecento/articolo.aspx?id\\_articolo=40&tipo\\_articolo=d\\_saggi&id=376](http://www.fondazionemicheletti.it/altrionovecento/articolo.aspx?id_articolo=40&tipo_articolo=d_saggi&id=376) (accessed on 21/04/2020).

5 A+P Smithson, "Alla ricerca di un nuovo lirismo," *Spazio e Società* 3 (January-March 1976): 7-16, on which will be further discussed later on.

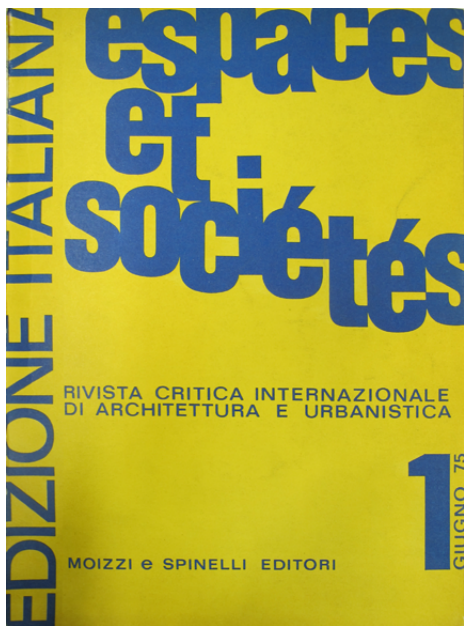
6 The nature of the dual bond with the French magazine seemed to become explicit with the evolution of the title. The French title remained in the first two issues of 1975, accompanied by the subtitle in Italian: "Rivista critica di architettura e urbanistica". The second issue (1975) was hyphenated with the Italian title – *Espaces et Sociétés-Spazio e Società* – which was then reversed in issues 3 and 4 of 1976. In 1978 the French part was dropped from the magazine's title, retaining only the Italian until its closure in 2001, adding the title in English from issue 18 of 1982 to consolidate its international position.

7 In 1976 the editorial staff consisted of Luigi Colajanni, Gaddo Morpurgo, Daniele Pini and Lamberto Dehò, who took care of graphics. Following are contributions to the magazine by the first three: Daniele Pini, "L'insegnamento dell'architettura," *Spazio e Società* 3 (January-March 1976): 80; Riccardo Mariani, "Quarant'anni dalla morte di Persico," *Spazio e Società* 3 (January-March 1976): 92-141; Gaddo Morpurgo, "Venezia: politica culturale e organizzazione del territorio," *Spazio e Società* 3 (January-March 1976): 98-108. In 1978 he took over the direction. The new editorial team was: Gabriele Corsani, Mario Mastropietro, Gaddo Morpurgo and Daniele Pini. Giancarlo De Carlo would be the director for all 92 issues from 1978 to 2000. Among the many who participated in the magazine, the only one mentioned here is Giuliana Baracco, De Carlo's wife, who managed editorial coordination from issue 1 to 89, also a central figure for her role as translator from English. Five publishers: the historic Mazzotta in Milan, Sansoni in Florence, MIT Press in Cambridge (Massachusetts), SAGEP in Genoa, Gangemi in Rome, Maggioli in Rimini.

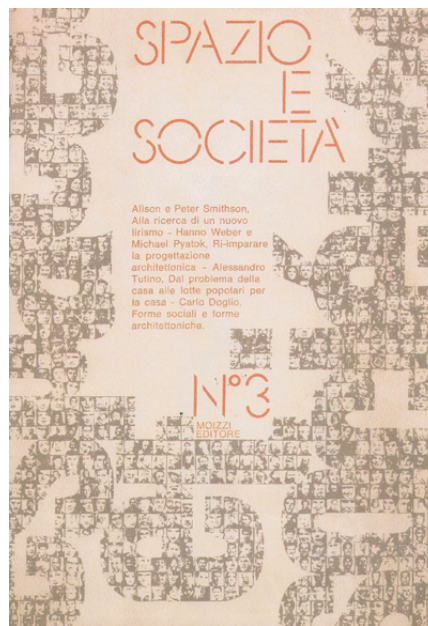
8 See footnote 4.

9 See Leonardo Ricci, "New Towns a scala territorial," *Spazio e Società* 3 (January-March 1976): 73-80, and by Riccardo Mariani, in the same years in which he assumed the position of editor-in-chief of the magazine: *Abitazione e città nella Rivoluzione industriale* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1975); *Fascismo e città nuove* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1976). In the same field of study, see in the same issues of the magazine the contributions of: Giuseppe Samonà, "La città in estensione," *Espaces et Sociétés* 2 (October 1975): 81-87; Carlo Doglio, "Città e dintorni," *Espaces et Sociétés - Spazio e società*, (October 1975): 95-98; Carlo Doglio, "Forme sociali e forme architettoniche," *Espaces et Sociétés - Spazio e società* 3, (March 1976): 62-72.

Fig. 1  
Spazio e Società 1, (1978).



2



3

Returning to the development of the editorial project, the introduction to issue number 3 (1976)<sup>10</sup> shows a “divergence” from the scope of the French journal which has society as its concept, while now it was intended to focus on space by defining a situation of symmetry and complementarity:

“The two journals will move on two different bands of the same spectrum...to explore a band rather than another inducing the readjustment, beyond the instrumentation, of ideological perspectives<sup>11</sup>”.

Instrumentation and ideological perspectives one intertwines according to the others in the organisational structure of the contents presented in the magazine, aimed at giving life to a mode of discussion where the topics are not programmatically explained, while the way in which they intend to develop them is. Giancarlo De Carlo declared this by assuming the leadership in 1978, intending to follow “alternating oscillations between objectives and proposals<sup>12</sup> in a tentative process that allowed the editorial line to be constantly checked<sup>13</sup>, an evident and declared analogy with the broader idea of an architect’s project, of which publishing and literature is a part<sup>14</sup>.

10 “From *Espaces et société* to *Spazio e Società*”, *Spazio e Società* 3 (January-March 1976): 3. Declared as the first of a new series, the publications stopped immediately the following year and then resumed in 1978.

11 Ibid.

12 De Carlo, “Editorial,” 4.

13 See for example Lamberto Rossi, “Viaggio all’interno di *Spazio e Società*,” *Spazio e Società* 29 (March 1985): 114-115; Giancarlo De Carlo, “Editoriale,” *Spazio e Società* 68 (October-December 1994): 6-11, with a response from Livio Sichirollo, in “Nota su ‘Facciamo il punto’, S&S n. 68/94,” *Spazio e Società* 71 (July-September 1995): 114-115. See also the final issue of 2001 where a sort of general assessment of the experience as a whole is offered through some “cuts” of various issues.

14 It is worth mentioning how De Carlo’s project-process approach feeds on narrative methods that were certainly consolidated by the architect’s well-known encounters with circles and personalities belonging to the world of literature. Here it is only mentioned in passing because it would require a much longer discussion and a specific investigation, a certain affinity that can be found between *Spazio e Società* and Elio Vittorini and Italo Calvino’s *Menabò*. See: Stefano Giovannuzzi, “Vittorini il *Menabò* e la neoavanguardia,” in *Vittorini e la città Politecnica*, ed. Virna Brigatti and Silvia Cavalli (Pisa: ETS, 2018), 95-111. A reference to the analogy between the forms of Vittorini’s editing and De Carlo’s “narrative” project can be found in Matteo Sintini, “Nelle città del mondo. Cosmopolitismo nell’opera e nel pensiero di Giancarlo De Carlo,” in *Multicultural Cities in the Mediterranean World*, edited Marco Folin and Rosa Tamborrino (Aisu International, 2019 conference proceedings, e-book), 310-330.

Fig. 2  
*Spazio e Società* 3, (1976).

Fig. 3  
*Espaces et Société. Rivista critica internazionale di Architettura e Urbanistica* 1, (1975).

An open forum necessary to provide tools and approaches capable of interpreting the complexity of the reality of the moment thanks to fundamental contributions from the social sciences in a broad sense, always leaving the issues unresolved, avoiding definitive positions, especially with regard to the formal matters involving the study of relational processes, as they existed before and would continue even in the event of a dissolution of physical configurations, which by nature are always changing<sup>15</sup>.

The journal's "open" nature is manifested also in the identification of the "public"<sup>16</sup> as potential readers:

"All those who by profession observe or transform – directly or indirectly – the physical and human environment; students, including young people who are not students in the institutional sense and yet are preparing themselves to observe and transform; but even those who are not allowed to observe and transform and therefore, suffer most acutely the effects of superficial observations and irresponsible transformations<sup>17</sup>".

The articulation of the sections is designed to encourage this user participation and develop the debate according to the objectives set out above. The journal's "open" style is reflected in the subdivision of the headings, which immediately indicates that these can be expanded, added to or replaced. The French edition's division into columns was substantially retained even after 1978 up to the mid-1980s (no. 33), when the "Recensioni" (Reviews) were added (from no. 34) along with "Qualità diffusa" (Widespread quality) and "Libri e riviste" (Books and journals). Those that characterise the first structure mirror the following subdivision: "Congetture" (Conjectures), featuring contributions that do not address a single argument in a systematic manner, useful for proposing situations that deserve an in-depth examination that the journal would take up in subsequent publications. "Argomenti" (Arguments) are reviews of a set of books just published whose subject matter is interesting, similarly to "Avvenimenti" (Events), drawing inspiration from facts and events. "Documenti" (Documents), on the other hand, offers the reader materials that are not easily found. Instead, the boxes dubbed "Questioni" (Issues) (which remained until no. 13, 1981) within the main articles are useful as a guide to the reading where topics are specified to help the reader participate, and as tools for the direct involvement of experts or spokespersons on the topic, who are specifically invited to participate in the debate.

De Carlo thus applies the role of the Italian intellectual-architect-professional in an original way, a "typical" figure of the Italian scene during all the 20th century

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15 Ludovico Quaroni, "Il ratto della città," *Spazio e Società* 8 (December 1979): 5-26, followed by two responses: Massimo Casavola, Francesco Cellini, Robert Maestro, Giuseppe Samonà, Antonio Terranova, "A proposito del ratto della città di Quaroni (no. 8)," *Spazio e Società* 10 (June 1980): 88-99 and Carlo Melograni, "A proposito del ratto della città di Quaroni (no. 8)," *Spazio e Società* 11 (September 1980): 92-97.

16 The issue had been a central focus for De Carlo since the previous decade. See Giancarlo De Carlo, "Il pubblico dell'architettura", which first appeared in the famous text *La Piramide rovesciata* (Bari: Di Donato, 1968), then in issue no. 5 in 1970 of *Parametro*.

17 Giancarlo De Carlo, "Editoriale", *Spazio e Società* 1 (January 1978): 4.

common to many other new “Masters”<sup>18</sup> experiences, such as: *Casabella* first and then *Rassegna* under the editorship of Vittorio Gregotti, *Zodiac and Hinterland* under Guido Canella, *Controspazio* under Paolo Portoghesi, and *Lotus* under Pierluigi Nicolini. The journals’ editors perform the function of an all-round “critic” similarly to what occurred in those same years as a result of the encounter between the historians liberated from the profession and the professionals by now excluded from the occupation of historian<sup>19</sup>, and by not entrusting all-Italian specificity to journalists or professional editors, as pointed out by Jean Louis Cohen<sup>20</sup>.

Although often on opposite sides as regards content, the Genoese architect shared with them the concept of the intellectual task and commitment to the profession, to be understood also as political difficulties of the profession and teaching of architecture<sup>21</sup>, thus renewing the Ernesto Nathan Rogers lesson learned by many members of this young generation precisely within the pages of a magazine: *Casabella-Continuità*. The greatest gap is recorded around the concept of a possible direct link between formal choices and political ideologies, which produced differences not only of a cultural type but also of a methodological and design approach. De Carlo considered the former to be determined by a more structured series of causes, still originating from political factors, yet broader, and not in the sense of belonging to a system of thought, in this case of a neo-Marxist matrix<sup>22</sup>.

This position finds a clear exemplification in architectural viewpoints by comparing the opposite experience<sup>23</sup> of Aldo Rossi and Giancarlo De Carlo as curators of the exhibition at the Triennale di Milano. In 1967, as regards the organisation of the 14th exhibition, the discussion on the shape and content of the setup became an opportunity to compare two contrasting worlds, both very present in the debate of the time. While the former fulfilled the same radical operation of ideological adhesion in the choice of an autonomous formal code based on the theory of “type”, the latter considered shape to be the result of a relational system that seeks to provide an interpretation of the complex world of mass society.

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18 The definition is used by taking here the words with which Bruno Zevi describes the architects mentioned, participants in the Milan exhibition *Nuovi disegni per il mobile italiano* of 1960. See Roberto Durbiano, *I nuovi maestri. Architetti tra politica e cultura nel dopoguerra* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2000).

19 See Jean Louis Cohen, “Dall’affermazione ideologica alla storia professionale”, *Zodiac* 21 (1999): 38.

20 *Ivi*: 39.

21 De Carlo’s editorial in issue no. 14 of 1981, applying the usual review of the editorial line helps clarify other aspects of the relationship between society and the architectural profession as the key topics of discussion in the journal. See also Serge Chermayeff, “Valori ed etica nella professione dell’architetto: domande e risposte”, *Spazio e Società* 26 (June 1984): 75-92.

22 Often declared to be De Carlo’s remoteness from socialist realism and the possibility that this could provide examples of society’s spatial construction. Consider De Carlo’s well-known affinity for anarchist movements and the influences of Pëtr Alekseevič Kropotkin. In this regard, see the responses of and on Colin Ward in the journal: Colin Ward, “Educazione alla conoscenza per la trasformazione dell’ambiente”, *Spazio e Società* 4 (December 1978): 72-84; Egle Becchi, “A proposito di Colin Ward (On Colin Ward) (no. 4)”, *Spazio e Società* 5 (January 1979): 5-6. See also Giancarlo De Carlo, “L’architetto e il potere”, *Gli spiriti dell’architettura*, ed. Livio Sichirollo (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1992): 191-197.

23 The first divergences are manifested specifically in the topics of *Casabella-Continuità* with De Carlo’s well-known article addressed to Aldo Rossi and Guido Canella. See Giancarlo De Carlo, “Problemi concreti per i giovani delle colonne”, *Casabella-Continuità* 204 (February-March 1955): 83.



## Per discutere sull'Eclettismo

**Eclettico:** (dal greco: *ek* fuori + *legein* scegliere, scegliere da vari sistemi, dottrine o soggetti; aderire ai principi dell'eclettismo.)  
 1) composto da materiali raccolti da vari sistemi, di varia origine ecc...  
 (Webster's New World Dictionary)

**Eclettico:** 1) selezionare, scegliere da varie sorgenti.  
 2) fatto di ciò che è stato selezionato tra cose di diversa origine.  
 3) che non segue alcun sistema della filosofia, della medicina ecc...; invece sceglie e usa ciò che considera il meglio di ogni sistema.  
 (The American College Dictionary)

**Eclettico:** 4) che denota o appartiene a opere di architettura, Decorazione, Pannaggio ecc... prodotte da una certa persona in un certo periodo, scegliendo in un ampio spettro di stili del passato, essendo la scelta ogni volta generata da una sua obliqua corrispondenza alla tradizione locale, ai caratteri geografici del luogo, allo scopo che si vuole perseguire o alle inclinazioni culturali del committente.  
 (The Random House Dictionary of English Language)

**Eclettico:** 1) Di quella filosofia che non accetta la stessa verità dottrina, ma da varie prende i principi che le paiono più probabili e questi commette alla meglio, senza che un principio unico sorregga su di tutti la ragione e la vita.  
 2) Chi eclettico, ove il doveroso giudicare dal nome che a si impongono, si dovrebbero una gente di memoria e non di ingegno.  
 (Niccolò Tommaseo, *Dizionario della lingua italiana*)

**Eclettismo:** nella filosofia o nella teologia è la procedura di selezionare dottrine da diversi sistemi di pensiero senza mai interamente adottare l'intero sistema dal quale ogni dottrina è stata derivata... Nella vita del popolare assistito l'eclettismo è esposto all'obiezione che, poiché si suppone che ogni sistema sia un tutto coerente e che ciascuna delle sue dottrine sia una sua parte integrale, l'arbitraria giustapposizione di dottrine appartenenti a diversi sistemi, facilmente risulterà in una fondamentale incoerenza.  
 «Questa tendenza si manifesta più naturalmente quando sistemi consolidati cominciano a perdere la loro novità o a rivelare le loro lacune attraverso cambiamenti di circostanze o a causa di scoperte scientifiche».  
 (Enciclopedia Britannica)

### Sistemi consolidati

**Capitalismo:** un sistema secondo il quale i mezzi di produzione e gli scambi sono in larga misura posseduti e indirizzati da privati.  
 (The American College Dictionary)

**Socialismo:** una teoria o sistema di organizzazione sociale che avoca la proprietà e il controllo sui mezzi di produzione, del capitale, della terra ecc... alla collettività.  
 (The American College Dictionary)

**Democrazia:** governo del popolo, una forma di governo in cui il potere supremo è nel popolo, che lo esercita direttamente o attraverso delegati eletti attraverso libero suffragio.  
 (The American College Dictionary)

**Libera iniziativa:** dottrina economica e politica secondo la quale un'occasione capitalistica può regolare se stessa, col minimo di interventi e regolamenti governativi, seguita dalle relazioni tra domanda e offerta che si sviluppano nella competizione del mercato.  
 (The Random House Dictionary of English Language)

**Pianificazione:** un metodo per influenzare o possibilmente controllare il futuro riformando o indebolendo le tendenze del presente.  
 Una perdita di credibilità sta erodendo i sistemi che sono stati ritenuti meriti i concetti che si sta per elaborare.

**Libertà:** si riferisce all'assenza di restrizioni legittime e alla possibilità di esercitare i propri diritti e poteri.  
 (The American College Dictionary)

**Progresso:** sviluppo della scienza, tecnologia, ecc., con speciale riferimento all'arricchimento di scarti tecnologici che ne deriva, o all'incremento del benessere materiale attraverso la moltiplicazione di beni, macchine, servizi che ne consegue.  
 (The Random House Dictionary of English Language)

**Ordine:** stato di pace e serenità.  
 (Webster's New World Dictionary)  
 Condizione di corrispondenza, stato di appropriata, tranquillità pubblica, pace quiete.  
 (Oxford's Concise English Synonyms)

**Disciplina:** addestramento che sviluppa l'autocoscienza, carattere, oppure ordine e efficienza.  
 (Webster's New World Dictionary)

L'editoriale della rivista americana «Progressive Architecture», n. 9 del settembre scorso, informava che il Postmodernismo sta per finire e a riprova che la vita come sempre continua presentava una dozzina di progetti di una nuova corrente chiamata Neomodernismo. Era inevitabile - diceva l'eclettico - che il Postmodernismo morisse giovane perché risultava affetto da moderno come il quale, poco più di dieci anni fa, si era levato con provocazione e dispetto.

Il Neomodernismo invece promette di essere assai più longevo perché di idealismo non ha alcuna traccia e al contrario è pragmatico, del senso che inclina a raccogliere quanto c'era di buono nel Movimento moderno dopo averne valutato se non le cause per le meno gli effetti, se non le strutture espressive per lo meno i reperti linguistici.

Di idealismo si muore, uno sarebbe portato a concludere subito.  
 Ma poi viene la curiosità di capire di che sorta di malattia si tratti. A prima vista la sua designazione appare avvertata, come a volte accade quanto ci si imbatte in quelle scorticazioni colloquiali che gli americani spesso usano per rendere concreti

## L'eclettismo dei tenenti americani

## The American lieutenants' eclecticism

G.D.C.

all'istante, e quindi largamente divulgabili, concetti che gli europei con fatica di secoli hanno sospeso ai livelli più astratti. Ma le si ricorre a *Random House* - uno dei dizionari Usa più autorevoli - a volte come nel territorio delle arti figurative (il definito idealismo) il trattamento che si impone al soggetto rappresentato per realizzare una particolare concezione inestinguibile della bellezza o della forma; trattamento che in genere consiste nel selezionare figure appartenenti a modelli diversi per ricomporre in configurazioni corrispondenti a una idea profilata di perfezione. E allora viene in mente il vecchio *Dizionario della lingua italiana* del sempre sorprendente Niccolò Tommaseo, che nel 1864 alla stessa voce osservava di passaggio: «l'eclettismo... tiene dell'idealismo».

E dunque di eclettismo che muoiono e anche nascono - per ogni morte, tante effimere nascite - le correnti, le famiglie, le gangie, dell'architettura contemporanea.

A tracciare un bilancio delle morti e delle nascite si dedica Charles Jencks in un consistente saggio nel n. 53 della rivista inglese «Architectural Design», da lui redatto per intero e dedicato alla Rappresentazione astratta.

Jencks è un genio della ecategorizzazione - è detto nel prologo pubblicitario del numero - e infatti nel suo saggio, e nel mirido gruppo di presentazioni che lo seguono, categorizza tutto e tutti con abilità sorprendente. Sembra che dopo le tante acquisite degli anni passati, gli sia arrivato il momento di misurarsi con il grande affanno.

Le correnti registrate sono molte e gli adepti in proporzione sono pochi; per cui capita che qualche corrente non abbia più di due o tre adepti o il più delle volte uno solo. Poi c'è un altro fatto che è un'adozione di compagnia in due o più correnti allo stesso tempo e allora il lavoro di collocazione diventa complesso, non solo perché la difficoltà di identificazione che insorgono ma anche perché, se il collocatore è anche capo-corrente, si trova a non sapere più

The editorial of «Progressive Architecture» (n. 9, Sept. 1982) reports that Post-Modernism is getting out and to show that life still goes on it carries a dozen or so projects from a new current called Neo-Modernism. The editorial says Post-Modernism just had to die young because it was infected by an even more acute form of idealism than that of the Modern Movement which it had once taken to task so fiercely, a little over ten years back.

We are given to understand that Neo-Modernism promises to be no flash in the pan just because it lacks the least trace of idealism; on the contrary, it's pragmatic, i.e. ready to take over whatever is good in the Modern Movement after appraising its effects, if not its causes, its vocabulary, if not its linguistic structures.

«Idealism» is a killer, or so one is led to conclude at first blush. But then comes the itch to try and see just what sort of ailment it is. At first sight the term seems to have been thrown out at random, as sometimes happens when one comes across those colloquial short cuts Americans so often use to make an idea immediately concrete and so widely ascertainable - ideas that Europeans have laboriously raised to the highest abstract levels through the centuries. But a glance at the *Random House Dictionary* shows that for them idealisms in the Fine Arts means treating the subject matter represented in such a way as to stress a mental conception of beauty or form, usually characterized by the selection of particular features of various models and their combination into a whole according to a standard of perfection. At which point one is reminded of the remarkable insight still to be found in Niccolò Tommaseo's old Italian Dictionary, which under the same entry notes in passing, «l'eclettismo... tiene dell'idealismo». So it's actually eclecticism that regularly kills off the various currents, families, gangs etc. of contemporary architecture.

In view of all this, including the open nature described above, *Spazio e Società* avoided presenting itself as a simple trade publication, to the point of assuming almost a "generalist" profile, to be read as an interpreter of the general crisis of those years when the structures and utopias of the previous decade had fallen, manifesting a desire to mirror the uncertainty of the moment and more in line with an international focus that became evident from the moment it was decided to publish in two languages.

### Debate: pluralism of language and new proposals for urban planning

Despite the aforementioned lack of a very clear statement of content, based on what has been stated so far some key topics discussed in the journal can be identified, in tune with the cultural climate of the 1970s and 1980s, a transitional period when some of the topics underlying the previous decade (social radicalism, utopia) had evolved and others that would dominate the following decade (the emergence of post-Modernism as a "style" and the evolution of mass society) took shape.

Referring to the two cases described above, the first illustrates a theory, the second builds the space within which to carry out a critical process<sup>24</sup>. At the assembly that Rossi would present at the following Triennale of 1973, De Carlo<sup>25</sup> in the previous one, a fusion of languages not to be interpreted as a new "eclecticism"<sup>26</sup> that instead was identified as post-Modern code.

24 See Paola Nicolini, *Castelli di carte. La XIV Triennale di Milano, 1968* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2011), 70-74.

25 The exhibition entitled *Il grande numero* was not inaugurated due to student protests. For more on the exhibition, see the exhaustive text mentioned above.

26 See Giancarlo De Carlo, "Per discutere sull'eclettismo," *Spazio e Società* 17 (March 1982): 62-67 and Giancarlo De Carlo, "L'eclettismo dei tenenti americani," *Spazio e Società* 25 (March 1984), 4-9. [Fig. 4-5]. See also Giancarlo De Carlo, "Beyond Postmodernism", preface to C. Richard Hatch, *The Scope of Social Architecture* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold International, 1984).

Through *Spazio e Società* the Genoese architect focused an interest on the manifestation of this phenomenon directed not so much at “showing its resounding superficial manifestations...but instead at orienting the discussion towards the causes that make them possible and the consequences that they produce,<sup>27</sup>” and considers it based on an ideological system that is even stronger than that which supported Modernism, as demonstrated by Charles Jenks’ “categorisation”<sup>28</sup> of postmodern eclecticism. They adapted to the capture of the new “princes”, the mass-media, through a system of mixing words in an exercise of mere language that “neglects the spatial reality of the building”<sup>29</sup>. The same line was also supported by the position of Jacob Bakema<sup>30</sup>, who emphasised the need to create “configurations” that require “dialectical effort fatigue with the events of society<sup>31</sup>,” expressions of pluralistic decision-making nodes that were no longer centralised. Instead of a repetitive and identifiable code, the answer to the “total urbanisation”<sup>32</sup> imposed by modernity, according to the Dutch architect, required an extension of language rather than formal simplification.

Engaging in the usual dialectic that followed the publication of a critical contribution, Ludovico Quaroni<sup>33</sup> [Fig. 6], responding to Bakema’s article, posed a key problem for the journal’s entire editorial programme, wondering if architectural and artistic culture had achieved equilibrium following recent socio-politically convulsive and dramatic decades. This was the proposal of the “Trendy priests”<sup>34</sup> who, according to Quaroni, deviate from the search for a correspondence between the linguistic system and social content by accentuating a figurative system. More interesting, according to the Roman architect, was another line of thought that could instead be represented by those who believe that there is no cyclicity and a unique relationship between social contexts and their representation, but that the causes that determine socio-political changes are the same that produce (or do not produce) progress in the artistic and architectural fields. It followed that the development of Italian architecture, but also that of other countries, had been largely detached from social and political events, and had been determined more by a desire for personal affirmation, as is the case, in his



6

27 Giancarlo De Carlo, “Editoriale,” *Spazio e Società* 14 (June 1981).

28 The author refers to the essay by Charles Jenks, published in the journal *Progressive Architecture* in issue 9 of 1983.

29 De Carlo, “L’eclettismo dei tenenti americani”: 9.

30 Jaap Bakema, “Dalla funzionalità dell’uso alla funzionalità creativa,” *Spazio e Società* 2, (April 1978): 75-84.

31 Heres Jedece, “Le vie dell’architettura sono davvero finite”, *Spazio e Società* 2, (April 1978): p. 86.

32 Jaap Bakema, “Dalla funzionalità dell’uso alla funzionalità creativa”: 78.

33 Ludovico Quaroni, “Una pericolosa tendenza,” *Spazio e Società* 2 (April 1978): 87-90.

34 *Ivi*: 87.

Fig. 6

L. Quaroni, “Una pericolosa tendenza,” *Spazio e Società* 2, (1978): 87-90.



# Umbilicus mundi

Caro Giancarlo, confesso di trovarmi in imbarazzo di fronte al tuo gentile invito a rispondere alla recensione di Aquiles Gonzales al mio libro *Venezia e il Rinascimento*. Chi scrive dovrebbe forse tacere di fronte a critiche, equivoci, opinioni diverse: per evitare ogni forma di pettegolezzo, innanzi tutto, ma anche per lasciare libero il proprio testo nel suo percorso. D'altra parte, anche una recensione è un testo, che esprime mentalità in genere legate ad ambienti che trascendono il suo autore: in quanto tale, essa si espone a una volta a critiche e a considerazioni storiche. Cercherei pertanto di esaminare lo scritto del mio recensente mettendo il più possibile fra parentesi il mio libro: un libro, d'altronde, che non sembra aver interessato Aquiles Gonzales, dato che egli rinvia a confronti con il suo esecutato. Le uniche cose che sembrano stare a cuore al recensente sono le *intenti* e la cosiddetta specificità dell'architettura. Ed è su quest'ultima che egli insiste: la storia — l'unica che nella pratica di scrivere, quella degli uomini — è fuori del suo campo di interessi. Perché mai, allora, prende in mano e sceglie di occuparsi di un testo storico? Quali che per Aquiles Gonzales sono sempre "nomi" che rendono complessa e accidentata la narrazione sono i soggetti delle mie analisi. La loro contraddittorietà è analoga a quella che caratterizza tutti i mortali, e sarebbe ben strano che le loro azioni si risolvessero in

storie prive di equivoci. La Serenissima Repubblica è paradossalmente in tal senso: il mio interesse per la sua storia è dovuto a tale caratteristica, che permette di far emergere — per ommissione — il significato delle opzioni cui Venezia resiste, che assorbe, che deforma. Né dovrebbe essere necessario ribadire che una volta a Bloch, Febvre, Furet ecc. — è sempre storia di intrecci fra storie storiche tradizionalmente separate per rigidità, per ignoranza, per semplicismo più o meno colpevole. Esattamente come avviene nelle nostre storie personali: una volta che decidiamo di compiere severe autoanalisi. Sono dunque meravigliato — ma non tanto, infine — delle rivendicazioni di Aquiles Gonzales: un discorso sull'architettura *justa sua principia*, è basta. Non si tratta, forse, della più limitate scelta storiografica? So bene (ed è per questo che non credo ad alcun determinismo. *Prima* di ogni intreccio storico e interpretativo l'analisi delle componenti, e l'architettura non sfugge a tale necessità. Non a caso, il recensente spesso non parla delle opere da me scritte, ma dei loro intenzioni, e, per come, la parrocchiale di San Martino, le Scuole Grandi di San Rocco e della Misericordia, le Procuratie Nuove ecc. Si sofferma, invece, su un tema introduttivo, il cui soggetto è la messa in luce di mentalità patriote nei confronti della *res publica*, della mistica urbana, (il sottotitolo *Religione, scienza, architettura* è evidentemente privo di

significato per lui). Lo lascio quindi libero di cercare ricette di cucina in un trattato di chimica organica. Piuttosto, ritengo sintomatico che, una volta di più, chi difende con accanimento la specificità dell'architettura si dimostri tanto incapace di leggerla. Il fatto che Aquiles Gonzales non sappia individuare nel foglio sanavvisato da Corrieri novità spaziali e "invenzioni" è tipico. Non mi rimane che rinviare all'analisi "specifici" di mentalità di quel foglio, e, il "Belicinoso dei Civici Musei Veneziani" del 1981 (peraltro citato in nota), raccomandandogli anche lo studio delle mie aggiunte in "Arte Veneta", 1987. Ma anche le sue letture dei palazzi Corrier e Giamani mi lasciano perplessi: sarebbero tali notazioni generici e smentite esempi di analisi specifiche? Non vorrei tuttavia essere frainteso. Come affermo di continuo, non credo ad alcun determinismo. *Prima* di ogni intreccio storico e interpretativo l'analisi delle componenti, e l'architettura non sfugge a tale necessità. Non a caso, il recensente spesso non parla delle opere da me scritte, ma dei loro intenzioni, e, per come, la parrocchiale di San Martino, le Scuole Grandi di San Rocco e della Misericordia, le Procuratie Nuove ecc. Si sofferma, invece, su un tema introduttivo, il cui soggetto è la messa in luce di mentalità patriote nei confronti della *res publica*, della mistica urbana, (il sottotitolo *Religione, scienza, architettura* è evidentemente privo di



Manfredo Tafuri

Dear Giancarlo, I confess to some embarrassment over your courteous invitation to reply to Aquiles Gonzales' review of my book, *Venezia e il Rinascimento*. An author ought really to keep quiet about criticism, misunderstandings, and conflicts of opinion, firstly to leave his book free to speak for itself. Anyway, even a review is a text, which expresses points of view shared by circles that go beyond its author, and as such it is likewise liable to criticism and historical appraisal.

So I shall try to examine the review by keeping my book as far as possible out of view; it does not seem to have in-

terested Aquiles Gonzales much anyway, since he refuses to go into its contents. The only things the reviewer really seems to care about are the *intenti* and the so-called *specificity of architecture*. And it is the latter on which he insists: history — the only history that matters, that of the architect — is not the subject of his text. So why did he choose to review a text dealing with history? What Aquiles Gonzales sees merely as "names", which cheapen and complicate the narrative, are the subjects of my analyses. Their lack of consistency is analogous to that which characterizes all mortals, and it would be odd if their actions were free from ambiguity.

The Serenissima Repubblica epitomizes this fact. My interest in the history of Venice is due to this very feature, which ranges — by omission — the significance of the options which Venice opposed, absorbed or distorted. And it should not be necessary to insist that any real history — after Bloch, Febvre, Furet and others — is always a history of interweavings between historical records that are traditionally kept separate out of laziness, ignorance or more or less blameworthy over-simplification. Just as it happens with our personal histories, when we decide to subject ourselves to a severe self-examination.

So I am surprised — though, at bottom, not greatly — at Aquiles Gonzales' desire to discuss an architecture *justa sua principia* and no more. Is not this about the most restrictive choice as a way of writing history? I know well enough — and this is why my autodidacticism is limited — that many architects have a special call for their own needs: bent in self-contemplation, they continually risk mistakes in their own writing, and the *Umbilicus mundi*. But I can not see why a historian should indulge such a vice. Though it is not impossible, it might serve the purposes of their often communitarian mania. So I shall interpret the fact that the reviewer can afford to ignore the construction of my book and its *intenti* (the subtitle, *Religione, scienza, architettura*, apparently means nothing to him), I'll leave him free to search for cake-

crumbs in a treatise on organic chemistry. Instead, I fear it is symptomatic that once again a person ferociously defending the specificity of architecture should prove so incapable of understanding it. The fact that Aquiles Gonzales fails to find spatial innovation and "invenzioni" in Santoni's drawings of the Corrier is typical. All I can do is to refer him to the "specific" analysis of this very drawing which I attempted in the *Bollettino dei Civici Musei Veneziani*, 1981 (cited in my book). But his interpretations of the Palazzo Corrier and Giamani are also unconvincing. Are these rather "true" general observations meant to be ex-

amples of specific analysis? Let me not be misunderstood though. As I say more than once, I do not accept any kind of determinism. Any historical interweaving needs to be preceded by an analysis of its components, and architecture is no exception to this requirement. It is no accident that the Spanish reviewer does not mention the works I have reconstructed in their laborious realisation, like the church of San Martino, the Scuole Grandi di San Rocco or the church of the Misericordia, the Procuratie Nuove, etc. He dwells, instead, on an introductory theme, the partisan outlook in regard to the *res publica*, the urban mystique, and private and state symbolism.

Without any interest in such questions, he seeks to offer his own "recipe", which to my (perhaps over-fatiduous) palate savours of stateliness. This is not in itself serious. The long-standing conflict between history and architecture is apparent again in Gonzales' article, which has constituted — apart from its intrinsic interest — a symptomatic text.

Fortunately *Spazio e Società* is a review which resists the strident cooing of recent architectural writing, that dives so often like "memory", the rediscovery of "history", "paradises regained" and other such garbage. There is no greater hypocrisy — and here I feel we agree — than that which stuffs its mouth with historical references in order to give away to one's own professional cynicism. But there exist many different forms of oblivion and hence my reaction to one of them, which is not characteristic of my career reviewer alone. This open letter of mine acts as a warning, on which discussion remains open. In fact, how can people who are called on to make decisions — like architects — avoid "forgetting"? How can one avoid the hurdle of the "intenti", of Nietzschean history? It seems to me only right to do so: this letter with its questions like this, whose difficulties, I feel, ought not to be underestimated. I know that you are similarly concerned with them. All the best.

Manfredo Tafuri

opinion, of "neo-rationalists" whose formal and graphic work believes, or wants people to believe, that it interprets a "socialist solidity"<sup>35</sup>.

Between the late 1970s and the mid-1980s<sup>36</sup>, eclecticism must be recognised as a multiplicity of languages<sup>37</sup>, a pluralism of points of view and multidisciplinary contributions. In this, De Carlo's opinion seems to coincide with what Manfredo Tafuri states<sup>38</sup> [Fig. 7] in his only article in the magazine, according to which history is a series of interwoven analyses of the components, to which architecture is one but not exclusive. Hence the continuous interest in broadening the horizons and expanding contacts with correspondents from the various continents — a work that was rarely done so systematically in Italian publishing — to better understand architecture in developing countries<sup>39</sup> and post-colonialism [Fig. 8-9]. The latter was approached from an exquisitely urbanistic point of view, for the opportunities it provided to propose case studies for measuring the expansion of the dimension of urbanisation due to the new forms of capitalist colonisation that repropo-

35 Ivi: 90.

36 Period in which a detachment occurs between the historian and the critic, Carlo Olmo, "Tra impegno e racconto: una generazione di storici al lavoro", *Zodiaco* 21 (1999): 18.

37 See, as developed in parallel with the early years of the journal in the ILAUD laboratories, *The multiplicity of language vs Eclectism* (Ilaud Year Book, Firenze: Sansoni, 1983).

38 Manfredo Tafuri, "Mundi," *Spazio e Società* 40 (October-December 1987): 110-111. Again in the dialectical form with which the magazine engaged in discussion, the text is a comment on Aquiles Gonzales's review of the book by Tafuri, *Venezia e il Rinascimento, religione, scienza, architettura* (Torino, Einaudi: 1985) There is a certain analogy of method, but the architect was quite distant from socialist realism and the possibility that this could provide examples of spatial construction of society.

39 Some issues of the journal addressed the systematic treatment of the realities of the various countries, occupying a large part of the editorial space in the form of "Dossiers": Argentina (33), Uruguay (35), Venezuela (39), Hong Kong (79) as well as much discussion about Brazilian, Colombian and Chilean architecture. Other countries of interest included those in the Maghreb (Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria), the Far East (China, Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia) and Africa (Burkina Faso, Angola, South Africa). India was often discussed by leading architects, in particular Balkrishnas Doshi.

Fig. 7  
M. Tafuri, "Umbilicus Mundi", *Spazio e Società* 40, (1987): 110-111.



imported, bureaucratized models of Western societies<sup>40</sup>. The experience of architecture in the Third World countries then had to be considered in the possibility of offering examples and solutions that were somewhat comparable or, in some cases, applicable to more developed contexts. Moreover, attention to the realities of these countries could be considered as a new opposition to the new internationalisation proposed by postmodernism, which was opposed to pluralism in a cosmopolitan key and strongly focused on local and regional culture. As a further step in this direction, to this was added the choice of non-traditional experiences, "out of the loop...and cultural operators who do not declare themselves architects"<sup>41</sup>, "alternative" forms of self-construction, misappropriation of spaces<sup>42</sup>, emergency housing solutions, widely present in the magazine's pages.

From the point of view of internationalisation and interest in contemporary proposals on the form and theory of urban form, *Spazio e Società* stands as the natural continuation of De Carlo's previous editorial project, the direction of the series *Struttura e forma urbana*<sup>43</sup> on behalf of the publishing house Il Saggiatore of Alberto Mondadori. The interest for urban planning that is not only regulatory or formalist that leads him, on the one hand to the rediscovery of certain texts, particularly of

40 See Luciano Barbero, Athina Savvidu, "Architettura e neocolonialismo," *Spazio e Società* 1 (January 1978): 27-66. See also Roberto Costa, "Sul neo-colonialismo," *Spazio e Società* 17 (March 1982): 85-98.

41 Giancarlo De Carlo, "Editoriale," *Spazio e Società* 1 (January 1978): 4.

42 See the author's interest and closeness to personalities such as Colin Ward and John F.C. Turner.

43 De Carlo's contacts for the inclusion of the volume *Architettura e rivoluzione* by Anatole Kopp in the series, which never materialised, were behind the approach to the French architect and urban planner and to the magazine *Espaces et Sociétés*.

De Carlo directed the series from 1967 to 1981, publishing 24 issues when only 16 had been planned. See Giancarlo De Carlo, "Tra tanti libri di architettura," in *Gli anni '60: intellettuali e editoria*, ed. Franco Brioschi (Conference proceedings. Milan 7-8 May 1984, Milano: Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 1987): 107-113; Fiorella Vanini, 6. "Giancarlo de Carlo e 'Struttura e forma urbana,'" in *La libreria dell'architetto. Progetti di collane editoriali 1945-1980*, ed. Fiorella Vanini (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2012): 99-115; Antonio Clemente, "Letture dimenticate," in *A partire da Giancarlo De Carlo*, ed. Federico Biò (Roma: Gangemi, 2007): 161-169.

Fig. 8

R. Costa, "Sul neo-colonialismo," *Spazio e Società* 17, (1982): 85-98.

Fig. 9

"Dossier": Argentina," *Spazio e Società* 33, (1985).





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an Anglo-Saxon culture, absent from the Italian debate thus far<sup>44</sup>, and on the other, to drawing closer to the contemporary urban planners: Christopher Alexander, Serge Chermayeff, Alexander Tzonis and Kevin Lynch<sup>45</sup> sensitive to the contamination of the discipline with social, anthropological and natural sciences and the introduction of participatory practices in the planning. The author's connection with American culture<sup>46</sup> solidified thanks to the ongoing presence of the above and other authors on the journal's pages, and through the establishment of an effective editorial staff parallel and independent to the MIT<sup>47</sup>, composed of Julian Beinart as editor-in-chief, Antonio Di Mambro and Edward Robbins [Fig. 10-12].

### Debate: from the Modern Movement to Post-Modern. Environment, architecture and power

The rethinking of some key elements of the Modern Movement that in recent years, compared to the 1950s<sup>48</sup>, have led to a change in perspective, adapting to the debate of the moment, allows us to frame other topics debated in the journal.

44 See: Ludwing Hilberseimer, *La natura della città* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1969); Clarence Stein, *Verso nuove città per l'America* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1969); Patrick Geddes, *Città in evoluzione* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1970).

45 See the texts published in the series: Christopher Alexander, *Note sulla sintesi della forma* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1967); Christopher Alexander and Serge Chermayeff, *Spazio di relazione e spazio privato (Relationship and Private Space)*, 1968; Serge Chermayeff and Alexander Tzonis, *La Forma dell'ambiente costruito* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1971); Robert Unwin, *La pratica della progettazione urbana* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1971); Robert Goodman, *Oltre il piano* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1973); Kevin Lynch, *Il tempo dello spazio* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1977); Kevin Lynch, *Il senso del territorio* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1981). *Spazio e Società* dedicated the cover of the "American" issue of June 1984 to the architect who passed away in April of that same year. See Giancarlo De Carlo, "Omaggio a Kevin Lynch," *Spazio e Società* 26, (June 1984): 2. Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1981).

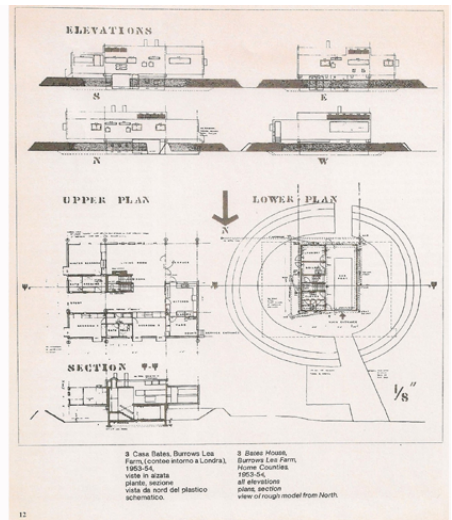
46 The first contacts with MIT date back to 1967, when De Carlo was contacted by Kevin Lynch, Henry Millon and Maurice Smith. Donlyn Lyndon, "Giancarlo De Carlo in the US," in *Giancarlo De Carlo. Percorsi*, ed. Francesco Samassa (Venice: Il Poligrafo, 2004): 47-58.

47 The issues completely edited by the American editorial team are no. 18 of 1982, no. 22 of 1983 and no. 26 of 1984: with further contributions from members of the editorial team including William Blake, Reyner Banham, John Ackerman, Michael Sorkin, Robert Gutman and John Turner. Architecture and American urbanism are also the subject of previous issues: nos. 7, 10 and 12.

48 De Carlo participated in this process from within the Italian architectural culture. Consider for example the volume on William Morris for the publisher Il Balcone, Milan, 1947. Externally he participated through Team X. Many members of the group would contribute to the pages of the magazine.

Fig. 10-12

*Spazio e Società* – *Space & Society* 18, (1982) – 22 (1983) – 26 (1984).



The first idea was based on two articles published by A+P Smithson in 1976 and 1978<sup>49</sup> [Fig. 13-14], significantly also called upon to open the new course of that year.

The first highlights the emergence of a “romantic” turn in the architecture of the late 1970s, where it is possible to recognise some aspects that the Modern Movement had instead wanted to abandon, such as: nature, history, the complexity of interwoven spaces determined by the relationship between places and denied societies in favour of a rigid schematism, the domestication of technology, the reliance on form as an expression of quality without ending in formalism and the enucleation of architecture as a space for human events, abandoning the utopias of large-scale architecture promoted during the 1960s.

Thus were clarified some fundamental terms for the Modern Movement, of particular importance in particular for Italian culture, such as the concept of “environment”, which turned towards new sensitivities determined by the reaction to the conditions of degradation produced by territorial development and the result of a new environmentalism that was also in part of American origin.<sup>50</sup> Hence the renewed interest in the conservation of historic city centres and the initiation of a discussion of the “new” industrial archaeology necessary for the recovery of abandoned areas, issues to which the journal devoted ample space.

Commenting on the considerations of the Smithson spouses in the aforementioned article in the 1978 inaugural issue, Francesco Dal Co<sup>51</sup> [Fig. 15] identifies how the need for a link between identity and space evoked by English architects

49 A+P Smithson, “Alla ricerca di un nuovo lirismo”; A+P Smithson, “La qualità dell’ambiente,” *Spazio e Società* 1, (January 1978): 9-26.

50 See Olmo, “Tra impegno e racconto: una generazione di storici al lavoro,” 12. Central in this regard was the interest in another personage of reference in American urbanism, Lewis Mumford. Giuliana Baracco was the first to translate *The culture of the cities* but never published it, the first Italian edition coming out in 1953, published by edizioni di Comunità. See Michela Rosso, Paolo Scrivano, “Introduzione,” in Lewis Mumford, *La cultura della città* (Torino: edizioni di Comunità, 1999), XXXVII.

51 Francesco Dal Co, “Desideri, tecniche, ambiente (intervento sulle questioni sollevate dall’articolo di A e P Smithson pubblicato sul numero 1 della rivista),” in *Spazio e Società* 3 (September 1978): 67-69.

Fig. 13

A+P Smithson, “Alla ricerca di un nuovo lirismo,” *Spazio e Società* 3, (1976): 7-16.

Fig. 14

A+P Smithson, “La qualità dell’ambiente,” *Spazio e Società* 1, (1978): 9-26.

Fig. 15

F. Dal Co, “Desideri, tecniche, ambiente (intervento sulle questioni sollevate dall’articolo di A e P Smithson pubblicato sul numero 1 della rivista),” *Spazio e Società* 3, (1978): 67-69.





16 |

no longer refers to Rogersian phenomenological space and not even to the desire to create a comfortable new and “technological” relationship between man and context belonging to a certain utopia of the 1960s and 1970s. The environment that the architect must be able to build is the field where needs and desires intersect and find balance. What the Smithsons propose, on the other hand, is a return to the place as an individual space, “resolved<sup>52</sup>”, antagonist of the house for an “anonymous” client proposed by the Modern Movement, however little able to intervene and modify the mechanisms of power and modern production. One of the most significant “moments” in this regard is represented by the publication of Le Corbusier’s interview in Issue 6<sup>53</sup> in 1979 [Fig. 16]. Twelve years after the architect’s demise<sup>54</sup>, the contribution’s tone seemed to adapt itself to the journal’s objectives as underlined in the comments to the text<sup>55</sup>:

“a loose, unordered and finalized story, different and in its own way revealing. This time the spokespersons are no longer the architects, the industrialists, the academics as in *Vers une architecture*, but the ordinary acquirers of the disk to be inscribed<sup>56</sup> “most extraordinary singularity of any utopia..., resulting from having surpassed the excesses of the same utopia<sup>57</sup>”.

Among these, Kenneth Frampton<sup>58</sup> [Fig. 17], anticipating the publication of the introduction written for the double issue 19-20 of the *Oppositions*

52 *Ivi*: 67.

53 Le Corbusier, “Messaggio in una bottiglia. Un inedito,” *Spazio e Società* 6 (June 1979): 5-30.

54 De Carlo from the beginning worked on a critique of the Swiss master’s thought. See the anthology of the writings edited by him, Giancarlo De Carlo, *Le Corbusier* (Milano: Rosa & Ballo, 1947) and Le Corbusier, *Urbanistica* (Il Saggiatore: Milan, 1967) also edited by him for *Struttura e Forma urbana* in 1967. Then followed the tribute to the centenary of the architect’s death, Giancarlo De Carlo, “Omaggio a Le Corbusier,” *Spazio e Società* 40, (October-December 1987): 4-5.

55 See: “Discussioni. A proposito del ‘Messaggio’ di Le Corbusier,” *Spazio e Società* 8, (December 1979): 96-101, see the content in the same article of Giuseppe Samonà, Francesco Tentori and Alison Smithson.

56 Giuseppe Cinà, “Le Corbusier da giovane era più saggio,” “Discussioni. A proposito del ‘Messaggio’ di Le Corbusier”, 9.

57 Samonà, “Discussioni. A proposito del ‘Messaggio’ di Le Corbusier”, 99.

58 Kenneth Frampton, “Resta come la nemesi del nostro tempo,” “Discussioni. A proposito del ‘Messaggio’ di Le Corbusier”, 97-98.

Fig. 16

Le Corbusier, “Messaggio in una bottiglia. Un inedito,” *Spazio e Società* 6, (1979): 5-30.



17

magazine edited by him on the master in 1980, from a certain temporal distance, seeking to avoid the risks of the sterile contemporary contrast between the post-modernists and the followers of militant modernism, to address it instead on more functional topics to a critique of the contemporary, of mass and bourgeois society and of the reduction of architecture to a commodity. According to the American historian, one of Le Corbusier's major contributions was that of having tried to tackle the titanic project of shaping the structure of the future bourgeois city and defining the cultural status of industrial objects. Le Corbusier's flaw was to have excessively extended Hausmanian urban planning instruments – and before that the Enlightenment matrix – to respond to the demands of the industrial capital between the two wars, first, and neo-capitalism from 1945. However:

“The anti-consumerist idea of the casual relationship between needs-type and objects-type...could not have been farther from the interests of capital.... Always waiting, like Charles Fourier, for the arrival of an enlightened prince or a technocrat magnate, Le Corbusier sought a patron who could not absolutely exist in capitalism<sup>59</sup>”.

It is clear how the social outlook on the construction of space cannot be confined solely to a more or less forced adherence to ideological systems, but much more widely concerns architecture's relationship with power, in the broadest sense<sup>60</sup>, another central theme of De Carlo's interests, of course, but which can also be

59 Ivi: 98.

60 See Alain Gouhier, “Il potere e i luoghi del potere”, *Espaces et Sociétés*, no. 2 (October 1975): 5-21. From this point of view we can consider, for example, the journal's interest in French public policies. On this, see again Giancarlo De Carlo, *L'architetto e il potere (The Architect and Power)*, op. cit.

Fig. 17  
 “Discussioni. A proposito del “Messaggio” di Le Corbusier”, *Spazio e Società* 8, (1979): 96-101.



considered as one of the many implications of the debate resulting from the criticism of postmodern culture. Franco Mancuso<sup>61</sup> [Fig. 18] sheds light on a substantial immobility of architectural culture on this relationship, an aspect also emphasised by Giovanni Michelucci<sup>62</sup> in his only contribution to the journal. While the problem of the Florentine architect is oriented towards objectives of more than an architectural nature, Mancuso's discourse starts from the observation of the absence of a genuine debate on the architecture-power relationship between the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s, a debate which shies away from the continuous historical recollection of the events of the Fascist period. This inability is attributable to the lack of a traumatic and "dividing" event as was the Second World War and the Resistance, capable of starting a process of reflection without which it is impossible to make a critical review of what one is already experiencing or has recently experienced. Turning to Italian architecture, it is affected by the condition whereby:

"The fact that the current political and cultural conditioning has not changed much (many protagonists in the political and cultural scene are still in the front row, despite the passing of almost two generations), induces historians and critics to take a cautious stance, and militant architects to make blurred judgments on everyday problems<sup>63</sup>".

A certain architectural tendency, therefore, seeks legitimacy in history for its monumental and formalist actions, still with an attitude that shies away from a genuine critique.

While these issues are directly relevant to academic culture, the debate on the journals, etc., as Mancuso points out, are disconnected from the real definition of the contemporary city's structure, and the difficulty of creating models is manifested at the moment in which the consolidation of public power is affirmed in all the processes that determine social relationships. Consequently, the response of the administration's practice is resolved with greater bureaucracy or by addressing architecture with a purpose that is often directed to provide immediate and simplified solutions, images for use by the mass media that produce the proliferation of occasions for competition, and conceptual or drawn



18

61 Franco Mancuso, "L'architettura come gioco del potere (Architecture as a Power Game)," *Spazio e Società* 21, (March 1983): 94-99.

62 See Giovanni Michelucci, "Ordine e disordine", *Spazio e Società* 31-32, (September-December 1985): 87-89, text from an article that appeared in December of the previous year in no. 5 of "La nuova città".

63 *Ivi*: 94.

Fig. 18

F. Mancuso, "L'architettura come gioco del potere," *Spazio e Società* 21, (1983): 94-99.

or ephemeral design exercises<sup>64</sup> that have actually increased considerably since the 1980s and at least throughout the decade.

In this context, according to Mancuso, the expertise of the historian or critic increases his or her potential to influence the promotion of an architect, who in turn increases the production of images and drawings for publications in journals, monographs and so on, aspects which logically also affect the cultural orientations of architecture schools “that pass down stereotypes easy to assimilate and copy, and feeding on the cultural products touted by journals<sup>65</sup>”. Mancuso’s proposals in opposition to this scenario offer, in conclusion, a revamped manifesto of *Spazio e Società*:

“Reject the seductions of formalistic complacency and bring architecture back to that desperate need of quality and efficiency which the daily space lived-in by the community requires; stop looking backwards and instead recover the enormous individual and collective energy that flows in the moments in which the built environment is created; observe with greater penetration capacity the ever-new and changing relationship between society and the built environment, and work for the reconciliation of architecture with the disciplines of the city<sup>66</sup>”.

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64 The reference is to the 1st International Biennale di Architettura by Paolo Portoghesi in 1980 and to the achievements of the *Strada Nuovissima* or of the *Teatro del Mondo* (*The Theatre of the World*).

65 Mancuso, “L’architettura come gioco del potere (Architecture as a Power Game),” 98.

66 *Ibidem*.

Correction to **“DEAR ALISON” The Diffusion of J.A. Coderch’s Work through his Participation in Team Ten**

Due to an author correction, note number 23 was changed in the following article:

Julio Garnica González-Bárcena, “DEAR ALISON” The Diffusion of J.A. Coderch’s Work through his Participation in Team Ten, 10.6092/issn.2611-0075/9815, HPA n.4 (2019).

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