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Committed, Politicized, or Operative: Figures of Engagement in Criticism from 1945 to Today

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Committed, Politicized, or Operative: Figures of Engagement in Criticism from 1945 to Today

In 1995, in an article on the renewal of criticism published in the French journal *Le Visiteur*, architect and critic Bernard Huet related to Charles Baudelaire to expound his position on the subject.[1] Determined to emphasize architectural criticism's separation from history and theory, and therefore to highlight its peculiar disciplinary distinction, Huet espoused an idea of engaged criticism connoting the latter for its social and political function in the spatial domain. Huet specifically referred to a passage in one of Baudelaire's writings (the *Salon de 1846*), where the terms *partiale, passionnée, politique* — partial, impassionate, and political — were used to indicate art criticism's chief attributes.[2]

Engagement has often been seen as an intrinsic characteristic of architectural criticism, if not as one of the defining traits of the discipline: however, this

1 Bernard Huet, "Les enjeux de la critique," *Le Visiteur* 1 (Fall 1995), 88–97.

2 Charles Baudelaire, "À quoi bon la critique" in *Salon de 1846* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1846), 2. On this subject see: Hélène Jannière, *Critique et architecture. Un état des lieux contemporain* (Paris: Éditions de la Villette, 2019), 21–3.

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view has been more pervasive in particular chronological settings and cultural contexts. During the 1990s, for example, a widespread nostalgy for a notion of criticism associated to the historical avant-gardes emerged perhaps as a reaction to a tendency of the 1980s to identify criticism with "communication" or even with the promotion of architects and architectures. This "committed" or "politicized" approach to criticism emphasized the critic's influential and active role in discovering, promoting, and intellectually supporting groups of artists or architects. The idea of a "golden age" of criticism began thus to spread in architectural historiography, being from time to time related either to the end of the 19th century, to the 1920s, or to the 1960s and 1970s.

The present introduction has no pretension to thoroughly discuss the question of criticism's engagement since 1945, in its artistic, intellectual, or political implications. It is necessary to remind, however, that architectural criticism emerged in the postwar years as a solidly established and largely recognized cultural practice in specific geographical contexts. It was the case, for example, of Italy, where Bruno Zevi ushered in an approach to criticism that would be later labeled as "operative". "Operative criticism", in fact, was a definition coined *ex post* by Manfredo Tafuri, but that Zevi intentionally endorsed to the point of founding in 1970 a department under the same denomination at the University of Rome La Sapienza, the Istituto di critica operativa dell'architettura (Institute of architecture's operative criticism), of which he became the first director. Zevi's activity as an engaged critic had its roots in early works such as *Verso un'architettura organica* and *Saper vedere l'architettura* — published in 1945 and 1948 respectively — and fully matured through the experience as director of the journal *L'architettura. Cronache e storia* and as columnist for the weekly *L'Espresso*.[3]

The rewards of Zevi's action would be reaped in the following decades. In fact, one of the most important breaking points in the history of 20th-century architectural criticism corresponds to the 1960s, a decade marked by the fading of the faith in a "progressive" idea of architecture and, as a consequence, by the decline of a kind of engaged and operative criticism that had accompanied its development since the years immediately preceding the Second World War. It was precisely at that time that Tafuri coined the expression critica operativa (operative criticism), indeed the title of the fourth chapter of his *Teorie e storia dell'architettura*, a volume first published in 1968.[4] Locating the origins of an "operative" attitude in Giovanni Pietro Bellori's *Vita de' pittori, scultori et architetti moderni (*The life of painters, sculptors and modern architects, 1672), a book that was singled out for unveiling an engagement in and commitment to the narrated events, Tafuri defined — and implicitly condemned — operative criticism as "analysis of architecture" intended to "design" a precise poetical aim "[…] anticipated in its structures, and resulting from programmatically finalized

3 Bruno Zevi, *Verso un'architettura organica* (Turin: Einaudi, 1945); id., *Saper vedere l'architettura* (Turin: Einaudi, 1948).

4 Manfredo Tafuri, *Teorie e storia dell'architettura* (Bari: Laterza, 1968), 161–93.

and deformed historical analyses."[5] As such, Tafuri claimed, operative criticism could only result from the encounter between history and architectural design, "projecting" history toward the future (Tafuri played with the double meaning of the verb "progettare", "to project", both "to cast forward" and "to design"). In the context of the late 1960s, when *Teorie e storia dell'architettura* was released, operative criticism appeared "too compromised" with architects and architectural activity, in particular with the narration of the Modern Movement, later further denounced in Tafuri's *Progetto e Utopia. Architettura e sviluppo capitalistico* of 1973.[6]

Through his controversial stance vis-à-vis the question of engagement, Tafuri set the tone for a discussion that would dominate criticism — and its understanding — for years to come, perhaps even beyond his own intents. Luca Monica has noted that Tafuri's position, as expressed in *Teorie e storia dell'architettura*, disclosed a paradox: thanks to the influence acquired in the years following the publication of the 1968 book, the Roman author almost "set to zero" existing traditions of criticism (in particular in Italy), building upon entirely new foundations a sort of historical criticism; moreover, he *de facto* reserved for himself the role of true "operative critic", a role taken on through an intense activity as academic and public intellectual.[7] It could be added that the paradox extended to delineate Tafuri both as an advocate of operative criticism and as an interested party of it.

What is certain is that, in spite of the degree of miscomprehension that characterized their circulation, Tafuri's views emerged soon as the principal yardstick within the international debate over the role and the duties of architectural criticism. The already-mentioned Bernard Huet, who became one of the main champions in France of Italian architectural culture of the 1960s and 1970s, in his preface to the French edition of *Progetto e Utopia* gave Tafuri credit for having employed "operative criticism" to succeed where other critics and historians had failed, that is, for shedding light on the crisis of modern architecture by revealing "its mythical origin". Huet claimed that, in order "To put this critique into effect," Tafuri had taken "[…] a fundamentally different perspective from the one used by traditional historians who operate within the problematic framework of art history." In Huet's view, Tafuri had produced a significant breakup, by challenging "[…] those who, claiming to be inspired by the Marxist thought, situate their point of view 'inside' the intellectual work and […] legitimize the survival of a myth that their predecessors E. Kauffman, N. Pevsner or S. Giedion had largely contributed to create in the 1930s."[8]

The negative assessment of operative criticism expressed in 1968 only anticipated a more general rebuff on the part of Tafuri of criticism in its entirety

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5 Ibid., 161.

6 Manfredo Tafuri, *Progetto e Utopia. Architettura e sviluppo capitalistico* (Bari: Laterza, 1973).

7 Luca Monica, *Postfazione. La critica operativa come letteratura artistica dell'architettura degli ultimi cinquant'anni* in Luca Monica (ed.), *La critica operativa e l'architettura* (Milan: Unicopli, 2002), 156–96.

8 Bernard Huet, *Préface* in Manfredo Tafuri, *Projet et utopie* (Paris: Bordas, 1979), IV.

— the famous statement "there is no criticism, only history", voiced in 1986 in an interview to Richard Ingersoll.[9] As it has been noted, it might be limiting to reduce Tafuri's intellectual trajectory in the final decades of his career to an attempt to completely abandon political commitment in favor of a philological approach to the study of architecture.[10] Tafuri's stance against criticism and in support of history did not reject criticism per se, it rather asserted that criticism should include a historical approach even if in relation to the present time. Still, one cannot but wondering whether Tafuri ended up "kidnapping" almost unintentionally a large portion of the discussion over engaged criticism.

The reception of the expression "operative criticism", as well as its appropriation by different commentators or actors, would deserve a dedicated research, in view of the multiple meanings it might have taken over time. After Tafuri's initial definition, the notion of "operative criticism" prompted a wide range of reactions and comments. In the first place, the break with operative criticism was welcomed as a positive transformation: its abandonment was seen as finally allowing the coming to the fore of a form of criticism based on "scientific" criteria, as it was the ambition of many during the 1960s and 1970s. Afterwards, operative criticism became the object of a nostalgic reappropriation. During the 1980s, for instance, criticism linked to the avant-garde movements of the interwar period became one of the most frequently cited cases of a sort of "golden age", seen — as it was — as a perfect embodiment of closed proximity between architects and critics and of criticism's engagement in the architects' activity. Since the 1990s, a nostalgy emerged for specific moments of the history of criticism, being them the perceived intellectual sophistication of Italian criticism of the 1950s and 1960s (incarnated by Ernesto Nathan Rogers's *Casabella-Continuità*) or the kind of "fighting spirit" characterizing British criticism in the postwar years (from *The Architectural Review to Architectural Design*, and with Nikolaus Pevsner or Reyner Banham as its protagonists).

Albeit neither sinking into pessimism nor giving way to nostalgy, during his tenure as director of *Domus* François Burckhardt identified the 1990s as marking the end of what he named "great criticism". Burckhardt attributed this season's closing off to the disappearance of figures such as those of Giulio Carlo Argan, Sigfried Giedion, or Ernst Gombrich — and one could add Manfredo Tafuri or Reyner Banham to this list — who could hold conflictual and controversial positions within the architectural debate.[11] Burckhardt noted that architects had gradually replaced critics, with the former expressing major theoretical positions and the latter relegated to an increasingly dependent function of mediators. Burckhardt's argumentation unveiled the ongoing inversion of roles between architects and critics, a change that reflected similar trends in the art

9 "There is no criticism, only history," *Design Book Review* (Spring 1986); republished in *Casabella* 619–620 (January-February 1995), 96–9.

10 Carla Keyvanian, "Manfredo Tafuri: From the Critique of Ideology to Microhistories," *Design Issues* 16: 1 (Spring 2000), 3–15.

11 "Architettura e media: il futuro delle riviste di architettura/Architecture and Media: The Future of the Architectural Magazines," *Domus* 790 (February 1997), 55.

field. For long "discoverers" active in the art market, critics would less and less associate their names to a group or a movement and test, as Nathalie Heinich has put, their "power of intervention in the realm of art."[12]

Well beyond this operation of social distinction, in Pierre Bourdieu's sense, critics were often the principal guarantors of the theoretical coherence of groups of artists, as exemplified by the case of Pierre Restany with the *nouveaux réalistes* in France and by that of Germano Celant with *arte povera* in Italy. In the domain of architecture, among the critics who after the Second World War cemented the coherence of a movement by stating common theoretical principles one can include Reyner Banham with New Brutalism in the United Kingdom and perhaps Arthur Drexler, Colin Rowe, and Kenneth Frampton with the New York Five in the United States.[13] The privilege of the critic, consisting in the power to place a group on an artistic or cultural map, was gradually sidelined, disappearing thus behind the role of mediation. At one point, a type of engaged criticism not reduced to the promotion of architects and to a "star system" model — according to a definition coined by François Chaslin — where architectural criticism and communication strategies of high-profile architectural firms almost collude began to appear outmoded to most.[14]

This issue of *Histories of Postwar Architecture* collects studies dedicated to historical examples of "committed" and "politicized" criticism, soliciting a reflection on the real meanings of these concepts and on the themes and subjects to which they are tied. On the one hand, the figure of "committed" critic might be linked to the art and architecture avant-gardes from the end of the 19th century onward, hence defining a privileged relationship between the critic and the artist or the architect; on the other, "politicized" criticism can be characterized as the understanding in political terms of architectural and city phenomena.

Partial, impassionate, and political, the three terms evoked by Huet and recalled at the beginning of this text, do not completely portray Baudelaire's thought, if one fails to notice that in the passage where they had been used the French poet described committed criticism as linked to Romanticism and, therefore, as the expression of "the morality of the century".[15] By quoting Baudelaire, in fact, Huet referred to the practice of the *critique influent* (the influential critic), which emerged at the time of the decline of the official *Salons* and the coming to the fore of the first avant-garde movements, rather than to the form of criticism that developed during the 18th-century as a "specific and autonomous literary

12 Nathalie Heinich, *Le triple jeu de l'art contemporain: sociologie des arts plastiques* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1998), 267.

13 *Five architects: Eisenman, Graves, Gwathmey, Hejduk, Meier* (New York: Wittenborn, 1972); on New Brutalism, see the essay by Silvia Groaz included in this volume.

14 François Chaslin, *Critique d'architecture* in *Dictionnaire de l'architecture du xxe siècle* (Paris: Hazan, 1995), 223–24; Id., *Architecture and Criticism* in Mohammad al-Asad and Majd Musa (eds.), *Architectural Criticism and Journalism: Global Perspectives* (Turin: Allemandi, 2006), 21–7.

15 Charles Baudelaire, "Qu'est ce que le Romantisme?," in *Salon de 1846* cit., 5.

genre" to provide judgment, evaluation or consecration for painters' careers.[16] The traditional function of the critic, to discern in a normative way art from non-art, evolved into a function of anticipation: more militant, the critic was expected to support young artists who were breaking away from existing traditions.[17] In the history of 19th- and 20th-century architecture, examples of "committed critics" abound and they include the likes of John Ruskin, William Morris, Sigfried Giedion, Nikolaus Pevsner, and Reyner Banham.[18]

The second possible way of considering the critic's role takes into account political commitment. In architecture, politically engaged criticism has often encompassed a vast array of meanings, from social criticism of architecture (as a disciplinary stance modeled on the social history of art or architecture), to social and political criticism of the urban phenomenon (as it was often the case during the 1960s and 1970s), to the explicit espousing of specific political positions, with critics becoming either *compagnons de route* or members of a political party or organization. In most commentaries on engaged criticism these different meanings — aesthetic and political commitment — tend to overlap. In an article titled "Does Architecture Criticism Matter?", published in 2014 in *Domus*, Joseph Rykwert remarked in fact that the French expression *critique militante*, one that "[…] might more gently translate as 'engaged criticism'," almost qualifies as "[…] an oxymoron since we often see the critic as detached, above the fray, calmly formulating judgements and not engaging in jousts or disputes."[19] Yet, Rykwert continued, "dispassionate criticism" (one could call it nonpartisan criticism) should not be the critic's ultimate goal: "I have always believed that the critic must be a fighter. To do so [critics] must […] have a clearly articulated notion of what they think society must expect of its builders, […] a distinct notion of what the architect may or may not be contributing to the common good."[20] In Rykwert's opinion, thus, the two faces of "engaged" criticism — regarding aesthetics, as a companion to architects — and politics — the preoccupation for the "common good" — must converge into a single figure of critic, in line with what had happened for a significant part of the history of architecture of the 19th and 20th centuries.

However, committed and politicized criticism reflect contextual conditions or, in other words, the *zeitgeist* of a particular moment of history. Kenneth Frampton has noted that architectural criticism specifically flourishes when it

16 See: Jean-Paul Bouillon (ed.), *La Critique d'art en France 1850-1900* (Saint-Étienne: CIEREC - Université de Saint-Étienne, 1989); Id., *La Promenade du critique influent, anthologie de la critique d'art en France 1850-1900* (Paris: Hazan, 1990).

17 Denys Riout, *Voir et prévoir (Notes sur une critique d'avant-garde dans les années 1880)* in Dominique Château (ed.), *À propos de "La critique"* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995), 289–304.

18 From the 1980s onwards, numerous studies have advanced new interpretations of the role played by different figures of committed or engaged critics; see for example: Sokratis Georgiadis, *Sigfried Giedion. Eine intellektuelle Biographie* (Zürich: gta/Ammann, 1989); Michela Rosso, *La storia utile, Patrimonio e modernità di John Summerson e Nikolaus Pevsner* (Turin: Edizioni di Comunità, 2001); Peter Draper (ed.), *Reassessing Nikolaus Pevsner* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Paolo Scrivano, *Storia di un'idea di architettura moderna. Henry-Russell Hitchcock e l'International Style* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2001); Nigel Whiteley, *Reyner Banham: Historian of the Immediate Future* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2002).

19 Joseph Rykwert, "Ma la critica architettonica conta qualcosa?/Does Architecture Criticism Matter?", *Domus* 979 (April 2014), 3.

20 Ibid.

is tied to both a cultural milieu and a political commitment. Referring to the debate that reached its climax at the beginning of the 2000s, when it became dominated by "neo-pragmatist" tendencies, Frampton has underlined that a "post-critical" attitude developed thanks to the economic and political context of neoliberalism.[21] Frampton juxtaposes this context to the situation that characterized the years after the Second World War, evidencing the concomitance between the emergence of a substantially critical environment and the political and social conditions of the age of the Welfare State — a fertile "social-democratic" interregnum placed between the end of the war and the development of globalized capitalism.[22]

Among the questions that this volume of *Histories of Postwar Architecture* wants to address are: in which way do these definitions of "committed" and "politicized" criticism come close to or differ from the definition of "operative" criticism, in the various meanings that have been attributed to it since Tafuri's dismissal? What are the theoretical tools, the rhetorical constructions, and the intellectual and political references of "committed" and "politicized" criticism? Should the latter be necessarily bound to the author's belonging to a party or political group? What are their main ways of circulation (specialized periodicals, journals, targeted actions)? In which measure did "politicized" criticism influence architecture's historical narrative? And finally, what are the interlacements and the convergences between criticism's intellectual and artistic engagement and the political commitment?

The authors included in this volume consider the concept of committed and politicized criticism in different ways, exploring in the first place its boundaries with historiography, by bringing for example to light the question of the "embedded" historian. Some essays challenge the "common" understanding of commitment in the architectural debate, for instance exploring the background of an architectural magazine or unveiling the political dimension of a notion, such as the one of New Brutalism. Others, finally, examine the conditions that brought specific critical trends to emerge in peculiar political contexts.

While at first sight only partially centered on architectural criticism, Rixt Hoekstra's essay reflects upon the position of the "committed" architectural historian by embracing a broad definition of criticism. Hoekstra argues that the postwar historiography of De Stijl was defined by a change in the subject position of the historian as a critical actor: promoting contemporary architects, in fact, "operative historians" linked very often their object of study to contemporary practices. Hoekstra's text focuses on a period at the turn of the 1980s, when historians adopted a more distant and detached attitude toward De Stijl and other avant-garde movements. On his part, Marco Capponi undertakes a philological research over the first and second editions of Manfredo Tafuri's *Teorie*

21 Kenneth Frampton, "Introduction," *Les Cahiers de la recherche architecturale et urbaine* 24-25 (December 2009), 11–3, monographic issue "La critique en temps et lieux" edited by Kenneth Frampton and Hélène Jannière.

22 Kenneth Frampton, "Notes sur la réception critique de Le Corbusier en Grande-Bretagne, 1946-1972," ibid., 22–3.

e storia dell'architettura, a book that marked a key-moment in Tafuri's career, characterized by the apparent abandonment of committed criticism and architectural practice in favor of history. Delving into *Teorie e storia dell'architettura*'s supporting bibliography and its apparatus of citations, Capponi's essay demonstrates that Tafuri politicized his book *a posteriori*, in order to somewhat conform to the cultural context of Venice's school of architecture, where he was teaching at the time. Through an accurate bibliographic analysis and the study of the university lectures on which part of the text was based, Capponi discusses Tafuri's notions of history and operative criticism, particularly in relation to key publications of the 20th-century such as those by Giedion, Zevi and Leonardo Benevolo, all preceding *Teorie e storia dell'architettura*.

In his essay on the British journal *Architectural Design*, Steven Parnell explores an unusual aspect of criticism, largely overlooked by architectural historians. Adopting a biographical approach, Parnell uses the case of Monica Pidgeon's long career as the publication's editor to unveil the continuous overlapping between her inclinations and preferences and the journal's critical line, not rarely reflecting Pidgeon's network of personal connections. Parnell convincingly contends that "engaged" criticism often materialized in the pages of *Architectural Design* thanks to the presence in the periodical's editorial board of "technical" editors such as Theo Crosby, Kenneth Frampton, and Robin Middleton. The postwar English architectural debate is also the subject of Silvia Groaz's essay, which focuses on the political and ideological implications of New Brutalism. The author illustrates the complex genealogy of the term, which was not only tied to the use of a particular material or aesthetics, but also incorporated political values when it was for example utilized to oppose the New Empiricism advocated by most architects and planners of the London County Council. The text scrutinizes the opposition between New Brutalism and New Empiricism, which mostly reflected the positions of two political factions: on the one side, the exponents of the Marxist wing, who endorsed a privileged Swedish-English cultural connection and advocated for a "new national architecture with humanistic overtones"; on the other, the supporters of a more radical conception of urbanism, accused by its opponents of "social failure". Groaz's contribution unveils the shift of meaning to which the term New Brutalism was subjected throughout the years: when largely disseminated from the mid-1950s onwards, its common understanding prioritized aesthetic or architectural values, owing to its appropriation by high-profile figures of the British postwar debate such as Banham and Alison and Peter Smithson.

The relationship between criticism and political context is at the center of two other essays included in this volume, those by Guanghui Ding and Dijia Chen, both dedicated to China. Investigating the role played from 1980 to 1995 by academic and critic Zhaofen Zeng in editing the journal *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* (World Architecture), as well as his activity as contributor to the rival publication *Jiànzhúshī* (The Architect), Ding takes Zeng's actions as an instrument to assess the conditions of possibility reserved to architecture criticism in the

Chinese context of the 1980s. On her side, Dija Chen scrutinizes the critical discourse that emerged around the so-called "experimental architects" and that involved part of China's academic community during the early 2000s. Her essay evaluates the role that experimental architecture had in voicing criticism in the country's post-reform architectural production, but also in providing an alternative venue for a novel debate on the discipline. Both Ding and Chen's essays draw an accurate portrait of the Chinese context at a time when the latter experienced a massive "encounter" with global architectural culture.

Finally, the last two essays explore themes with a significant potential to enrich the discussion that this volume of *Histories of Postwar Architecture* intends to launch. Considering the events surrounding the 1988 competition for the German Historical Museum in Berlin and the role played by architect and university professor Max Bächer in promoting the project by Aldo Rossi, Frederike Lausch and Phoebus Panigyrakis analyze the discussions of the time over the "intrinsic" value of an architectural work and over the independence of aesthetics from politics. The question concerning the relation between architecture and politics, that Bächer had investigated in his university lectures, echoed the debate over architecture's disciplinary autonomy that had surfaced since the 1990s in Italian circles — and which involved, not surprisingly, the same Rossi. The case examined by Lausch and Panigyrakis is a good example of intersection between political and disciplinary debates, but also between different levels of competence and understanding of architecture. The latter subject is indeed at the center of Alessandro Benetti's essay, which considers architectural guides as a peculiar form of "non-professional criticism". Drawing on the analysis of the texts and the iconographic apparati of the publications issued by the Touring Club Italiano, which were devoted to small city centers (the so-called *centri minori*), Benetti argues that these books, written by prominent Italian scholars, led ostensibly to the realization of a product situated between high-culture publications and tourist guides: as such, they reached a wide public of amateurs while fitting into the Club's cultural agenda, meant to create consensus around the preservation and valorization of Italy's non-monumental heritage.

The essays collected in this volume offer a sufficiently vast array of examples of engaged and politicized criticism. They take into consideration different contextual conditions and backgrounds, encompassing disciplinary, political, or cultural levels, and linking them to the involved actors and theirs networks. Without doubt, they do not provide an overall panorama of committed criticism in historical terms, but they aspire to open a discussion on a subject too often taken for granted while not always thoroughly analyzed. Since much remains to be done, this volume of *Histories of Postwar Architecture* aims thus to offer a small contribution to a discussion that in large part is still in progress.

Rixt Hoekstra

Thinking about De Stijl: Three Generations of Committed Historians in the Netherlands.

Historiography of modern art and architecture, History of De Stijl, History of critique, Feminist critique, Dutch historiography of art history

/Abstract

This essay focusses on the changing critical identity of the Dutch modern art-and architectural historian in the decades after the Second World War ranging from the 1950s to the early 1990s. As such, the focus of this essay is not upon the history of criticism per se, but instead on historiography understood as a frontier area between history and criticism. By adopting the De Stijl movement as a case-study, this essay traces the different steps in its historization. I state that its post-war historiography was not only defined by new insights concerning this avant-garde movement, but equally by a change in the subject position of the historian as a critical actor. During the 1950s in the Netherlands, it was the historian rather than the critic who played an important role in promoting and intellectually supporting groups of architects. Influential art historians such as Hans Jaffé proposed a form of operative history which entangled the past with contemporary artistic practice. Later generations created a break with the practices of engaged, operative history writing. In this essay this break is analysed as a change in the relationship between the subject (the historian) and the object (the past) and as the replacement of an engaged attitude by a more detached position in which the past increasingly became the focus of an exclusive epistemic concern. Historians now felt that too much engagement and partisanship would hinder the analysis of the past and the insight into its contents. The mission of the historian was now no longer to educate the public, but to gain scientific knowledge about the past. However, this did not mean its results remained unchallenged. In fact, the epistemic turn described in this essay – the exchange of engagement for a historical practice aimed principally at acquiring knowledge about the past - went hand in hand with the rise of postmodernism in the humanities, leading to relativistic claims concerning historical knowledge. In this way, a univocal history of architecture was fragmented into a plurality of historical practices. Although these practices were no longer overtly politically engaged, they remained politically implicated as the result of the complex correspondences between past and present that remained a part of the histories of artistic modernism. This essay concludes by stating that the departure from engaged history writing left unanswered crucial questions concerning the identity of the historian as a critical actor.

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Rixt Hoekstra is an architectural historian and has received her PhD in 2006. She is specialized in the fields of modern architectural theory, historiography, and gender studies. At present she works as a lecturer in Creative Technology at the University of Twente in the Netherlands, department of Electrical Engineering, Mathematics and Computer Science. The article presented here is part of her research about the Dutch architect Han Schröder (1918-1992).

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Introduction

In an essay published in 1999, the Dutch architectural historian Ed Taverne called into question whether the Rietveld-Schröder House in Utrecht could be regarded as a "pinnacle of De Stijl architecture".[1] In fact, so wrote Taverne, even though the house had been presented in numerous books as the sublime embodiment of the De Stijl ideas in the field of architecture, historians had nevertheless failed to demonstrate which relationship the "unique dwelling" had to the corpus of the De Stijl writings.[2] This questioning of the Rietveld-Schröder House as an icon of avant-garde architecture should not be regarded as a rebellious and isolated interpretation made by a maverick intellectual. Rather, Taverne's text should be considered as a late outcome of a project that started in the early 1980s to rewrite the history of the Dutch artistic avant-garde. As I will state in this essay, the occasion for this reconsideration was formed not only by new insights regarding De Stijl as the Netherlands' main contribution to early 20th century avant-garde movements, but also by a different thinking about the tasks and goals of the architectural historian. Indeed, it is in the field of the subject position of the historian that a break was forced with respect to an earlier generation of historians and critics, especially with the generation that in the 1950s had been responsible for the first historizations of De Stijl. An engaged, committed relationship with a past that was still very much present – 1950 marked eighteen years since the last issue of the journal De Stijl was published – was exchanged in the 1980s for a more detached attitude with respect to a past that was slowly becoming more distant. Instead of regarding the immediate past as a source for moral, political and aesthetical lessons, now a generation of historians emerged that were interested in an more exclusive epistemic relationship with history: they wanted to gain knowledge about the past per se, apart from the need to evaluate, praise or criticize it.[3] In this essay, I will analyse the changed relationship between the subject (the historian) and the object (the past) in Dutch art-and architectural history between 1950 and 1980 by focussing upon the historization of the De Stijl movement as a case-study. As I will argue, even though the relationship with the past became more epistemic and less engaged for historians working in the 1980s, this did not mean that the histories produced by them were beyond debate. In fact, the epistemic turn described in this essay – the exchange of engagement for a historical practice aimed principally at acquiring knowledge about the past - went hand in hand with the rise

1 Ed Taverne, "The only truly canonical building in Northern Europe" in: Crimson ed., *Mart Stam's trousers: Stories from behind the Scenes of Dutch Moral Modernism*, (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers 1999), 93-107.

2 Taverne, "The only truly canonical building", 101.

3 I have borrowed the types of relationships – epistemic, moral, political and aesthetic – from the philosopher of history Herman Paul. Based upon the work of the philosopher Mark Day, Paul departs from the notion that "… people have different reasons to be interested in the past and as a consequence entertain different relationships with the past." Paul also points to the work of the philosopher Jörn Rüsen who discerned a semantic, cognitive, esthetical, rhetorical and political dimension in the use of history. Both Rüsen and Day accentuate that although these relationships can be discerned on a conceptual level, in practice they only exist in interrelation, so that history is never completely epistemic for example, or completely political. See: Herman Paul, *Als het verleden trekt, kernthema's uit de geschiedfilosofie*, (Amsterdam: Boom Uitgevers, 2014), 50. Mark Day, "Our Relations with the Past", Philosophia, 36, (2008): 417-427. Jörn Rüsen, "Was ist Geschichtskultur? Überlegungen zu einer neuen Art, über Geschichte nachzudenken", in: Klaus Füssmann, Heinrich Theodor Grütter, Jörn Rüsen, eds., *Historische Faszination: Geschichtskultur heute*, Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1994, 3-26.

of postmodernism in the humanities, leading to relativistic claims concerning historical knowledge. This becomes clear from a number of studies that were produced from the early 1980s onwards. I will discuss Carel Blotkamp's *De Stijl: The Formative Years* (1982), Nancy Troy's *The De Stijl Environment* (1983), Yves Alain Bois' *The De Stijl Idea* (1982), Paul Overy's *De Stijl* (1992) and, finally, Alice Friedman's *Women and the Making of the Modern House* (2006). As I will state, in these studies a univocal history of architecture was fragmented into a plurality of historical practices. These practices were no longer overtly politically engaged, but they remained politically implicated: in fact, this was the result of the complex correspondences between past and present that remained a part of the histories of artistic modernism. For the historiography of De Stijl, the debates between different generations of historians resulted in an open-ended history and an ongoing dialogue that, despite its status as a Dutch avant-garde icon, has not yet reached its conclusion. At the same time, the departure from engaged history writing left crucial questions concerning the identity of the historian as a critical actor unanswered.

The discovery of recent history

Today, at the time of this essay's writing, the worldwide bibliography of De Stijl - the Dutch avant-garde movement based on the journal *De Stijl* founded in 1917 in Leiden by the artist Theo van Doesburg – lists some 10,000 publications, including books, pamphlets, articles and exhibition catalogues. In the first years after the Second World War, however, this list looked quite different. By then, although the first steps towards the institutionalisation of De Stijl as a major part of the international modernist canon had already been taken, its historization had not yet come about. De Stijl figured in a survey of modern architecture as early as 1929, when the American architectural historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock (1903-1987) included this movement in his book *Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration*.[4] In 1932, Jacobus Johannes Pieter Oud – one of the architects connected to De Stijl – was recognized as one of four modern masters in the exhibition Modern Architecture: International Exhibition organized by Hitchcock and Philip Johnson for the Museum of Modern Art in New York and he was included in the accompanying publication *The International Style: Architecture since 1922*.[5] Four years later, in 1936, the De Stijl movement was included in Alfred Barr's exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art* organized by the same Museum. De Stijl figured in Barr's famous flowchart used to demonstrate the development of modern art from 1890 to 1935.[6] Also in Europe during this period the first initiatives were taken to officially recognize

4 Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration*. (New York: Payson&Clarke, 1929).

5 Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style: Architecture since 1922*.(New York: W.W. Norton, 1932).

6 Hanna Schouten, "De Stijl – From Amsterdam to New York, The (re) presentation of De Stijl in the historical retrospective De Stijl exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam (1951) and the Museum of Modern Art in New York (1952-1953)" ,(Ma thesis University of Leiden, 2016).

De Stijl and its protagonists. For example, when in the 1930s the international avant-garde movements threatened to become marginalized in Europe, Nelly van Doesburg - a Dutch avant-garde musician and wife of Theo van Doesburg – started her campaign to newly draw attention to the importance of De Stijl and to secure that her by then deceased husband was recognized as one of its main protagonists. Together with Willem Sandberg, who was by then a board member of the VANK (Nederlandse Vereniging voor Ambachts-en Nijverheidskunst, Netherlands Association for Crafts and Industrial Art), she organized an exhibition about Theo van Doesburg in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1936.[7] In 1938, immediately after Sandberg had become a curator at the Stedelijk Museum, Sandberg and Nelly Van Doesburg organized the exhibition *Abstracte Kunst* (Abstract Art). However, Barr, Sandberg and Nelly Van Doesburg supported an avant-garde movement that in the 1930s was still alive and active; the information they presented to the public was a direct result of the promotional activities of Theo Van Doesburg, Piet Mondriaan and other designers attached to De Stijl. This situation changed after the war. With the death of Piet Mondriaan in 1944 the awareness grew that De Stijl belonged to a period that had already ended and that it was time to secure De Stijl's place in history. It is from this background that in 1947 Philip Johnson wrote to Sandberg that it was time to celebrate de Stijl as "the most important single movement that resulted in what we now call modern architecture" by organizing an exhibition and a publication dedicated to this movement. [8] Thirty years after the foundation of De Stijl – De Stijl was founded in 1917 in Leiden - the time had come to express a final judgment on its relevance. It was also for this reason– presenting De Stijl as a historical movement that belonged to the past – that the architects Oud and Van Eesteren initially objected to the idea of organizing an exhibition dedicated to De Stijl. [9] These architects had played major roles in the movement; for them, the evaluation of it was narrowly connected to their own fortune as architects. The first post-war attempts at historization thus heralded a period of confusion and dissent among these architects. Should De Stijl be regarded as a cohesive movement or rather as a collection of separate artists? Which architectural designs should be brought to the fore as the movement's main achievements? Should certain artistic disciplines assume a primary position? Despite these questions, in 1951 the first retrospective exhibition of De Stijl was organized by the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, before being restaged by the Museum of Modern Art one year later.[10] Also the Dutch entry for the 1951 Venice Biennale was dedicated to De Stijl – both exhibitions, in Venice and in

7 Max Arian, *Zoeken en Scheuren, de Jonge Sandberg*, (Amsterdam: Johannes van Kessel Advising, 2012), http:// www.jvank.nl/jongesandberg.

8 "Both Mr. Barr and I consider De Stijl as the most important single movement that resulted in what we now call modern architecture (….) We feel that now is the time to celebrate its achievements with an exhibition and a book". Letter from Philip Johnson to Willem Sandberg, August 7, 1947. (Amsterdam, City Archives, Dossier: De Stijl exhibition 1951, folder nr. 3431), now quoted in: Hanna Schouten, "De Stijl – From Amsterdam to New York", 33.

9 Hanna Schouten, "De Stijl – From Amsterdam to New York", 34.

10 Nancy J. Troy, "Making History: De Stijl at the Stedelijk Museum", 2018, https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/digdeeper/making-history-de-stijl-stedelijk-museum.

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Amsterdam were designed by Gerrit Rietveld. [11] These initiatives were organized at a pivotal moment after the war when what had always been a living avant-garde for the first time turned into a chapter of the past. At the same time, for the protagonists discussed here this recent past was non-concluded since its ideas, aspirations and ambitions continued to play a role in the present. The recent past was something from which the protagonists discussed so far wanted to set themselves apart while at the same time continuing to identify with its contents.[12] In this way we may understand the creation in 1946, on the part of Sandberg and architects Mart Stam and Oud among others, of the journal *Open Oog. Avant-garde cahier voor visuele vormgeving* (Open Eye. Avant-garde cahier for visual design). The journal was founded with the idea to pass on to a younger generation the social engagement of the pre-war avant-garde as well as its *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideals.[13] The recent past had just ceased to be, but its legacy needed to be kept alive.[14] It is from the awareness of the new task to historicize the past that Hans Jaffé wrote the dissertation *De Stijl, the Dutch contribution to Modern Art* (1956), which was the first intellectual reflection upon the history of De Stijl as an artistic movement.[15] With this dissertation, Jaffé received his doctorate at the University of Amsterdam.While for Sandberg, the curator, the recent past needed to be discarded in order to seize the momentum of his own

11 Nancy J. Troy, "Making History".

12 Ad Petersen, *Sandberg, Designer and Director of the Stedelijk*, (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers 2004), 5-20.

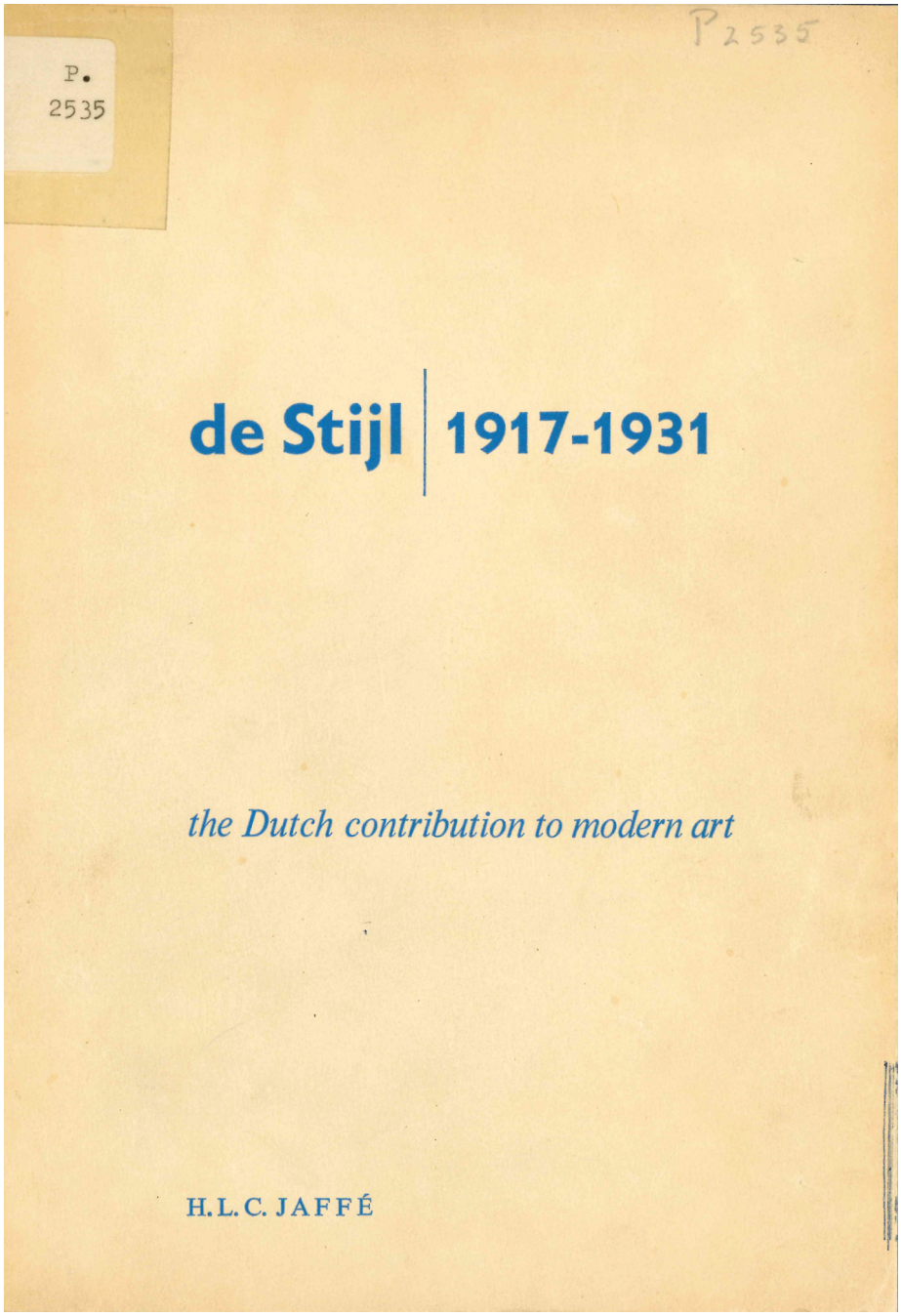
13 Jan van Adrichem, *De ontvangst van de moderne kunst in Nederland 1910-2000, Picasso als pars pro toto*, (Amsterdam: Prometheus Uitgevers 2001), 234.

14 See in this respect also the work of the architect and artists Joost Baljeu (1925-1996) who was the founder of the journal Structure (1958-1964): Marion Jobse, *De Stijl Continued. The journal Structure* (1958-1964), *an artists' debate*, (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2005).

15 Hans Ludwig Cohn Jaffé, *De Stijl 1917-1931: the Dutch contribution to Modern Art*. (Amsterdam: Meulenhof 1956).

Fig. 1

Presentation of the Prix de la Critique by Hans Jaffé to Charlotte van Pallandt, 1959. Source: Nationaal Archief/Collection Anefo. Photographer: Joop van Bilsen.



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time – hence his focus on new avant-garde movements like the Cobra group – Jaffé, the art historian, saw the task to reflect upon its contents.[16] After the war, the engagement of Jaffé was rooted in the awareness of a critical moment when the present for the first time becomes the past: a non-concluded past whose substances continued to determine the present [Fig. 1-2].

16 Jan van Adrichem, *De ontvangst van de moderne kunst in Nederland*, 240.

Fig. 2
Front cover of the book *De Stijl, the Dutch contribution to Modern Art* by Hans Jaffé, 1956. Photo by Patricia Bongers.

De Stijl: Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte

When Jaffé wrote his dissertation *De Stijl, the Dutch contribution to Modern Art,* he had already been working for the Stedelijk Museum for more than a decade.[17] Hans Jaffé was born as Hans Ludwig Cohn in 1915 in Frankfurt into a left-wing Jewish family of intellectuals. His parents moved to the Netherlands in 1933 after Hitler's arrival to power in Germany: in search of a less Jewish-sounding name, he adopted, the surname Jaffé from one of his uncles.[18] Jaffé began his studies in art history in 1933 at the University of Amsterdam and became a voluntary assistant at the Stedelijk museum in 1935. From this position he started to collaborate with Sandberg, who had become curator at the same museum in 1938. Jaffé spent the war years in Switzerland and became a curator at the Stedelijk in 1947, collaborating again with Sandberg who by that time had become its director.[19] However, while Sandberg's engagement in the avant-garde was based on his personal acquaintance with its members – among others, with Johannes Itten, Mart Stam, Gerrit Rietveld and the photographer Eva Besnyö – Jaffé had a more intellectual and scholarly approach to the subject.[20] As an art historian, Jaffé displayed/manifested a strong sympathy for the art of his time; this also distinguished him from his art historical colleagues who kept a greater distance to the practices of contemporary art.[21] Most of all, it was Jaffé's goal to explain the motivations behind the coming about of abstract art and to indicate a historical genealogy for it and, by doing so, to provide a legitimisation.[22] For Jaffé, the coming about of abstraction in the visual arts marked a profound rupture in the representation of reality by the side of the artist. Where in the previous century sensory perception had been the point of departure for an art that had the mimesis of reality as its goal, around the year 1900 the awareness grew that in this way an insight into the nature of reality could no longer be obtained, since sensory perception no longer led to knowledge about reality. It was this insight, so wrote Jaffé, that formed the basis for a ground-breaking development in visual art: the turn towards a non-representative, abstract art. [23] However, for Jaffé this rupture with 19th century realism could not be explained by pointing at art history alone. Inspired by the Czech art historian Max Dvořák (1874- 1921) and his *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte* (Art history as the history of ideas), he claimed that it was rooted in a wider *Zeitgeist* – a spirit of the time – in which 19th century positivism was exchanged for a world view that was dictated by modern technique, science and urbanization.[24] While these tendencies were a universal phenome-

17 This paragraph is based upon: Jan van Adrichem, *De ontvangst van de moderne kunst in Nederland*, 328-333.

18 Arian, *Zoeken en Scheuren, de Jonge Sandberg*, 224.

19 Arian, *Zoeken en Scheuren, de Jonge Sandberg*, 247.

20 Ibid., 209.

21 See: Carel Blotkamp, "Kunstgeschiedenis en moderne kunst: een lange aanloop" in: Peter Hecht eds., *Kunstgeschiedenis in Nederland, negen opstellen*, (Amsterdam: Prometheus 1998), 89-105.

22 Jan van Adrichem, *De ontvangst van de moderne kunst in Nederland*, 330.

23 Ibid., 330.

24 Ibid., 331. For Dvorák see also: Matthew Rampley, "Max Dvorák: art history and the crisis of modernity", *Art History*, 26 (2), 214-237.

non in the Western World, their precise expression depended for Jaffé on what he called the collective spiritual life of a nation and a people at a given time and place. For Jaffé, art was not autonomous but always the expression of a collectivity. This was the leading thought behind his dissertation *De Stijl, the Dutch contribution to Modern Art* from 1956.[25] Jaffé believed that the Dutch people were united by a set of national traits which were largely derived from their protestant background. In this way, while pointing at Mondriaan as the main protagonist of De Stijl, Jaffé sought to explain his work by placing him in the context of Dutch Calvinism. Inspired by, among others, the Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga (1872-1945), who in the essay *Nederland's Geestesmerk* - the Spiritual Characteristic of the Netherlands - had reflected upon the typical identity of the Dutch people, Jaffé claimed that most members of De Stijl had a Calvinist background, stressing that Mondriaan's father had been a vicar who had had contact with the neo-Calvinist theologian Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920).[26] It was Jaffé's goal to embed De Stijl in a broader speculation about the history of collective cognitive structures and beliefs and their manifestations in art. In this way, as part of a wider history of ideas, Jaffé connected De Stijl to the tolerant humanism of Spinoza and the liberal Protestantism of the Remonstrant Church.[27] In Jaffé's view, Spinoza's philosophical work *Ethica more geometrica demonstrata* (1671) was particularly important in connection to De Stijl: Jaffé detected a parallel between the geometric and mathematical method of Spinoza's argumentation in which each contingency was cancelled and De Stijl's development towards a geometrical abstraction from which each subjectivity was taken away.[28] As part of a shared horizon of ideas, both Spinoza and De Stijl were engaged in a quest for an absolute standard: a radical project that, once chosen a specific road, attempted to pursue it to the last instance. In this way, so stated Jaffé, the members of De Stijl exchanged a long Dutch tradition of nominalist art – an art that observed the nature of objects in reality by mimetically depicting them – for an art that was universalistic, abstract and spiritual.[29]

Engagement

As committed intellectuals, both Sandberg and Jaffé entertained a relationship with the recent past that was not merely aesthetical – based on a notion of artistic quality – but also moral and political. They believed that the modern art of the recent past contained moral lessons because, as a mirror of the time,

25 The following paragraph is based upon: Rob Lambers, "H.L.C. Jaffé, kunsthistoricus in dienst van het Stedelijk Museum, 1935-1961", (Ma thesis University of Amsterdam, 1987).

26 Rob Lambers, "H.L.C. Jaffé" 86-90. See also: Johan Huizinga, *Nederland's geestesmerk*, Leiden: Sijthoff's Uitgeverijmaatschappij, 1935.

27 Rob Lambers, "H.L.C. Jaffé", 90-91. As Dolf Broekhuizen noted, with this interpretation of De Stijl a tension was created between the attempts of Barr and Johnson to place De Stijl in an international canon of modernism and Jaffé's attempt to regard De Stijl as a specific Dutch contribution to it. See: Dolf Broekhuizen, *De Stijl toen/J.J.P. Oud nu. De bijdrage van J.J.P. Oud aan herdenken, herstellen, en bouwen in Nederland* (1938-1963), (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers 2000): 285-291.

28 Benedictus de Spinoza, Ethica, Amsterdam: Boom Uitgevers, 2012. Originally published as: Benedicti de Spinoza, *Ethica ordine geometrico demonstrata*, Amsterdam: Jan Rieuwersz. 1677.

29 Rob Lambers, "H.L.C. Jaffé", 90-93.

it could help experience modernity at a deeper level. From their viewpoint as left-wing intellectuals – Jaffé was a socialist and Sandberg a Communist fellow-traveller – the recent past also had a political meaning as it showed the superiority of a non-elitist art that was directly engaged with society.[30] Both Sandberg and Jaffé fully supported the avant-garde notion that art had to give up its "false autonomy" in order to integrate into society.[31] Sandberg combined this conviction with an interest in Marxism, but he was not a member of the Dutch Communist Party.[32] For both Sandberg and Jaffé changes in artistic production were a direct consequence of changes in society. In other words, art was determined by society; however, according to Sandberg and Jaffé, art was also able to influence society. They both believed that the potential of experimental and innovative approaches was not limited to the artistic realm: artistic change could make the people aware that social change was possible.[33] For both Sandberg and Jaffé important works of art reflected societal conditions but, at the same time, also heralded art's future course. They believed that artists possessed an innate sensitivity to understand the "Zeitgeist" and translate it into artistic forms. Progressive artists therefore showed the people the way towards the "Brave New World" of a more equal, just and fair society. In this way, for Sandberg and Jaffé modern art was a reflection of and a catalyst for social change. While Sandberg and Jaffé's thinking about art was clearly politically motivated, it was at the same time acceptable for a wide public and for many political purposes. In the Netherlands after 1945 the national government formulated for the first time a consistent cultural policy in which a fair amount of attention was paid to modern art.[34] This meant that museums of modern art were not only supported by city governments, but also by the national government which, by now, was convinced of culture's social relevance. As a consequence, museums were given new responsibilities and tasks. Post-war cabinets of various political orientations were united in their belief that art could present an alternative for a commercial culture that merely focussed on consumption. The appreciation of modern art and architecture was necessary for the democratic *Bildung* of citizens: it was an instrument towards social justice and a free and open society.[35] In this way, in the 1950s the appreciation of modern art was part of the post-war reconstruction of society and the installation of a welfare state system. Under this condition, museums like the Stedelijk were able to reflect on early 20th century modernism through a series of exhibitions, lectures, and publications. These museums created an awareness of the existence of a "modernist tradition" by indicating a genealogy of modernism in which

30 Ad Petersen, *Sandberg, Designer and Director of the Stedelijk*, 21.

31 Roger Schumacher, *Museumjournaal en de ontvangst van de neo-avant-garde in Nederland in 1961-1973*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 18.

32 Jan van Adrichem, *De ontvangst van de moderne kunst in Nederland*, 231.

33 Roger Schumacher, *Museumjournaal en de ontvangst van de neo-avant-garde in Nederland in 1961-1973*, 34-35.

34 Roger Schumacher, *Museumjournaal en de ontvangst van de neo-avant-garde in Nederland in 1961-1973*, 18.

35 For the way in which these convictions were translated by architects see: Dirk van den Heuvel ed., *Jaap Bakema and the Open Society*, (Rotterdam: Archis, 2018).

different movements succeeded each other in a linear way.[36]Although these initiatives received consensus and were supported by the state, they also faced criticism from conservative forces.[37] Conservative art critics equated modernism to a radical left-wing, if not Communist, agenda. In their criticism, they equally connected the developments in the art world with a moral message. However, instead of promoting a new social order, they stated that through its rejection of earlier artistic traditions modern art sabotaged this order by rejecting democracy.[38] Sandberg and Jaffé thus shared the same ideological horizon: for both of them innovative, abstract art was the materialized promise of a more fair and just society. However, there were also differences between them. Sandberg combined a strong identification with the artist with a dislike of both history and criticism, his relationship with Jaffé being characterized by a strong *jalousie de métier.* At the same time, Jaffé's craving for knowledge and classification worked very well in combination with Sandberg's intuitive approach. Even more, Jaffé's exploration of "historia hodierna" was representative of a development within art history as an academic practice.[39]

Art History after 1945

With the new mission of Dutch museums to reflect upon early 20th century modernism, the contrast between what was going on in the museums and academic art history seemed to increase. In fact, in the university milieu the relationship between art history and modern art had been problematic during a large part of the twentieth century. Until well into the 1950s, art historical surveys at the most included the painter Van Gogh and the art of the fin-de-siècle, however, most art historians agreed that a painter or architect had to be dead for at least fifty years before being considered as a theme for study.[40] This attitude slowly began to change in the 1960s, as modern art hesitantly conquered a place within the curricula of art historical training. With this development, what had always been the exclusive territory of art critics became a subject for art historians as well. Nineteenth-century critics such as Carel Vosmaer (1826-1888) , Joseph Alberdingk Thijm (1820-1889) and Jan Veth (1804-1925) had a broad multidisciplinary practice: departing from an aesthetical conviction, they wrote about literature, theatre, music as well as fine art.[41] At the beginning of the twentieth century, a generation of critics writing only about visual arts came to the fore and acquired an influential role in directing the attention of the general public and the artists. Important critics such as Henk Bremmer (1871-1956),

36 Roger Schumacher, *Museumjournaal en de ontvangst van de neo-avant-garde in Nederland* in 1961-1973, 19.

37 Jan van Adrichem, *De ontvangst van de moderne kunst in Nederland*, 321-324.

38 Jan van Adrichem, *De ontvangst van de moderne kunst in Nederland*, 326.

39 Jaffé mentions this notion in his dissertation: Hans Ludwig Cohn Jaffé, *De Stijl 1917-1931: the Dutch contribution to Modern Art*, 2.

40 Carel Blotkamp, "Kunstgeschiedenis en moderne kunst: een lange aanloop" , 89.

41 Carel Blotkamp, "Kunstgeschiedenis en moderne kunst", 90-96. On this theme see also: Peter de Ruiter, Jonneke Jobse, Annemarie Kok, *Kunstkritiek in Nederland 1885-2015*, (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2016). This is a series of 11 books.

Jos de Gruyter (1899-1979) and Bram Hammacher (1879-2002) wrote at once about the art of the past and contemporary art. After the war, several art history professors developed an interest for modern art, as in the case of Henri Van der Waal (1910-1972) in Leiden and Jan Van Gelder (1903-1980) in Utrecht.[42] They not only wrote about modern art, but also paid attention to it in their lectures, stimulating students to develop an interest in that direction. However, doctoral dissertations dealing with modern art were rare; indeed, Jaffé's thesis on De Stijl constituted a novelty. Modern art history became an integral part of university curricula for the first time in 1958, when Jaffé accepted a position as a lecturer in modern art at the University of Amsterdam, after he had left the Stedelijk because of a conflict with Sandberg. In 1963 this position was turned into a professorship in modern art.[43]

Another post-war development was the introduction of architecture as a substantial branch of art historical study. Notably, the introduction of architectural history coincided with a new interest in the "recent art of building". Until well into the 1950s, in fact, architectural history had only been marginally present in the art historical curricula of Dutch universities.[44] This changed when in 1947 Murk Daniel Ozinga (1902-1967) was appointed extraordinary professor in architectural history at Utrecht University. Ozinga had previously worked for the Dutch Architectural Monument Service ("Monumentenzorg") and, in light of this, he had been trained in research necessary to determine which old buildings were worthy of preservation.[45] As a professor in architecture he specialised in the Middle Ages; at the same time, however, he had a broad view and a wide range of interests. It was Ozinga's goal not only to anchor architectural history firmly into the art historical program, but also to change the way in which it was studied.[46] As Ozinga wrote in 1960, architectural history had to become a scientific practice and, for this goal, staff had to be hired. Moreover, Ozinga stated that architectural history had to start the study of the recent past. According to him, architectural history had failed in this respect and, as a consequence, little was known about late 19th - and early 20th century architects such as Pierre Cuypers and Hendrik Petrus Berlage. While still available, documentation on their work was already starting to get dispersed, he wrote.[47] The career of Pieter Singelenberg (1918-2007) may be held representative for the careers of the first art historical researchers specializing in architecture.[48] Singelenberg began to study art history in 1941 at the University of Utrecht. He was first attracted to

42 Carel Blotkamp, "Kunstgeschiedenis en moderne kunst", 99.

43 Carel Blotkamp, "Kunstgeschiedenis en moderne kunst", 100.

44 Lex Bosman, "De oratie van M.D.Ozinga (1948), het ontstaan van de gotiek en het probleem van de stijlperioden", *Bulletin KNOB*, 95 (1), 1996, 1-11: 1. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7480/knob.95.199.6.1.418.

45 Lex Bosman, "De oratie van M.D. Ozinga", 2.

46 M.D. Ozinga, "Werkzaamheden van de Afdeling Geschiedenis van de Bouwkunst van het KHI en het oprichten van een ikonografische monumentenindex van de Nederlanden", unpublished report, Universiteit Utrecht, november 1960, 1-2. Universiteit Utrecht, Archieven van het Kunsthistorisch Instituut, Archief van prof.dr.M.D. Ozinga, 364-369, 369.

47 M.D. Ozinga, "Werkzaamheden van de Afdeling Geschiedenis van de Bouwkunst", 2.

48 Bram de Klerck, "Pieter Singelenberg", *Jaarboek van de Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde te Leiden*, 2007-2008, 144-145. Also available at: https//dbnl.org/tekst/jaa04200801_01_0015 (visited 10-1-2021).

medieval art and to the field of iconology. In 1946 he became an assistant in the department of medieval art and kept this position until 1955. However, as a consequence of a series of visiting professorships in the United States in the middle of the 1950s, Singelenberg became increasingly interested in the history of modern architecture. His interests included, among others, the Jugendstil movement, Frank Lloyd Wright and Berlage. In 1965, he exchanged his job as a lecturer at the department of medieval art for the new department of architectural history created by Ozinga.[49] In that same year he started his doctoral thesis on Berlage, which would be defended in 1971[50] In it, Singelenberg had made a number of remarkable choices. First, he discussed only the first part of Berlage's career, because he believed that later on in his life his ideas had not really changed. Activities in the field of urban planning were not included, because Singelenberg believed they had little connection to modern architecture. The design for the Amsterdam Stock Exchange was for Singelenberg an absolute highlight in Berlage's work.[51] What Singelenberg had in common with Jaffé and Sandberg was that their engagement for modern art and architecture was based upon friendship and first hand contacts with the members of the avant-garde. Together with his wife and son, for instance, Singelenberg lived from 1951 to 1995 in a house designed by Rietveld.[52] In 1957, he asked the architect for help in redecorating it, and this formed the basis for a lifelong friendship. Singelenberg also had friendly contacts with the architect Hendrik Wijdeveld (1885-1987), the four children of Berlage and with Truus Schröder-Schräder. The only student he supervised in the writing of a doctoral thesis was Hans Oud, who wrote a dissertation about his father, J.J.P.Oud.[53] As a consequence, modern architectural history as practiced by art historians had an engaged and moral undertone for a fairly long time after the war. For example, also in the historical sciences in the 1950s and 1960s a moral approach of the recent past – concerning most of all the evaluation of the Second World War – dominated. However, in the 1970s this was replaced with a historicist approach. By now, the consensus among historians was that too much partisanship and judgment would stand in the way of analysis and insight into the past.[54] In art history this change would not come about until well into the 1980s.

49 Bram de Klerk, "Pieter Singelenberg", 146.

50 Pieter Singelenberg, *H.P. Berlage, Idea and Style, The Quest for Modern Architecture*, Utrecht: Hoentjes, Dekkert, Gumbert, 1972. Singelenberg was fifty-three years of age when he wrote his dissertation.

51 Singelenbergs' thesis was the starting point for a discussion about Berlage's place within Dutch architectural history. See: Manfred Bock, *Anfänge einer neuen Architektur: Beitrage zur architektonischen Kultur der Niederlanden im ausgehenden 19. Jahrhundert*, Den Haag: Staatsuitgeverij, 1983. Auke van der Woud, *Sterrenstof, honderd jaar mythologie in de Nederlandse architectuur*, Rotterdam: NAI010, 2008.

52 Singelenberg lived in Robert Schumannstraat in Utrecht. This was a series of four row houses, built as a continuation of the houses designed for the Erasmuslaan. See: http://architectuurgids.nl/project/list_projects_of_architecture/arc_id/1213/prj_id/610, visited 11-1-2021.

53 Bram de Klerk, "Pieter Singelenberg", 150.

54 Boudewijn Smits, *Loe de Jong 1914-2005, historicus met een missie*,(Amsterdam: Boom, 2014), 861.

A concluded past

The historiographical perspective proposed by Hans Jaffé remained unchallenged for two decades. In fact, his interpretation of De Stijl as primarily a group of artists who, led by the painter Piet Mondriaan, fought in unison to introduce abstract painting remained dominant for a long time. However, this situation changed at the start of the 1980s. By then, a new generation of art historians emerged for whom De Stijl was increasingly at a temporal remove to themselves. De Stijl, in other words, had become "a thing of the past" and that past now assumed the traits of a concluded chapter, with which scholars entertained first of all an epistemic relationship. Instead of valuing the past for its moral and political lessons, this generation posed questions like: what has exactly happened in the past? Who were the involved actors? The availability of new archival sources played a role in this shift: while historians were now at a temporal remove with respect to a movement started some fifty years ago, they were at the same time at a spatial proximity to sources as they could lay their hands more easily on key documents. In fact, for a long time Nelly Van Doesburg, the wife of Theo Van Doesburg, had kept the De Stijl archive in her house in Meudon, France. After her death in 1975 the fate of this archive remained at length unclear. At the start of the 1980s, the art historian Wies van Moorsel, who was the sole heir to the Van Doesburg estate, decided to donate the archive, along with Van Doesburg's house, works and library, to the Dutch state.[55] In the new wave of De Stijl studies from the 1980s onwards, this archive played a major role. An important characteristic of these studies is that they were concerned to counter Jaffé's postulation of De Stijl as a homogeneous group consisting most of all of painters. A key contribution was made by a group of researchers from the Art Historical Department of Utrecht University led by professor Carel Blotkamp.[56] These scholars started a research project that departed from the singularity of De Stijl as an avant-garde movement. In contrast to Jaffé, who had placed De Stijl on a par with groups like *Die Brücke* in Dresden or the Dadaists in Zürich, the researchers from Utrecht based their interpretation on the fact that De Stijl members had had little personal contact with each other and were geographically dispersed. De Stijl, so wrote Blotkamp, was to be viewed primarily as the name of a magazine: it did not have a common program or a coherent shared aesthetic theory.[57] In this way, there was little ground to assume their coherence as a group. This new outlook on De Stijl was accompanied by a different art historical method consisting of close philological "readings" of individual artists and their work coupled with a painstaking gathering of historical documents and other

55 See the website of the Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie (RKD) for information about the custodial history of the Theo and Nelly Van Doesburg archive: https://rkd.nl/en/explore/archives/details/NL-HaRKD-0408/keywords/van%20doesburg%20history%20of%20archive. On the basis of the archive, Evert van Straten compiled a documentary biography about Theo Van Doesburg and a selection of the archive was displayed at the Haags Gemeentemuseum in The Hague, as part of an exhibition on De Stijl architecture. See: Evert Van Straten ed., *Theo Van Doesburg 1883-1931: een documentaire op basis van materiaal uit de schenking van Van Moorsel*, Den Haag: Staatuitgeverij, 1983.

56 Among these researchers were Marijke Küper, Sjarel Ex and Els Hoek, who would later become recognized De Stijl scholars.

57 Carel Blotkamp eds., *De beginjaren van De Stijl 1917-1922*, (Utrecht: Reflex Uitgeverij, 1982), 9.

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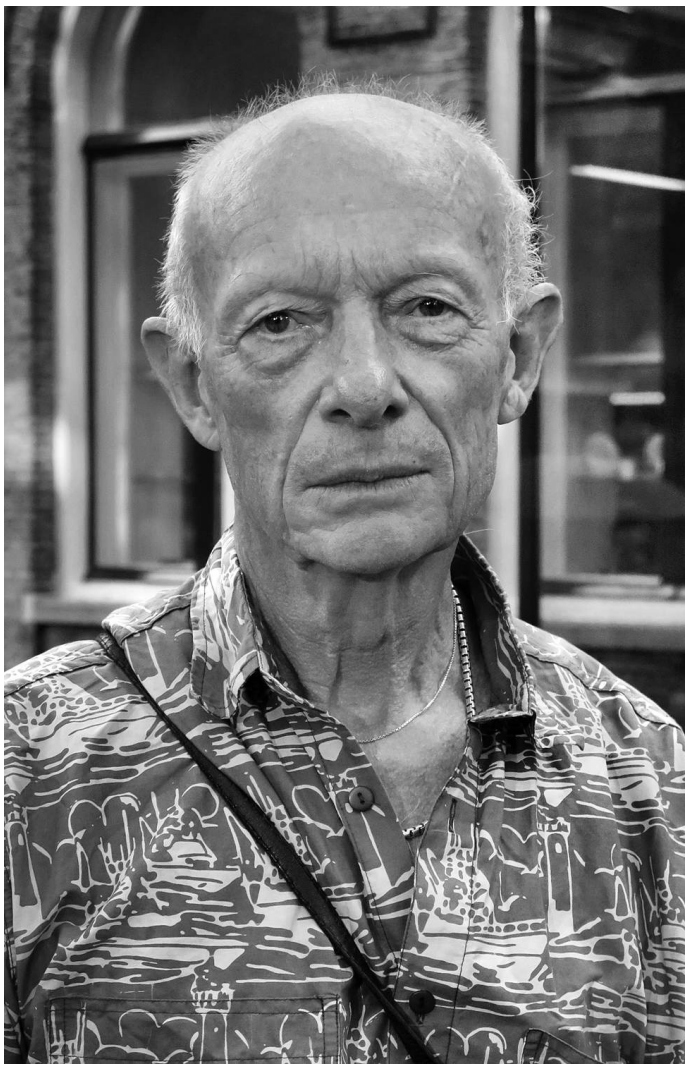
sources. In this way, De Stijl was broken down into a plurality of artistic practices. This was also reflected in *De Beginjaren van de Stijl 1917-1922*, a publication of 1982 which consisted of a collection of biographies of individual artists and architects so as to fragment the narrative of De Stijl into a loose assembly of artists and architects.[58] The book derived its periodization from the fact that the amount of archival material had been so enormous that the researchers had to limit their scope. As Blotkamp later wrote, one third of the images in the book were new discoveries, and the archives permitted the researchers to correct dates and other pieces of information. Also, mutual influences and differences between De Stijl members could now for the first time be analysed. To further underline the above-mentioned lack of coherence, the book also pointed to the manifold frictions and disagreements between the members of De Stijl.[59] Besides criticizing the assumed unity of De Stijl, another line of critique was aimed at the dominance of painting as its core activity. Therefore, in *De Stijl: The Formative Years 1917-1922* architects such as Rietveld, Oud and Robert

Fig. 3
Front cover of the book *De Beginjaren van de Stijl 1917-1922* by Carel Blotkamp, 1982. Photo by Rixt Hoekstra.

58 Ibid., 5.

59 Carel Blotkamp eds., *De beginjaren van De Stijl*, 10.

van 't Hoff were discussed alongside Mondriaan and Van Doesburg.[60] However, the decisive push in this direction came from abroad: in 1983 the American art historian Nancy Troy published the book *De Stijl Environment* in which she underlined the relevance of interior design for the De Stijl members and the importance for its members to place painting within three dimensional space.[61] On this account, Troy positioned the interaction between architects and artists at the basis of the De Stijl group. A year before, in 1982, the second large post-war exhibition on De Stijl was organized at the Walker Art Centre in Minneapolis. This show, titled *De Stijl 1917-1931 Visions of Utopia*, was accompanied by a catalogue in which De Stijl was related to political events and developments in urban planning and interior design, in other words, within a contextual analysis that had been previously excluded by Jaffé and others in the 1950s.[62] [Fig. 3-4]



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The debated past

From the 1980s onwards a new generation of art and architectural historians appeared that entertained a more exclusive epistemic relationship with the past. However, this did not mean their findings were beyond debate. The most profound comment on Blotkamp's approach of De Stijl was formulated by the French historian Yve-Alain Bois, who in 1990 published the essay "The De Stijl Idea" as part of the book *Painting as Mode*l.[63] By the time Bois published his book, he had been teaching and working in the United States for almost a decade. He was a part of the group of scholars who were involved in a revision of art history that was referred to with the umbrella term of "New Art History". Coming from France and influenced by intellectuals such as the art historian Hubert Damisch and the literary theorist Roland Barthes, Bois represented a particular branch of it, called the "New Art History in France".[64]

60 The book contained chapters on the architects Jan Wils, Robert van 't Hoff, J.J.P.Oud, and Gerrit Rietveld and discussed Van Doesburg's architectural designs.

61 Nancy J. Troy, *the De Stijl Environment*, Cambridge Mass: The MIT Press, 1983.

62 The essay by the art historian Manfred Bock for this catalogue should be in particular mentioned. By focussing on the relationship between architecture, urban planning and the other arts within De Stijl, Bock confirmed the heterogeneity of the De Stijl group. The architects discussed by him only shared to his contention the fact that they had come under the influence of Mondriaan and Van Doesburg. Manfred Bock, "De Stijl en de Stad", in: Hans Jaffé et al., *De Stijl 1917-1931*, *Visions of Utopia*, (New York: Abbeville Press, 1982), 197-206.

63 Yve-Alain Bois, "The De Stijl Idea" in: Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model*, (Cambridge Mass.: The MIT Press), 1990: 101-123.

64 Stephen Melville, "Matter, Model, and Modernism", *Art History*, 3, 1992, 387-391, 387.

Fig. 4

Photo of Carel Blotkamp, 2016. Photographer: Gijsbert van der Wal.

As Blotkamp confirmed, from the perspective of the New Art History his book *De Stijl: The Formative Years 1917-1922* could be criticised in many ways.[65] For example, the strong focus on the artists left little space for the analysis of the social and cultural structures in which De Stijl was embedded; also, by emphasizing the individual path of each artist leading to abstraction, the book still participated in the ideology of modernism rather than taking a distance from it. However, in his essay Bois chose a different strategy. He addressed what constituted the core of Blotkamp's book: the assertion that De Stijl was primarily the name of a magazine and that there was little ground to belief in the cohesion as a group. In response to this statement, Bois debated on what constituted the absolute specificity of De Stijl as an avant-garde movement, concluding that De Stijl's peculiarity lay in the fact that it was, despite of all the differences between its participants, a movement based upon a common ground shared by its members. At the same time, refusing to become caught up in an opposition between "De Stijl as a group" and "De Stijl as a magazine", Bois indicated a third possibility. He thus pointed to the fact that, since 1928, three definitions of De Stijl had been used simultaneously: as a magazine, as a group, and as an idea shared by a number of artists.[66] For Bois, it was this last option that ultimately bound its members together. Bois used an interdisciplinary and theory-informed approach to define this specific De Stijl idea: his definition of it reflected the structural convergence of literary studies and the newer art histories that was characteristic of the French revision of art history.[67] Therefore, Bois indicated two basic principles at the core of De Stijl whereby especially the last principle reflected the syntax of language. According to him, De Stijl was defined by the proposition that each collaborator, whether painter, architect or sculptor, should strive towards the reduction of the work to its irreducible core. This operation of elementarisation was followed by a structural act of integration through which the distinct fields could be united into a "syntactically indivisible and non-hierarchical whole", in much the same way as "the phonemes of verbal language receive their meaning only through their differences".[68] In addition, also the notion of autonomy was an important part of De Stijl idea for Bois. In fact, so argued Bois, while the effect of the principle of integration was exponential in that it formed a totalizing and all-embracive De Stijl landscape, it was exactly this totalizing environment that secured the autonomy of each form of art.[69] For Bois, modern art is justified insofar as it invents models of social and individual autonomy. Modern art seeks to be "plastically self-sufficient and does not seek a transcendental justification outside of itself."[70] Notably, in his essay about De Stijl Bois continued to use Jaffé as his main source, just as Mondriaan was still at the physical and historical centre of his book. However, resisting easy

65 Carel Blotkamp, "Inleiding" in: Carel Blotkamp ed., *De Vervolgjaren van De Stijl 1922-1932*, (Amsterdam: L.J. Veen) 1996, 9-14, 10.

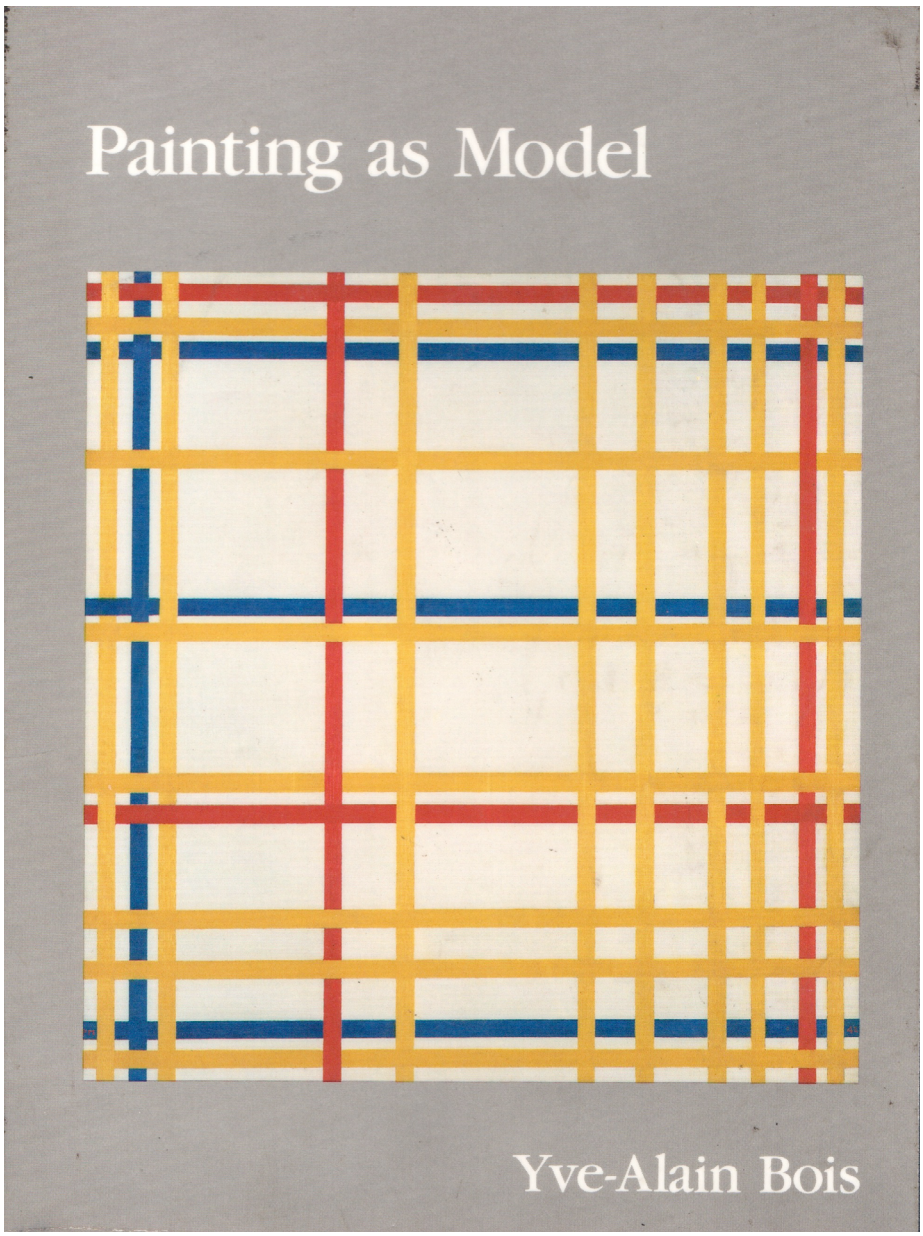
66 Yve-Alain Bois, "The De Stijl Idea" 101.

67 Stephen Melville, "Matter, Model, and Modernism", 154.

68 Yve-Alain Bois, "The De Stijl Idea" 103.

69 Yve-Alain Bois, "The De Stijl Idea" 103.

70 Yve-Alain Bois, Painting as Model, 154.



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dialectical schematizations - he spoke of the "blackmail of political demand" and, in the same strain, of the "theory-antitheory" opposition – Bois refused to take sides between Jaffé's collectivism and Blotkamp's fragmentation.[71] Rather, his search for the specificity of the research object led him to acknowledge, as a kind of third truth value, the relevance of De Stijl as an idea that despite all the differences between its members, made it into a movement. Bois's essay exposed the faith in positivist history that was present in Blotkamp's enterprise – of going into the archives to find out the "truth" about De Stijl. However, it equally countered the relativism that was behind the view that the ideological and spatial aesthetical orientations of De Stijl were manifold, depending on which artist or architect one investigates. Instead, Bois's analysis was once more value-laden, foregrounding the ongoing relevance of De Stijl as a program. It also forced the historian to take a stand, to commit oneself or, in Bois's words,

Fig. 5

Front cover of the book *Painting as Model* by Yve-Alain Bois, 1990. Photo by Rixt Hoekstra.

71 Yve-Alain Bois, Ibid., 6-7.

to "stand for or against".[72] For the purpose of of this essay, even if the past was concluded, in Bois's view its political weight was ongoing and required an engagement by the side of the historian [Fig. 5].

The missing past

At the end of the 1980s, it was the British historian Paul Overy who pointed at the consequences of recent De Stijl interpretations. Overlooking the historization of De Stijl since the Second World War, he concluded that there was no way to escape from the swamp of historical interpretation and that a firm ground in the form of a "true" De Stijl did not exist. Instead, Overy stated that De Stijl was made and remade with each publication: such was the *perpetuum mobile* of history.[73] In other words, the embrace of an epistemic and fact-based method did not lead to universal truths regarding De Stijl; rather, the appreciation of its manifold orientations opened the door to the relativistic perils of historization. In this way, Overy introduced an explicit postmodern argument into the debate. However, Overy's book *Het Rietveld Schröder Huis*, published in 1988, added yet another element to the debate.[74] While in this book Overy did not question the status of the Schröder House as an icon of De Stijl architecture, he did introduce the female subject as a relevant category for a De Stijl history. The Rietveld-Schröder House was now no longer the sole accomplishment of Rietveld: on the contrary, Overy acknowledged the contribution of Truus Schröder and introduced her as an actor in the history of the building. With that, he opened the door to issues concerning authorship – in this case, the shared authorship of the house. In the Netherlands in the late 1980s feminist art history was marginally present. As the art historians Halbertsma and Zijlmans confirm, in the Netherlands in the 1980s and 1990s feminist art historians were present most of all in museums and cultural institutions but outside of the university, as academic art historians tended to not be at ease with their critical approach.[75] An exception to this situation was the career of Wies Van Moorsel (1935). At the end of the 1970s, she became a lecturer at the Art Historical Institute of the University of Amsterdam. As the heir of the estate of Theo and Nelly Van Doesburg – the latter was her aunt – and as the wife of Jean Leering (1934-2005), who was the director of the Van Abbe Museum in Eindhoven in the 1960s, the career of Wies van Moorselwas characterized by an engagement with both modernism and feminism. Van Moorsel was also one of the first women to pose the question about the status of the women connected to De Stijl. With her monograph on Nelly Van Doesburg (1899-1975), published in 2000, Van Moorsel faced the challenge to research the life of a woman who had spent great energy to pro-

72 Yve-Alain Bois, Ibid., 6.

73 Paul Overy, *De Stijl*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991:, 7-17.

74 Paul Overy, Lenneke Büller, Frank den Oudsten, Bertus Mulder, *Het Rietveld Schröder Huis*, Houten: De Haan, 1988.

75 Marlite Halbertsma, "Vrouwenstudies Kunstgeschiedenis" in: Marlite Halbertsma, Kitty Zijlmans eds., *Gezichtspunten. Een inleiding in de methoden van de kunstgeschiedenis*. (Nijmegen: SUN Publishers, 1993): 212-213.

mote and protect the legacy of her husband, but who had never claimed a place in the spotlights for herself.[76] While Nelly van Doesburg left a carefully composed archive of Theo Van Doesburg, her own activities as a dada musician, dancer, artist and promotor of De Stijl were much harder to trace.[77] With the volume dedicated to her aunt, Van Moorsel opened up a discussion on who could count as a subject in the history of art and architecture: was the history of the avant-gardes only about artists and architects or did intermediaries like Nelly Van Doesburg also play a role?[78] Van Moorsel's monograph worked as a touchstone opening up insight into other women whose careers were connected to De Stijl: for example, the poet, linguist and author Mathilda Brugman (1888-1958), who made translations for the De Stijl magazine, published a poem in it, and decorated her apartment according to De Stijl principles.[79] Or the British painter and sculptor Marjorie Jewel Moss (1889-1958), on whose work Mondriaan's influence is manifest.[80] The history of these women clarified what had already been implicit in the approach of Blotkamp and de Bock: that De Stijl should not be regarded as an exclusive gathering of canonical artists and designers, but rather as a diffuse network of diverse actors with different and often conflicting ideas. What should also be mentioned in this context is Alice T. Friedman's ground-breaking publication *Women and the Making of the Modern Home* (2006) in which she analysed Truus Schröder not just as a muse to Gerrit Rietveld, but also as a client and a design partner who acted as an important catalyst for the innovation introduced in the Rietveld-Schröder House.[81]

Conclusion

In this essay I have discussed three generations of historians who, each from their own critical position, interpreted De Stijl. I have analysed the changed relationship between the subject – the historian - and the object – the past – as the exchange of an engaged attitude for a more detached and cognitive position. Today, few would consider Jaffé's panoptic visions of the totality of art history as an example for art historical scholarship. The method of "art history as the history of ideas" has come to be seen as theoretically undetermined, simplistic and even nationalistic in its undertones. The adoption of a successive epistemic

76 Wies Van Moorsel, *'De doorsnee is mij niet genoeg'. Nelly van Doesburg 1899-1975*. Nijmegen: SUN Publishers, 2000.

77 Based on a conversation with Van Moorsel, Amsterdam, October 5, 2018.

78 See among others: Marjan Groot, "Women as Patrons and Intermediairies. A Footnote Introducing the Articles of the First *MoMoWo* e-book" in: Helena Seražin, Caterina Franchini, Emilia Garda, eds. *MoMoWo Women's Creativity since the Modern Movement, Women Designers, Craftswomen, Architects and Engineers between 1918 and 1945*, (2015), 22-28, http://doi.org/10.3986/wocrea/1/momowo1, and http://omp.zrc-sazu.si/zalozba-zrc/catalog/book/2.

79 Marjan Groot, "Women as Patrons", 24-25. In the 1990s, Carel Blotkamp already published the correspondence of Brugman: "Liebe Tiltil, brieven van El Lissitzky en Kurt Schwitters aan Til Brugman 1923-26" *Jong Holland*, 13 (1997) 1, 32-46 and *Jong Holland* 13 (1997) 4, 27-47,62.

80 Katjuscha Otte, Ingelies Vermeulen, *Vrouwen in het leven van Piet Mondriaan*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017, Doris Wintgens, *Peggy-Nelly, Peggy Guggenheim and Nelly Van Doesburg advocates of De Stijl*, Rotterdam: NAI010 Uitgevers, 2017.

81 Alice T. Friedman, Maristella Casciato, "Family Matters: The Schröder House by Gerrit Rietveld and Truus Schröder", in: Alice T. Friedman, *Women and the Making of the Modern House, A Social and Architectural History,* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2007) 64-92.

paradigm as the touchstone for art history has led to heteronomous art historical practices. In fact, rather than leading to a final truthful history, it has revealed the complex ideological commitments of the discipline. With the rise of postmodernity in the 1980s, the Weberian ideal of a value-free science seemed more remote than ever. As the feminist historians discussed in this essay proved, history as a pure positivist science appears problematical because, despite its epistemic merits, already through the activity of selecting, excluding and focussing the historian displays a personal and normative stance. The historians discussed here exchanged a critical attitude, under the form of advocacy for modernist ideals, for a criticality that aimed to test, debunk and thus gain reliable knowledge. An overt political engagement was now replaced by a history that nonetheless was politically implicated, because historical research is never free from political interferences. However, this exchange also came at a price. In fact, it is questionable whether the epistemic approach to De Stijl, with its concern for the correct contextualisation of texts, ideas and works of art, left enough space for other approaches in the analysis of the past. In particular, it is open to debate whether the exclusive emphasis on "how did it all come about" did not go at the expense of "what do we really think about it." While in the Netherlands the physical reconstruction of the sites of De Stijl is ongoing, as is their utilisation in national narratives, one is left wondering where this rediscovery ultimately positions the historian of art and architecture. For example, the 2017 centennial of De Stijl was celebrated in the Netherlands with the slogan "From Mondrian to Dutch Design: 100 years De Stijl", thus suggesting that De Stijl was a precursor of a supposed national character in design that is nothing more than a brand invented to sell the Netherlands abroad. Exhibitions such as "Rietveld's Masterpiece: Long live De Stijl" displayed an uncritical embrace of long worn-out tropes, as it is evidenced by the placement of a gigantic plexiglass red-blue chair in the city centre of Utrecht, which turned what was originally meant to be an object of use into a sculpture or even a monument, reducing it to an image for photos taken by a smartphone. Should the historian, despite his or her epistemic virtues, be willing to leave the study room to take a stand? Should the historian adopt a position of criticality or complicity vis à vis these developments? The debates about the nature of De Stijl as analysed in this essay were also meta-debates: they were at the same time discussions about the tasks and responsibilities of the historian. The historians presented here did not just deal with the question of how De Stijl should be interpreted, but also of what historical interpretation ought to be and what we may ask from it. This debate remains in large part unresolved in the Netherlands: while operative history belongs to the past, the critical identity of the architectural historian remains an open question.

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Marco Capponi

Back to the Sources. Manfredo Tafuri's *Teorie e storia dell'architettura* (1968) between Project and Work in Progress

Manfredo Tafuri, Theories and History of Architecture, Emilio Garroni, Semantic Crisis, Angelo Guglielmi

/Abstract

A rigorous study of Manfredo Tafuri (1935-1994) must inevitably find compensatory strategies to overcome the main difficulty posed by the object of study: that of the sources. A challenge, we might say, made even more difficult by the fact that Tafuri, with rare exceptions, never included bibliographies in his books.

This contribution intends to present the first results of a philological analysis on one of the most important books in the historian's *œuvre* and the debate of the time, *Teorie e storia dell'architettura* (1968), closely compared with its second Italian edition (1970). This first step and the significant discovery of the letters exchanged in 1967-69 between Tafuri and the publishing house let to detect the extent to which Tafuri originally modified the book's project and intervened in its re-editions. This leads to the conclusion that he refashioned himself and politicised his work retroactively, probably to approach the new Venetian intellectual context.

Moreover, the systematic filing of 1968 book's bibliography, together with the critical bibliographies and recordings from his mid-1960s lectures, allow to give due weight to references hitherto unknown. They help us to enter into the historiographic framework in which the main problem – the relationship with history – is to be situated, and to identify a number of knots on which Tafuri will focus in the following years.

The analysis situates *Teorie e storia* in 1960s artistic and architectural discourse and brings to light, in particular, the underlying conversation with Emilio Garroni'book *La crisi semantica delle arti* (1964), a source that fits precisely a generational urgency, that of architecture and its meaning, to which Tafuri will constantly return.

The reading is intertwined with a parallel narration through the illustrations replaced by Tafuri for the second edition of *Teorie e storia*.

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As a consequence of his initial interest in the relationship between modern architecture and the Mediterranean basin, he is author of essays and petitions in order to safeguard the built heritage in the Maghreb countries. Then he published scientific contributions on sixteenth-century Venetian construction techniques and seventeenth-century architectural drawings. Two essays on the church and the pronaos of San Nicolò da Tolentino in Venice are currently forthcoming.

His present research interests include the training and the technical culture of Venetian architects in the eighteenth-century European context. He is also working on a critical edition of sources about Manfredo Tafuri's teaching activity.

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Manfredo Tafuri (1935-1994) has been one of the most influential architectural historians of the second half of the twentieth century.[1] However, research on Manfredo Tafuri's training and early years of activity has been sporadic so far, and only recently his great social and civil commitment has begun to be highlighted.[2]

Tafuri's transition from a stance of ongoing criticism, through committed essays and architectural practice, to a different intellectual commitment, choosing the historical discipline, is marked precisely by the publication of *Teorie e storia dell'architettura* in 1968 **[Fig. 1]**.[3]

It is a decision obviously reached over time. Civil struggles and disillusions may help us to understand Tafuri's book themes and reasons, but not entirely. We would like, therefore, to present some initial reflections starting from the first philological analysis of *Teorie e storia*'s text and references.[4]

It firmly situates the book in the 1960s artistic and architectural debate. Only afterwards, attempts were made – by Tafuri himself – to re-contextualise the book in a stronger political way. The analysis of the sources also allows to identify the intellectual tools that were used in detecting the problem – the relationship with history – and in facing a personal and generational unease.

1

Fig. 1

Cover of Manfredo Tafuri, *Teorie e storia dell'architettura*, 1st ed. (Bari: Editori Laterza, 1968).

1 This article was written thanks to a postdoctoral research grant awarded by the Iuav University of Venice on the teaching activity of Manfredo Tafuri. First research results were presented on 12 June 2020 as part of the reading seminar on *Teorie e storia dell'architettura*, organised by prof. Fulvio Lenzo and Luka Skansi, within the activities of the Iuav Ph.D. in History of Architecture. The excerpts from lectures' transcripts are my own translation, as well as quotations of the sentences changed by Manfredo Tafuri in Manfredo Tafuri, *Teorie e storia dell'architettura*, 1st ed. (Bari: Editori Laterza, 1968). Otherwise, they are from Manfredo Tafuri, *Theories and History of Architecture*, trans. G. Verrecchia (London: Granada, 1980). Quotations of Manfredo Tafuri, *Ricerca del Rinascimento. Principi, città, architetti* (Torino: Einaudi, 1992) are from Manfredo Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance. Princes, cities, architects*, trans. D. Sherer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006). I sincerely thank prof. Lenzo and Skansi for the opportunity to discuss the issue with which I was dealing, and in particular prof. Lenzo for his support and generosity. Finally, I would like to thank the Gius. Laterza & Figli S.p.A. publishing house, in the person of Carla Ortona, for her precious helpfulness, and my tireless friend Sandra Toffolo.
This paper comes after a difficult period. It brings with it the hope to come 'back to the future.'

2 Read, in particular, Luka Skansi, "Qualcosa oltre l'architettura. Gli anni formativi," in *Manfredo Tafuri. Seus leitores e suas leituras. Actas del Seminario Internacional* (Sao Paulo 2015), ed. Mario D'Agostino, Mario H. Simão, Adalberto da Silva Retto Jr., Rafael Urano Frajndlich (Sao Paulo: Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo, Universidade de Sao Paulo 2018), 138-57. We also suggest: Jean-Louis Cohen, "La coupure entre architectes et intellectuels, ou les enseignements de l'italophilie," *In extenso*, no. 1 (1984): 182-223. Republished as: Jean-Louis Cohen, "The Italophiles at Work," in *Architecture Theory since 1968*, ed. Kenneth Michael Hays (Cambridge-London: The MIT press, 1998), 506-20; Giorgio Ciucci, "The formative years," *Casabella*, no. 619-20 (1995): 12-25; Federico Rosa, "Progetto e critica dell'urbanistica moderna: i primi anni di attività di Manfredo Tafuri, 1959-1968," Master thesis (Iuav University of Venice, 2002-03, 2 v.); the talks and memories in Orazio Carpenzano, ed., *Lo storico scellerato. Scritti su Manfredo Tafuri* (Macerata: Quodlibet 2019).

3 Manfredo Tafuri, *Teorie e storia dell'architettura*, 1st ed. (Bari: Editori Laterza, 1968).

4 Marco Capponi, *La bibliografia di "Teorie e storia dell'architettura" di Manfredo Tafuri (1968) e sue modifiche nelle riedizioni italiane*, forthcoming online, http://www.iuav.it/Ateneo1/eventi-del/PROGETTO-T/LIBRI-SCRI/.

Moving Teorie e storia: between "fixed point" and "substantial changes"

The first edition of *Teorie e storia dell'architettura* was printed in May 1968. The book starts with an introduction and is structured in six chapters, with twenty illustrations in total. The chapters are titled "Modern Architecture and the Eclipse of History," "Architecture as 'Indifferent Object' and the Crisis of Critical Attention," "Architecture as Metalanguage: the critical Value of the Image," "Operative Criticism," "Instruments of Criticism" and "The Tasks of Criticism." The work ends with an appendix of illustrations divided by chapter and an index of names. The first chapter, on the beginning of modern architecture with Brunelleschi and his rupture of historical continuity, is the basis of any subsequent consideration.

Teorie e storia has also become the most successful of Tafuri's books on a global scale. There are four Italian re-editions (1970, 1973, 1976, 1980) for Laterza's *Biblioteca di cultura moderna* series, and two reprints (1986, 1988) for Laterza's *Biblioteca Universale* series. These are intertwined with translations and, of course, other parallel publications by the author. The first translation is from the second Italian edition into Spanish (Barcelona: Laia, 1972; 2nd ed., 1973), followed by the fourth Italian edition into French (Paris: Éditions Sadg, 1976), Portuguese (Lisbon: Presença 1979; São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1979), a first one into English (London: Granada, 1980) and a second one for an American publishing house (New York: Harper and Row 1980), but in both cases translated from the fourth Italian edition by Giorgio Verrecchia. Then, there is a Japanese one (Tokyo: Asahi, 1985), as well as, of course, the circulation of unauthorised mimeographed copies.[5] After the author's death, the book has also been translated into Korean and Chinese.

Looking at the translations, it would appear that the second and fourth Italian editions had the largest global diffusion. However, a series of changes had been already made to the first Italian edition and the book seems to be born destined to change together with its author.

The correspondence between Manfredo Tafuri and the publishing house, in fact, shows that the book profoundly changes between April 1967,[6] when Tafuri signs two contracts for what will be *Teorie e storia dell'architettura* and *L'architettura dell'Umanesimo* (1969), and January 1968, a few months before going to print. The text of the book is written almost at once, but with a parallel and conspicuous bibliographic update.[7] However, this should not be interpreted as a sudden and revolutionary change of course. Rather, Tafuri seems to have chosen to examine the issues he was dealing with from a different perspective.

At the end of January 1968, in fact, the book, now at the first draft of the fourth chapter, still has a provisional title: *I miti della Ragione nell'architettura europea*.[8]

5 Manfredo Tafuri, *Theories and History of Architecture*, trans. G. Verrecchia (London: Granada, 1980), xiii.

6 Appendix, letters nos. 1 and 2.

7 Appendix, letters nos. 3, 4 and 5.

8 Appendix, letters nos. 5 and 6.

Only at the beginning of May 1968 the book has its definitive title, although the editor still confuses "Teorie" with "Teoria."[9] For the cover image, Tafuri seems inclined to use the one finally adopted. However, he leaves the choice to the publisher, because Vito Laterza probably prefers a drawing by Giovan Battista Piranesi, previously discussed with Tafuri.[10]

The initial project probably was a great historical narrative, from Brunelleschi to the twentieth century, following the *fil rouge* that Tafuri would define as the "Reason's adventures:" that is, the continuous transformation throughout history of rationality in its opposite, irrationality. An ambitious programme that will be postponed and articulated over time.[11]

Postponing for the moment this question, a possible link between the first and the second project for the future *Teorie e storia* could be found in a testimony to which we will return several times: the recording of the first lecture that Tafuri held in Venice in 1966 for Giuseppe Samonà's course.

Here, focusing on the interventions on the city, Tafuri speaks about the overthrow of late eighteenth-century rationality in the irrationality of the demolitions in the Fascist era. Then he affirms: "and this practice, in which rationality becomes irrationality, precisely is […] an explication of what I was saying before about the false stabilisation of the concept of relationship with history."[12]

Therefore, in *Teorie e storia* Tafuri finally turns his attention to the ongoing problem of the relationship with history. A problem that, as we shall see, has its roots in the eighteenth-century rationalist turn.

When the French edition is published, Tafuri declared that *Teorie e storia* is the result of a maturation that began at least in 1964.[13] According to the author, the book is like "the fixed point one has to create for himself at certain times in his life." It binds his personal experience "to the histories of individual and collective

9 Appendix, letter no. 8.

10 Appendix, letters nos. 5 and 8.

11 This is a hypothesis that we cannot treat properly here, but on which we can give some clues. The book project seems to have clear origins. The title originally conceived by Tafuri is, most likely, the most explicit proof of the influence of the Italian art critic and politician Giulio Carlo Argan (1909-1992). The title is in fact a literal quotation from a "memorable" conference held by Argan in 1960 at the Gallery of Modern Art in Rome, titled *The great problems of contemporary arts*. Tafuri publishes a significant transcription of this conference in the conclusion of Manfredo Tafuri, *L'architettura moderna in Giappone* (Rocca San Casciano, Bologna: Cappelli, 1964), 153-54. In the opening note to *L'architettura dell'Umanesimo*, according to Tafuri humanism is not "a defined 'period' in itself, but a 'moment' of the long history of the modern European intellectual and his ideology: the myth of Reason." See Manfredo Tafuri, *L'architettura dell'Umanesimo* (Bari: Editori Laterza, 1969), 6. Later, in 1973, the narrative of *Progetto e utopia* will resume from the "Reason's Adventures: Naturalism and the City in the Century of Enlightenment," as title of the first chapter. See Manfredo Tafuri, *Progetto e utopia. Architettura e sviluppo capitalistico* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1973), 5. Although Tafuri never mentions it explicitly, it also seems possible to hypothesize the importance at this moment of Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, translated for the first time into Italian by Renato Solmi and printed in April 1966 (Torino: Einaudi, 1966). In 1968 Tafuri only shows a general knowledge of Adorno's American writings: Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 1st ed. (1968), 107. While in 1992 he will remember the "socializing effect" of 1960s public demonstrations, during which students passed "a book by Adorno around the table at a restaurant, not reading him but creating complicated theories:" Manfredo Tafuri, "History as Project: an Interview with Manfredo Tafuri," interview by Luisa Passerini, Rome, February-March 1992, *ANY: Architecture New York*, no. 25-26 (2000): 69.

12 Manfredo Tafuri, "Le strutture del linguaggio nella storia dell'architettura moderna: i parametri di controllo," (February 1966) audio recording now on eight CDs, no archival signature, Archivio Progetti Iuav, Iuav University of Venice: CD 1, about 01:00:00-01:01:30.

13 Manfredo Tafuri, "Entretien avec Manfredo Tafuri," interview par Françoise Very, *AMC. Architecture-Mouvement-Continuité*, no. 39 (1976): 64-68. Republished as: Manfredo Tafuri, "The culture markets. Françoise Very interviews Manfredo Tafuri," *Casabella*, no. 619-20 (1995): 37.

crisis together in a sort of complex knot."[14] At the same time, in the preface to the French edition, Tafuri defines the book as a "work in progress," since "after the additions and corrections made in 1970, the book was still revised for the Spanish edition in 1972 and finally for the third Italian edition in 1973."[15] However, changes were actually introduced at least until the fourth Italian edition.

Focusing on the printed versions, from a first comparison between the Italian editions it is evident that Tafuri took the opportunity of the book's republication to introduce additions and changes.

The most striking interventions are the two introductory notes to the second and fourth editions. Until the fifth edition (1980) both are present, to be reduced to the second note only from the 1986 edition onwards.

Less evident, but nonetheless eloquent, are the limited bibliographical updates, to texts up to 1975, and the self-censorships, the last of which was carried out for the fourth edition (1976).

With new editions, in fact, Tafuri proceeded to eliminate or replace his own publications considered no longer adequate. From the second edition onwards, the booklet on the cathedral of Amiens (Firenze: Sadea Sansoni, 1965) disappears from note no. 17 to the third chapter. Subsequently, in note no. 25 to the same chapter, from the fourth edition onwards Tafuri replaced *L'architettura del Manierismo nel '500 europeo* (Roma: Officina, 1966), on which the author's severe judgment is known,[16] with the second edition of *L'architettura dell'Umanesimo* (Bari: Laterza, 1972).

Sometimes, however, the changes pose a historiographic problem. In the second edition of 1970, for instance, Tafuri inserts new references from prior to 1968 and, in later interviews, he will say they were fundamental for the first draft of the book.[17] The impression is that the author tried to untangle and make the threads of the discourse more explicit, but that he also pulled them forcefully, in a direction that he would fully embrace only later.

In 1968, in fact, Tafuri starts his steady teaching period at the *Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia* and is committed to writing his first article for *Contropiano: Materiali marxisti*.[18] Based on these decisive biographical experiences,[19] Tafuri begins to modify and rewrite entire paragraphs of *Teorie*

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14 Ibid., 37-39.

15 Manfredo Tafuri, *Theories et histoire de l'architecture*, trans. J.-P. Fortin, F. Laisney (Paris: Sadg, 1976), xi.

16 Tafuri, "History as a Project," 33.

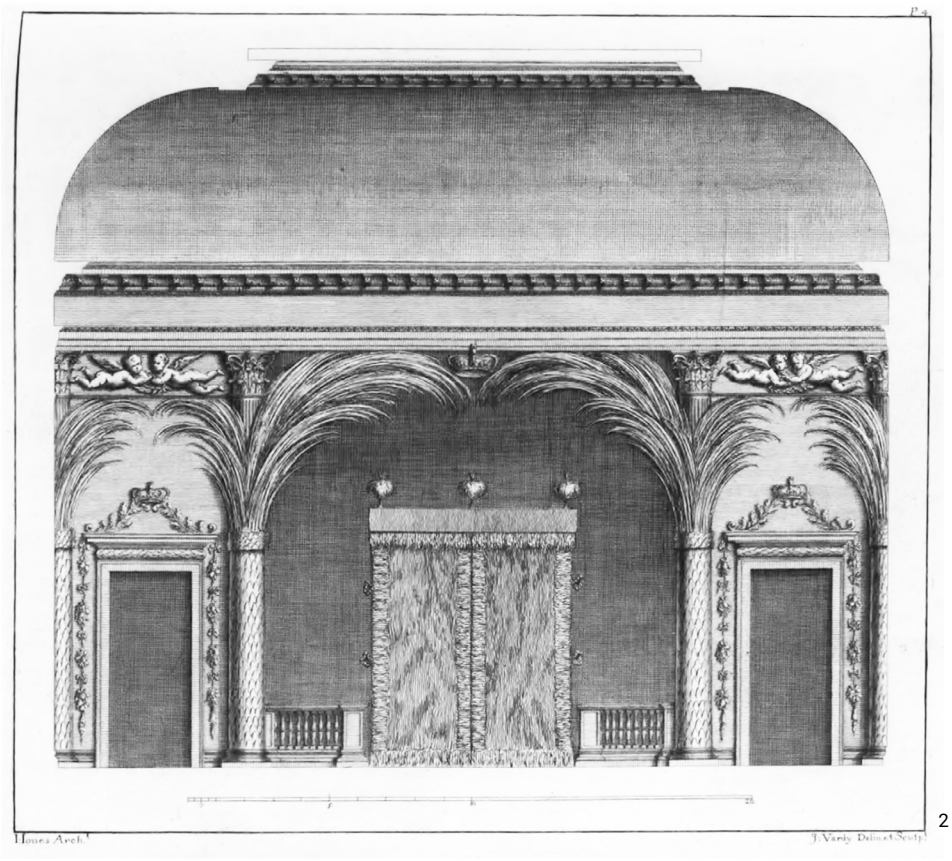
17 Tafuri, "The culture markets," 37. It would be possible to continue to verify Tafuri's subsequent statements with the data provided by the books, and we would come to realise that neither in the first edition, nor in the previous book on Mannerism, there is sure evidence of an early knowledge of Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre (Tafuri, "History as a Project," 43). No references in Manfredo Tafuri, *L'architettura del Manierismo nel '500 europeo* (Roma: Officina edizioni, 1966). The concept of "historical judgement" should be debated in this sense. But, for a different opinion, see the interesting Andrew Leach, *Crisis on crisis, or Tafuri on Mannerism* (Basel: Standpunkte, 2017), 16-17.

18 Manfredo Tafuri, "Per una critica dell'ideologia architettonica". Contropiano: materiali marxisti, no. 1 (1969): 31-79; see Alberto Asor Rosa, "Critique of ideology and historical practice," *Casabella*, no. 619-20 (1995): 29.

19 Tafuri, "History as a Project," 32-33, 54. Up to that moment, for Tafuri "on the one hand, there was history, while on the other, there was politics". The collaboration with the journal's authors and founders would also lead to the establishment of a first research group.

e storia and to re-contextualise the book's contents within a more evident and radical political framework. The most significant changes in this sense occur between the first and the second edition,[20] as also evidenced by the 1969 correspondence between the author and the publisher.[21]

Between October and December 1969 Tafuri revises the book at least twice: in the second edition he inserts an introductory note, he makes changes and additions to the text and replaces three illustrations: nos. 1, 16-17 (both of them of a covered bridge designed by Giacomo Quarenghi) and 18, the same that accompany this article **[Fig. 2-3-4-5]**.



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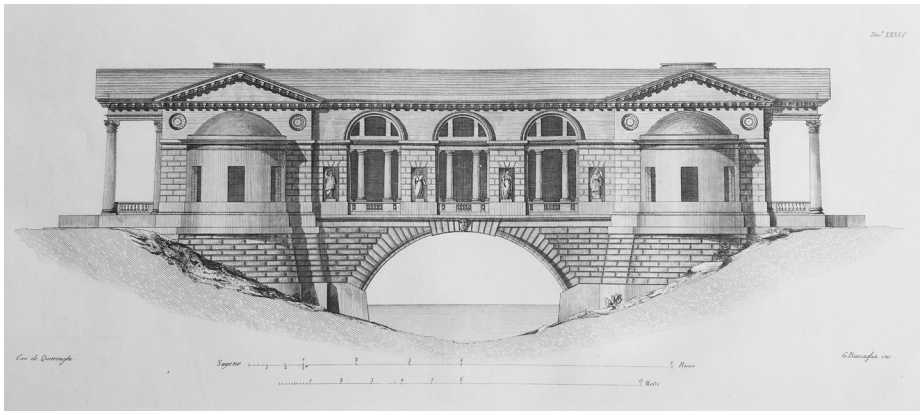

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Fig. 2

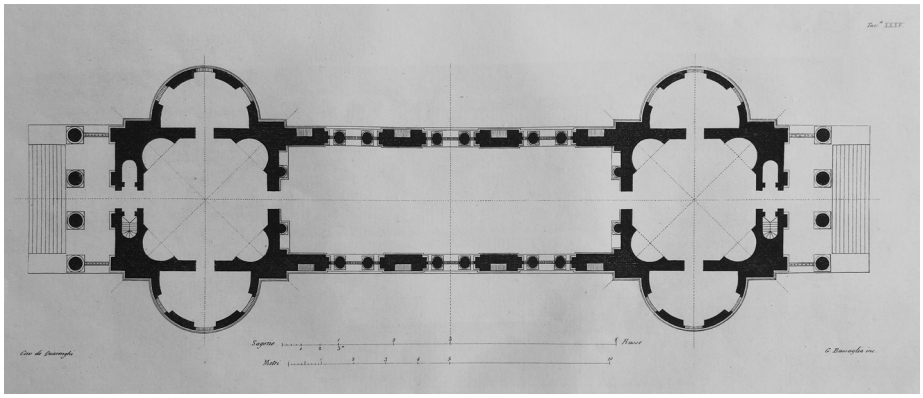
John Vardy, from Inigo Jones and William Kent, "An Alcove for a Bed at Greenwich for King Charles Ist." From: *Some designs of Mr. Inigo Jones and Mr. William Kent*, drawn, engraved and published by John Vardy, 1744, tab. 4. The volume was reprinted in 1967 (Farnborough, Hants: Gregg P., 1967). It is likely that Tafuri used this modern reprint for the illustration to the text no. 1 of *Teorie e storia*. See Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 1st ed. (1968), 33.

Fig. 3

Giulio Quarenghi, from a drawing by Giacomo Quarenghi, front on the water of the covered bridge for the Gatčina gardens. From: *Fabbriche e disegni di Giacomo Quarenghi, architetto, illustrate dal Cav. Giulio suo figlio*, 2nd ed. (Mantova: F.lli Negretti, 1844), tab. XXXVI. Tafuri cites a previous edition of this volume (Milano: presso Paolo Antonio Tosi, 1821) in "Simbolo e ideologia nell'architettura dell'Illuminismo" (1964), 82. He may have used one of these editions, or more likely a modern monograph or a journal, for the illustrations to the text nos. 16, 17 of *Teorie e storia*. See: *Tafuri, Teorie* e storia, 1st ed. (1968), 173.

20 Manfredo Tafuri, *Teorie e storia dell'architettura*, 2nd ed. (Bari: Editori Laterza, 1970). Some notes in Manuela M. Morresi, "Il Rinascimento di Tafuri," in *Manfredo Tafuri. Oltre la storia*, ed. Orlando Di Marino (Napoli: Clean, 2009), 34.

21 Appendix, letters nos. 9, 10 and 11.



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In the second edition, Tafuri states to write the introductory note in order to provide the coordinates for a less arbitrary reading of the text and defines it "only a step towards the acknowledgment of what architecture, as an *institution*, has meant up to now" in its entire ideological character, and concludes by announcing "an urgent second 'political' reading of the entire history of modern architecture."[22] Tafuri therefore prefigures a clear radicalisation of his positions, as would have happened in the subsequent *Progetto e utopia*.[23]

To work more in depth in this direction, Tafuri acts on the previous text, sometimes even in a subtle way. First of all, he refers to the article "L'uomo, il poeta" by Alberto Asor Rosa, published in 1965 in the issue no. 5-6 of *Angelus Novus* journal, founded the previous year by Massimo Cacciari and Cesare De Michelis. It is a very eloquent reference: Asor Rosa's article, in fact, defines a different and detached role for criticism to face the inevitable contradictions of art making,[24]

Fig. 4

Giulio Quarenghi, from a drawing by Giacomo Quarenghi, plan of the covered bridge for the Gatčina gardens. From: *Fabbriche e disegni di Giacomo Quarenghi architetto*, tab. XXXV. See: Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 1st ed. (1968), 173.

Fig. 5

Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, "abreuvoir et lavoir de Meilliand." From Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, *L'architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'art, des mœurs et de la législation*, Planches (2nd v., Paris: Lenoir, 1847; Paris: De Nobele, 1961, limited edition of 300 copies), 348. This could be the source used by Manfredo Tafuri for the illustrations to the text no. 18. See: Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 1st ed. (1968), 195.

22 Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 2nd ed. (1970), 3, 8.

23 Tafuri, *Progetto e utopia*.

24 Alberto Asor Rosa, "L'uomo, il poeta," *Angelus Novus*, no. 5-6 (1965): 22.

and marks the beginning of the path that would lead to *Contropiano*'s cultural experience.[25]

But the changes also infiltrate the core of the book. On page 85 of the first chapter, the comment inserted in round brackets "this has as its premise the most complete adhesion to the new conditions of artistic communications in the broad sense" becomes "if this has any meaning within an ideological superstructure."[26] Then, at the end of the first chapter, Tafuri adds a new note, no. 124, to clarify that a political judgment was implicit in the previous note, no. 52. In this case, the range of references is clearly expanding in the debate inspired by the publication of Franco Fortini's *Verifica dei poteri* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1965; 2nd ed. 1969), to which Asor Rosa had replied with the above-mentioned article.

In the fifth chapter we have two significant changes. In the first case, Tafuri finds the detachment between criticism and architecture healthy, at least until such a clash has "induced a more authentic climate in the cultural debate;" a sentence that, in the second edition of the book, becomes "completely cleared the ideological and mystified character of architectural discipline."[27] Subsequently, still in relation to the tasks of an independent criticism, Tafuri first writes that "it is in its constant and disruptive activity that a criticism can exert a direct action on the design," then he modifies it to "by this constant demythologisation criticism can perform a 'political' rather than a 'productive' function."[28]

Finally, in the last chapter, Tafuri removes the initial quote from Bertolt Brecht's poem *Praise of Doubt*,[29] and completely rewrites two of the concluding paragraphs. It is starting from the 1970 edition, in fact, that he renames historical activity as "'criticism of architectural ideologies' and, as such, 'political' activity."[30] The first version's last words also were on a scarcely conciliatory, but actually more reformist position. Criticism, in fact, would have imposed "advanced obstacles in the architect's way, challenging him to overcome them," so that architecture "could recover its specific dimension: that of the future. It is therefore clear that, by bringing the phenomena of contemporary architecture back into the historical channel, criticism must challenge the anti-historicism that, in the preceding pages, we have recognised as the great unsolved problem of modern art."[31]

These are not normal text revisions that any author could make. Indeed, in the correspondence with the publishing house Tafuri defines some of these

25 Marco Assennato, "Une Marseillaise sans Bastille à prendre: Manfredo Tafuri enquêté par la philosophie. Architecture, aménagement de l'espace," PhD diss., Université Paris-Est, 2017, 146-52, HAL multidisciplinary open access archive (Id: tel-01866692), https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-01866692.

26 Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 1st ed. (1968), 85; Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 2nd ed. (1970), 85.

27 Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 1st ed. (1968), 206; Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 2nd ed. (1970), 206.

28 Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 1st ed. (1968), 241; Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 2nd ed. (1970), 241.

29 "Praised be doubt! I advise you to greet / Cheerfully and with respect the man / Who tests your word like a bad penny. / I'd like you to be wise and not to give / Your word with too much assurance. […] You, you are a guide, do not forget / That you are a guide because you doubted / other guides! So let those who are guided / the right to doubt."

30 Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 2nd ed. (1970), 272.

31 Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 1st ed. (1968), 272.

changes as "substantial,"[32] which seem to have escaped the author's first review.

All the references, additions and modifications mentioned above appear from the second edition of the book onwards, after Tafuri's arrival in Venice. They represent covert attempts to disguise earlier less radical positions and explicitly tie *Teorie e storia* to the new political course. In other words, Tafuri seems to refashion himself and to politicise his work retroactively, probably to approach and enter the *Contropiano* group.

But it is not inconsistency, or a form of flattery. Rather, *Teorie e storia* represents a kind of laboratory, open to change along precise coordinates. It moves between a project and a work in progress: between the analysis and the diagnosis of the problem, as discussed in the first chapter and stated at the end of the first edition – on which Tafuri will believe for his entire life[33] – and the identification of the tools to intervene.[34] Moreover, this is the structure of the book and, within this polarity, *Teorie e storia* records the process through which Tafuri continued to build himself.

The philological analysis of the references must therefore be carried out *a fortiori* from the first edition of the book.

Manfredo Tafuri and the bibliography: a historiographical problem

Throughout the indexes of Manfredo Tafuri's books we rarely find a bibliography.[35] This does not mean that Tafuri was not aware of the usefulness of such an instrument. For instance, the course notes he prepared for his students are mainly based on bibliographies.[36] This teaching material was usually structured in an introduction, with a more general course bibliography, and lecture-specific summaries with critical bibliographies organised by themes and architects. Particular attention was paid to the iconographic and documentary apparatus of books and articles.

However, this does not happen in an organic and structured form in the books he wrote. Without his personal archive at our disposal, in order to understand how he uses the sources we have to rely on what he writes, on his changes and silences.

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32 Appendix, letter no. 11.

33 Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 1st ed. (1968), 10-8, 272; Tafuri, "The culture markets," 39; Manfredo Tafuri, *Ricerca del Rinascimento. Principi, città, architetti* (Torino: Einaudi, 1992), xxii, footnote no. 8.

34 Tafuri, "The culture markets," 37-9; Morresi, "Il Rinascimento di Tafuri," 32-4. However, rather then a co-existence, the approaches to the critique of ideology and philology should be linked to Tafuri's research experiences over time.

35 Particular exceptions in Manfredo Tafuri, *Storia dell'architettura italiana*, 1944-1985 (Torino: Einaudi, 1986), xxi; Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co, *Architettura contemporanea* (Milano: Electa, 1976), 392. The final bibliography in Tafuri, *L'architettura moderna in Giappone*, has a structure

36 Manfredo Tafuri, "Storia dell'ideologia antiurbana," (Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia, Istituto di Storia dell'architettura. Corso di Storia dell'architettura 1A/2A, 1972-1973) DEPIUAV B0034, Iuav University of Venice Library, Venice; Manfredo Tafuri, "Il grattacielo e la struttura della città terziaria in America e in Europa (1850-1975)," (IUAV, Istituto di Storia dell'Architettura, corso di Storia dell'architettura 2A, 1975-1976) DEPIUAV A0013, Iuav University of Venice Library, Venice.

Scholars have resorted, for instance, to a selection of cited references,[37] or to Tafuri's later statements,[38] or even to the reconstruction of the contemporary historical-artistic debate and political context.[39] These approaches, however, though erudite and stimulating, are not always attentive to the references actually cited by Tafuri.[40] Moreover, as we have seen, some choices, even when based on more rigorous strategies, do not always seem able to grasp the complexity of the experience with which they deal.

We believe, instead, that it seems more effective to concentrate on specific key issues of his production,[41] and a systematic cataloguing of the bibliography used by Tafuri can provide a valid tool to undertake a gradual deconstruction and analysis of his writings and thought.

This philological method, applied for the first time to the first edition of *Teorie e storia dell'architettura* (1968), brought about the first challenges **[Fig. 3-4]**. Not in verifying partial or inaccurate references, but rather because it posed the historiographical problem in clear terms: that is, a propensity for Manfredo Tafuri not to declare his references in some cases. In fact, it happens that he omits bibliographical references, does not state the origin of the illustrations, makes almost a clean sweep of architectural literature: for example, an emblematic passage in which Tafuri clearly places himself in a dialectical relationship with respect to Giulio Carlo Argan and Bruno Zevi.[42] Or, with regard to the illustrations, he always indicates, albeit in a shortened way, the eighteenth-century printed sources, but not the modern monographs and magazines from which the photographs are taken.[43]

It is therefore evident that the bibliographic filing alone is a blunt weapon. It will have to be interrogated from different perspectives, but compensatory strategies should be used in order to obtain a productive re-construction of the data. The teaching material could help integrating bibliographic omissions and re-evaluate the importance of books and authors that have remained hitherto mostly unnoticed.

The close relationship between the first edition of the book and the beginning of Tafuri's teaching activity, in fact, represents the main reason that led us to use a philological method with an elusive book such as *Teorie e storia*. Between

37 Marco Biraghi, *Progetto di crisi: Manfredo Tafuri e l'architettura contemporanea* (Milano: C. Marinotti, 2005), 9-53.

38 Andrew Leach, *Choosing History: A Study of Manfredo Tafuri's Theorisation of Architectural History and Architectural History Research* (Gent: A&S Books, 2007), 129, 134. https://lib.ugent.be/fulltxt/RUG01/000/955/648/RUG01-000955648_2010_0001_AC.pdf. Titia Rixt Hoekstra, "Building versus Bildung: Manfredo Tafuri and the construction of a historical discipline," *University of Groningen*, 2005, 76-78. http://irs.ub.rug.nl/ppn/283596589.

39 Pier Vittorio Aureli, "Recontextualizing Tafuri's Critique of Ideology," *Log*, no. 18 (2010), 89-100; Assennato, "Une Marseillaise," 127-83.

40 Assennato, "Une Marseillaise," 100-101, points out some bibliographic additions in Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 2nd ed. (1970).

41 Carla Keyvanian, "Manfredo Tafuri's notion of History and its methodological Sources: from Walter Benjamin to Roland Barthes," MIT Libraries, 1992. https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/13110; Carla Keyvanian, "Manfredo Tafuri: From the Critique of Ideology to Microhistories," *Design Issues*, no. 1 (2000): 3-15.

42 Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 1st ed. (1968), 184-85.

43 The only exception is appendix ill. no. XXXVII, probably from the periodical *Rassegna Sovietica*, as we will see.

1963-64 Tafuri is invited to join Ernesto Nathan Rogers at the Polytechnic University of Milan,[44] and we have different kind of sources at our disposal. For the following year, Tafuri would draw up the first summaries with critical bibliographies intended for students of the faculty of Rome, at the time printed twice by Alberto Samonà in 1966 and 1973.[45] Moreover, a recording of the two lectures and debates that Manfredo Tafuri gave on February 1966 for Giuseppe Samonà's course on *La teoria della progettazione architettonica* in Venice has also been preserved.[46] Additionally, a revised version of these two lectures were published in 1968, the same year of *Teorie e storia*'s first edition.[47] It would be like starting from a hypothetical but probable library of the historian, to understand what material Tafuri mainly uses and why.

The most cited authors: Zevi, Argan, Panofsky

The bibliography was first analysed using the frequency with which bibliographic references of authors and texts occur as a starting point **[Fig. 5]**.

The authors with the greatest number of bibliographic references ever are Bruno Zevi (1918-2000) and Giulio Carlo Argan (1909-1992), with twenty-one and nineteen citations respectively. The data may not appear surprising,[48] however the two authors are cited for different reasons.

Tafuri mainly employs writings by Bruno Zevi to deal with problems of historiographic method, such as *La storia come metodologia del fare architettonico* (academic inaugural lecture, Roma, 18 December 1963) and *History as a Method of Teaching Architecture*, paper in the repeatedly cited collection *The History, Theory and Criticism of Architecture* (ed. Marcus Whiffen, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1965).

The most cited work by Giulio Carlo Argan, on the other hand, is *Walter Gropius e la Bauhaus* (Torino: Einaudi, 1951) with at least three citations, one of which in the text. The importance of this source in *Teorie e storia* must also be taken into consideration in the absence of other explicit and specific references on the German architect. Subsequently, there are two collections of essays by Argan,

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44 Tafuri, "History as a Project," 29. The article by Guido Canella, "Vecchie e nuove ipotesi per i centri direzionali," *Casabella-continuità*, no. 275 (1963): 42-56, should no longer be included in Tafuri's bibliography, because his name does not appear anywhere. Nevertheless, it remains an eloquent testimony of Canella and Rogers' design research in relation to history.

45 Manfredo Tafuri, "La storia dell'architettura moderna alla luce dei problemi attuali. Sommari e bibliografie critiche," (Palermo: Istituto di composizione, Facoltà di Architettura, Università di Palermo, 1966) Samonà 5.rci/10, Samonà, Giuseppe e Alberto, Archivio Progetti Iuav, Iuav University of Venice; (Palermo: Istituto di studi sull'architettura, Facoltà di Architettura, 1973) 1759/d, Biblioteca di Architettura, Università di Palermo.

46 Manfredo Tafuri, "Le strutture del linguaggio nella storia dell'architettura moderna: i parametri di controllo," (February 1966) eight CDs. Partial and not always accurate transcription in: Rosa, "Progetto e critica," 2nd v., 295-321; Hoekstra, "Building versus Bildung," 210-23.

47 Manfredo Tafuri, "Le strutture del linguaggio nella storia dell'architettura moderna," in Giuseppe Samonà et al., *Teoria della progettazione architettonica* (Bari: Dedalo libri, 1968), 13-30. Manuela Morresi stated that the lectures and the essay "differ significantly," but without stressing them: Morresi, "Il Rinascimento di Tafuri," 46, footnote no. 26. As we shall see, she used a transcript not always rigorous of Tafuri's voice, but Morresi tends to return an always 'coherent' Manfredo Tafuri, despite the use of different sources.

48 Tafuri, "History as a Project," 16.

Salvezza e caduta nell'arte moderna and *Progetto e destino*,[49] each of them with two citations. However, even in these cases, the mere number of citations can lead to underestimate their importance, as well as a deeper knowledge of Argan's writings.[50]

The long quote at the end of the introductory chapter, for instance, is almost a programmatic frame for the entire discussion. According to Argan, in fact, critical activity should first of all be free from predestined sentences or absolutions, and Tafuri does not hesitate to adopt this approach in order to also criticise the constructivist positions of Argan, without however citing a specific essay or article.[51]

The third most cited author, not adequately considered so far, is Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968) with sixteen citations.[52] Panofsky was certainly known by specialists, but the historical and cultural dimension of his method must be taken into consideration with respect to a Crocean aesthetic judgment that was still widespread in Italy.[53]

Panofsky's most cited works are the collection *La prospettiva come «forma simbolica» e altri scritti* (Milano: Feltrinelli 1961) and *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1957), both widely employed in the fifth chapter on the instruments of criticism. Tafuri shows that he already knew Panofsky's *Il significato nelle arti visive* (Torino: Einaudi, 1962) in his previous book on Mannerism (1966), where he attributed to Panofsky the hypothesis of the existence of a specific mannerist architecture.[54] In *Teorie e storia*, however, Tafuri is interested in Panofsky's methodological approach.

The relationship between theories and art history is clearly stated through Panofsky's words, according to which theories "do not 'explain' or 'designate' the values or the meanings of the works, but constitute parallel phenomena, with their own history – they are the *object* rather than the means of interpretation."[55] But for Tafuri, which assumes as clear the distinction between artistic intentions and the artist's intentions, Panofsky's separate analysis are impossible to be integrated in a final synthesis, and he suspects that "the relationship between the symbolic element and its 'referent,' its specific meaning, may not

49 Giulio Carlo Argan, *Salvezza e caduta nell'arte moderna* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1964); *Progetto e destino* (Milano, Il Saggiatore, 1965).

50 See Manfredo Tafuri, "La vicenda architettonica romana, 1945-1961," *Superfici: problemi di architettura e tecnologie edili*, no. 5 (1962), 23, 34. Marco Assennato rightly stresses the importance of Argan's essay "Architettura e ideologia" (1957) republished in Argan, *Progetto e destino*, 82-90; Marco Assennato, *Progetto e metropoli. Saggio su operaismo e architettura* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2019), 19-23. See also Rosa, "Progetto e critica," 1st v., 214-27.

51 Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 1st ed. (1968), 184-185; Giulio Carlo Argan, *Progetto e destino*, 43-50.

52 For some initial considerations: Tomas Llorens, "Manfredo Tafuri: Neo-Avant-Gard and History," *Architectural Design*, no. 6-7 (1981): 85; Daniel Sherer, "Tafuri's Renaissance: Architecture, Representation, Transgression," *Assemblage*, no. 28 (1995): 40. Recently in Massimo Bulgarelli, "Tafuri e Giulio Romano," in *Utilità e danno della storia. Quaderni della ricerca – IUAV*, ed. Massimo Bulgarelli, Agostino De Rosa, Carmelo Marabello (Milano-Udine: Mimesis edizioni, 2018), 20-21.

53 Emilio Garroni, *La crisi semantica delle arti* (Roma: Officina edizioni, 1964), 109-11, 163, footnote no. 2.

54 Tafuri, *Architettura del Manierismo*, 3-9, 17.

55 Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 1st ed. (1968), 224.

be so decisive."[56] At this point, Tafuri prefers to underline the inadequacy of the iconological analysis to grasp the meaning proper of the single works.

However, Tafuri will constantly refer to Panofsky, still twenty-years later in his *Ricerca del Rinascimento*.[57] Additionally, in Tafuri's view, the perspective as representation system seems progressively to lose its symbolic contents and to remain the only "control parameter" for architectural invention.[58] In fact, in 1992 Tafuri assumes that the transition to the long cycle of modern architecture was marked by a single criterion:

> When compared to the medieval era, the only element that can be called truly innovative is a crucial one: the introduction of a system that is *completely representational* [*compiutamente rappresentativo*]. At stake was not the 'contents,' but rather, a process at once mathematically rationalized and subject to verification: one permitting their formalization within a system that 'placed the world epoch in an image.'[59]

But it is a – temporary – arrival point. In 1966-68, Tafuri placed the birth of modern architecture with humanism and he summarised it through the adoption of three "parameters," that were, at the same time, an explanation of contents already given and universal, and design tools. They were the univocity and measurability of the space, the perspective representation and the harmonic-mathematical proportions[60] – to which, starting from 1969, a rationalisation of the social organisation of the work would be added.[61] Modern architecture would have developed starting from challenging these parameters. The relationship between architecture and science, for example, would lead to the reversal of perspective as form of knowledge to a representation of the world; that is, from a concept of "form" as "representation of universal data," to a concept of "image" which can assume such universal data, but it is "subject to the transparency of the author's autobiography […] proposing itself as an autonomous value."[62] So, according to Tafuri, at the end of the eighteenth century architecture would fall into a deep semantic crisis, reached through the total shattering of these parameters. As we will see, the adoption of a new indirect parameter, an instrumental use of history, would have allowed architecture to regain an institutional level.

However, as is well known, starting from the 1980s Tafuri began focused philological investigations and progressively dismantled the foundation of his first

56 Ibid., 227.

57 Tafuri, *Ricerca del Rinascimento*, 3-24.

58 Bulgarelli, "Tafuri e Giulio Romano." Thanks to Massimo Bulgarelli for sharing some reflections about this point with me.

59 Tafuri, *Ricerca del Rinascimento*, 20.

60 Tafuri, "Strutture del linguaggio," CD no. 1, about 00:06.00-00:25:30; Tafuri, "Strutture del linguaggio," 13-6.

61 Tafuri, *L'architettura dell'Umanesimo*, 17-19.

62 Tafuri, "Strutture del linguaggio," CD no. 1, about 00:33:00-00:34:55; Tafuri, *L'architettura dell'Umanesimo*, 345-57.

hypotheses about the 'classic.'[63] Modern architecture would exclusively become 'representational.'

Naturally, the frequency is not the only criterion to be adopted. See for instance the importance of Angelo Guglielmi (1929-), although mentioned only once. In reply to Guglielmi's book *Avanguardia e sperimentalismo* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1964), at the end of the first chapter Tafuri comes to prefigure the concept of a "zero-degree" history. Although Tafuri rejects Guglielmi's inevitable assassination of history, he polemically adopts the theoretical extremism of a history as "pure event," and no longer as "a value," to tackle the ahistorical attitude and instrumental use of history in design.[64]

It is a dialectical construction. But history as 'pure event' also represents – in the first edition of the book – the explicit precedent of the "total disenchantment"[65] reached by Tafuri, at least according to Asor Rosa, after the exercise of what would have been the critique of ideology.

The most cited books

The most cited book in *Teorie e storia* is the Italian translation of Walter Benjamin's *L'opera d'arte nell'epoca della sua riproducibilità tecnica* (Torino: Einaudi, 1966), with at least eleven explicit citations. The data is interesting, albeit unsurprising. The "crisis of the object", in fact, was a highly topical issue in 1960s, especially among art historians, as stated by Tafuri himself.[66] Rather, it should be emphasised that *L'opera d'arte* and the collection of essays and fragments *Angelus Novus* (Torino: Einaudi 1962) are the only writings by Benjamin cited by Tafuri, about which he also shares the introductory analysis proposed by Renato Solmi.

After Benjamin, we find *La crisi semantica delle arti* by Emilio Garroni (Roma: Officina 1964) and Umberto Eco's *Appunti per una semiologia delle comunicazioni visive* (Milano: Bompiani, 1967), with eight and seven explicit citations respectively. In the second case, the book is mainly cited by Tafuri in the fifth chapter, first to warn – through Zevi's words – against a limited interpretation of architectural codes and, above all, the risk of a strong reactionary attitude.[67] Then it is extensively quoted to put forward the difficulty of current codes in grasping the philological meaning of the work.[68] Also in this case, Tafuri does not question the existence of the work's original message, rather he casts doubts on

63 See, for instance, Antonio Foscari and Manfredo Tafuri, *L'armonia e i conflitti. La chiesa di San Francesco della Vigna nella Venezia del '500* (Torino: Einaudi, 1983), 3-10; Joseph Connors, "The culture of the fictitious," *Casabella*, no. 619-20 (1995): 160-163; Bulgarelli, "Tafuri e Giulio Romano," 16-21.

64 Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 1st ed. (1968), 92-94, footnote no. 123.

65 Asor Rosa, "Critique of ideology and historical practice," 33; see also Alberto Asor Rosa, "Manfredo Tafuri, or, Humanism Revisited," *Log*, no. 9 (2007): 34.

66 Tafuri, "The culture market," 41; Argan, Progetto e destino, 50-51.

67 Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 1st ed. (1968), 242-43.

68 Ibid., 246-47.

the application of language analysis techniques to the art object, thus sharing Emilio Garroni's critics to Umberto Eco.[69]

The all but instrumental use of Garroni's book, and the continuity with which Tafuri quotes and cites *La crisi semantica delle arti* (in the introduction, first, second, fourth and fifth chapter), suggest a different role for this volume, almost as a theoretical platform or a dialogical reference for Tafuri's argumentation. A key role, still not sufficiently taken into consideration, despite being confirmed by both the course bibliography and the recordings of lectures.

Underlying conversations: Emilio Garroni and Cesare Brandi

A close analysis of the text and footnotes allowed us to identify for the first time Emilio Garroni as a central reference for the project on which Tafuri focuses in *Teorie e storia*.[70]

Emilio Garroni (1925-2005) was an interviewer and author of TV programmes on artistic topics even before his assignment as university professor of Aesthetics in Rome, received after the publication of *La crisi semantica delle arti*.[71] This book is the continuation of a previous study on informal art, through widely debated and topical issues at the time. In fact, Garroni intends to analyse the communicative structure of the art object as well, but placing semanticity at the centre. Starting from that point, the methods of analysis derived from semiotics and the information theory are first used critically, and then dialectically overcome within a broader methodological horizon.

It is worth noting that Garroni already uses a peaceful vision of the concept of crisis, intended as a relevant but not exhaustive moment of a historical and cultural phase, and simultaneously perceived as a "real need for transformation and continuity."[72] For this reason, from the first pages of the book Garroni warns against all the disciplines (such as sociology) and other strictly analytical methods, that produce attitudes of renunciation of crisis, since they lead to accepting the world "as it is."[73]

A crisis of the arts was ongoing since at least the late eighteenth century and it concerns its semanticity.

According to Garroni, the process of semantic reduction of intentionality, that is, those operations through which the semanticity of the sign could rely on the

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69 Ibid., 111, footnote no. 26.

70 Argan, *Progetto e destino*, 71, footnote no. 1, 2, refers to Garroni and Umberto Eco for an in-depth analysis of the concept of crisis; this reference has been pointed out by Biraghi, *Progetto di crisi*, 24, footnote no. 16, but without links to Tafuri's book; Assennato, "Une Marseillaise," 176, dedicates a few words to Garroni; Bulgarelli, "Tafuri e Giulio Romano," 14. Although more attentive to the text, neither Assennato nor Bulgarelli have pointed out the central role of Garroni's book. On July 10, 2020, in the above-mentioned reading seminar on *Teorie e storia*, prof. Marco Biraghi spoke about Garroni in relation to Manfredo Tafuri and semiology, considering Garroni's notion of crisis important for Tafuri.

71 Lorenzo Dorelli, "Garroni, Emilio," in *Enciclopedia del Cinema*, 2nd v. (Roma: Istituto dell'enciclopedia italiana, 2003): 709-10.

72 Garroni, *Crisi semantica*, 65.

73 Ibid., 35-36.

intentionality that had concretely determined it, was torn apart.[74] In the nineteenth century, art appeared incapable of intersubjective and institutional status without returning to a now-lifeless language. In this perspective, the sign tends to become objective – without an internal intentionality – and to be regained through an external intentionality, that is, not contained in the sign itself.[75] During the nineteenth-century experience, the "sign recovery" also corresponds to a "semantic recovery," but this does not happen to contemporary art, whose continuous attempts to re-invest the artistic language with meaning produce the maximum linguistic ambiguity.[76] Therefore, the semantic crisis of the arts, for Garroni, precedes and conditions the notion of "crisis of the object."[77]

Positivistic analytical approaches, such as linguistics and semantics, have contributed to the development of a plural notion of art. But, consequently, their cognitive capacity is severely limited when applied to these "misleading signs."[78] Rather, Garroni proposes a method that is inextricably composed of a double analytical phase: the object-linguistic analysis and the historical-intentional moment. Nevertheless, he is fully aware of its historicist approach, at the same time an instrument of investigation and a historical outcome.[79]

It is possible that Tafuri met Emilio Garroni for the first time at the Ugo Spirito's lectures, of which Garroni was teaching assistant since 1951.[80] Later, it is certain that Tafuri and Garroni met at least in 1967, during a round table conference on Francesco Borromini.[81] However, Tafuri had long been aware of Garroni's book.

In the summaries with critical bibliography for students, *La crisi semantica delle arti* is recommended from the first lecture on, to understand the "problems concerning the relations of architecture with other arts and semantic aspects."[82] Although within the context of a design course, Tafuri also intends to provide students with theoretical tools, in order to develop a methodology that does not include an instrumental use of history. According to Tafuri's diagnosis, for architecture the problems would arise from a methodological leap, from the programme to immediate figurative results, without a conscious linguistic research and from the ambiguous and contrasting positions assumed by critics.

In much more sophisticated terms, the two 1966 recorded lectures given by Tafuri in Samonà's course also revolve around the eighteenth-century "semantic crisis of the arts,"[83] as well as the following essay published in 1968.[84] Even in

74 Ibid., 198-205.

75 Ibid., 317-21.

76 Ibid., 336.

77 Ibid., 330.

78 Ibid., 338.

79 Ibid., 147-70.

80 Tafuri seems to have a good knowledge of Ugo Spirito's thought, and he associates it, with some distinctions, to the design methodology of Saverio Muratori: Tafuri, "Strutture del linguaggio," CD no. 3, about 00:59:35-01:00:06.

81 Emilio Garroni, Paolo Portoghesi, Manfredo Tafuri, "Il metodo di progettazione del Borromini," in *Studi sul Borromini: atti del convegno promosso dall'Accademia di San Luca*, 2nd v. (Roma: De Luca, 1967), 5-34.

82 Tafuri, "Storia dell'architettura moderna," (1973), 10.

83 Tafuri, "Strutture del linguaggio," CD no. 1, about 00:43:38, 00:44:40, 00:56:06; CD no. 6, about 00:00:30.

84 Tafuri, "Strutture del linguaggio," 21.

these cases, however, observing the aims of the course, it would appear that Tafuri tries to make clear the central concept by speaking of direct and indirect "design control parameters," such as the instrumental use of history, which would seem to coincide with Garroni's "external intentionality."

But the core of the 1966 lectures and the 1968 essay consists in the awareness that, since the eighteenth century, history has been used to resolve the semantic crisis in which architecture found itself.

According to Tafuri, on the one hand the culture of the Enlightenment has produced a history that is "history of human values," a history in which "values can be selected and transformed into current values."[85] On the other hand, the rationalist turn would have definitively generated a crisis in humanistic culture, still based on a "precise intelligibility of the expressive sense of language within its determining structures," through the split between "significant structure of the art work" and "semantic value of the art work itself."[86]

The culture of Enlightenment, Tafuri clearly says

> precisely in its desire to restore a dignity and an institutional status, I would say an authoritativeness to the linguistic architectural sign, again reproduces indirect control parameters, resorting however – and I would say this is fundamental – to something completely new: that is, an instrumental use of history. That has such a profound influence on European culture from the eighteenth century to the present day, that today we are still deeply involved in it, I would say, we are not able to detach ourselves from it, and evidence of this is […] the extensive use that is made of the history of architecture […] as a tool on the drawing board.[87]

Contemporary architecture is still facing the consequences of this centuries-old flawed relationship with history, because twentieth-century "architects and artists need a direct relationship, completely recognisable by the observer, with structures, works and eras that had aroused those same ethical and civil values."[88] The instrumental use of history as a design control parameter is, using Tafuri's words, "undoubtedly one of the greatest and one of the most moving, I would say, of the modern history of architecture." But, he concludes, "the revolution accomplished is a revolution that is still incomplete."[89]

Similarly, in the first chapter of *Teorie e storia*, one of the most meaningful parts of the book, Tafuri places the eighteenth-century intellectual rupture at the basis of today's semantic crisis of the arts. He merges the "crisis of the object" with the crisis of the historicity of modern art, and makes it incapable,

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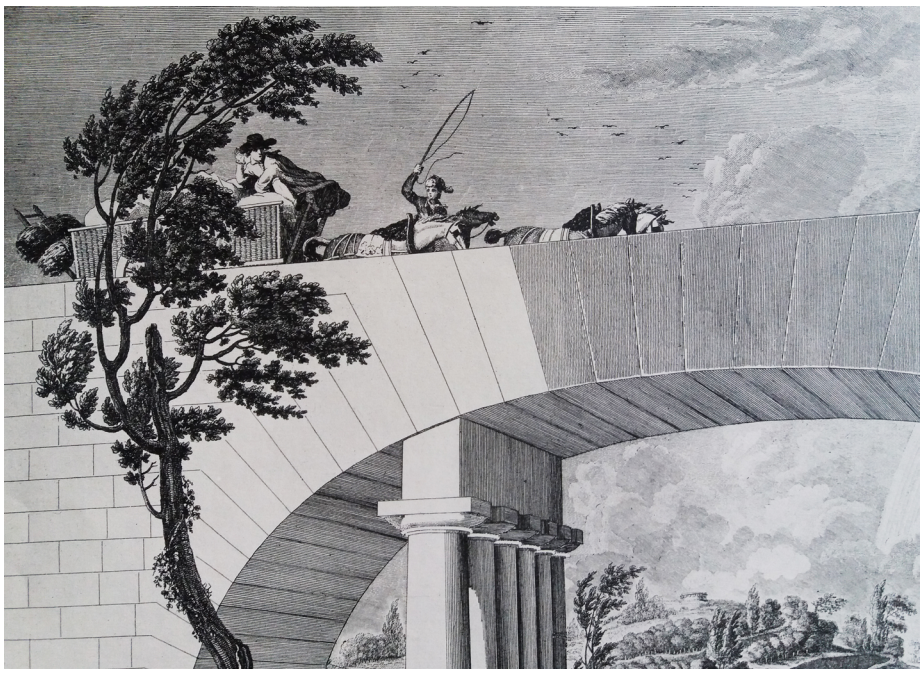
85 Tafuri, "Strutture del linguaggio," CD no. 1, about 00:53:30-00:54:00.

86 Tafuri, "Strutture del linguaggio," CD no. 1, about 00:44:30-00:45:00. See also Tafuri, "Strutture del linguaggio," 21-24.

87 Tafuri, "Strutture del linguaggio," CD no. 1, about 00:40:40-00:42:10. The transcription used by Morresi has "the Renaissance culture" instead of "the culture of Enlightenment:" Morresi, "Il Rinascimento di Tafuri," 31.

88 Tafuri, "Strutture del linguaggio," CD no. 1, about 00:45:00-00:45:40.

89 Tafuri, "Strutture del linguaggio," CD no. 1, about 00:42:40-00:43:00, 01:02:50-01:02:58; see also Tafuri, "Strutture del linguaggio," 26-28.



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from this moment, of becoming an intersubjective institution.[90] Therefore, the de-historicising process started with Brunelleschi, but this process, however, was still based on a balance, a capacity to still produce institutional results,[91] and it would have a fundamental turning point in the late eighteenth century.[92]

Therefore, it does not seem correct to consider that Garroni's role in Tafuri's *Teorie e storia* is limited to the field of semiotics. This is true at least because *La crisi semantica delle arti* contains only the premises for future and more detailed investigations on the subject, added by Tafuri in following bibliographic updates.[93] Rather, it would seem that, starting from the years of *Teorie e storia*, Tafuri sets out on a path parallel to that of Garroni. A path which, at the beginning of "The historical project" in 1980, will lead him to claim to have reached comparable positions, but via different roads.[94]

Garroni, after Armando Plebe and Luciano Anceschi, also provides the starting point for a deeper reflection to redefine the field, the tasks and instruments of criticism, a question already posed by Tafuri in the introduction and taken up in the fifth chapter on the instruments of criticism.[95]

Tafuri verifies the crisis of a traditional and defining aesthetic based on a metaphysical and static concept of art, but also the ineffectiveness of analytical and

90 Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 1st ed. (1968), 42-45.

91 Ibid., 24-26, footnote no. 10.

92 In 1966 Tafuri said: "What does it mean for the eighteenth-century architect to relate his production to Greek or Roman architecture? It certainly does not mean the supra-historical dialogue that the theorists of humanism had instituted. It means something profoundly new. It mainly means finding content values that pass through a profound semantic crisis." From Tafuri, "Strutture del linguaggio," CD no. 1, about 00:43:00-00:43:40. There would be no significant differences between the 1966 lectures, the 1968 essay and the historical setting of the problem as formulated in *Teorie e storia*.

93 Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 2nd ed. (1970), 242, footnote no. 77.

94 Manfredo Tafuri, *La sfera e il labirinto. Avanguardie e architettura da Piranesi agli anni '70* (Torino: Einaudi, 1980), 3, footnote no. 2.

95 Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 1st ed. (1968), 13-14, 199-200; to be compared to Garroni, *Crisi semantica*, 147-54.

Fig. 6

Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, "abreuvoir et lavoir de Meilliand," detail. From Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, *L'architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'art*, 348.

inductive approaches. The path to follow is that of a historicist attitude "able to determine, each time and with a future-oriented perspective, a horizon for the study of aesthetic problems that is constantly variable and determined by the concrete experience of art's unforeseeable changes,"[96] therefore effective only within the limits of the selected aesthetic problems.

As it was for Garroni, for Tafuri the founding choice is to leave the field neither to empirical critics, nor to architects. Problems and concrete experiences determine methods, strategies and tools, which will still be verified, updated or even revolutionised. But the nature of criticism changes: it must be identified, right now, with history.[97]

Garroni is not the only one with whom Tafuri establishes one of the founding dialogues of the book **[Fig. 6]**. A second exchange is intertwined with Cesare Brandi (1906-1988), who Tafuri had probably known in the years 1966-67, when he held his first teaching position at the University of Palermo.[98] In this case, however, Tafuri refers to Brandi mainly to disprove his theories.

The second recurring book in *Teorie e storia*, in fact, is *Le due vie* (Bari: Laterza, 1961), with a total of five citations, in the first, second, third and fifth chapter. For Tafuri, the dialectic triggered with this book, but also with the most recent of Brandi's publications on architecture and development of the previous one, *Struttura e architettura* (Torino: Einaudi, 1967),[99] becomes of vital importance. The criticism of Brandi's thought, also here in line with Garroni,[100] is in fact almost the fundamental precondition for the activity and existence of the criticism itself, particularly historical.

Tafuri rejects Brandi's reduction of architecture to a pure metaphysical "astanza" and a tautological system, empty of meanings other than its internal laws. On the contrary, according to Tafuri the very basis of architecture's existence would rest precisely on the continuous and "unstable balance between a nucleus of permanent values and meanings, and their metamorphoses in historical time,"[101] citing as example the reinterpretations of the ancient architecture by the fifteenth- and sixteenth-centuries architects. If on the contrary the artwork lacked its "historical" character, the critical activity would be reduced to a simple description, being unable to interpret or historicise. Rather, Brandi's statement of the artwork's "supremacy" appears to be the consequence of a contingent, prejudicial and ideological position, in reaction to the difficult challenges posed to criticism by contemporary art.

Two books of two fundamental authors. Tafuri makes his own the first one in search of the historical foundations of the unease and to define a renewed

96 Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 1st ed. (1968), 199.

97 Ibid., 200.

98 Tafuri, "History as a Project," 36.

99 Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 1st ed. (1968), 214-15.

100 Garroni, *Crisi semantica*, 227-30.

101 Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 1st ed. (1968), 211.

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critical method, even if its instruments were deeply affected by the debate at the time. On the other hand, however, Tafuri is engaged in an idealistic struggle in defence of the meaning of architecture.[102]

Historiography and critics on twentieth-century architecture

The bibliographic filing also lends itself to direct questions, for example about the presence and use of historiography and critical literature on twentieth-century architecture [Fig. 7].

It is a known fact that, in *Teorie e storia*'s chapter on operative criticism, Giedion, Zevi and Benevolo's historiographical accounts represent the great narratives to be contested, although Tafuri's criticism is always articulated on various levels.[103]

However, one should not think that Tafuri censored these books while teaching.[104] In the cycle of lectures on *La storia dell'architettura moderna alla luce dei problemi attuali*, they represent three manuals to be known and overcome dialectically at the same time. Tafuri invites to a critical reflection on various historiographic positions, including literature produced by architects such as Saverio Muratori and Louis I. Kahn, critical writings by Bruno Zevi, Renato Bonelli and Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti, but also the volume *Ragionamenti sull'architettura* by Giusta Nicco Fasola (Città di Castello: Macrì, 1949) on the critical production since 1935. This last book is also cited by Emilio Garroni as one of the first, timid post-Crocean attempts of a different interpretation of architectural

Fig. 7
Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, "abreuvoir et lavoir de Meilliand," detail. From Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, *L'architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'art*, 348.

102 Ibid., 217.

103 Ibid., 185, in particular footnote no. 27.

104 Tafuri, "Storia dell'architettura moderna" (1973), 9; Tafuri, "Ideologia antiurbana," 7.

phenomena.[105] Through the lectures, Tafuri would then be able to show the strongly limited visions of the three manuals, integrating them with lessons on more articulated panoramas and contexts.

It should be stressed that magazines were also the network from which to draw on primary sources in translation, otherwise difficult to find and read in the original language. The most evident case in *Teorie e storia* is that of *Rassegna Sovietica*, Italy-USSR Cultural Association's periodical.[106] A similar role should also be recognised in *Edilizia moderna*, a quarterly technical periodical, whose no. 86 (1965) titled *Ricerca storica* is among the most used issues by Tafuri, with a total of four citations. Indeed, as we can observe from the course critical bibliographies, this dossier is a fundamental source for Hugo Häring and Bruno Taut's translated writings[107] and for questioning the simplified and flattened architectural histories supported by manuals available at the time.[108]

Even though freely cited, in *Teorie e storia* Tafuri cannot avoid mentioning these manuals, which constituted a fundamental background in the cultural and architectural debate of the time.[109] On the other hand, whenever possible Tafuri dismisses all the critical literature on twentieth-century architects.

The most conspicuous exception is represented by Louis I. Kahn. The monograph by Vincent Scully (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1963), and the periodicals *Perspecta*, *Architectural Design* and *Zodiac remain* reference points on the subject. This, however, is not only due to autobiographical reasons, given the strong interest in the Estonian-American architect of the students of the faculty of architecture of Rome. Tafuri feels that behind the phenomenon there was an extremely topical urgency. For instance, in the 1966 lectures, he wonders about the reason for the interest in Kahn's linguistic system: "not only because it is easy to adopt," was the answer, "but also because it has something inside it. What, what I call the institutional attitude."[110]

As we said, however, Kahn represents the exception. Besides the aforementioned volume on Gropius by Argan, whose importance is confirmed, within the pages and footnotes of *Teorie e storia* any secondary source on the main contemporary architects, such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier, is absent.

Furthermore, Tafuri completely closes the distance with Wright and Le Corbusier by directly quoting their writings. Tafuri quotes Wright's *Architettura organica: l'architettura della democrazia* (ed. Alfonso Gatto, Giulia Veronesi, Milano: Muggiani 1945) and, more frequently, Le Corbusier's *Quand les cathédrales étaient blanches. Voyage au pays des timides* (Paris: Plon, 1937), *Urbanistica*

105 Garroni, *Crisi semantica*, 109-10.

106 Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 1st ed. (1968), 58, footnote no. 62.

107 Tafuri, "Storia dell'architettura moderna" (1973), 33-34.

108 Ibid., 23, 27; Tafuri, "Strutture del linguaggio," CD no. 5, about 00:33:40-00:42:40.

109 Tafuri, "History as a Project," 11.

110 Tafuri, "Strutture del linguaggio," CD no. 3, about 01:01:28-01:01:42.

(Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1967) and *La Carta d'Atene* (Milano: Edizioni di Comunità, 1960). From this point of view, the critical bibliographies written for his students are a very useful tools to integrate book's references.

In the bibliography dedicated to Le Corbusier, Tafuri separates primary sources from literature, warning that all the monographs are completely inadequate.[111] Among the primary sources, besides the available volumes of the *Œuvre complète* (1910-1965), he invites students to read *La mia opera* (Torino: Boringhieri, 1961) and *La ville radieuse. Éléments d'une doctrine d'urbanisme pour l'équipment de la civilisation machiniste*, (Boulogne: Éditions de L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui, 1935; Paris: Fréal, 1964), while being aware of the differences between Le Corbusier's statements and his parallel œuvres.[112]. He also includes the collection *Le Corbusier* (Milano: ed. Rosa e Ballo, 1945), edited by Giancarlo De Carlo. Among the available publications, Tafuri indicates the catalogue on the 1963 Florentine exhibition at Palazzo Strozzi, *L'opera di Le Corbusier* (Firenze: Giuntina, 1963), with a useful summary of the Italian bibliography edited by Italo Insolera and Alberto Samonà. He finally suggests students to read some commemorative articles to demonstrate the different and contrasting reception of Le Corbusier's work by the Italian architectural culture. Alongside articles by Zevi, Ernesto Nathan Rogers and Giovanni Klaus König, Tafuri also inserts his own article *La lezione di Le Corbusier*, published in the PSIUP political journal (*Mondo nuovo*, no. 35, 5 September 1965), a contribution hitherto unknown to the last, generous bibliographical project on Tafuri's huge printed production.[113]

The meaning of architecture

The immediate editorial success of *Teorie e storia*, at least in Italy,[114] seems to have been due to the strong and transversal relevance compared to the contemporary historical-artistic debate, rather than to a strictly political reason. As even Tafuri would have admitted, many issues that the book deals with were more comprehensible to art historians than to architects, while it would be useless to look for "a political message, since the book was targeting a public that was me, and a particular discipline, even if it does contain an implicit political discourse."[115]

According to Tafuri's words, the year 1964 is a common element in both *La crisi semantica delle arti* and *Teorie e storia*. We would not assign an altered

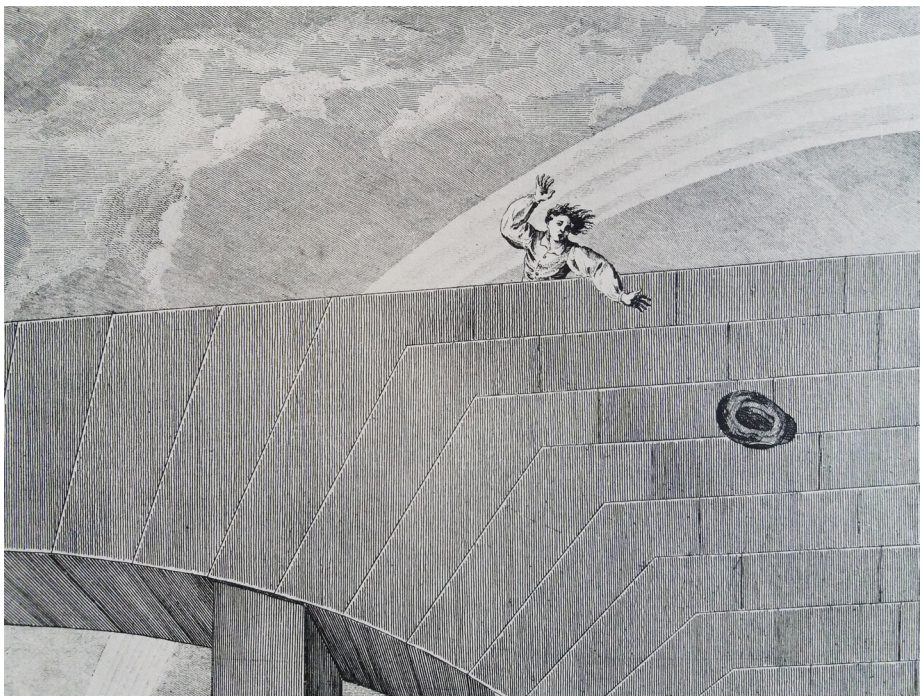
111 Tafuri, "Storia dell'architettura moderna" (1973), 60-61.

112 Tafuri, "Strutture del linguaggio," CD no. 5, about 00:34:50-00:35:05.

113 Víctor Pérez Escolano, "Manfredo Tafuri (1935-1994). Un ensayo de bibliographía," *Arquitectura*, no. 300 (1994): 90-94; Anna Bedon, Guido Beltramini, Pierre-Alain Croset, "Una prima bibliografia," *Casabella*, no. 619-20 (1995): 170-75; Leach, *Choosing History*, 307-32; Federico Rosa, "Bibliografia degli scritti di Tafuri," in *Manfredo Tafuri. Oltre la storia*, ed. Orlando Di Marino (Napoli: Clean, 2009), 110-27. Consider now: Manfredo Tafuri, *bibliografia degli scritti in Biblioteca Iuav*, ed. Paola Chiara Barsotti, with the collaboration of Marco Capponi, http://www.iuav.it/Ateneo1/eventi-del/PROGETTO-T/LIBRI-SCRI/. This is a bibliography including Manfredo Tafuri's printed production kept and available at the Iuav University Library, Venice. It is constantly updated with new bibliographic acquisitions.

114 Tafuri, "The market culture," 39.

115 Ibid., 41.



8 |

role to Garroni's book within the biography of Tafuri, who, at the time, was just making the first steps with Rogers outside a Roman framework. However, Garroni is certainly a link in the chain, a source that precisely fits a common question, about architecture and its meaning.

In a 1964 article, in fact, Tafuri defines late eighteenth-century architecture as the construction of new myths on the ruins of the classicist ones, "through a new interpretation of the symbol and its role in determining the social content of the image," a consequence of a "generalised rejection of the transcendence of meaning traditionally connected to the forms used."[116] In 1966 this passage has a precise diagnosis, a 'semantic crisis': a crisis which, still in the second half of the twentieth century, is faced by resorting to a history 'of values,' looking for operative solution and meanings for architectural choices.

At this point, the other side of the coin becomes clear. *Teorie e storia* is the answer to this urgency, to use Tafuri's words, to "know whether architecture still had meaning," only to discover that "once you had entered the maze, Ariadne's thread was broken, and to go on from there you had simply to ignore Ariadne's thread. A leap suddenly made after writing *Theories and history*."[117]

However, that thread was anything but lost. Perhaps it was deliberately not fully addressed, or removed. Nevertheless, in his last book, Tafuri is interested more in the way in which, in the so-called Renaissance, the "production of meaning" took place, than in the consolidation of standards.[118] At the core: the belief that the origins of the present lie in the awareness of the architectural construction's arbitrariness. A crucial point, which Tafuri finally moves from Piranesi back

116 Manfredo Tafuri, "Simbolo e ideologia nell'architettura dell'Illuminismo," *Comunità. Giornale mensile di politica e cultura*, no. 124-25 (1964): 76-77.

117 Tafuri, "The market culture," 37-39. The last sentence is our own translation.

118 Tafuri, "Ricerca del Rinascimento," 5.

Fig. 8

Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, "abreuvoir et lavoir de Meilliand," detail. From Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, *L'architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'art*, 348.

over the centuries, to at least the sixteenth century, where he seems to recognise the existence of a "subjective relationship between naturalness and artifice."[119]

In *Teorie e storia*, as is evident in the critique of Brandi's position, on this issue Tafuri exposes himself in an explicit struggle in defence and reaffirmation of a meaning of architecture **[Fig. 8]**. The task of history, Tafuri concludes, "is the recovery, as far as possible, of the original functions and ideologies that, in the course of time, define and delimit the role and meaning of architecture."[120] What that is, is not said.[121] It is a task without a predictable outcome, and another reason why "solutions are not to be found in history."[122]

119 Ibid., 12; Tafuri, *La sfera e il labirinto*, 74-75.

120 Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 1st ed. (1968), 263.

121 See the passionate article Tafuri, "Vicenda architettonica romana."

122 Tafuri, *Teorie e storia*, 1st ed. (1968), 272.

Appendix

The appendix is composed of a selection of letters exchanged in 1967-69 between Manfredo Tafuri and the Gius. Laterza & Figli publishing house. They concern the first and the second edition of *Teorie e storia dell'architettura*. The appendix is also enriched with the photographs of Tafuri's handwritten letters and of the most significant ones concerning writing process and changes, the choice of the title and the cover image. Our interventions are limited to the text between square brackets.

Source: Archivio Autori Editori Laterza – per gentile concessione / Archivio Autori Editori Laterza – with kind permission.

Letter 1. [typewritten]

Bari, 5 aprile 1967

Prof. Arch. Manfredo Tafuri

Via Etiopia 18

ROMA

Caro Tafuri,

nell'inviarLe i contratti per i due libri che si concordarono a Roma, tengo a ringraziarLa nuovamente e a manifestarLe la mia più viva soddisfazione per questo nostro primo incontro che spero continui proficuamente in futuro.

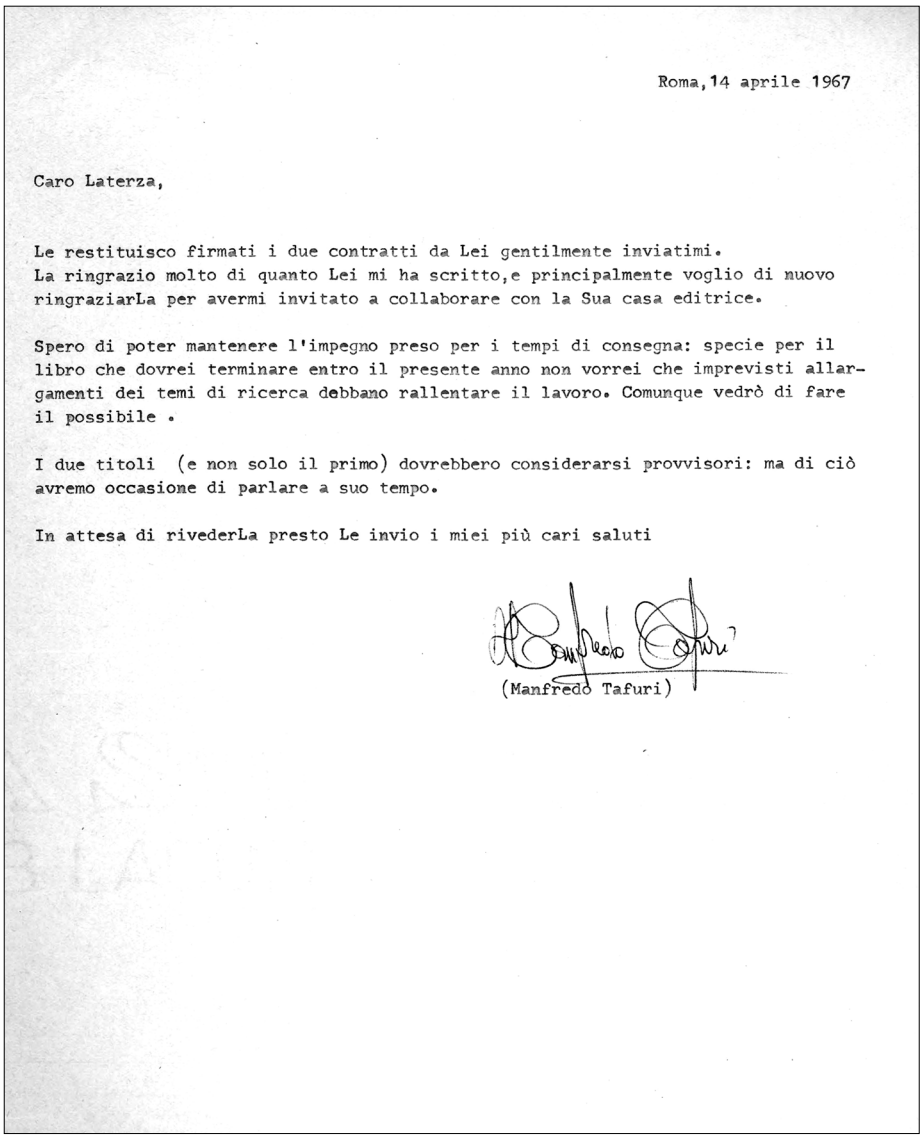
Se Le pare che i contratti vadano bene, me ne torni per favore una copia controfirmata.

Spero molto di rivederLa a Roma la prima volta che tornerò, e cioè tra il 17 e il 20.

Mi abbia, con molti cordiali saluti, Suo

(Vito Laterza)

Letter 2. [typewritten and signed] [Fig. 9]



Roma,14 aprile 1967

Caro Laterza,

Le restituisco firmati i due contratti da Lei gentilmente inviatimi.
La ringrazio molto di quanto Lei mi ha scritto,e principalmente voglio di nuovo ringraziarLa per avermi invitato a collaborare con la Sua casa editrice.

Spero di poter mantenere l'impegno preso per i tempi di consegna: specie per il libro che dovrei terminare entro il presente anno non vorrei che imprevisti allargamenti dei temi di ricerca debbamo rallentare il lavoro. Comunque vedrò di fare il possibile .

I due titoli (e non solo il primo) dovrebbero considerarsi provvisori: ma di ciò avremo occasione di parlare a suo tempo.

In attesa di rivederLa presto Le invio i miei più cari saluti

(Manfredo Tafuri)

9 |

Roma, 14 aprile 1967

Caro Laterza,

Le restituisco firmati i due contratti da Lei gentilmente inviatimi.

La ringrazio molto di quanto Lei mi ha scritto, e principalmente voglio di nuovo ringraziarLa per avermi invitato a collaborare con la Sua casa editrice.

Spero di poter mantenere l'impegno preso per i tempi di consegna: specie per il libro che dovrei terminare entro il presente anno non vorrei che imprevisti allargamenti dei temi di ricerca debbano rallentare il lavoro. Comunque vedrò di fare il possibile.

I due titoli (e non solo il primo) dovrebbero considerarsi provvisori: ma di ciò avremo occasione di parlare a suo tempo.

In attesa di rivederLa presto Le invio i miei più cari saluti

(Manfredo Tafuri)

Fig. 9
Manfredo Tafuri, typewritten and signed letter to Vito Laterza. Rome, 14 April 1967 (Source and credits: Archivio Autori Editori Laterza – per gentile concessione / Archivio Autori Editori Laterza – with kind permission).

Letter 3. [typewritten]

Bari, 14 dicembre 1967

Prof. Arch. Manfredo Tafuri

Via Etiopia 18

ROMA

Caro Tafuri,

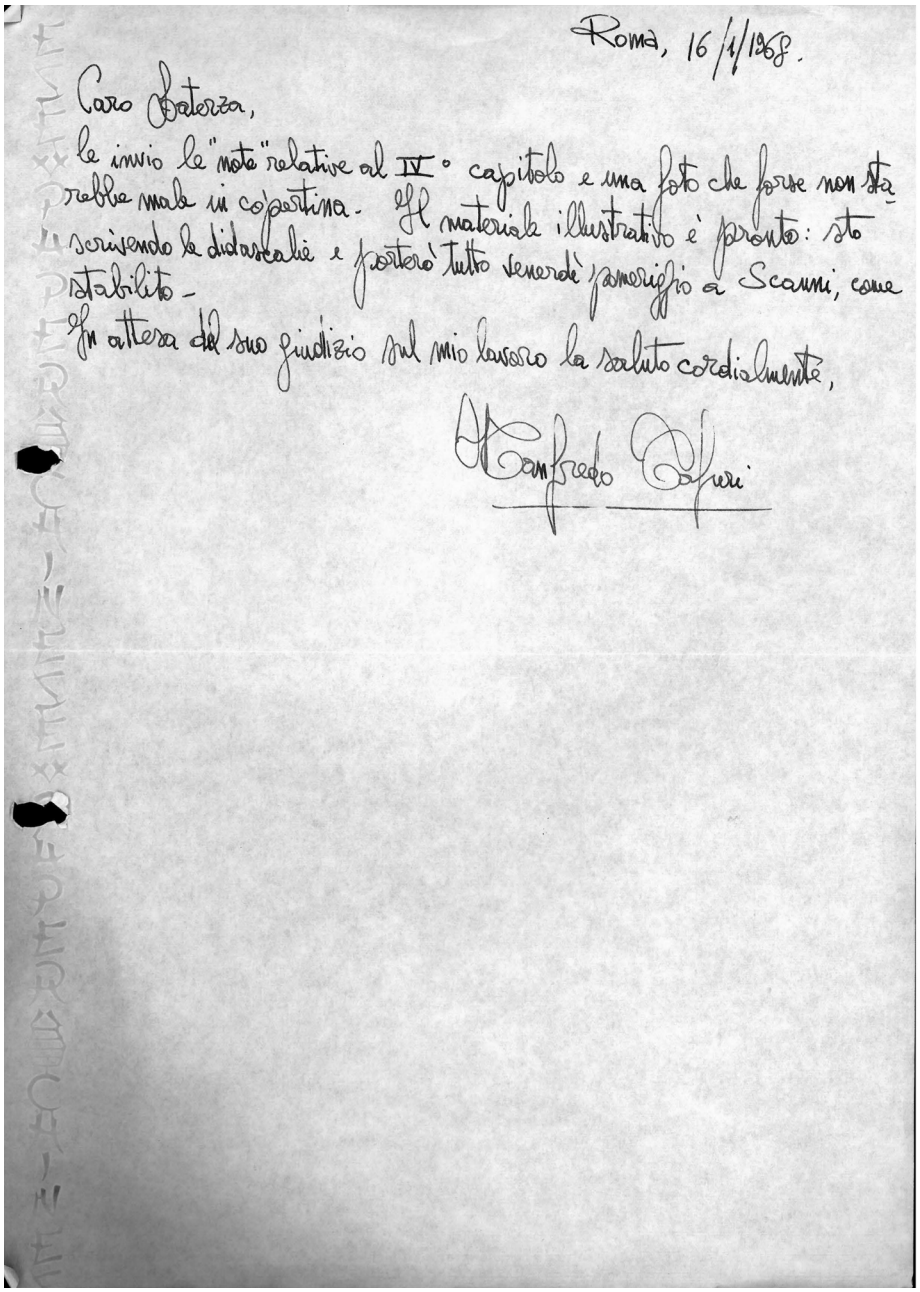
La signorina Metta mi comunica che Lei conta di consegnare tutto il Suo lavoro per il 10 gennaio.

Va benissimo. Arrivederci allora a Roma il 10 e intanto i più affettuosi auguri dal Suo

(Vito Laterza)

P.S. Ho definito l'accordo con Piccinato e sto per definirlo anche con Quilici.

Letter 4. [handwritten] [Fig. 10]


Roma, 16/1/1968.

Caro Laterza,

le invio le "note" relative al IV° capitolo e una foto che forse non starebbe male in copertina. Il materiale illustrativo è pronto: sto scrivendo le didascalie e porterò tutto venerdì pomeriggio a Scanni, come stabilito.

In attesa del suo giudizio sul mio lavoro la saluto cordialmente,

Manfredo Tafuri

10

Roma, 16/1/1968

Caro Laterza,

le invio le "note" relative al IV° capitolo e una foto che forse non starebbe male in copertina. Il materiale illustrativo è pronto: sto scrivendo le didascalie e porterò tutto venerdì pomeriggio a Scanni, come stabilito.

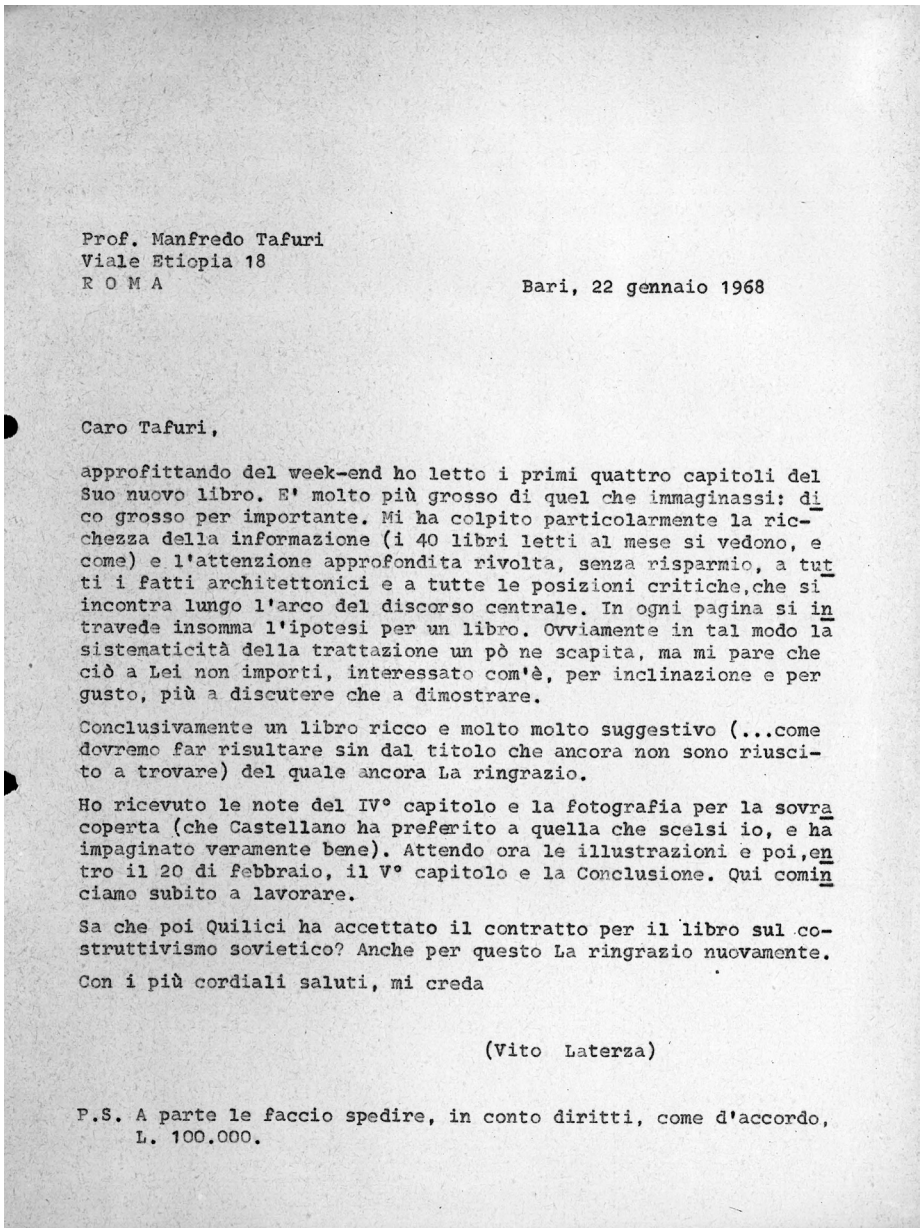
In attesa del suo giudizio sul mio lavoro la saluto cordialmente,

Manfredo Tafuri

Fig. 10

Manfredo Tafuri, handwritten letter to Vito Laterza. Rome, 16 January 1968 (Source and credits: Archivio Autori Editori Laterza – per gentile concessione / Archivio Autori Editori Laterza – with kind permission).

Letter 5. [typewritten] [Fig. 11]



Prof. Manfredo Tafuri
Viale Etiopia 18
R O M A

Bari, 22 gennaio 1968

Caro Tafuri,

approfittando del week-end ho letto i primi quattro capitoli del Suo nuovo libro. E' molto più grosso di quel che immaginassi: dico grosso per importante. Mi ha colpito particolarmente la ricchezza della informazione (i 40 libri letti al mese si vedono, e come) e l'attenzione approfondita rivolta, senza risparmio, a tutti i fatti architettonici e a tutte le posizioni critiche,che si incontra lungo l'arco del discorso centrale. In ogni pagina si intravede insomma l'ipotesi per un libro. Ovviamente in tal modo la sistematicità della trattazione un pò ne scapita, ma mi pare che ciò a Lei non importi, interessato com'è, per inclinazione e per gusto, più a discutere che a dimostrare.

Conclusivamente un libro ricco e molto molto suggestivo (...come dovremo far risultare sin dal titolo che ancora non sono riuscito a trovare) del quale ancora La ringrazio.

Ho ricevuto le note del IV° capitolo e la fotografia per la sovracoperta (che Castellano ha preferito a quella che scelsi io, e ha impaginato veramente bene). Attendo ora le illustrazioni e poi,entro il 20 di febbraio, il V° capitolo e la Conclusione. Qui cominciamo subito a lavorare.

Sa che poi Quilici ha accettato il contratto per il libro sul costruttivismo sovietico? Anche per questo La ringrazio nuovamente.

Con i più cordiali saluti, mi creda

(Vito Laterza)

P.S. A parte le faccio spedire, in conto diritti, come d'accordo, L. 100.000.

11 |

Prof. Manfredo Tafuri

Via Etiopia 18

ROMA

Bari, 22 gennaio 1968

Caro Tafuri,

approfittando del week-end ho letto i primi quattro capitoli del Suo nuovo libro. È molto più grosso di quel che immaginassi: dico grosso per importante. Mi ha colpito particolarmente la ricchezza della informazione (i 40 libri letti al mese si vedono, e come) e l'attenzione approfondita rivolta, senza risparmio, a tutti i

Fig. 11

Vito Laterza, typewritten letter to Manfredo Tafuri. Bari, 22 January 1968 (Source and credits: Archivio Autori Editori Laterza – per gentile concessione / Archivio Autori Editori Laterza – with kind permission).

fatti architettonici e a tutte le posizioni critiche che si incontra lungo l'arco del discorso centrale. In ogni pagina si intravede insomma l'ipotesi per un libro. Ovviamente in tal modo la sistematicità della trattazione un pò [sic] ne scapita, ma mi pare che ciò a Lei non importi, interessato com'è, per inclinazione e per gusto, più a discutere che a dimostrare.

Conclusivamente un libro ricco e molto molto suggestivo (…come dovremo far risultare sin dal titolo che ancora non sono riuscito a trovare) del quale ancora La ringrazio.

Ho ricevuto le note del IV° capitolo e la fotografia per la sovracoperta (che Castellano ha preferito a quella che scelsi io, e ha impaginato veramente bene). Attendo ora le illustrazioni e poi, entro il 20 di febbraio, il V° capitolo e la Conclusione. Qui cominciamo subito a lavorare.

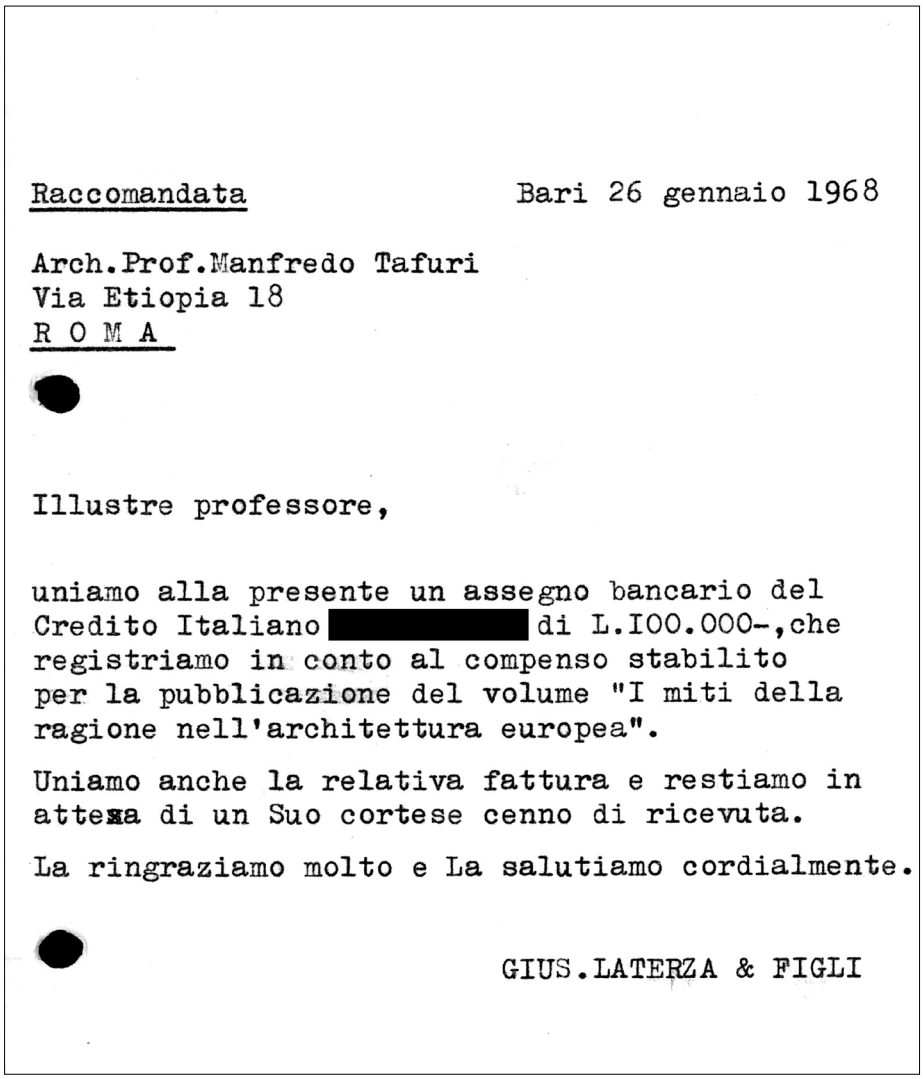
Sa che poi Quilici ha accettato il contratto per il libro sul costruttivismo sovietico? Anche per questo La ringrazio nuovamente.

Con i più cordiali saluti, mi creda

(Vito Laterza)

P.S. A parte le faccio spedire, in conto diritti, come d'accordo, L. 100.000.

Letter 6. [typewritten] [Fig. 12]



Raccomandata

Bari 26 gennaio 1968

Arch.Prof.Manfredo Tafuri
Via Etiopia 18
R O M A

Illustre professore,

uniamo alla presente un assegno bancario del Credito Italiano [redacted] di L.I00.000-,che registriamo in conto al compenso stabilito per la pubblicazione del volume "I miti della ragione nell'architettura europea".

Uniamo anche la relativa fattura e restiamo in attesa di un Suo cortese cenno di ricevuta.

La ringraziamo molto e La salutiamo cordialmente.

GIUS.LATERZA & FIGLI

12

Raccomandata

Bari 26 gennaio 1968

Prof. Arch. Manfredo Tafuri

Via Etiopia 18

ROMA

Illustre professore,

uniamo alla presente un assegno bancario del Credito Italiano [omissis] di L. 100.000-, che registriamo in conto al compenso stabilito per la pubblicazione del volume “I miti della ragione nell’architettura europea”.

Uniamo anche la relativa fattura e restiamo in attesa di un Suo cortese cenno di ricevuta.

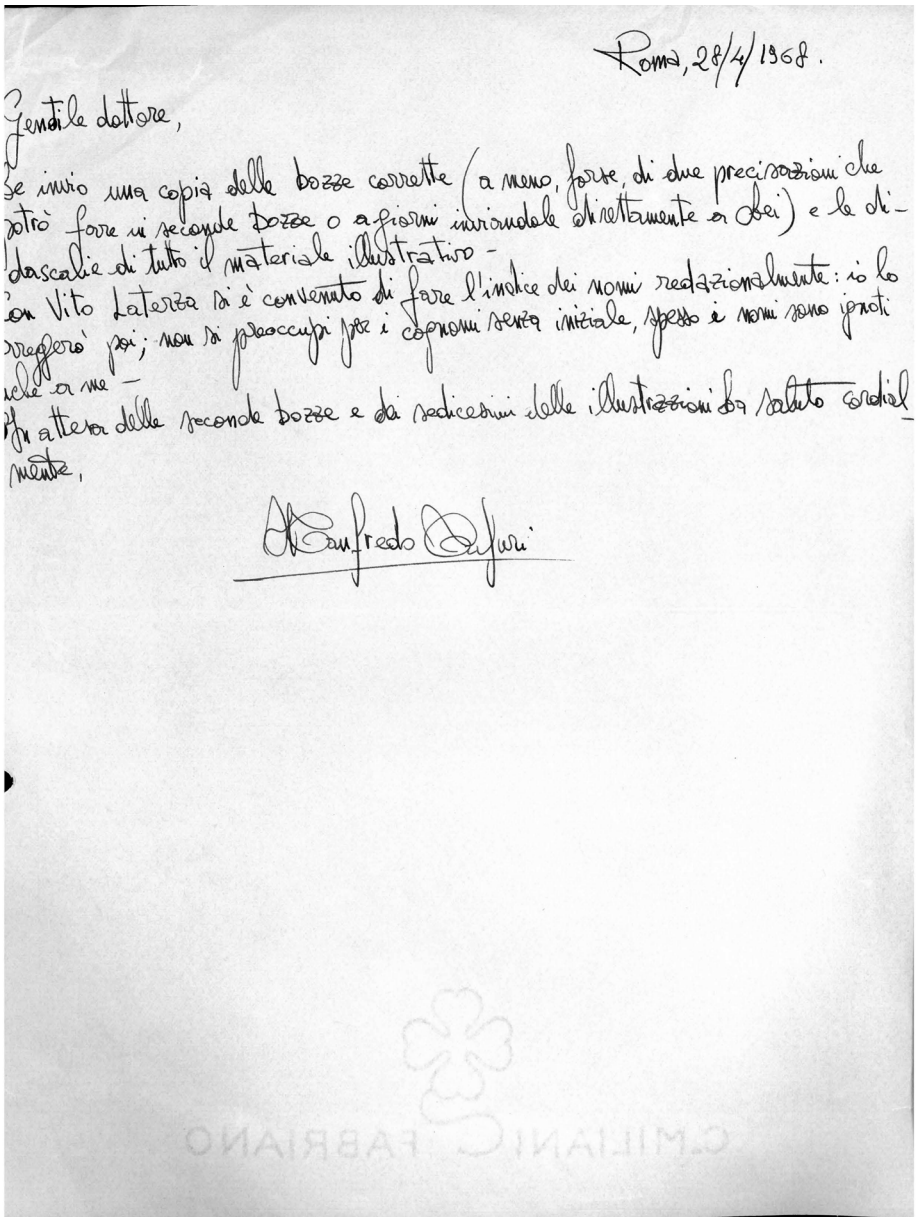
La ringraziamo molto e La salutiamo cordialmente.

GIUS. LATERZA & FIGLI

Fig. 12

Gius. Laterza & Figli Publishing House, typewritten letter to Manfredo Tafuri. Bari, 26 January 1968 (Source and credits: Archivio Autori Editori Laterza – per gentile concessione / Archivio Autori Editori Laterza – with kind permission).

Letter 7. [handwritten] [Fig. 13]



| 13

Roma, 28/4/1968

Gentile dottore,

Le invio una copia delle bozze corrette (a meno, forse, di due precisazioni che potrò fare in seconde bozze, o a giorni inviandole direttamente a Lei) e le didascalie di tutto il materiale illustrativo.

Con Vito Laterza si è convenuto di fare l'indice dei nomi redazionalmente: io lo correggerò poi; non si preoccupi per i cognomi senza iniziale, spesso i nomi sono ignoti anche a me.

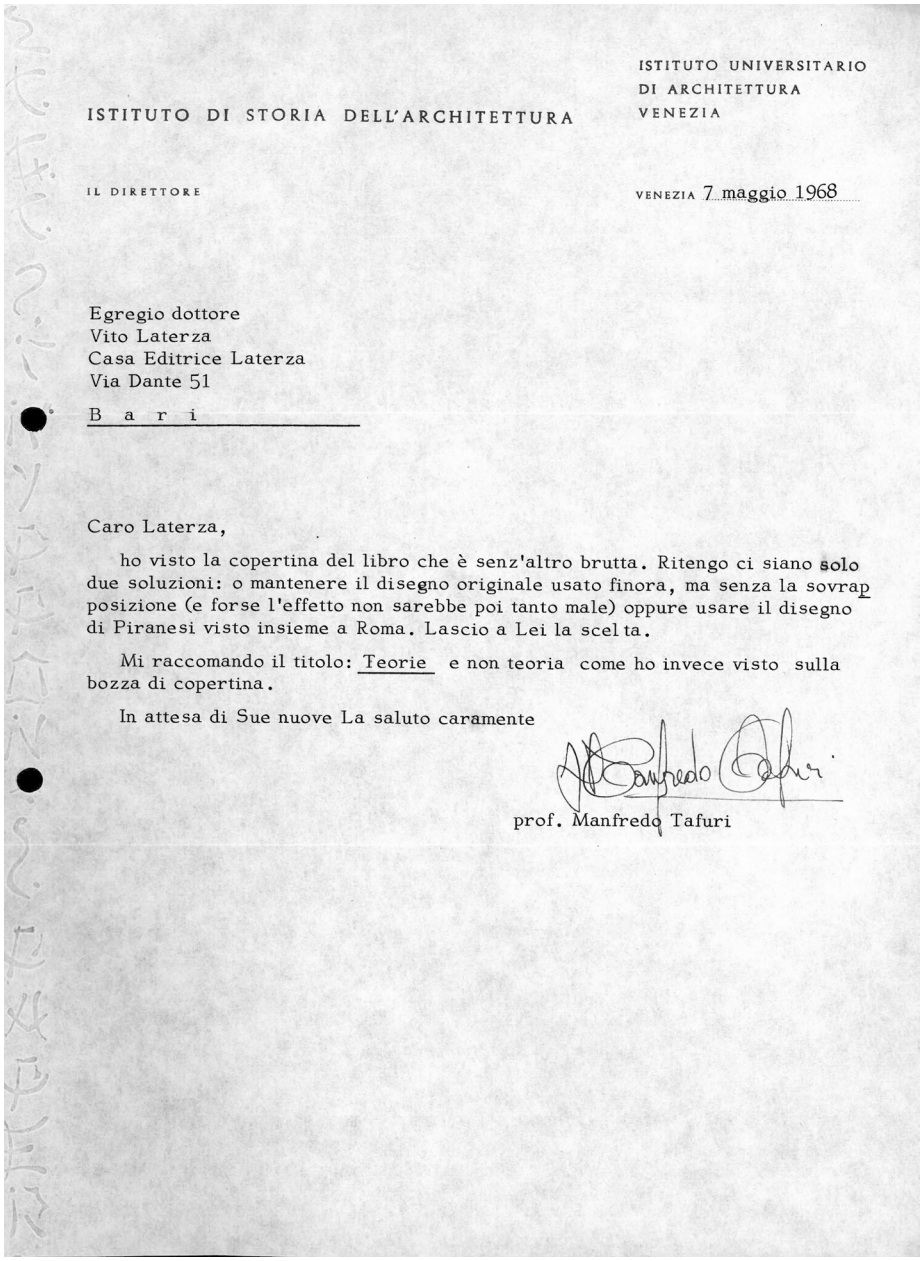
In attesa delle seconde bozze e dei sedicesimi delle illustrazioni La saluto cordialmente,

Manfredo Tafuri

Fig. 13

Manfredo Tafuri, handwritten letter to Franco Buono, Gius. Laterza & Figli Publishing House. Rome, 28 April 1968 (Source and credits: Archivio Autori Editori Laterza – per gentile concessione / Archivio Autori Editori Laterza – with kind permission).

Letter 8. [typewritten on headed paper and signed] [Fig. 14]



ISTITUTO UNIVERSITARIO
DI ARCHITETTURA
VENEZIA

ISTITUTO DI STORIA DELL'ARCHITETTURA

IL DIRETTORE

VENEZIA 7 maggio 1968

Egregio dottore
Vito Laterza
Casa Editrice Laterza
Via Dante 51
B a r i

Caro Laterza,

ho visto la copertina del libro che è senz'altro brutta. Ritengo ci siano solo due soluzioni: o mantenere il disegno originale usato finora, ma senza la sovrap posizione (e forse l'effetto non sarebbe poi tanto male) oppure usare il disegno di Piranesi visto insieme a Roma. Lascio a Lei la scelta.

Mi raccomando il titolo: Teorie e non teoria come ho invece visto sulla bozza di copertina.

In attesa di Sue nuove La saluto caramente

prof. Manfredo Tafuri

14 |

Istituto Universitario

di architettura

Venezia

Istituto di storia dell'architettura

Il direttore

Venezia, 7 maggio 1968

Egregio dottore

Vito Laterza

Casa Editrice Laterza

Fig. 14

Manfredo Tafuri, typewritten on headed paper and signed letter to Vito Laterza. Venice, 7 May 1968 (Source and credits: Archivio Autori Editori Laterza – per gentile concessione / Archivio Autori Editori Laterza – with kind permission).

Via Dante 51

Bari

Caro Laterza,

ho visto la copertina del libro che è senz'altro brutta. Ritengo ci siano solo due soluzioni: o mantenere il disegno originale usato finora, ma senza la sovrapposizione (e forse l'effetto non sarebbe poi tanto male) oppure usare il disegno di Piranesi visto insieme a Roma. Lascio a Lei la scelta.

Mi raccomando il titolo: Teorie e non teoria come ho invece visto sulla bozza di copertina.

In attesa di Sue nuove La saluto caramente

prof. Manfredo Tafuri

Letter 9. [typewritten and signed]

Roma, 7 Ottobre 1969

Egr. Signor

FRANCO BUONO

Casa Editrice “Laterza”

Via Dante n. 51

BARI

Egregio Dottore,

Le invio i fogli corretti della seconda edizione di “Teorie e Storia dell’Architettura” insieme all’avvertenza da aggiungere e alle tre tavole al tratto da inserire nel testo in luogo di quelle cancellate nelle bozze.

Nell’indice dei nomi vanno aggiunti: Fischer E., Goldmann L., Della Volpe G., Marx C., Fortini F., Asor Rosa A., Cacciari M., Tafuri M., De Michelis M., Venturi M., Dal co Fr., Hauser A., tutti nomi contenuti nell’avvertenza e di cui quindi non so ancora la collocazione nelle pagine.

Ringraziandola, Le invio i più cordiali saluti.

(Manfredo Tafuri)

P.S. Sarà opportuno che io riveda l’impaginato definitivo specie per le tavole. Con il Dr. Laterza eravamo rimasti d’accordo che il disegno di copertina cambiasse colore (si pensava ad una seppia).

Letter 10. [typewritten]

ESPRESSO

Bari, 27.XI.1969

Prof. Manfredo Tafuri

Piazza dei Caprettari 70

Roma

Illustre professore,

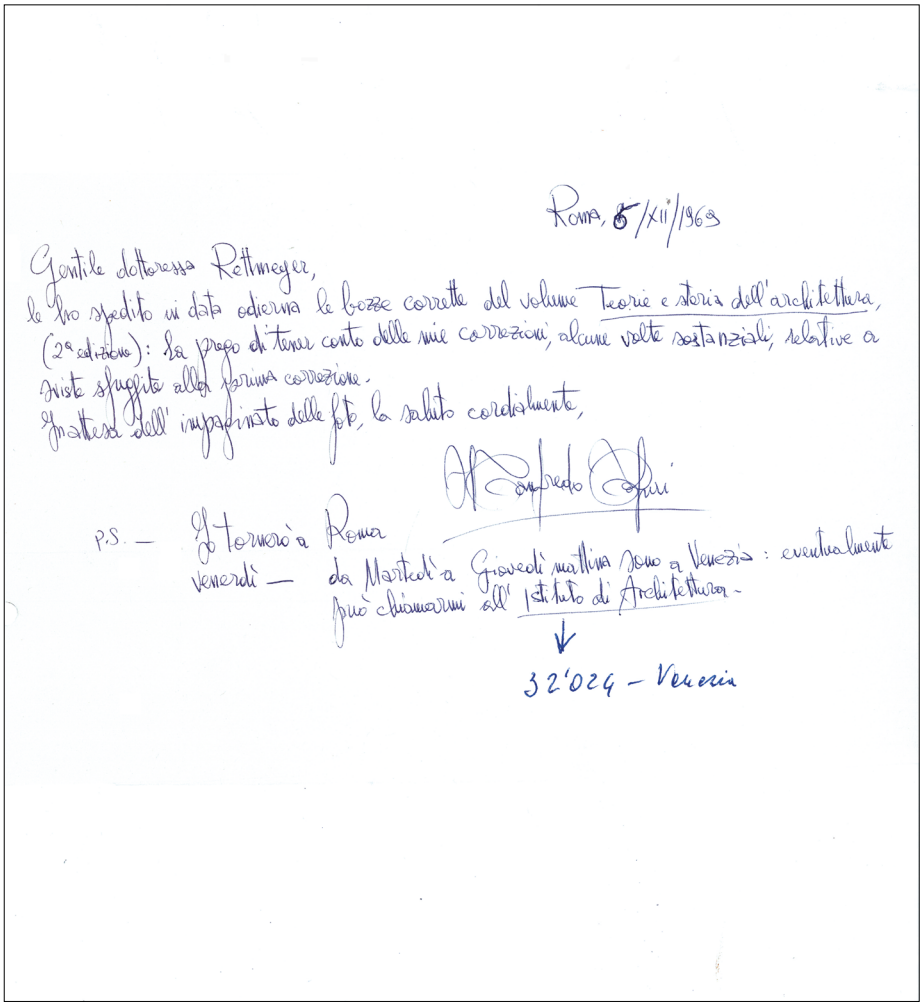
Le abbiamo spedito, in due invii successivi per raccomandata espresso, le bozze del Suo Teorie e storia dell'architettura cui facciamo seguire oggi stesso l'originale.

Per rientrare nei tempi fissati per l'inizio della stampa, abbiamo già compiuto in redazione un accurato riscontro delle integrazioni e modifiche da Lei inserite nel testo dell'edizione precedente. È quindi indispensabile che anche le Sue eventuali correzioni siano comunicate a noi al più presto e indirizzate alla sottoscritta. Vorrà dunque scusarci se Le proponiamo anche in questa occasione l'assillo della fretta, mentre La ringraziamo sin da ora e Le porgiamo i nostri migliori saluti.

La segretaria di redazione

Nelly Rettmeyer

Letter 11. [handwritten] [Fig. 15]



15

Roma, 6/XII/1969

Gentile dottoressa Rettmeyer,

le ho spedito in data odierna le bozze corrette del volume Teorie e storia dell'architettura, (2ª edizione): la prego di tener conto delle mie correzioni, alcune volte sostanziali, relative a sviste sfuggite alla prima correzione.

In attesa dell'impaginato delle foto, la saluto cordialmente.

Manfredo Tafuri

P.S. - Io tornerò a Roma venerdì - da Martedì a Giovedì mattina sono a Venezia: eventualmente può chiamarmi all'Istituto di Architettura. -> 32'024 – Venezia

Fig. 15

Manfredo Tafuri, handwritten letter to Nelly Rettmeyer, Gius. Laterza & Figli Publishing House. Rome, 6 December 1969 (Source and credits: Archivio Autori Editori Laterza – per gentile concessione / Archivio Autori Editori Laterza – with kind permission).

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Stephen Parnell

A Semi-Social Magazine: Love, Life, and *Architectural Design*

Architectural Design magazine, Monica Pidgeon, AD, Personal/professional entanglement

/Abstract

This paper analyses the magazine *Architectural Design (AD)* under the post-war editorship of Monica Pidgeon. Through extensive archival research, content analysis, oral histories, and interviews, I adopt a biographical approach to understand the people behind the magazine and their networks and argue that Pidgeon had a very different idea of criticism to how we might today interpret it in retrospect. Pidgeon was neither an architect nor an ideologue and did not run her magazine on the basis of a campaign for how she believed the world should be reconstructed. Instead, her commitment was primarily to people – the architects whom she accepted into her network – rather than their buildings. I argue that Pidgeon's personal and professional life became so entangled that she developed this network as a type of social 'club' to the extent that *AD* turned into her life and her life into *AD*. The paper is split into two halves: the first explores Pidgeon's background in order to develop an understanding of her approach to editing an architectural magazine; the second describes the contents of the magazine and the networks of its contributors during the tenure of the first three technical editors, Theo Crosby, Kenneth Frampton, and Robin Middleton. In contrast to conventional understandings of architectural criticism and history, the paper emphasises the messy personal, human, back-stories as a fundamental driver of the decisions that are made about what is 'given ink' and, as a consequence, what is ultimately nominated to the canon of architectural history.

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Les Trente Glorieuses of architectural criticism

After the Second World War, a 'golden age' of architectural criticism emerged in tandem with the general consensus that modern architecture was the way to re-build a new, progressive world. The quarter century following the end of the war witnessed a remarkable period of economic development and political stability in Europe and the USA which was reflected in the growth and stability of the professional architectural press. Several architectural magazines in these countries maintained a long-term editor and proprietor who developed their magazine along an editorial line that promoted a certain view of what architecture should be.

In Italy, examples include Ernesto Nathan Rogers' period at *Casabella-Continuità* (1953-64), where he attempted to link modernity with history; Gio Ponti's directorship of *Domus* (1928-41 & 1948-79), where he promoted modern taste to the burgeoning middle classes; and *L'architettura: cronache e storia*, which Bruno Zevi started in 1955 and edited until his death in 2000, promoting organic architecture and attempting to define modern architecture as a language of asymmetry and dissonance.

In the USA, Douglas Haskell edited *Architectural Forum* from 1949 until he retired in 1964 when Peter Blake, who had worked at the magazine since 1950, became editor-in-chief until the magazine folded in 1972. Both Haskell and Blake were critics of modern architecture. Haskell in particular believed in the role of the architectural critic to connect the profession with the public and spoke up for popular taste. On the West Coast, John Entenza edited *Arts & Architecture* from 1938 until 1962. In January 1945 he announced the Case Study House Program, in which the magazine commissioned American architects to design inexpensive, replicable prototype houses to demonstrate how good modern design, manufacturing methods, and materials could help improve the anticipated deficiencies in post-war housing.

And in the UK, Hubert de Cronin Hastings was appointed proprietor of both the *Architectural Review* (*AR*) and the *Architects' Journal* in 1927 and oversaw both publications until his retirement in 1973. In December 1949, Hastings and his editors at the *AR* launched the Townscape campaign to advocate the use of Picturesque principles applied to town planning and architecture. This pervasive campaign dominated the magazine for the next quarter century and had more influence over British post-war architectural design than Hastings cared to admit.

In contrast to these examples, however, Monica Pidgeon edited *AR*'s main monthly rival in the UK, *Architectural Design* (*AD*), from September 1941 until November 1975 without campaigning. In this paper, I will describe how *AD* became one of the most influential architectural magazines in the world during this long-term tenure despite Pidgeon never promoting a specific vision of how architecture should be beyond the overarching optimistic belief in progress and its manifestation in modern architecture. I will explain how

Pidgeon's magazine became more of a club than a cause, and more a network of architects than a platform to promote a vision for how the world should be reconstructed. While the campaigns of its peers and competitors got tired and aged, this approach enabled *AD* to stay young, vital, and relevant to a changing profession.

This idea of a 'club' takes magazines' engagement with their readers to a level beyond the kinds of network or community that they usually encourage, described by Carolyn Kitch as 'ready-made social groups, collections of people united by shared interests and worldviews.'[1] An important characteristic of architecture magazines in this respect is that the readers also often become the writers, as well as the subjects of the articles – an engagement far beyond letters pages. Yet Monica took this idea of community further still in nurturing a network of people interested in architecture who were not only contributors and subjects of articles, but also her personal friends. This is not unusual in architecture, but it is not usually discussed in relation to how its history is constructed. So this paper describes how the personal and professional lives of architects, contributors, and editors are unavoidably entangled and argues, therefore, that architectural criticism – and ultimately its history – can be a product of such human entanglement and the personalities involved, rather than straightforward objective judgement. The bigger argument is that the production of architecture ultimately relies on these life stories, an aspect usually ignored or overlooked as insignificant or incidental to architectural history.

Part 1: Monica's approach[2]

The paper is split into two quite distinct halves. The first half will focus as much on Monica's life as it does on *AD* itself, as it is impossible to understand one without the other. On the basis that the magazine and her life are completely entangled, I will explore her life story, beliefs, and introduction to architecture in order to establish how she approached architectural journalism.

The second half will then outline the consequences of this approach in terms of how she chose and worked with her technical editors initials and networks to cultivate a magazine that proved to be most successful when it was least critical.

Monica was a woman working at the epicentre of the very male-dominated world of architecture in post-war Britain, yet she made nothing of this and always insisted that she was absolutely not a feminist.[3] Throughout her career, she had

1 Carolyn Kitch, 'Theory and Methods of Analysis', in *The Routledge Handbook of Magazine Research: The Future of the Magazine Form*, ed. David Abrahamson and Marcia R. Prior-Miller (New York & London: Routledge, 2015), 12.

2 From here on in the paper, I will refer to Monica Pidgeon as simply 'Monica' for two reasons. Primarily, this is to acknowledge how she consciously constructed her life: 'Monica' was not the name her parents gave her, but one she became known as in her childhood and which she chose to continue using throughout her life. She was always simply known as 'Monica', even by her children. A less significant reason is to reduce the ambiguity and confusion with her first husband Raymond Pidgeon who was an architect and appears briefly in the story.

3 Barbara Goldstein, interview with the author 15 July 2020.

little patience with anyone who asked her about it. In an interview with Charlotte Benton in 1999, for example, she responded to the question of being a woman in a man's world by saying that 'people are always trying to find out the difference between women's interests and men's interests. Or women architects - there's a women's architects' group at the RIBA. I always say an architect's an architect, irrespective of gender […] you're trying to get out of me there's a difference by being female […] the only problem I ever had about being a female was these directors.'[4] And ten years later, just a few months before she died, when I asked her a similar question, she responded, 'I've always had this attitude that a job's a job and if you can do the job, so what? Never mind what sex you are.'[5] Monica did not see any disadvantage in being a woman – in fact, Barbara Goldstein, who worked with her at *AD* from 1973 to 1975 and then together at the *RIBA Journal* until 1978, explained how she used it to her advantage: 'How she made it as a woman in a man's world, I think, is that she was charming. People found … men found her attractive. She was able to talk with them in such a way that they would let their guard down.'[6] This way of operating was also inflected by her childhood and privileged upbringing in South America and her introduction to British architecture, which I will outline first, before going on to describe her influence on international architectural culture through *AD*.

Scrapbooks

There are 25 half-hour recordings of Benton's interview with Monica in the British Library Architects' Lives series and the last seven narrate a scrapbook that Monica started collating in the 1950s. Monica revealed to Benton,

> I used to get on very badly with my father. They lived in Chile, my parents, we were here [in London]. In 1950-something they said they were going to come and visit us, and I thought I've got to figure out who I am. So, I started this collection of photographs of my life. I don't like writing, it takes too long. So it's for me: my photographic record of my life.[7]

I paid no attention to this part of the interview when I first listened to it in the British Library, before it was put online, as time was short and Monica and Benton were talking about old family photographs that I couldn't see. But several years later, I visited Monica's daughter, Annabel Donat, and I finally had the opportunity to see the scrapbook myself. It is huge and remarkable in the number of press cuttings and photographs from Monica's personal and professional life throughout the twentieth century. It is notable that there is no attempt

4 Monica Pidgeon, National Life Story Collection: Architects' Lives. Monica Pidgeon (7 of 25), interview by Charlotte Benton, 9 July 1999, C467/39, British Library Sound Archive, https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Architects-Lives/021M-C0467X0039XX-0700V0. The directors she was referring to were the directors of the Standard Catalogue Company, the owners of *AD*.

5 Monica Pidgeon, interview with the author, 25 February 2009.

6 Goldstein, interview with the author

7 Pidgeon, Architects' Lives. Monica Pidgeon (17 of 25), 1 June 2000, https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Architects-Lives/021M-C0467X0039XX-1700V0.

to separate the personal and professional – the two are completely collaged together. Jessica Kelly also noted this personal/professional entanglement in her study of Jim Richards, editor of the *AR*, explaining that,

> the specific details of his personal life were integral to understanding his career and the meaning and cultural significance of his work. Richards was part of a complex network of people and places at a particular time. His role was contingent on this entanglement and could not be separated from it.[8]

This entanglement is normal for editors and architects, as the field operates more through knowing people. Just like Monica, Richards 'knew absolutely *everybody*'[9] and Kelly goes on to argue that 'the people and places that constituted Richards' personal life […] were instrumental to architectural history.'[10]

Early on in Benton's interview, Monica explained that she used to enjoy making scrapbooks as a child and that it gave her a feel for making magazines. Monica found her life in *AD* and her biographical scrapbook is Monica making her life into a magazine. In conjunction with Benton's interview, it assembles a detailed picture of Monica's background in both spoken word and image and allows us a glimpse of her and her personal/professional network throughout her life.

Monica was actually born Grisel Helen Ida Lehmann in a small rural village called El Ñilhue **[Fig. 1]** in the valley of Catemu, Chile, on 29 September 1913, to a Scottish musician mother and French-German mines manager father. She enjoyed a privileged, strict, Edwardian expatriate upbringing with an English governess and maids and servants for everything, with whom she spoke Spanish. Monica recalled a very happy childhood and school life with lots of friends, many of which are included in the scrapbook **[Fig. 2]**. Her ambitions were limited to simply being a señorita in Chile: 'dancing', 'tennis', and 'flirting'.[11] On reading a draft of this article, Annabel requested that I also add that 'she had desperately wanted to learn ballet but her father forbade it, much to her great sorrow and resentment.'[12]

Her father had promised her mother that they would return to England for their children to finish their education, so the Lehmanns came to London briefly in 1926 for her elder sister Olga to enter the Slade School of Fine Art. Three years later, Monica came to England for good. In her scrapbook, she scribbled, 'What to do with an unambitious daughter who likes art and algebra? "Architecture" said Pop.' And so Monica enrolled on a degree in architecture at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL.[13] After the first year, she was advised to switch to interior

8 Jessica Kelly, 'Discourse, Ephemeral Sources, and Architectural History', in *Speaking of Buildings: Oral History in Architectural Research*, ed. Janina Gosseye, Naomi Stead, and Deborah Van der Plaat (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2019), 83.

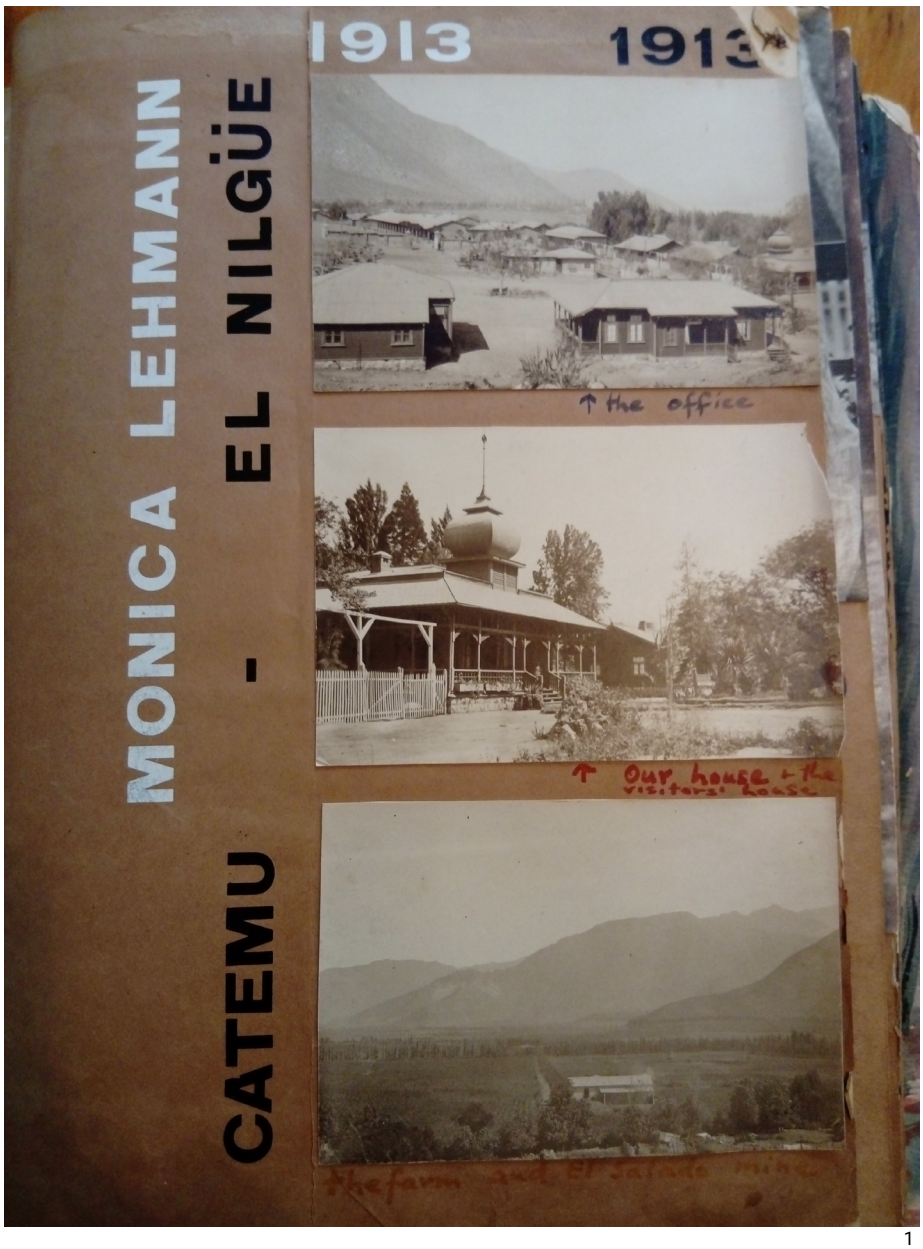
9 Reyner Banham, 'Sir Jim', *London Review of Books* 22, 1980, 30.

10 Kelly, 'Discourse, Ephemeral Sources, and Architectural History', 91.

11 Pidgeon, Architects' Lives. Monica Pidgeon (1 of 25), 29 April 1999, https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Architects-Lives/021M-C0467X0039XX-0100V0.

12 Annabel Donat, email to author, 22 September 2020

13 Monica Pidgeon, 'CV' (CV, n.d.), British Library, C467/39/01-13.



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decoration as architecture was 'no good for women'.[14] In 1934 she completed her 'College Certificate in Decoration – or 'useless diploma' as she referred to it in her scrapbook – with a 'Commendation',[15] and started working for the Leo Scott-Cooper Furniture company in Bedford.[16] She met the architect Raymond Pidgeon[17] at Christmas in 1935 and they married a year later.[18] Wanting to live in London with her new husband working at T.P. Bennet, Monica was responsible for opening Leo Scott-Cooper's new London showroom in March 1937, for which she commissioned her sister Olga to paint murals. However, it closed

14 Pidgeon, Architects' Lives: Monica Pidgeon (1 of 25).

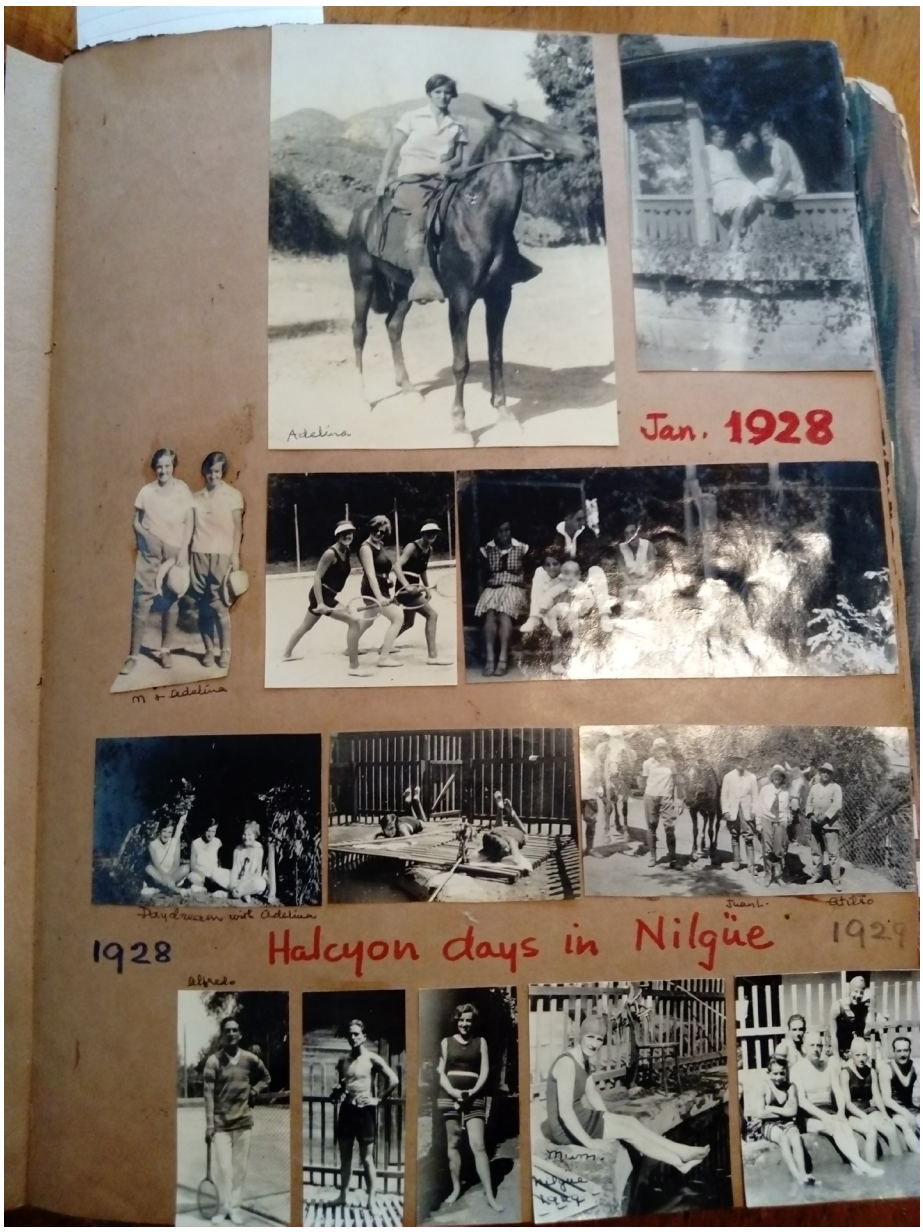
15 'LEHMANN, Grisel Helen Ida', 1934, University of London graduate records.

16 She started work on 21 September 1934. Leo Scott Cooper's real name was Michael Dawn, who was published in *AD&C* a couple of times in the Thirties: review of *An Architect's Study*, by Michael Dawn, *Architectural Design & Construction* 5, no. 8 (June 1935), 256. Review of *Space Saving Flat*, by Michael Dawn, *Architectural Design & Construction* 7, no. 6 (April 1937), 213.

17 Raymond Vincent Pidgeon (12 May 1910 – October 2006).

18 They married on 19 December 1936 at St. Martin-in-the-Fields and moved into a flat at 191 Gloucester Place.

Fig. 1
Photographs of El Ñilhue in Monica's scrapbook (permission courtesy of Annabel Donat).



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after only six months and Monica left the company to have her son, Carl. For 1938, Monica wrote in her scrapbook how she was a '"kept" wife during the whole year – plus a nannie/housekeeper' and 'on the whole AIMLESS.' Monica was not at all domesticated and did not take to being a housewife and mother – she admitted that she didn't have any maternal instincts and she always put the magazine before her family to the extent that the magazine effectively became her family.[19] Peter Murray, who joined *AD* as art director from 1970 and was then technical editor from 1972 to 1974, recalled her advice on interviewing candidates for secretary positions: 'Never employ anyone with children because the children will always be seen to be more important than the magazine.'[20] On the 1940 page of the scrapbook, there is a photograph of Pinewood, Crowborough,

Fig. 2

Photographs from Monica's scrapbook showing her 'halcyon days' in Chile (permission courtesy of Annabel Donat).

19 Annabel Donat, interview with the author, 4 April 2019.

20 Peter Murray in Ema Bonifacic, 'Letters for Monica Pidgeon', Architectural Association Independent Radio, accessed 22 November 2010, http://radio.aaschool.ac.uk/2009/11/21/letters-for-monica-pidgeon/.

DESIGN FOR LIVING IN 280 SQUARE FEET by Monica Lehmann and Raymond Pidgeon

The flat illustrated here is self-contained on the ground floor of a converted building in Gloucester Place, W.1. It was designed for a married couple, an architect and an interior decorator, who are out during the day, and away on most week-ends, and therefore merely require a functional unit as a headquarters.

As will be seen in the accompanying plan, the lounge and adjacent bedroom are divided by a curtained archway.

The bedroom furniture is made up of fitted units: two wardrobes; two chests of drawers, with hinged lifting tops over boxed compartments which serve as dressing-tables; a cupboard unit between, with a built-in electric heating panel; and a long bed-head unit with a door at one end, in which are stored T-squares, drawing-boards, portfolios, and other such untidy accumulations. A large mirror over the dressing units, doubles the apparent size of the room.

In the lounge, the focal point of interest is a shelf-and-cupboard fitment, forming a recess for a large settee, with concealed lighting in the soffit behind a frosted glass panel. Cupboards are fitted wherever possible to take drinks, glasses, cigarettes and cigars, coffee-cups, tea-cups, and so on, and the top of the projecting fitment on the right of the settee has a hinged top with a boxed compartment underneath for small drawing instruments. Built into the window recess is a collapsible table, at which four people can sit comfortably to eat a meal, and further recesses on either side of the chimney-breast and gas fire are fitted with a low cupboard and a writing-desk. Two Parker-Knoll easy-chairs, four small chairs, and an occasional table make up the rest of the furniture. Lighting is by means of architectural tube-lamp over the mirror in the bedroom, ceiling fittings in both rooms, and small movable lamps, as well as the panel which has already been mentioned.

There is only one picture in the flat—a portrait which hangs under this panel but there are two large mural paintings, by Olga Lehmann, one on the lounge chimney-breast and the other over the divan in the bedroom, called respectively "Architectural Dream Fantasy" and "Musical Concord". They are executed unobtrusively in pastel shades of pink, white, and brown.

The colour scheme is the same for both rooms:

The walls and woodwork are cream distemper and paint; the ceiling is pinkish cream distemper; the floor is close-covered with a warm nigger-brown carpet, and the fitted furniture is cream cellulose to match the walls. Plate glass protects all available ledges. Other furniture is of cellulosed Finnish birch.

The upholstery of the settee, easy chairs, and divan cover is cream tapestry with self-coloured pattern. The small divans are in a carmine red sponge fabric. The window curtains are off-white satin with a slight design in red, black, and fawn. The curtain dividing the two rooms is of a cream woven fabric to match the walls, and the cushions and pillow-covers are of red or nigger-brown or gold satin.

The use of built-in furniture painted to match the walls, ceilings and upholstery tends to make the rooms look much bigger than they would normally, especially as the colour is a light one; the touch of red is all that is needed to make a cheerful, bright, and warm ensemble.

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labelled 'May: Carl's new home'. Pinewood was a boarding school run by 'Strix'[21] and modelled on the philosophy of A.S. Neil's Summerhill in Suffolk, where children could be free from adult authority. Carl was sent there at the tender age of 2½, just before the school moved to Cornwall away from the danger of the Nazi bombing. Immediately after the War, the school moved to Ware in Hertfordshire and Monica sent her daughter, Annabel, to join Carl there at the same age.

Trying to find a direction in life, Monica made friends with Roger Smithells who edited the magazine *Decoration*. Smithells published the Pidgeons' tiny Gloucester Place flat (including a couple of murals by Olga)[22] **[Fig. 3]** and Monica reviewed books for him, which she said gave her a feeling for liking magazines. She also attempted to start an Association of Interior Decorators, modelled on the Architectural Association (AA): a news clip in *Decoration* mentions her as secretary of this association though it never actually got going.[23] It does, however, show how much she needed to do things with other people, and how she was always a driver of activity through getting people together.

Monica met Frederic Towndrow, then the editor of *Architectural Design & Construction* (*AD&C*) magazine, when Olga – by then an emerging illustrator and artist who had done a mural in Highpoint 2 – brought him round for dinner,

21 'Strix' was Elizabeth Strachan, the aunt of Su Brumwell who went on to marry Richard Rogers.

22 Raymond Pidgeon and Monica Lehmann, 'Design for Living in 280 Square Feet', *Decoration* 25 (October-December 1937), 54–55.

23 Roger Smithells, 'Notes and News', *Decoration* 29 (July-September 1938), 60.

Fig. 3
Monica and Raymond's flat published in *Decoration* magazine, October-December 1937.

around 1938.[24] Towndrow and his wife Ena became family friends. In June of that year, Olga illustrated an article in *AD&C* and Raymond also started contributing by taking over the 'Materials & Equipment' column in November 1938.[25]

On taking up a post as Senior Architect at the Ministry of Works and Buildings, Towndrow wound down his practice and had to reduce his commitment to *AD&C*. On hearing that Monica had resigned her job at the Ministry of Supply in June 1941, Towndrow asked her to ghost for him. She joined the magazine three months later, effectively co-editing the magazine with Towndrow's secretary, Barbara Randell. Towndrow continued as a consultant, but Monica and Randell became the de facto editors, each month taking the proofs to the Ministry of Works for Towndrow's approval.[26] From what appeared to be an unpromising starting position, deep in the middle of the war with few buildings being constructed and paper rationing, Monica and Randell embarked on the magazine's 'golden era'.

The second half of the war, and the immediate post-war period was a real struggle for survival for *AD&C*. Advertising and editorial were minimal, circulation averaged only around 2,300 and each issue consisted of only around 20 pages.[27] But survive it did and December 1946 marked a turning point for both Monica and her magazine. As she and Raymond divorced, she optimistically noted in her scrapbook, 'In my beginning was my end – in my end, my beginning. THE NEW FREEDOM'. And the magazine's editorial for that month was equally buoyant, ending 'we shall appear in a new cover with a slight change in our title. For the sake of brevity we shall be known in future as ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN.'[28]

Architectural Design

Magazines are focal points around which people with a common interest congregate. Magazine scholar David Abrahamson has used the term 'magazine exceptionalism' to describe how magazines are different from other media such as newspapers, explaining that 'in most cases, the editors and writers of magazines share a direct community of interest with their readers. They are often, indeed literally, the same people'.[29] Magazines are therefore material manifestations of the networks of these people: editors publish the work of the people they know about and more often than not, for expediency, commission the

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24 Pidgeon, Architects' Lives: Monica Pidgeon (3 of 25), 29 April 1999, https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Architects-Lives/021M-C0467X0039XX-0300V0; interview with the author, 25 February 2009.

25 Raymond Pidgeon, 'Materials & Equipment', *Architectural Design & Construction* 9, no. 11 (November 1939), 441.

26 They were not acknowledged as co-editors on the masthead until January 1946.

27 By way of some context, there were 15,045 registered architects in the UK in 1946. Circulation figures are taken from the Audit Bureau of Circulation.

28 Barbara Randall and Monica Pidgeon, 'About Ourselves', *Architectural Design & Construction* 16, no. 12 (December 1946), 322.

29 David Abrahamson, 'Magazine Exceptionalism', *Journalism Studies* 8, no. 4 (1 August 2007): 670, https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700701412225.

people they know and trust to write the pieces. Before the internet, this 'inner circle' of contacts was even more important. These networks are vital for an editor to understand what is happening in the field, but they also create a critical sphere, or what is known as the 'discourse' in architecture. While architecture magazines often printed letters to the editor and acted as something of a forum for debate, the main features would mostly be written either by or about architects involved in these networks attached to the magazine and its editors. It was the editors' job to be acquainted with the right people – something Monica excelled at. Not only was she charming and found people interesting, but she had a terrific nose for talent.[30]

From the nineteenth century, Victorian Gentlemen's Clubs such as the Athenaeum and Freemason's lodges offered ready-made networks for gentlemen of a certain social standing – those who had usually attended public school and elite universities. These were places where the personal and professional were entirely intertwined and where members could dine, debate, and meet other gentlemen of a similar status.[31] These clubs, however, were simply not accessible to women, even after the Second World War. So, while Jim Richards could be a member of the Athenaeum,[32] the sociable, gregarious Monica had to create her own and became an avid joiner of groups and organising committees.

One such club was The Architecture Club which was established in 1922 with the purpose 'to enlarge public appreciation of good architecture and the allied arts, and especially of the best work of today.'[33] Members were originally either '(a) architects, or (b) writers, or (c) persons interested in furthering good building'.[34] The Club's activities consisted of two committee meetings a year, a summer party, and a winter black-tie supper debate, attended by approximately half of the 200 members. Despite editors of the press being present, the Club itself was never reported upon and 'made public'.[35] It was therefore more than just a means of enlarging the public appreciation of good architecture, but as much about defining a distinct group of mostly London-based people who could network in the name of architecture. In July 1951, *AD*'s long-time contributor and consultant Mark Hartland Thomas proposed for membership Barbara Randell, along with Gontran Goulden, another *AD* consultant who knew Monica from their student days at UCL. Randell joined the Club and at the December meeting, Monica was then nominated and had joined by the next meeting in April 1952. At

30 Goldstein, interview with the author.

31 Ian Horton, 'The Foreign Architectural Book Society and Architectural Elitism' (unpublished PhD Dissertation, Open University, 2000), 51–66.

32 James Richards, *Memoirs of an Unjust Fella* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1980), 228–29.

33 Murray, Peter and MJF, 'A Short History of the Architecture Club', March 1979, 1, AC/1/1, Architecture Club Archives, RIBA Archives.

34 'The Architecture Club List of Members', December 1922, n.p., AC/2/3, Architecture Club Archives, RIBA Archives.

35 It was mentioned at a committee meeting in 1966 that 'it was agreed that the traditional right of the Club not to have its meetings reported must be insisted upon' after an article appeared in the *AJ* the previous week. 'The Architecture Club: Minutes of the 55th Meeting of the Executive Committee', 20 April 1966, AC/2/3, Architecture Club Archives, RIBA Archives.

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CIAM • 6 BRIDGWATER, 1947 (See page 269)

Group photograph taken during the visit of CIAM to the Bristol Aeroplane Company's factory producing aluminium housing.

TOP–ROW 1. (Left to right).
1. Milton (England).
2. Browne (England).
3. Rogers (Italy).
4. Cedercreutz (Finland).
5. Grannasztoi (Hungary).
6. Hruska (Czechoslovakia).
7. Neumann (Czechoslovakia).
8. Marshall (England).
9. Kadleigh (England).
10. van Bodegraven (Holland).
11. Entwistle (England).
12. Richards (England).
13. Elte (Holland).
14. Samuel (England).
15. Roth (Switzerland).
16. Emery (Algeria).
17. Bijhouwer (Holland).
18. de Vries (Holland).
19. van den Broek.
20. Kloos (Holland).
21. Kleykamp (Holland).
22. Michel (Belgium).

ROW 2.
23. Cadbury-Brown (England).
24. Shepheard (England).
25. De Syllas (England).
26. Cox (England).
27. Moffett (Ireland).
28. Batista (Cuba).
29. Arroyo (Cuba).
30. Fuchs (Czechoslovakia).
31. Honnegger (Switzerland).
32. Fischer (Hungary).
33. Steiger (Switzerland).
34. Mrs. Stam Beese (Holland)
35. Katona (England).
36. Pritchard (England).
37. Bakema (Holland).
38. Hogan (England).
39. Singer (Czechoslovakia).

ROW 3.
40. Papadaki (U.S.A.).
41. Morton Shand (England).
42. Rosenberg (England).
43. Martin (England).
44. Goldfinger (England).
45. Jensen (England).
46. Ling (England).
47. Ferrari Hardoy (Argentine).
48. Mrs. Wiener (U.S.A.).
49. Wiener (U.S.A.).
50. Maxwell Fry (England).
51. Wells Coates (England).
52. Townsend (England).
53. Krejcar (Czechoslovakia).
54. Oberlander (Canada).
55. Schütte (Austria).
56. Merkelbach (Holland).

ROW 4. (Front row).
57. Le Corbusier (France).
58. Vivanco (Argentine).
59. Sadie Speight (England).
60. Susan Cox (England).
61. Malnai (Hungary).
62. Mrs. Malnai (Hungary).
63. Barbara Randell (England).
64. Monica Pidgeon (England).
65. Sert (U.S.A.).
66. Giedion (Switzerland).
67. Jane Drew (England).
68. van Eesteren (Holland).
69. M. de Silva (India).
70. Gropius (U.S.A.).
71. Mrs. Fischer (Hungary).
72. Blanche Lemco (Canada).
73. Kalivoda (Czechoslovakia).
74. Mrs. Sert (U.S.A.).
75. Mrs. Schütte (Austria).
76. van Tijen (Holland).

that time, the Club was meeting just up the road from the Architectural Press's offices on Queen Anne's Gate, Westminster and Jim Richards was a member of the Executive Committee. The Architecture Club still exists and Peter Murray has been the Honorary Secretary since 1977.

Monica also joined MARS (the Modern Architecture Research Group) in 1947, when she attended the 6th CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) congress in Bridgwater. In the famous photograph of the group on a visit she organised to the Bristol Aeroplane Factory (designed by her friend, *AD* consultant David Aberdeen), Monica is featured sitting in the middle on the front row, to the right of Josep Lluís Sert, President of CIAM. To Monica's right is Barbara Randell and to Sert's left is Sigfried Giedion, Secretary of CIAM **[Fig. 4]**. In comparison, Jim Richards, convener of the congress, is located in the middle of the back row, a position that Reyner Banham interpreted as being at the centre of the introduction of modern architecture, but in the background. Banham argued that Richards knew everybody but kept them at arm's length.[36] Following this interpretation, Monica is at the centre of things and very much at the forefront. Despite the fact that her magazine was then still relatively young and unknown (with a circulation of less than 3,000) compared with the much more established and popular *AR*, this ability to be at the front and centre is a good example of Monica's networking ability and modus operandi.[37]

Fig. 4

CIAM 6 group photograph as published in *Architectural Design*, October 1947, p.258.

36 Banham, 'Sir Jim', 30.

37 Circulation figures from Audit Bureau of Circulation.

Architects I've Known and Loved

Catherine Hakim has extended the three types of capital that Pierre Bourdieu identified (social, cultural, and economic) with another, erotic capital, which Hakim described as having 'enhanced value in situations where public and private life can become closely intertwined – such as politics and jobs in the media and entertainment industries.'[38] Monica enjoyed a cornucopia of this type of capital. Goldstein said that if she wrote a biography of Monica, it would be called *Architects I've Known and Loved*.[39] Monica herself openly admitted to Benton several times that she had a propensity to easily fall in love:[40] 'I was falling in love right through my life with boys and older men'[41] and 'I like men very much' and 'find men very exciting.'[42] For an independent woman who had been brought up well in good society, the male-dominated field of post-war British architecture with its still predominantly upper-class charismatic and egotistic practitioners was a comfortable and exciting field for Monica to work in.

As Monica's scrapbook and interviews clearly demonstrate, her personal and professional lives were completely and inseparably entangled – a very recognisable phenomenon in the arts and media industries where personality and networking have always been crucial to success. But this went deeper for Monica who was actually more interested in people – the architects themselves – than their buildings or architecture per se. She conflated the person with their architecture to the extent that when she published something, she was primarily affirming the person rather than their work. At her memorial at the AA, Michael Manser recounted how he would ask Monica if they should publish a building and she would not commit herself until she knew who the architect was.[43] She had a terrific intuition and appreciation for good design, but this came from knowing, understanding, and trusting the designer. And once she trusted a person, she was completely loyal and continued to publish them regardless of the work itself, as we shall see below with the Smithsons.

This clearly had an impact on how criticism appeared in *AD*. Monica believed that the best form of criticism was simply not to publish something, or 'give them ink'. In her interview with Benton, she disclosed her beliefs in this regard:

> A principle which I hold to this day is never to put in print something that you think is bad, so we never had and never do and never will. Because people go through a magazine from the back […] and they see a picture of something – something you think is horrible – if you've put it in. They see

38 Catherine Hakim, 'Erotic Capital', *European Sociological Review* 26, no. 5 (2010): 503.

39 Barbara Goldstein (Monica Pidgeon Memorial, Architectural Association, 23 November 2009). Video, 52:50. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oJ0lsfBuzE [accessed 14 September 2020].

40 Pidgeon, Architects' Lives: Monica Pidgeon (6 of 25), 29 April 1999, https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Architects-Lives/021M-C0467X0039XX-0600V0.

41 Pidgeon, Architects' Lives: Monica Pidgeon (12 of 25), 9 July 1999, https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Architects-Lives/021M-C0467X0039XX-1200V0.

42 Monica Pidgeon, National Life Story Collection: Architects' Lives. Monica Pidgeon (13 of 25), 9 July 1999, https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Architects-Lives/021M-C0467X0039XX-1300V0.

43 Michael Manser (Monica Pidgeon Memorial, Architectural Association, 23 November 2009). Video, 25:00. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oJ0lsfBuzE [accessed 14 September 2020].

it, they don't read anything about it, and they go on through and then they remember that and they say, "well, it must be good if it's in *AD*!"[44]

Peter Murray agreed that she used to say, 'if it's not worth writing about, don't put it in the magazine' and that she 'did not like writing knocking copy.'[45] According to Goldstein, Monica 'didn't believe in critiquing architecture'; she preferred to let the architects speak 'in their own voices and she didn't want to critique what they had to say.'[46]

If, then, we apply the idea of a 'committed criticism' to Monica's editorship of *AD*, it would not be based on ideology or policy, whether personal or dictated from above. She was given complete freedom to include what she wanted in the magazine as long as it continued to be profitable for the owners, the Standard Catalogue Company (SCC). Monica's 'commitment' was to the architects themselves, as people and as friends. This is not to say that ideas or opinions did not matter, but they did not come first. And her idea of 'criticism' was implicated in being part of her 'club'.

'I always thought we were called "technical editors" because we were technically the editors!'[47]

On her 39th birthday, Monica moved into a beautiful new house in Highgate designed by her close friend Walter Segal, where she was to stay for the rest of her life. St. Anne's Close was a kind of early housing association where many architects, including Segal himself, lived. The following year, her personal and professional life changed considerably. Her scrapbook mentions that after the 1953 CIAM conference in Aix, she toured around France 'with Jim and Goldfingers, ending in Paris'. Monica's daughter Annabel thinks that 'Jim' was Jim Richards, whom Monica was then seeing. She remembered that Monica asked her ten-year old daughter whether she should marry Richards, or Cyril Clarke, the artistic director for Argo records. Clarke was a charismatic man who had an aura about him – a personality trait that always impressed Monica. Annabel chose the friendly, gentle Jim. Monica instead opted for the exhilarating, wild Cyril. He turned out to be an alcoholic[48] and the tumultuous marriage lasted only three years: 'END OF CYRIL' appears in big red capital letters in the 1957 page of her scrapbook.

The second considerable life change in 1953 was in Monica's professional life: her co-editor Barbara Randell left *AD* to start a family. Neither editor was an architect, so the directors wanted to replace her with someone who could offer more technical knowledge about architecture. Dargan Bullivant,

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44 Pidgeon, Architects' Lives: Monica Pidgeon (3 of 25).

45 Peter Murray in Bonifacic, 'Letters for Monica Pidgeon'.

46 Goldstein, interview with the author.

47 Peter Murray in Bonifacic, 'Letters for Monica Pidgeon'.

48 Pidgeon, Architects' Lives: Monica Pidgeon (15 of 25), 9 July 1999, https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Architects-Lives/021M-C0467X0039XX-1500V0.

a student at the AA who had lived in the same mansion block as Monica, had been fulfilling this role on an ad-hoc basis up until that point, but a permanent appointment was required. This role turned into the technical editor, a crucial role that was fulfilled successively by Theo Crosby (October 1953 – May 1962), Ken Frampton (June 1962 – December 1964), Robin Middleton (December 1964 – July 1972), and Peter Murray (August 1972 – January 1974). The technical editor was trained as an architect which satisfied the SCC's requirement that there was sufficient technical material going into the magazine to appease their advertisers. Monica explained that the title was just 'to keep those people upstairs happy that he, as the technical person, knew about technology. I didn't – this little woman didn't!'[49] In other words, a reassurance for advertisers that there was a man in charge of the technical material.

Coming from a financially comfortable background, money was not a concern for Monica: she was never either driven by, nor worried about it. She lived a relatively modest life in St. Anne's Close, driving around London in her white Mini, being much more involved in culture and interested in people and their conversations and ideas than material wealth. Following Bourdieu, she was rich in cultural and social capital (and if we believe Hakim, also in erotic capital), but not economic. She was never paid very well working at *AD*,[50] but it gave her the freedom, independence, and opportunity to mix within a social and cultural milieu that was perfect for the life that she desired. So, while *AD* at least paid for itself through its adverts, Monica was entrusted with the freedom to develop the cultural and social aspect of the magazine rather than the financial, without interference from the directors. Peter Murray's quote at the head of this section shows how crucial the technical editor became to *AD*: it was pivotal to the magazine's success, which took on a new life from the introduction of the role.

Part 2: Working with the technical editors

AD blossomed with the introduction of the technical editor role. Monica could leave the layout, design, and much of the actual editing to the technical editor while she oversaw its management, dealt with the 'men upstairs' at the SCC and nurtured her networks for material. She had been editing the magazine for over a decade by this point and her charm with people and 'scrapbook' mentality had become an effective way to achieve continuous publication through an incredibly testing time. So, the second half of this paper will focus more on the individual technical editors and how they inflected Monica's overarching approach of nurturing a 'club'. In contrast to Monica, each of these technical editors had trained and practised as an architect and had different ideas about what

49 Pidgeon, Architects' Lives: Monica Pidgeon (9 of 25), 9 July 1999, https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Architects-Lives/021M-C0467X0039XX-0900V0.

50 When she finally left to edit the RIBA Journal in 1975, her salary immediately doubled: Pidgeon, Architects' Lives: Monica Pidgeon (5 of 25), 29 April 1999, https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Architects-Lives/021M-C0467X0039XX-0500V0.

architecture should be, each of which in itself might be considered a different cause which was manifested in distinct ways in the magazine.

Theo Crosby and Brutalism

Randell's replacement was the South African Theo Crosby who started at *AD* in October 1953.[51] His appointment revolutionised the magazine, turning it into the young architect's magazine. As Banham later wrote, 'the student generation were without much means of public expression (until Theo Crosby joined *Architectural Design* in October 1953) and little of the polemic is visible in print.'[52] Not only did Crosby have a real aesthetic sensibility (Monica admitted she was never a particularly good designer or writer herself), but he brought architectural experience and knowledge to the role. He was also an ardent modernist who opened Monica's eyes and mind to modern design.

In my own and others' interviews, Monica frequently recalled how she loved to work with Crosby and how he changed the face and fortune of the magazine. 'There's nobody been like Theo', she told Stephen Escritt.[53] Similarly, to Benton: 'Theo was wonderful, I had eight wonderful years with Theo because he's such an all-round person and such a nice guy. I really enjoyed that. Eight wonderful years. He did lovely covers and he somehow changed the direction of the magazine. It was lovely working with him.'[54] It is perhaps not surprising that during those early years the South African's and South American's own personal and professional lives became entangled.

Crosby contributed far more than his knowledge and skills, however: his real passion was art and on arriving in London in 1947, he immediately absorbed himself in the art world of the post-war neo-avant-garde. His life revolved around the Central School of Arts where he took night classes in sculpting and where Eduardo Paolozzi and Peter Smithson taught,[55] as well as the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) where he was a member of the nascent Independent Group consisting of artists and architects such as Eduardo Paolozzi, Lawrence Alloway, Richard Hamilton, Reyner Banham (by then an assistant editor at the *AR*) and Crosby's best friends, Alison and Peter Smithson, with whom he lived until 1953.[56] The Smithsons were the new up-and-coming architects of the time - 'the bell-wethers [sic] of the young throughout the middle fifties' according to Banham,[57] having won the competition for Hunstanton School, which was then

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51 Initially as co-editor, as Randell had been, but in November 1954, he was listed as 'Technical Editor'. Monica Pidgeon, 'Editorial Staff Changes', *Architectural Design* 23, no. 10 (October 1953), 298.

52 Reyner Banham, 'Revenge of the Picturesque: English Architectural Polemics, 1945-1965', in *Concerning Architecture: Essays on Architectural Writers and Writing Presented to Nikolaus Pevsner*, ed. John Summerson (London: Allen Lane, 1968), 266.

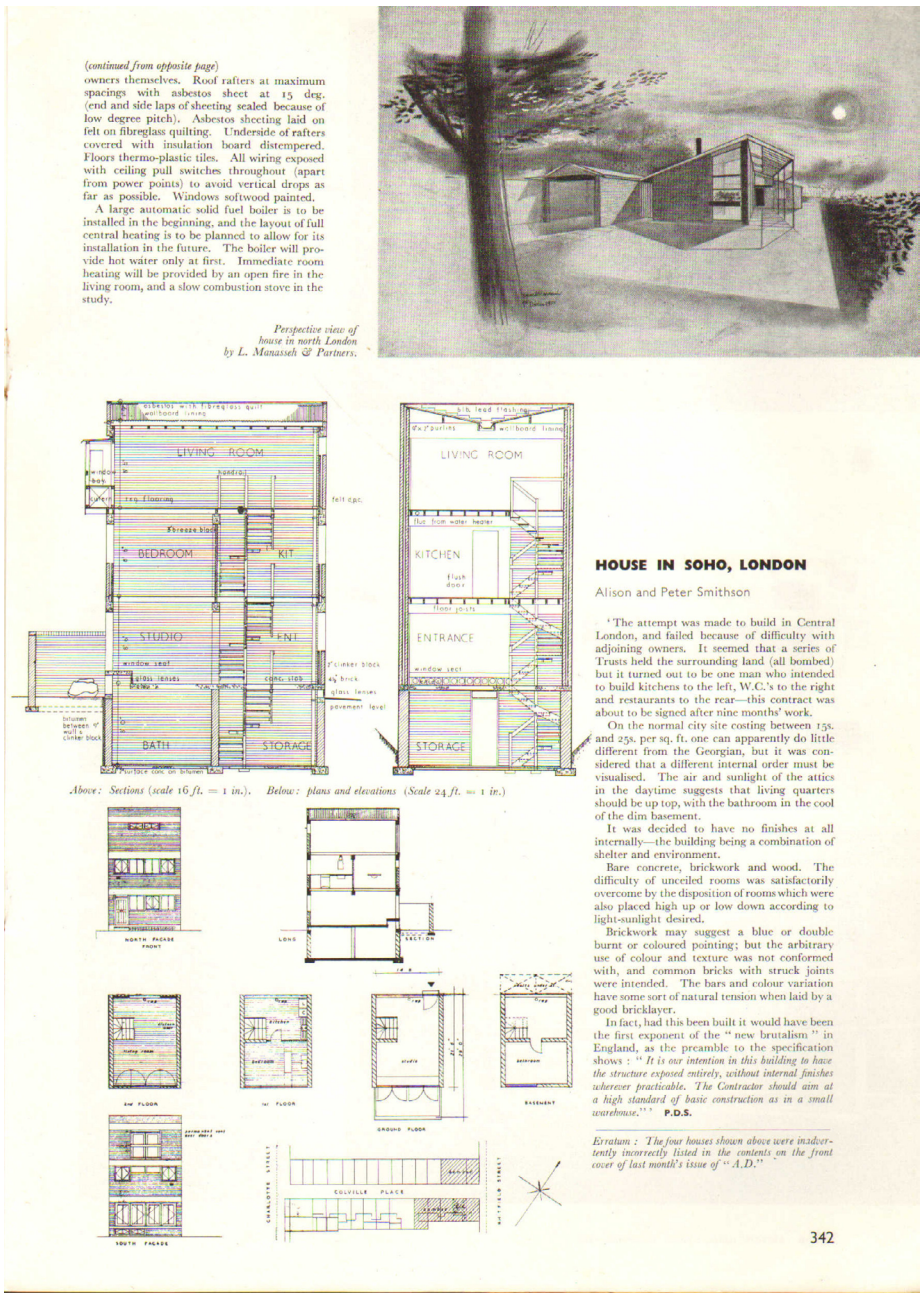
53 Monica Pidgeon, interview by Stephen Escritt, 18 July 1995.

54 Pidgeon, Architects' Lives: Monica Pidgeon (3 of 25).

55 David Robbins, ed., *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 57.

56 See Parnell, 2019.

57 Reyner Banham, "Revenge of the Picturesque: English Architectural Polemics, 1945-1965," 270.



(*continued from opposite page*)
owners themselves. Roof rafters at maximum spacings with asbestos sheet at 15 deg. (end and side laps of sheeting sealed because of low degree pitch). Asbestos sheeting laid on felt on fibreglass quilting. Underside of rafters covered with insulation board distempered. Floors thermo-plastic tiles. All wiring exposed with ceiling pull switches throughout (apart from power points) to avoid vertical drops as far as possible. Windows softwood painted.

A large automatic solid fuel boiler is to be installed in the beginning, and the layout of full central heating is to be planned to allow for its installation in the future. The boiler will provide hot water only at first. Immediate room heating will be provided by an open fire in the living room, and a slow combustion stove in the study.

Perspective view of house in north London by L. Manasseh & Partners.

LIVING ROOM
BEDROOM
KIT
STUDIO
ENT
BATH
STORAGE
KITCHEN
ENTRANCE
STORAGE
COLVILLE PLACE

Above: Sections (scale 16 ft. = 1 in.). Below: plans and elevations (Scale 24 ft. = 1 in.)

HOUSE IN SOHO, LONDON

Alison and Peter Smithson

'The attempt was made to build in Central London, and failed because of difficulty with adjoining owners. It seemed that a series of Trusts held the surrounding land (all bombed) but it turned out to be one man who intended to build kitchens to the left, W.C.'s to the right and restaurants to the rear—this contract was about to be signed after nine months' work.

On the normal city site costing between 15s. and 25s. per sq. ft. one can apparently do little different from the Georgian, but it was considered that a different internal order must be visualised. The air and sunlight of the attics in the daytime suggests that living quarters should be up top, with the bathroom in the cool of the dim basement.

It was decided to have no finishes at all internally—the building being a combination of shelter and environment.

Bare concrete, brickwork and wood. The difficulty of unceiled rooms was satisfactorily overcome by the disposition of rooms which were also placed high up or low down according to light-sunlight desired.

Brickwork may suggest a blue or double burnt or coloured pointing; but the arbitrary use of colour and texture was not conformed with, and common bricks with struck joints were intended. The bars and colour variation have some sort of natural tension when laid by a good bricklayer.

In fact, had this been built it would have been the first exponent of the "new brutalism" in England, as the preamble to the specification shows: "*It is our intention in this building to have the structure exposed entirely, without internal finishes wherever practicable. The Contractor should aim at a high standard of basic construction as in a small warehouse.*" P.D.S.

Erratum: The four houses shown above were inadvertently incorrectly listed in the contents on the front cover of last month's issue of "A.D."

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nearing completion and reviewed in *AD* by Bullivant in September 1953.[58]

Crosby's first piece for *AD* was actually a short review of the Independent Group's 1953 exhibition, *Parallel of Life and Art* at the ICA.[59] As this exhibition only opened on 11 September, he must have been invited to write it as soon as he was offered the job. He had an immediate impact, inviting the Smithsons to contribute a piece on a design for their house in Soho, which he published in his first issue of December that year, the magazine being put together three months in advance.[60] This small article has since become famous as the place where the term 'The New Brutalism' was first mentioned in print **[Fig. 5]**.

58 Dargan Bullivant, 'Hunstanton Secondary Modern School', *Architectural Design* 23, no. 9 (September 1953), 238-48.

59 Theo Crosby, 'Parallel of Life and Art', *Architectural Design* 23, no. 10 (October 1953), 297.

60 Alison Smithson and Peter Smithson, 'House in Soho, London', *Architectural Design* 23, no. 12 (December 1953), 342.

Fig. 5
First mention of 'The New Brutalism' in print, *Architectural Design*, December 1953, p.342.

AD cheered on the New Brutalism as it gained momentum as an identifiable movement. Crosby asked the Smithsons, as the 'prophets of the movement to supply a definition or statement' for the first editorial of 1955.[61] While architectural historians have tended to overlook this rambling, incoherent statement in favour of Banham's much longer, more considered and articulate 'New Brutalism' article that appeared in the *AR* of December that year,[62] the movement was first published and nurtured in *AD*. Not only did *AD* promote the Smithsons, but under Crosby, it also provided a platform for the whole Independent Group.

The Group appeared very little in *AD* until it ceased meeting in 1956, when its members started to become regular contributors and subjects for content. From January 1956 until December 1961 (72 issues), there were at least 30 articles by or about a one-time member of the group, quite apart from the writings by the Smithsons and Crosby. Bloomfield's bibliography demonstrates that *AD* was the organ of choice for the Smithsons' rhetorical pieces.[63] Peter Smithson later acknowledged the importance of Crosby's position: 'That meant that when we started, we had a channel. Monica was […] very loyal. Where you have an editor who doesn't understand what you're writing but trusts you, it's an interesting phenomenon.'[64] In the 276 issues between December 1953 (when Crosby became effective) and November 1975 (when Monica left), 168 pieces by the Smithsons, or a group connected to them (the Independent Group or Team 10) appeared in *AD*, an average of appearing in almost two-thirds of the period's issues.

Monica also published other Brutalists such as Jim Stirling and Denys Lasdun, the latter whom she claimed was 'a terrific guru' for her.[65] In December 1956, Lasdun appeared on *AD*'s masthead as a consultant and a new series called 'Thoughts in Progress' started. Although printed anonymously, these opinion pieces were conversations between Crosby, Lasdun, and an architectural historian friend of Lasdun called John Davies on various topics from the 'Curtain Wall' to 'The New Brutalism'. In response to the latter article, the Smithsons were 'given ink'[66] to bemoan that 'Up to now Brutalism has been discussed stylistically whereas its essence is ethical.'[67]

But the relationship benefited both parties: *AD* needed the neo-avant-garde as much as they needed the platform to disseminate their ideas and *AD*'s popularity increased throughout Crosby's time. Figures for the last half of 1953 show a

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61 Alison Smithson, Peter Smithson, and Theo Crosby, 'The New Brutalism', *Architectural Design* 25, no. 1 (January 1955), 1.

62 Reyner Banham, 'The New Brutalism', *The Architectural Review* 118, no. 64708 (December 1955), 354–61.

63 Julia Bloomfield, 'A Bibliography of Alison and Peter Smithson', in *Oppositions*, vol. 2 (New York: The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, 1974), 104–23.

64 Peter Smithson, National Life Story Collection: Architects' Lives. Peter Smithson (7 of 19), interview by Louise Brodie, 4 September 1997, C467/24, British Library Sound Archive, https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Architects-Lives/021M-C0467X0024XX-0100V0.

65 Pidgeon, Architects' Lives: Monica Pidgeon (16 of 25), 9 July 1999, https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Architects-Lives/021M-C0467X0039XX-1600V0.

66 Goldstein used this lovely term in the author's interview with her.

67 John Davies and Denys Lasdun, 'Thoughts in Progress: The New Brutalism', *Architectural Design* 27, no. 4 (April 1957), 113.

circulation of 6,067, a third of the 18,158 registered architects in the UK.[68] By the time Crosby left in May 1962, *AD*'s circulation had increased to 9,613, compared to the *AR*'s 10,947.[69] While *AD* itself didn't ostensibly have a cause based on any architectural ideology beyond the simple declared policy 'To show good architecture, and to attempt to stimulate thought about the art of architecture and the direction it must take to complement the rapid development of science,'[70] it had become a champion of the neo-avant-garde centred on the Smithsons. Through Crosby's 'commitment' to his best friends, *AD* effectively became a 'channel' to promote their Brutalist ideas.

Ken Frampton and criticism

Crosby left *AD* to work for Taylor Woodrow in May 1962 and recommended Kenneth Frampton as his replacement. Frampton's first contribution was jointly with Crosby in the 'Art' column of the following month and he was listed as the technical editor from July, with Crosby joining the growing list of consultants.[71]

Frampton attended the AA between 1950 and 1956[72] where he was taught by luminaries such as Walter Segal, Leonard Mannaseh, Arthur Korn, Ove Arup, Anthony and Oliver Cox and, during his thesis year, Peter Smithson. While at the AA, Frampton was part of a close circle of friends centred around Thomas (Sam) Stevens. Included in this group that met at Stevens's flat in Marylebone High Street in the early 1950s were James Stirling, John Miller, Alan Colquhoun, Neave Brown, Joseph Rykwert, Patrick Hodgkinson, Bob Maxwell, Douglas Stephen, and Reyner Banham.[73] In 1961 Frampton joined Douglas Stephen and Partners, a practice that was a crucible of young talent for architects such as Elias Zenghelis and Panos Koulermos. As the *AD* 'team' (Monica and her technical editor) worked from 2pm until 7pm, Frampton could supervise the construction of an eight-storey block of flats in Bayswater in the mornings before going to Bloomsbury to work at *AD* in the afternoons.[74]

Monica teased Frampton for being the 'arch-worrier', and didn't have the same excitement as with Theo, but recalled that he 'brought a *very* serious approach to the magazine, much more architectural than Theo.'[75] *AD*'s tone completely changed during Frampton's 2½ years. The most obvious changes were his introduction of a more critical approach and more in-depth coverage of buildings, 'meticulous in all the details and working drawings and

68 Figures for the *AR* are unfortunately not available before 1959.

69 46% and 53% of the 20,693 registered architects in the UK respectively.

70 Monica Pidgeon, 'Affirmation', *Architectural Design* 26, no. 1 (January 1956), 1.

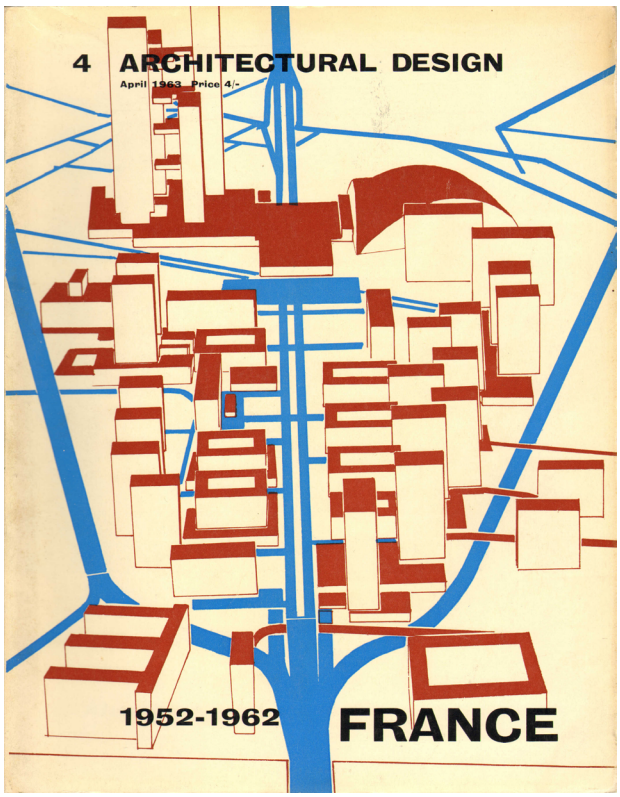
71 Peter Smithson had also been appointed as consultant in February 1962. Alison was never listed as an official consultant.

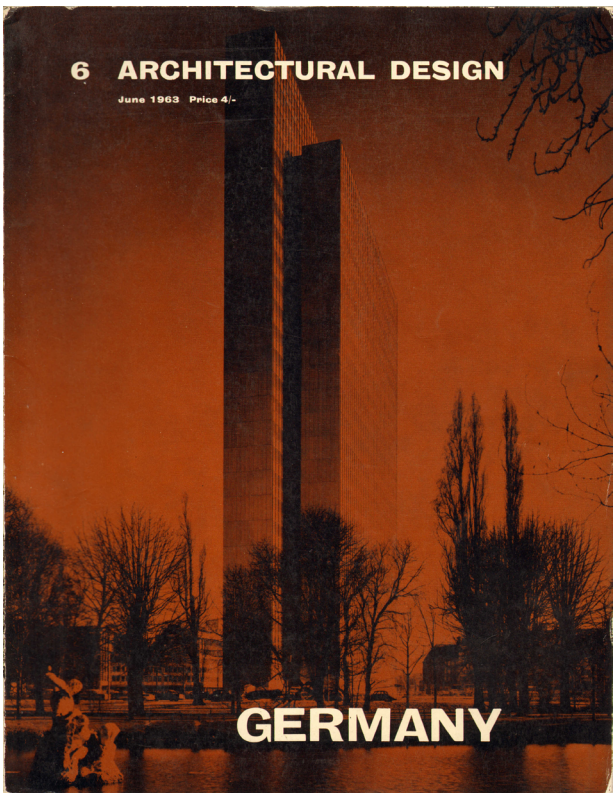
72 Kenneth Frampton, 'The English Crucible' (CIAM Team 10, the English Context, Faculty of Architecture TU Delft, 2001), 115, http://www.team10online.org/research/papers/delft1/frampton.pdf.

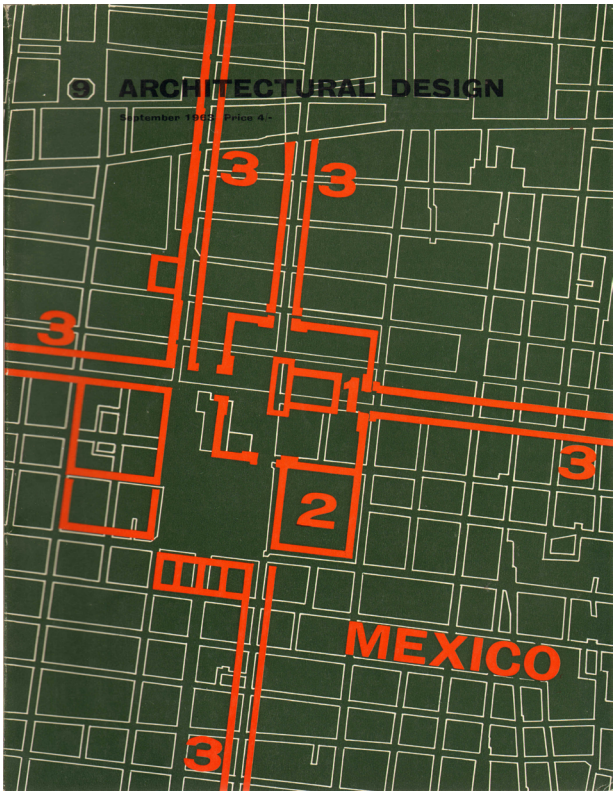
73 Mark Girouard, *Big Jim: The Life and Work of James Stirling*, (London: Pimlico, 2000), 60, 74.

74 Ken Frampton. Presentation at Monica Pidgeon Memorial (Architectural Association, 23 November 2009). Video, 11:40. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oJ0lsfBuzE [accessed 14 September 2020].

75 Pidgeon, Architects' Lives: Monica Pidgeon (9 of 25).







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everything – marvellous photos.'[76] Architects no longer spoke in their own words. Instead, Frampton recalled that he 'advance[d] the critical stance of the magazine with a line of authors who had not hitherto been published in that journal, including Joseph Rykwert, Alan Colquhoun, Neave Brown, and Gunter Nitschke.'[77] He also introduced special issues with themes focused on countries (such as France, Germany, and Mexico in April, June, and September 1963 respectively [Fig. 6]), or architects: Lingeri & Terragni with an introductory overview of Italian Rationalism by Italian correspondent Koulermos;[78] a year later came the work of Mangiarotti & Morassutti in Milan and of Gino & Nani Valle in Udine, Italy with an introduction by Rykwert.[79]

Frampton acknowledged that the seeds of his ideas on critical regionalism were sown during his time at *AD*, while touring Continental Europe with Monica,[80] and the magazine started focusing more on Europe's 'city states', 'their "princes" of architecture. Ungers

76 Ibid.

77 Frampton, presentation, 18:09.

78 March 1963.

79 March 1964.

80 Kenneth Frampton, interview with the author, 23 November 2009.

Fig. 6
Covers of *Architectural Design* special issues focusing on France,Germany and Mexico (April, June and September 1963).

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in Cologne, Gisel in Zurich, Valle in Udine and […] Ceccarelli Epaminoda [sic] in Ravenna.'[81] The previous favourites of Crosby featured much less during Frampton's time. Monica was 'fed up' with the Smithsons for breaking up CIAM, which she had been involved with herself **[Fig. 7]**, and thought that Team 10 was 'a lot of blah blah.'[82] Yet she remained loyal and allowed them to guest-edit two issues, the 'Team 10 Primer' (December 1962) and on 'The Work of Team 10' (August 1964).

The apartment block that Frampton had been overseeing was published in September 1964 **[Fig. 8]**[83] and this seems to coincide with his desire to move on: Robin Middleton took over from him at the end of that year and Frampton's final issue of February 1965 focused on the Smithsons' Economist cluster. Monica

81 Kenneth Frampton, 'The Work of Epaminoda', *Architectural Design* 35, no. 1 (January 1965), 3.

82 Pidgeon, Architects' Lives: Monica Pidgeon (5 of 25).

83 Frampton, "Maisonettes in Bayswater, London", *Architectural Design* 34, no. 9 (September 1964), 442-48.

Fig. 7
Photographs from 1951 in Monica's scrapbook (permission courtesy of Annabel Donat).

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and Frampton didn't fall out but clearly had different styles, especially concerning the place of criticism in the magazine, and Middleton remembered that they 'were both control freaks.'[84] While Monica wanted to open up *AD* to her network and let architects speak for themselves, Frampton wanted to control the discourse. One example of this is that 68 letters appeared in Crosby's pages during his 103 issues while only a single letter appeared in the 31 that Frampton oversaw. It is also worth noting that during these 2½ years, *AD*'s circulation remained static whereas *AR*'s continued to grow slowly, as it would continue to do until around 1970,[85] suggesting that Frampton's 'commitment' to criticism was not shared by Monica.

84 Beatriz Colomina and Craig Buckley, eds., *Clip, Stamp, Fold: The Radical Architecture of Little Magazines*, 196X - 197X (New York: Actar, 2010), 443.

85 From 9,682 (48% of UK registered architects) in the second half of 1962 to 10,102 (48% of UK registered architects) in the second half of 1964. This compares with 10,879 and 11,862 respectively for the *AR*.

Fig. 8

Photograph of the block of flats that Frampton worked on while at AD, published in September 1964.

Robin Middleton and Cosmorama

After completing a PhD under Nikolaus Pevsner at Cambridge University, Robin Middleton – another South African – went to work for Crosby at Taylor Woodrow on the recommendation of their mutual friends, the Smithsons. Crosby had remained close to Monica and when Frampton left *AD*, he suggested that Middleton help her out. After Frampton's seriousness, Monica was about to have fun again: Middleton, who had 'ceased believing in most of the architecture going around because it was so bad and so horrible'[86] gradually turned *AD* from a vehicle for promoting products, buildings, and their architects into one of iconoclastic and experimental ideas.

Crosby's team at Taylor Woodrow ended up including future *AD* contributors such as Alex Pike and Brian Richards as well as all the members of Archigram. Middleton recalled that 'Cook was the first of the group to arrive, in 1962; Chalk and Herron followed at the end of the year, to be joined by Crompton, Webb and Greene in 1963, when the architects' office was established on the Euston site.'[87] Archigram started in 1961 as a small student newsletter reacting 'against the crap going up in London',[88] but numbers 3, 4, 5, and 6 were designed and produced in the Taylor Woodrow office and in the home of Peter Cook. Cook is generally acknowledged as the engine of the group and came to London to be part of 'the scene' and to replicate the success of the Independent Group's exhibitions.[89] However, as David Greene recalled, 'the real lucky break for Archigram was [when] Robin Middleton became assistant editor of Architectural Design.'[90] So in terms of facilitation, Middleton was for Archigram what Crosby was for the Smithsons and Middleton's 'first real intrusion, editorially, was the 15-page survey of the works of Archigram'.[91] Archigram matured while the group worked at Taylor Woodrow but Middleton introduced them to the wider world of architecture in this survey that appeared in November 1965 **[Fig. 9]**. For young architects in the mid-1960s, the post-war reconstruction boom had simply become tedious and the space-age comic architecture of Archigram became a favourite for *AD*.

By this time, the *AD* 'club' had become centred on the AA, where Middleton taught General Studies and where Cook, Chalk, and Webb taught design alongside other *AD* contributors such as Cedric Price. After a hiatus under Frampton, the Smithsons were invited into the *AD* club again with their Team 10 reports, but the magazine increasingly focused on future thinking through a section that Middleton introduced called Cosmorama. This started as a news column in July

86 Robin Middleton, interview with the author, 4 March 2010.

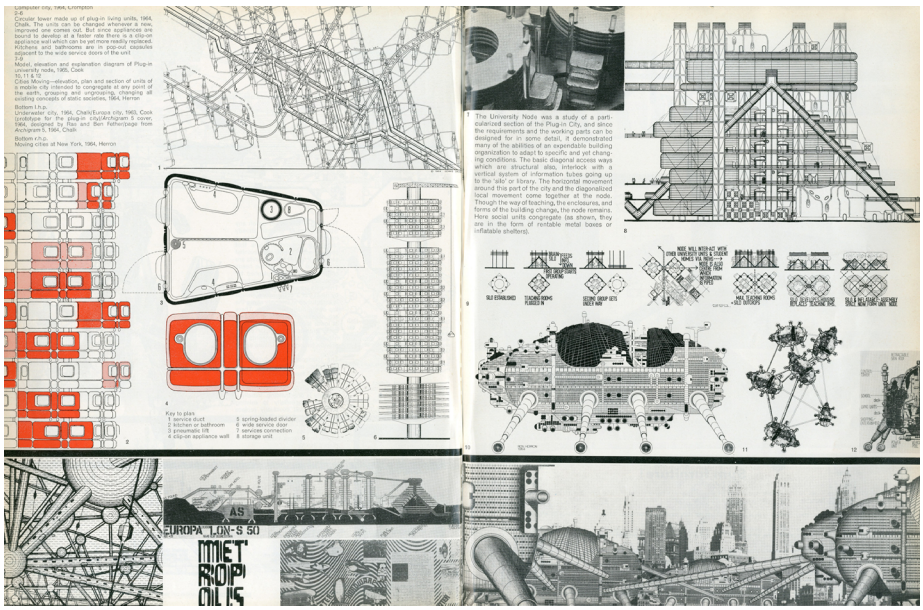
87 Robin Middleton, 'Haunts of Coot and Hern', in L.A.W.U.N. Project #19 (London: AA Publications, 2008), B22.

88 Peter Cook, 'Amazing Archigram', supplement, *Perspecta*, no. 11 (1967): 133.

89 Mary Banham, interview with the author, 2 July 2008.

90 David Greene, Jon Goodbun, and David Cunningham, 'Architecture and the Rain', *Journal of Architectural Education* 6 (Summer 2001): 197.

91 Robin Middleton, 'Working for Monica', *AA Files*, no. 60 (Spring 2010): 26.



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1965 but expanded to the extent that it practically consumed *AD* by the time Middleton left.

Neither Monica nor Middleton were motivated by any proactive policy or agenda, but rather an ad-hoc exploratory process from month to month based on what came into the office. They were both interested in the future and the content turned towards experimental ideas and transferable technologies: 'There was certainly a tremendous belief at the time in the possibilities of technology,' Middleton explained, 'You could solve problems in the world not by building things but solving the problems of life.'[92] 'There were editorial "interests" – let's put it that way,' he explained to me, 'Monica and I could never produce a concerted policy together, we wouldn't have done […] we couldn't have.'[93] Furthermore, they simply 'didn't have enough money to determine exactly what went on.'[94] Looking more towards Stewart Brand's *Whole Earth Catalog* than the *Architects' Standard Catalogue*, Cosmorama became Middleton's own scrapbook to speculate about the future: 'that was where you could try out things and have a fling,' he later explained, 'Monica would allow almost anything, she wouldn't vet it.'[95]

Middleton came to believe that 'Cosmorama was the reason people were buying and reading the magazine. It was the main part of the magazine. We were all saving our energy to put into Cosmorama, picking up any sort of information on new lifestyles that we could find. Nobody was interested in pictures of new buildings. Cosmorama kept the magazine going'.[96] But it was also the reason that advertisers were leaving, as coverage of buildings became rare and the readership more international. Monica had always been able to run the editorial

92 Colomina and Buckley, *Clip, Stamp, Fold*, 32.

93 Middleton, interview with the author.

94 Ibid.

95 Ibid.

96 Colomina and Buckley, eds., 'Interview with Robin Middleton', in *Clip, Stamp, Fold*, n.p.

Fig. 9

A double page spread from the Chronological Survey of Archigram's work published in *Architectural Design*, November 1965.

side of *AD* independently from the marketing side because it managed to pay for itself through advertising – at its height, *AD* made £60,000-£70,000 a year from advertising.[97] In terms of number of adverts, this was around 1962, coinciding with the peak of the post-war building boom. However, as advertising declined, loss of revenue was countered by an increase in circulation which rose at a steady rate of about 1,000 per year and even gained on that of their closest competitor, the *AR*, until eventually, for 1968 only, *AD*'s figures were slightly higher.[98]

It would not be accurate to attribute this circulation curve to Cosmorama alone, but it would be fair to claim that Middleton's content curation attracted more readers than it lost during the first half of his tenure, while the reverse was true in the second. By turning away from reviewing buildings and advertising products, and focusing instead on theoretical ideas, paper architecture, and political criticism, Middleton started losing professional readers but gaining a large international student following: 'we didn't want to be a professional magazine,' he admitted, 'we wanted to deal with the culture of architecture.'[99]

It was pure coincidence that the student riots in Paris happened as *AD*'s first art editor, Dave Chaston, started. Chaston changed the magazine's name to '*AD*' for the May 1968 issue guest-edited by Cedric Price. From that point on, Price, who taught at the AA and contributed to most Archigram zines, became a regular contributor and his iconoclastic attitude exemplified the more ideas-led direction of *AD*. This split from its traditional customer base, both in terms of readers and advertisers, forced *AD* to become a 'little magazine' from October 1970, covering its costs through subscriptions alone rather than advertising and allowing complete independence from the practicalities of product manufacturers. With Archigram ceasing publication in 1970, *AD* effectively took over as the magazine of architectural ideas for students and in its 'little' phase in the early 1970s, it became more of an alternative magazine of the counter-culture than a professional publication, influenced heavily by ideas circulating around the AA and Price but connecting a network of like-minded young architects between the USA, Italy, Austria, Japan, and beyond.

Middleton had completely transformed *AD* by the time he left in July 1972.[100] He was an astute critic and historian in his own right, whose criticism, along with that of AA colleagues he published such as Cedric Price and Peter Cook, resisted the hegemony of modernist dogma. It was an iconoclastic, anti-establishment, and 'politicised' critique of the values of architecture and society, which resonated with a young, vibrant, consumerist, and swinging 1960s London.

97 David Dottridge in email to the author, 15 September 2011. Adjusting for inflation, £70,000 is equal to around £1.5m in 2020.

98 Audit Bureau of Circulation figures show that *AD*'s mean circulation for 1968 was 13,434 and *AR*'s was 13,278.

99 Middleton, interview with the author.

100 Middleton, 'Working for Monica', 26.

A semi-social magazine

In her interview with Benton, Monica recalled why *AD* commenced publication in the first place, in November 1930, explaining that the directors of the SCC 'thought it would be nice to have a give-away, *semi-social* magazine with their Standard Catalogues.'[101] This has gone down on record, being repeated elsewhere.[102] But it is entirely her interpretation and is not corroborated by any archival or analytical evidence: 'semi-social' is simply how she thought of the magazine. Habermas argued that the very idea of public opinion and the public sphere were created by the publication: rather than thinking of an audience waiting to receive the publication, the publication appeared first and organised a group of private people (subjects) into a public.[103] In the context of twentieth-century architecture, we can read this as architectural publications forming a critical architectural sphere or architectural discourse in which architects participate. The architects who are the subjects of architectural periodicals like *AD* and *AR* are also their major contributors, or have networks connected to the contributors. Magazines create networks.

AD was different to many post-war architecture magazines. Monica was neither an architect, nor an ideologue and while she was interested in modern design and futuristic ideas, she was more interested in people. Editorial policy was always vague and related more to building an architectural culture than a way to build society;[104] Monica's overriding policy was simply not to publish people who had not been accepted into her club. Instead, she used *AD* as a platform to create such a club and constantly renewed it with new members who kept it young, vital, and relevant while its competitors' campaigns became tired and dogmatic. Within this context, the technical editors mentioned in the second half of the paper were free to publish their own causes. For Crosby, this was giving the Smithsons a channel to effectively run their own campaign for Brutalism; for Frampton, it involved exploring a critical discourse about architects related to their region; and Middleton transformed the entire magazine into a radical and counter-cultural organ of experimental speculation.

In his *The Content Machine: Towards a Theory of Publishing*, Michael Bhaskar explains that

> Their [people's] actions reflect assemblages of motivations and expectations, conscious and unconscious, internally or externally conditioned, affecting their behaviour. Content is no exception. It therefore makes no sense to discuss content without some reference to how these motivational factors work, as the factors involved will have powerfully helped

101 Pidgeon, Architects' Lives: Monica Pidgeon (4 of 25), 26 April 1999, https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Architects-Lives/021M-C0467X0039XX-0400V0. My italics.

102 Parnell, 2012; Monica Pidgeon, 'AD Remembered: 1941-75', *Architectural Design* 71, no. 2 (April 2001).

103 Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: Polity, 1989), 25-26.

104 See Randall and Pidgeon, 'About Ourselves', 322; Pidgeon, 'Affirmation', 1.

constitute the work in question.[105]

This applies to any form of content creation, from magazine publishing to architectural design – there is always a context, a back-story, with people behind the scenes making decisions based on motivational factors small and large, personal and professional. While the personal is often included in narratives of artists' works, it has traditionally been excluded from architectural history, ignored as the hidden private lives of the protagonists. However, this paper has tried to explain how the private and professional lives of these actors are always entangled and a fuller understanding of architectural history might be achieved by taking this into account.

Monica's criteria for publication in *AD* were not primarily motivated by an ideology, but by a commitment to and love of people. Becoming part of her club depended more on the personality of the architect in question: how well Monica got on with them and, frankly, how attractive she found them. In writing architectural histories, it is tempting to focus on divining some 'objective truth' that ideally represents a committed or politicised critical position of a magazine or editor, overlooking the fact that the people running them are flesh and blood with inconvenient real-life problems and confusing contradictory emotions that have real, printed consequences and long-lasting historiographical implications.

Igea Troiani has written about using gossip and rumour as evidence in architectural history, 'sources often dismissed because they are deemed subjective, sensationalist, and unverifiable'.[106] Troiani uses these versions of oral history as hints to look elsewhere to provide other stories based on more traditional, objective documentation. I have similarly used 'gossip' and 'whispers' to direct my interviews and highlight other evidence that would normally remain hidden. The point is not to write a biography, but to adopt a biographical approach to architectural history, acknowledging that the entanglements of the personal and professional lives have a very real influence on what gets published, built, wins awards, and written into the canon. Had I not adopted this approach, with its implied commitment to people itself, I would have assumed that Monica and *AD* held a specific policy and critical position and attempted to divine what beliefs underpinned Monica's long, uninterrupted editorship as I characterised the other magazines at the beginning of the paper. But what I found instead was that the content was driven by a commitment to people rather than their products.

105 Michael Bhaskar, *The Content Machine: Towards a Theory of Publishing from the Printing Press to the Digital Network* (London; New York: Anthem Press, 2013), 96.

106 Iggea Troiani, 'Spoken-Not-Spoken, Written-Not-Written: From Gossip and Rumour to Architectural History between Margin and Center', in Gosseye, *Stead, and Van der Plaat eds., Speaking of Buildings, 235*

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Silvia Groaz

The New Brutalism: Ethic vs. Marxism? Ideological Collisions in Post-War English Architecture

New Brutalism, British post-war architecture, Reyner Banham, Alison and Peter Smithson, London County Council

/Abstract

At the end of the Second World War, an intense ideological confrontation took place in British architectural circles. The debate was influenced by a politicized generational divide, pitting the legacy of Howard's Garden City model, supported by those who called themselves 'Marxists', against Le Corbusier's *Unité* at Marseille, defended by a younger generation of architects who took a 'non-Marxist' position. Following these two different models, the principles of reconstruction established around the 'low rise' and 'high rise' dichotomy. The various political tendencies were translated into stylistic rules that addressed types, city configuration, and even materials, according to a rich constellation of new labels: the New Humanism derived from Soviet Socialist Realism, the William Morris Revival and People's Detailing, the New Picturesque advocated as a democratic model by Nikolaus Pevsner, and the New Empiricism reworked by Eric de Maré on the Cooperative Housing Schemes of the Swedish welfare state.

It is in this context that the New Brutalism originated. The term disguised subversive attributes with respect to the relationship of urban and architectural models with political demands. The rigid ideological instance that configured a conventional model for the reconstruction was purged in the New Brutalism through the introduction of a category meant to supplant Marxist ideology. Ethics, translated into the truth to materials and structure, as well as into the concept of 'as found', paved its way through an argument rooted in the architectural discourse.

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Comparing Ideologies: The Unité d'Habitation and the Garden City

The entire English post-war architectural discourse could not be fully understood if separated from the intense ideological debates that led to a new 'battle of styles', after the one that during the 18th and 19th century opposed the supporters of Gothic Revival to those of Neoclassicism. In Great Britain, in fact, the Welfare State, architectural critics and urban planners participated in the re-shaping of both national identity and the territory, in an interlacement that set one of the main characteristics of 20th-century British architecture.

In the 1940s, British architectural culture, suffering from thirty years of exclusion from international dynamics, began searching for alternatives to the reduction of the Modern Movement to the aesthetic values of the International Style.[1] With the Labour Party's electoral victory in 1945, and subsequent legislative deliberations such as the 1946 New Towns Act and the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, the socialistic concepts of Ebenezer Howard's Garden City regained relevance in the form of principles for reconstruction.

The regeneration of British culture and the reconstruction of its heritage after the devastation of the war seemed possible only through the outline of a critical discourse representative of a social-democratic national identity[2]. The ambition to find a shared style for reconstruction led to a search for principles which could be considered national, in accordance with the statement 'England after the war must be England'[3]. With the aim of pursuing a British way within the Modern Movement, values belonging to concepts such as 'Englishness', 'craft' and 'Humanism' were rediscovered.[4]

It is on these topics that critics waged an increasingly bitter ideological battle, in an attempt to converge the debates into a succession of styles proposed in the form of guidelines. This second 'battle of styles' of the 1950s, driven by ideology, was necessary for Britain to configure its own metamorphosis of the Modern Movement, theorized in antithesis to the International Style.

Critics' research converged in the formulation of several stylistic lemmas that brought to the resurrection of 18th- and 19th-century principles, from the

1 Several are the essays and analyses about the impact of political and ideological debates on architecture criticism in post-war Britain. For the discussions related to the London County Council and reconstruction, see: Nicholas Merhyr Day, *The Role of the Architect in Post-War Housing: A Case Study of the Housing Work of the London County Council 1939-1956*, PhD Thesis (Warwick, University of Warwick, 1988); Nicholas Bullock, "La politica del London County Council 1945-1951", *Rassegna* 54, no. 2 (June 1993): 50–57; Dennis Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain. History, the New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997); Nicholas Bullock, *Building the Post-War World: Modern Architecture and Reconstruction in Britain* (London: Routledge, 2002); Andrew Higgott, *Mediating Modernism: Architectural Cultures in Britain* (London: Routledge, 2006); Elizabeth Darling, *Re-Forming Britain : Narratives of Modernity before Reconstruction* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Alan Powers, *Britain* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007); Anthony Vidler, "Another Brick in the Wall", October 136, (Spring 2011): 105-132; Stephen V. Ward, "Soviet Communism and the British Planning Movement: Rational Learning or Utopian Imagining?", *Planning Perspectives* 27, no. 4, (October 2012): 499-524; Erden Erten, *Alternative Visions of Post-War Reconstruction: Creating the Modern Townscape* (London: Routledge, 2015).

2 Andrew Boyd, "A Review of the Symposium - The Kind of Architecture We Want in Britain", *Keystone* (May 1949): 96. In the conclusion Boyd states: 'we shall get a great architecture in England only when the working class is dominant, when the state and society are moulded by the great ideas of socialism, and when architecture is inspired by the conscious aim to celebrate and inspire the achievements of the people.'

3 "Rebuilding Britain", *Architectural Review* 93, no. 556 (April 1943): 86.

4 John Gloag, *The English Tradition of Design*, (London: King Penguin: 1947): 15.

Picturesque[5] to the theories of Augustus Pugin, John Ruskin, and William Morris.[6] These 'pioneers' were selected for their ability to translate a democratic and socialist vision into architectural principles.[7] In addition to Nikolaus Pevsner's stance on a style derived from Ruskinian ethical principles, other critical interventions on *Architectural Review* aimed at steering the debate toward the impact of modern architecture on the 'common man', through an 'appeal to public taste'.[8] The specific British reconstruction agenda emerged also in the CIAMs through the contributions of James Maude Richards, who at the time was the editor of *Architecture Review*. This debate progressed via the search for a new 'humanism', understood both as an aspiration to a more human, or 'humanized' architecture, and as a reference to the classical principles of architecture. This justified the resurgent interest in Geoffrey Scott's book *The Architecture of Humanism: A Study in the History of Taste*,[9] as well the popularity of Rudolph Wittkower's *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism of 1949*.[10]

In the hope of strengthening public consensus in favour of the new housing policies supported by the post-war government, and with the aim of solidifying relations with Labour Party politicians, British critics promoted an approach aligned with the government's reconstruction agenda. The intention was to perpetuate the relationship between art, politics and architecture, as advocated by Pevsner through radio broadcasts such as 'Art for Everyone: Art and the State.'[11] The search for a new national architecture with humanistic overtones and the capacity to meet reconstruction needs also involved consideration of foreign examples as prototypes adaptable to the British context.

The political affinity between the Labour Party and the Scandinavian welfare state made the choice of the Swedish architectural model the logical expression of an architecture for a socialist democracy. This reference was also supported by a popular publication by Bertil Hulten,[12] in which Sir Patrick Abercrombie, author of the 1943 County of London Plan, indicated in the legislation of the Swedish welfare state a model for Britain, 'where class or income differences are minimalised in architectural expression.'[13]

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5 Nikolaus Pevsner, "A Short Pugin Florilegium", *Architectural Review* 94, no. 560 (August 1943): 31–34; "A Village Planned to Be Picturesque", and "Price on Picturesque Planning", *Architectural Review* 95, no. 566 (February 1944): 39–50; Nikolaus Pevsner, "The Genesis of the Picturesque", *Architectural Review* 96 (November 1944): 139–46.

6 Maxwell Fry, "The Future of Architecture", *Architects' Year Book* 1, no. 1 (1945): 7–10.

7 "Rebuilding Britain".

8 Howard P. Robertson, *Architecture Arising*, 1 ed. (London: Faber & Faber, 1944), 82. The discussions raised by the considerations about the 'common man' were then summarized by labels such as Peoples' Detailing and Townscape.

9 Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism: A Study in the History of Taste* (Boston/New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1914).

10 Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*, vol. 19, Studies of the Warburg Institute (London: Warburg Institute, University of London, 1949).

11 Nikolaus Pevsner, *Art for Everyone: Art and the State* (London: BBC Radio, 16 June 1946).

12 Bertil Hulten, *Building Modern Sweden* (London: Penguin, 1951). During the war, also George Everard Kidder Smith raised the interest of British architects in Sweden with his *Stockholm Builds* (1941). In September 1943 *Architectural Review* dedicated an entire issue to Sweden, edited by the photographer Eric de Maré and entitled "Swedish Peace in War". It showed the possibility of combining traditional materials and a progressive trend capable of overcoming pure Functionalism, through a vernacular and psychological dimension envisaged for the 'humanization' of architecture.

13 Patrick Abercrombie, "Introduction" in Hulten, *Building Modern Sweden*, 3.

The term 'New Humanism', theorized around 1944,[14] was a British response to Alvar Aalto's take against Functionalism[15], and included a wide range of examples of Swedish architecture, founding the basis for what Eric de Maré would assemble in 1947 under the term 'New Empiricism'.[16] However, the 'New Humanism' was not limited to reconsidering Scandinavian inputs. It also converged interests in post-revolution Russian architecture, which since the mid-1930s was dubbed Socialist Realism. The question of Socialist Realism is decisive for the understanding of the ideological substratum that animated the definition of Humanism in the British context. Humanism was hence understood as an alliance between architecture and politics, in the wake of the Russian example: 'Realism demands of the artist constant active participation in the daily activities and the emotions of the people whom he serves … it also implies fundamentally that art is a part of the socialist dynamic.'[17]

Interest in Socialist Realism grew out of seeing architecture as a reflection of political thought, and thus as a means to mend the fracture between art, architecture and politics. The architecture of the Soviet Union was analysed as an experiment of urban and social reconstruction, and thus one that could support the moral assumption that communal and 'human' considerations should be reflected in reconstruction programmes.

Hence 'New Humanism' outlined a synthesis oriented on a Russian-Swedish axis. Its centre was mainly ideological, supported by a political imperative turned into an architectural language capable of overcoming pure functionalism and 'provid[ing] the men in the street with something more genuine'. Therefore, in light of the positions taken by critics in the immediate post-war period, architecture became a political instrument and a vehicle for those civil values that an entire society could share.

The ideological battles of the early 1950s represented a key moment of openness that engendered the proposals of new movements, based on the questioning of International Style principles and the search for an English essence within the Modern Movement. This very same agenda defined the conceptual ground of what can be defined as an aspiration towards a new movement: the New Brutalism. This definition summed up a critical stake that purged the English theoretical tradition of ideological principles, in favour of an essentially ethical position.

The clash of the ideological implications of Socialist Realism with the

14 Herbert Read, "A New Humanism", *Architectural Review* 78 (October 1935): 47–48; "The New Humanism", *Architects' Journal* 96, no. 575 (November 1944): 375–76.

15 Alvar Aalto, "The Humanizing of Architecture", *Architectural Forum* 73 (December 1940): 505–6. In this contribution Aalto articulated the crisis of Functionalism and the consequent search for an architecture responding to human's psychological needs, supporting the possibility of a regionalist interpretation of the Modern Movement. Architectures by Aalto himself, as well as by Gunnar Asplund and Sven Markelius were the core examples that later converged in the definition of New Humanism.

16 Eric de Maré, "The New Empiricism: Sweden Last Style", *Architectural Review* 102, no. 606 (June 1947): 199–204; Eric de Maré, "The Antecedents and Origins of Sweden's Last Style", *Architectural Review* 103, no. 623 (January 1948): 8–22. For a more recent revision of these two definitions, see Joan Ockman, "New Empiricism and New Humanism", DBR 41/42 (winter/spring 2000): 18-21.

17 "Architecture in the USSR", *RIBA Journal* 48 (June 1941): 155–58.

search for a theoretical take defended through the New Humanism or the New Empiricism makes it possible to understand the crucial scope of the New Brutalism. Its origin was in fact at the crossroads of British debates culminating in the definition of new styles, the theoretical urban implications generated by the *Unité d'Habitation* building site in Marseille, and the political positions that dictated the principles of reconstruction.

A whole generation of young architects and critics were opposed to the nostalgic deviation advocated by institutional intellectual circles, such as the editorial staff of *Architectural Review*, and supported an architecture that would become the most eloquent symbol of their rebellion: the *Unité* of Marseille, which in England, and beyond, steered the debate in a completely unexpected way. The *Unité*, which was diametrically opposed to the English New Towns model of Howardian derivation, imposed an ideological dichotomy between 'low-rise' and 'high-rise', between British and international cultures, and between two divergent political visions. Le Corbusier's work sanctioned a specific position in the English architectural debate and became the pretext for an ideological front on which the *Unité* urban model became part of the apologetic rhetoric of the architects who opposed the return of the picturesque, the advent of the Scandinavian model through the New Empiricism and the Soviet reference of the New Humanism.

Subsequently, a strong ideological subdivision developed within the Housing Division of the London County Council, marked by two opposing factions reflecting different generational visions and divergent political and design orientations. The supporters of the Lecorbuserian model, nicknamed 'hards', were politically unaligned and commonly defined as 'non-Marxist';[18] they included architects Alison and Peter Smithson, Colin St. John Wilson, James Stirling, Alan Colquhoun, Peter Carter and the so-called 'AA trio' of Bill Howell, John Killick and Gillian Sarsen. On the other side stood the *Unité*'s detractors, nicknamed 'softs' because they advocated a concept of modernity promoted through a Marxist ideological framework and a 19th-century urban model linked to the brick building tradition and 'low-rise' development; various trends conflated within the 'softs', starting with the Garden City model, to the principles of the New Humanism, New Empiricism, and William Morris Revival, all of which resulted into the prototypes in line with the spirit of the New Towns designed by Cleeve Barr, Rosemary Stjerstedt, Oliver Cox, and Philip Powell.

In the early 1950s, the 'softs' began to criticize the 'hards' by calling their vision of reconstruction 'New Brutalism', a name used within the London County Council to denigrate what was emerging as a new urban model and embodied in the example of *Unité*. The path to the definition of New Brutalism is complex and unexpectedly concerns the cultural trajectory that leads to Scandinavia, always seen by the British in an anti-Lecorbuserian way. All the clues converge to hypothesize that in 1950 the term New Brutalism was already in use according

18 Reyner Banham, "The New Brutalism", *Architectural Review* 118, no. 708 (December 1955): 354–61.

to a particular connotation that found its origin in Sweden.[19]

It is no coincidence that in the summer of 1950 three London County Council members, Oliver Cox, Graeme Shankland and Michael Ventris, who were proponents of the Marxist wing of the New Empiricism and supporters of the Swedish-English cultural connection, visited Hans Asplund, son of the better-known Gunnar Asplund. Several hypotheses support Hans Asplund as author of the definition of what he called 'Neo Brutalism'. Asplund coined the term in January 1950 as a 'sarcastic' reference to the design of Uppsala Villa Göth, the first building ever constructed by Swedish architects Bengt Edman and Lennart Holm, with whom Asplund shared an office space.[20] Under the banner of Neo Brutalism, Asplund intended to criticize the theoretical vision that Edman and Holm imprinted on materials, selected for their characteristic strictly 'simple and pure', and to be used in a 'direct' way.[21] The Villa Göth represented a particular stance on contemporary Swedish architecture, as evidenced by Holm's frequent critical contributions. In 1948 he harshly criticized the contemporary drift of Swedish architecture, to the point of ridiculing New Empiricism as defined by De Maré. The New Empiricism was for Holm the result of 'hallucinations', 'funny episodes' and 'silly generalizations', and evidence of a betrayal of functionalist doctrine owing to a 'sentimental romantic' approach.[22] What emerged, then, through Asplund's sarcastic term, was a contrast between the values of Neo Brutalism and those of New Empiricism.

The export of the term Neo Brutalism from the Swedish context entailed an all-English meaning of New Brutalism, which did not specifically concern the honesty of materials. New Brutalism became a tag charged with the criticism levied by 'softs' against younger generations, whom they considered politically less committed.[23] The origins of the definition of New Brutalism were hence coloured by a passionate discussion about future urban visions, in an open collision between the sentimentality of New Empiricism and the heroic dimension of the *Ville Radieuse*. The terms of the debate conducted within the London County Council demonstrated an active cultural process aimed at a political interpretation of the *Unité*. The report of a 1951 symposium on the latter, organized by London County Council members, stated that 'This building and the ideas

19 The origins of the Swedish definition of New Brutalism are confirmed by a 1956 letter from Hans Asplund to De Maré published in Eric de Maré, "Et tu, Brute?", *Architectural Review* 120, no. 8 (August 1956): 72. However, Banham's assumption is not actually confirmed in the review 'Byggmasteren', in which the definition New Brutalism is not present. In a 7 March 1955 typewritten document, the Smithsons confirmed the existence of a term similar to New Brutalism in use in the Scandinavian countries. The document is in Alison and Peter Smithson Special Collection, Loeb Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, USA, folder E009, and then published in "En Ny Engelsk Skola", *Byggmästaren* 34, no. A6 (5 June 1955): 159–62. This hypothesis is also confirmed by Banham himself in both his 1955 and 1966 contributions, in Banham, "The New Brutalism" and in Reyner Banham, "The polemic before Krushev" in, *The New Brutalism. Ethic or Aesthetic?* (London: Architectural Press, 1966), 11-15. Contemporary historiography also confirms this thesis, starting with Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London, Thames & Hudson, 1980).

20 de Maré, "Et tu, Brute?".

21 A description of the villa is published in "Villa i Uppsala", *Byggmästaren*, no. A12 (December 1952): 256-58. To understand Edman and Holm's vision of materials, see: Bengt Edman and Lennart Holm, "Tegelspråk", Tegel *40*, no. 2 (1950): 46-50.

22 Lennart Holm, "Ideologi Och Form", *Byggmästaren* 27, no. 15 (1948): 264-72.

23 Otto Saumarez Smith, "Graeme Shankland: A Sixties Architect-Planner and the Political Culture of the British Left", *Architectural History* 57 (2014): 393–422.

behind it have probably engendered more heat "for and against" than any other building since the war'.[24]

At the time when the Housing Division of the London County Council was engaged in the design of new residential typologies, the ideological opposition between the Lecorbuserian 'vertical city' model and the 'low-rise' reconstruction of the New Towns resulted in a political clash. The ideologically charged Unité model took on the connotations of a 'symbol of L.C.C. dispute', as John Robert Fourneaux Jordan recalled in April 1952: 'a symbol of a controversy that is splitting the housing and planning division of the London County Council to the point of bloodshed.'[25]

The *Unité* of Marseille was interpreted according to the parameters of the political criticism directed against Le Corbusier. It became an expression of values contrary to the social-democratic model of reconstruction brought back to Howardian theories or Scandinavian examples. The ideological connotations assigned by the 'softs' to the Unité urban model are evident in the considerations of the most conservative members of the London County Council, such as Cleeve Barr, Oliver Cox and Robin Rockel. In pointing out the negative characteristics of the *Unité*, which they described as 'arbitrary', 'monumental' and 'abstract', they advanced a lapidary judgement, stating, '[I]n Moscow Corbusier is accused of Fascist tendencies.'[26] Still alive in the British debate, underlying the accusation of Fascism directed against Le Corbusier, was the cultural trend ascribable to Socialist Realism.

New Empiricism, Marxist ideology, Socialist Realism and the Unité model became the poles of divergence that determined the whole course of the debates of the 1950s and took concrete form in the achievements of the London County Council between 1951 and 1955: on the one hand, in the projects for Ackroydon Estate and Alton East Estate, designed under New Empiricist influence; on the other, in the estates on Bentham Road, Alton West and Loughborough Road, commonly referred to as 'pro-Corbu' and which even Pevsner admitted fell under the label of New Brutalism.[27] The clash of the 'softs' and 'hards' culminated in discussions on the ideological implications of the *Unité*. The 'softs' publicly accused the 'hards', particularly Colin St. John Wilson, who had defended the model of the 'vertical city',[28] of metaphorically 'throwing mud at Stalin' in front of a crowd of one hundred London County Council architects who witnessed a

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24 London County Council Division, "Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation", *Architectural Review* 109 (May 1951): 292–300. A report of the main contributions relating the discussion on Le Corbusier in Britain are collected in, Irena Murray (ed)., *Le Corbusier and Britain: An Anthology* (Abingdon: Oxon, 2009).

25 John Robert Fourneaux Jordan, "Marseille Building Experiment: Symbol of L.C.C. Dispute", *Manchester Guardian*, September 1952. Fourneaux Jordan was described by Banham as 'the most substantial exponent of the Ruskian Left', in Reyner Banham, *Revenge of the Picturesque: English Archtiectural Polemics, 1945-65*, Concerning Architecture: Essays on Architectural Writers and Writing Presented to Nikolaus Pevsner (London: Allen Lane, 1968), 266.

26 London County Council Division, "Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation", 299.

27 Nikolaus Pevsner, "Roehampton, LCC Housing and the Picturesque Tradition", *Architectural Review* 125, no. 750 (July 1959): 21–35.

28 Colin St. John Wilson, "The Vertical City", *The Observer*, 17 February 1952.

sharp polarization: 'Communists versus the rest'.[29]

In this sense, the criticism of the *Unité* by Frederic J. Osborn, promoter of the Garden City Movement and president of the Town and Country Planning Association, focused on one of the principles of the *Ville Radieuse* in order to debunk its urban vision.[30] Osborn bluntly described Le Corbusier's 'vertical city' as a sociological failure owing to 'monumental' and 'colossal' aspects that in his eyes were disproportionate and dictated exclusively by a 'romantic mechanicistic phantasy'. Osborn's criticism revealed to what extent the anti-mechanistic stances of a fringe of 19th-century Marxist culture were still valid in the paradigm of the Howardian 'low-rise' model of land occupation. In the same way, he ridiculed the *pilotis* for their disproportionate dimension, writing, 'The stilts struck me as needlessly swollen, rather brutal, more anxious to demonstrate the colossal quantity of material they are carrying than to 'free the ground'".[31] In associating the adjective 'brutal' with the Lecorbuserian vision, Osborn seemed to confirm the sarcastic tone of the term New Brutalism in London's Marxist circles.

The association of 'brutal' characteristics with the *Unité*'s moral demands was also reaffirmed in a December 1952 article that appeared in *The Times* under, in this context, a telling title: 'Radiant City Lawsuit. Complaint of Brutal Realism'.[32] The article briefly discussed the international controversy surrounding the *Unité* and reported on Le Corbusier's trial acquittal from charges brought against him by the Société pour l'Esthétique Générale de la France, which had declared the *Unité* contrary to French morality. The 'brutal' values undermining traditional aesthetic canons resounded in the framework of the ideological debates over the reconstruction in which the respective supporters of the Garden City, Scandinavian New Empiricism, and Le Corbusier's *Unité* participated. The 'brutal realism' confirmed the climax of associations that would lead within a year to a clarification of all the criticism associated with the *Unité* under the definition of New Brutalism. Leading this clarification were the Smithsons, for whom *The Times* article played a decisive role.[33]

The New Brutalism: 'A Term of Communist Abuse'

The definition of New Brutalism which became famous is not the sarcastic

29 Banham, "The New Brutalism", 356; see also Sarah Menin and Steven Kite (ed.), *An Architecture of Invitation* (London: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005); Stephen Kite, "Softs and Hards: Colin St. John Wilson and the Contested Vision of 1950s London", in Mark Crinson and Claire Zimmerman (ed.), *Neo-Avant-Garde and Postmodern. Postwar Architecture in Britain and Beyond* (London: YC British Art, 2010): 55-78.

30 Frederic J. Osborn, "Concerning Le Corbusier. Part I", *Town & Country Planning* 20, no. 99 (July 1952): 311–16; Frederic J. Osborn, "Concerning Le Corbusier. Part II", *Town & Country Planning* 20, no. 100 (August 1952): 359–63.

31 Osborn, "Concerning Le Corbusier. Part I".

32 "Radiant City Lawsuit: Complaint of Brutal Realism", *The Times*, December 4, 1952.

33 The article is kept in the Smithsons archives, Alison and Peter Smithson Special Collection, Loeb Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, USA, folder G059. In 1966 Alison pointed out that the origin of the definition of New Brutalism came from reading an article published in the *Times*. Jeremy Baker, "A Smithson File", Arena, Architectural Association Journal 82, no. special issue (February 1966); Alison and Peter Smithson, "Banham's Bumper Book on Brutalism, Discussed by Alison and Peter Smithson", *Architects' Journal* 144, no. 26 (28 December 1966): 1590–91.

one born in the London County Council circle, but the one based on the short publication authored by the Smithsons in 1953[34] and, above all, on Banham's 1955 article, 'The New Brutalism'.[35] When, in December 1953, Alison Smithson publicly used the term New Brutalism for the first time to describe the unbuilt design for the House in Soho, the term's ideological connotations disappeared and the debate was refocused on architectural issues.[36] In her brief description, probably co-authored with Peter Smithson, Alison Smithson confirmed the desire to root the New Brutalism in the principles of English culture and the tradition of bricks and craft, but to revise them in the light of a synthesis of different contemporary cultural and artistic impulses. In essence, architecture was reduced to a simple 'structure exposed entirely'. Its radicalism consisted of domesticity conceived 'without internal finishes' and with visible ducts. The New Brutalism in its first definition infers, in the abolition of the differences between inside and outside, a roughness capable of overcoming the conventions of the domestic environment.

Whilst for the Smithsons the New Brutalism was a firm a-political stance, Banham considered its origin in the wake of controversy and discussion among the various factions of the London County Council. 'It was somewhere in this vigorous polemic that the term The New Brutalism was first coined,' he affirmed in 1955 after summarizing the different ideological positions of the British debates.[37]

The understanding of the origins of the New Brutalism in England cannot be separated from the committed intentions underlying Banham's role to promote and support the Smithsons. In fact, Banham's article is undeniably a manifesto of precise cultural and critical thinking, reflecting the debates and controversies that characterized London in the 1950s. Different ideologies and cultural epicentres were evoked in the article, ranging from the genesis of New Art History, to the experience of the Independent Group, to the technological-fantastic universe of the Futurists or American mass consumer products. The crucial epicentre in the context of the article was London's academic and cultural world, to which Banham undoubtedly belonged, and which resonated in some of his positions. His most radical criticism was against the 'softs' and 'Professor Wittkower' with his book *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*. These were the poles of the debate that help to understand the ideological scope repeatedly evoked and placed at the origin of the New Brutalism.

'The New Brutalism' could even be considered Banham's manifesto against a forced alignment of a political orientation with an architectural style, as well as against the abuse of academic and historical references. Indeed, Banham

34 P.D.S. [Alison Smithson], "House in Soho", *Architectural Design* 23, no. 12 (December 1953): 342. The article was authored by Alison, as she made clear in 1966: "The piece was initialed A.M.S. in typescript, but this was mistranscribed, in error or as an anti-feminist editorial gesture, as P.D.S. This is how one comes to found a movement." in Smithson, *Banham's bumper book on brutalism, discussed by Alison and Peter Smithson*.

35 Banham, "The New Brutalism".

36 P.D.S. [Alison Smithson], "House in Soho".

37 Banham, "The New Brutalism".

made clear since the beginning of the article that what seemed to have shaped the origin of New Brutalism was exactly the 'new battle of styles', characteristic of the early post-war years, which entailed the association of political ideologies with architectural values. Banham took a precise position against the 'softs', those who, according to him, had reduced New Brutalism to an ironic category in order to mock a specific trend of the Modern Movement and profess a new picturesque and vernacular architecture dictated by a certain interpretation of the British Marxist ideal.

Banham confirmed the Swedish origin of the New Brutalism and the ideological opposition that this term engendered amongst the participants in the London debates:

> There is a persistent belief that the word Brutalism (or something like it) had appeared in the English Summaries in an issue of Bygg-Mastaren published late in 1950. The reference cannot now be traced, and the story must be relegated to that limbo of Modern Movement demonology where Swedes, Communists and the Town and Country Planning Association are bracketed together as different isotopes of the common 'Adversary'.

The intent underlying Banham's article was twofold: to historicize the phenomenon of New Brutalism, by acknowledging several chronological phases linked to precise references and debates; and to clarify and articulate the phenomenon in order to make it operational. Banham expressed this dual intention through a liberation of the definition, first from its ideological components and, second, from the discipline of stylistic categories.

While recognizing the disparaging origin of the definition of New Brutalism, Banham intended to release the term from any political connotations and redeem it from any negative assumptions derived from the disengaged nature proposed by the Smithsons. In particular, Banham targeted Marxist ideology, of which the 'People's Architecture', the influence of Socialist Realism summarized by the definition of New Humanism, and the enthusiasm for Swedish architecture had become synonyms. What Banham criticized was not Marxist political ideology itself, in which he recognized some valid ethical arguments, but its declination into a series of retrograde and conservative architectural styles, belonging to an outdated political line rooted in 19th-century Marxist doctrine, outmoded even in contemporary Soviet Union. Banham retraced the salient moments of this controversy, lashing out the communist wing of the London County Council, calling their operation a 'Communist abuse':

> [New Brutalism] was, in the beginning, a term of Communist abuse, and it was intended to signify the normal vocabulary of Modern Architecture—flat roofs, glass, exposed structure—considered as morally reprehensible deviations from 'The New Humanism,' a phrase which means something different in Marxist hands to the meaning which might be expected. The New Humanism meant, in architecture at that time, brickwork, segmental arches, pitched roofs, small windows (or small panes at any rate)—pictur-

> esque detailing without picturesque planning. It was, in fact, the so-called 'William Morris Revival', now happily defunct, since Kruschev's reversal of the Party's architectural line, though this reversal has, of course, taken the guts out of subsequent polemics. But it will be observed that The New Humanism was again a quasi-historical concept, oriented, however spuriously, toward that mid-nineteenth century epoch which was Marxism's Golden Age, when you could recognise a capitalist when you met him.

Banham's criticism towards Communists circles and his interests in the aesthetics and expendability of American consumer goods, in which he saw the democratization of design, may suggest an ambiguous political orientation. Only in the 1960s Banham clearly revealed a 'Left-oriented' political tendency, even though he was openly opposed to loyal adherence to dogmatic positions.[38] He confessed his ambivalent political orientation in a 1964 article, in which he explained the links between his passion for Pop and his political views:

> Now if this is where we came from, it left us in a very peculiar position, vis-à-vis the normal divisions of English culture, because we had this American leaning and yet most of us are in some way Left-oriented, even protest-oriented … people whose lightweight culture was American in derivation, and yet, in spite of that, were and are, of the Left, of the protesting sections of the public. It gives us a curious set of divided loyalties. We dig Pop which is acceptance-culture, capitalistic, and yet in our formal politics, if I may use the phrase, most of us belong very firmly on the other side'.[39]

In this sense, Banham operated an engaged criticism aimed at reversing hierarchies and established moral values as a deliberate discursive strategy against a culture invaded by the spectre of ideology. Even if his political views remained silent, in his articles clearly emerged his active role in promoting and intellectually framing anti-establishment groups such as the Independent Group, or 'antagonist' architects such as the Smithsons. Banham's committed criticism and political orientation was later confirmed by his wife Mary Banham, who recalled that 'he was a supporter of the Labour party all his life. There was a long family tradition of left-wing politics.'[40]

Banham's cultural line is thus recognisable as an anti-establishment 'lone voice', typically hostile and subversive towards even the institutions with which he collaborated, such as the Institute of Contemporary Art directed by Herbert Read or the conservatism of *Architectural Review*.[41] For the purpose of entangling the hidden links between ideology and the New Brutalism's trajectory, what is important to note is the declared coincidence between the 'non-Marxist'

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38 For Banham's political views, see Adrian Forty, "Reyner Banham, 'One Partially Americanized European'", in Louise Campbell (ed.), *Twentieth-Century Architecture and Its Histories*, (London: Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain, 2000): 195–205.

39 Reyner Banham, "The Atavism of the Short-distance Mini-Cyclist", in *Living Arts* 3 (1963): 91-97.

40 Mary Banham, interviewed by Corinne Julius, *National Life Story Collection: Architects' Lives*, British Library Oral History, 2001, part 10/19.

41 Nigel Whiteley, *Reyner Banham: Historian of the Immediate Future* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002).

position, the origins of New Brutalism's definition, and the interest not only in Le Corbusier but more precisely in his *béton brut* and the artistic constellations rooted in that technique, including Art Brut. 'Among the non-Marxist grouping,' Banham wrote, 'there was no particular unity of programme or intention, but there was a certain community of interests, a tendency to look toward Le Corbusier, and to be aware of something called le *concrete brut* … and, in the case of the more sophisticated and aesthetically literate, to know of the Art Brut of Jean Dubuffet and his connection in Paris.'[42]

Ethics vs. Politics

The definition of New Brutalism, purged of ideological attributes and declined by Banham in a series of principles, was further reworked by other critics with the intention of inferring operational principles that contributed to the affirmation of a style. Precisely against this possible stylistic drift, the Smithsons intervened in 1957 with a note to affirm the ethical essence of New Brutalism and to reiterate the need to consider that definition as a dynamic device irreducible to canons or dogmas.[43] The affirmation of New Brutalism against a possible stylistic drift was based, on the one hand, on an ethical stance, and on the other on the poetics of 'as found'. The concept of 'as found', as theorized by the Smithsons, prevents with its intrinsic mechanism the translation of architectural choices into a recognizable style linked to a-priori forms and the use of a single material. The Smithsons conceived their concept of 'as found' as the bearer of a decisive ethical component: the rediscovery of 'quality' and 'honesty' of materials, which coincided with the 1950s phenomenon that the Smithsons described as an inclusive 'arrival of the raw: raw brick, raw block, raw steel, raw paint, raw marble, raw gold, raw lacquer.'[44] The moral responsibility of New Brutalism appears in the words of the Smithsons as the necessity to consider 'the whole problem of human associations and the relationship that buildings and community form has to them.'[45] This statement implies a critical vision in which architecture, as a form of culture, encompasses social patterns and political processes.

It should also be stressed that the definition of New Brutalism was considered by the Smithsons not as a static entity, but as an evolving concept. The typescript for their January 1955 manifesto, in fact, read this way: 'New Brutalism looks for roots not in a past style:life:philosophy, but in this moment of life. It will take many forms because of this finding moment'.[46] The Smithsons brought the

42 Banham, "The New Brutalism", 356.

43 Alison and Peter Smithson, "The New Brutalism: Alison and Peter Smithson Answer the Criticism on the Opposite Page", *Architectural Design* 27, no. 4 (April 1957): 113.

44 Peter Smithson, untitled typewritten document in preparation for the book The 1930s, dated: 'date unknown, probably '60s'. *Quoted in Dirk van den Heuvel, Alison and Peter Smithson: A Brutalist Story, Involving the House, the City and the Everyday (Plus a Couple of Other Things)*, PhD Thesis (Delft, TU Delft, 2013): 179.

45 Alison and Peter Smithson, "The New Brutalism: Alison and Peter Smithson Answer the Criticism on the Opposite Page".

46 Alison and Peter Smithson, Untitled Document, October 2, 1954, E009, Alison and Peter Smithson Special Collection, Loeb Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, USA. The document was prepared for the editorial in *Architectural Design* 26, no. 1 (January 1955): 1.

debate back to ethical principles and to a conception of New Brutalism as an intention, an attitude and a much more complex device that could not be limited to the expression of exposed concrete. For this reason, the concept of 'real architecture' and the need to affirm a 'new attitude' consisting of a 'non-classical aesthetic' was often reaffirmed by them as a bulwark against stylistic drifts. With this stance it is clear that for the Smithsons New Brutalism did not consist of a revolutionary action against traditional canons, but rather of the evolution of the principles of the first Modern Movement. Any other declination would have entailed the risk, as they noted, of reducing that 'attitude' to a 'style'. 'Up to now,' they stated, 'Brutalism has been discussed stylistically, whereas its essence is ethical.'[47]

For the Smithsons the ethical essence of architecture consisted of a concept they summed up in an anti-historicist statement: 'Brutalist to us meant "Direct". To others it came to be a synonym for rough, crude, oversized and using beams three times thicker than necessary. Brutalism was opposite, necessary to suit the new situation.'[48] In their view, an architecture defined as 'direct' entailed a dualism that expressed a maximum fidelity to the nature of materials, and encouraged the search for a specific response to a specific case and discouraged the concept of an a priori architecture. The ethical essence of New Brutalism therefore consisted in the absolute coherence between the construction system and the expression of the building, and in contemporary techniques combined with a necessary social responsibility that extended to urban planning. 'From individual buildings … we moved on to an examination of the whole problem of human associations and the relationship that building and community has to them.'[49] That New Brutalism was destined for an ethical and social dimension capable of transcending the limits of the individual building would be revealed in 1959, when the Smithsons declared, 'The essential ethic of brutalism is in town planning.'[50]

For Banham, New Brutalism continued, even during the 1960s, to presuppose first and foremost a critical and subversive reaction to the establishment. 'The Brutalists … are neither leftish nor insular,' he stated in 1961, specifying that 'the first target of the Brutalists could not have been more specifically leftish and insular—the so-called William Morris Revival.'[51] What allows the definition of New Brutalism to take a radical position, 'overriding [a] gentlemen's agreement',[52] is precisely the attack against the political control of artistic expressions established by London's cultural elites, which Banham defined as a 'local variant

47 Alison and Peter Smithson, "The New Brutalism: Alison and Peter Smithson Answer the Criticism on the Opposite Page".

48 Baker, "A Smithson File": 183.

49 Alison and Peter Smithson, "The New Brutalism: Alison and Peter Smithson Answer the Criticism on the Opposite Page".

50 Alison and Peter Smithson, Jane Drew, Maxwell Fry, "Conversation on Brutalism", Zodiac 4 (April 1959): 73–81.

51 Reyner Banham, "The World of the Brutalists. Opinion & Intention in British Architecture, 1951-60", *Texas Quarterly* 4, no. 3 (Fall 1961): 129–38.

52 [Reyner Banham], "School at Hunstanton", *Architectural Review* 116, no. 693 (September 1954): 150–62.

of Zhdanov's Social Realism',[53] referring to the canons drawn up by Andrej Aleksandrovič Zhdanov for the control of Soviet cultural production in the late 1940s. Only the 'moral load' of the first Modern Movement, expressed through truth to structure and materials, could redeem an architecture otherwise dissipated in continuous revivals. 'If a piece of steel appeared to hold something up,' Banham wrote, 'then it did; if a wall was made of brick then it showed on both sides, no plaster, no paint; if water came from a tap it got there through a visible pipe.'[54]

In the theory of New Brutalism enunciated by Banham, alongside the truth to structure and materials—summarized by the formula 'as found'—composition became a crucial step to counteracting the 'leftish' vision, crystallized in the recovery of the Picturesque and expressed through an 'informality of plan' that for Banham took on the features of a 'soft-touch architecture'. In the phase identified as 'early Brutalism', Banham recognized a 'demand for more formal design' that had prompted the Smithsons to take an interest in Wittkower's diagrams and Rowe's subsequent readings, from which the composition of symmetrical and 'compact' plans, such as those of the school in Hunstanton and the House in Soho, derived.

Precisely this 'formal legibility of plan', elected by Banham as the first quality of the early stages of New Brutalism, became the conceptual fulcrum against which he expressed his fiercest criticism. In contrast to the 'formal' aspects, Banham supported a cultural and artistic agenda against the traditional canons of beauty, defended by London's socialist cultural elite, defined in a mocking manner as 'Anglo-pink intelligentsia'. Concepts such as 'anti-art' and 'anti-beauty' allowed the emancipation from pure geometry and the evolution of composition towards an 'a-formalism' informed by recourse to 'topology.'

All of Banham's reasoning on New Brutalism leads to the conclusion that traditional academic principles are outdated. His criticism was aimed at prompting an architecture open to the invention of a new form of modernity, in which the 'plan' was replaced by the concept of 'image' and the structure by a matrix of relationship, while the materials were innervated by the anti-artistic principle of 'as found'.[55] Only through these three principles could the architecture of New Brutalism, according to Banham, succeed in overcoming the historicist components evoked by Wittkower or Pevsner, and free itself from the dogmas of an ideological and political vision.

The act of replacing political attributes with ethical ones was reiterated by

53 It is to note that Banham here misused the term "Social Realism". "Social Realism" refers to an artistic current that took hold internationally around the 1930s and that focused on the depiction of the "real" problems of the working class. "Socialist Realism", instead, was the official aesthetic doctrine of the Soviet Union from the 1930s to the mid-1950s.

54 Banham, "The World of the Brutalists. Opinion & Intention in British Architecture, 1951-60".

55 'The definition of a New Brutalist building derived from Hunstanton and Yale Art Centre, above, must be modified so as to exclude formality as a basic quality if it is to cover future developments and should more properly read: I, Memorability as an Image; 2, Clear exhibition of Structure; and 3, Valuation of Materials "as found." Remembering that an Image is what affects the emotions, that structure, in its fullest sense, is the relationship of parts, and that materials "as found" are raw materials' (Banham, "The New Brutalism", 361).

Banham in his famous 1966 *The New Brutalism. Ethic or Aesthetic?*, a book whose subtitle already poses the emblematic question about the relationship between ethics and aesthetics.[56] Banham framed the New Brutalism discourse in the light of a generational clash and particularly in response to the 'Communist doctrine' and the positions of his master Pevsner. According to Banham, Pevsner was the spokesman for a 'purely visual' recovery of the historicist elements of the English Picturesque, in virtue of the 'firm tradition of British Liberalism, democracy and common law.'[57]

Although some principles of the English New Brutalism took up concepts or models advanced by figures like Pevsner and Richards—such as the 'warehouse aesthetic' or the principle of 'judge every case on its merits'—what Banham emphasized was the desire of the new generation led by the Smithsons to found new principles in order to radically respond to the question of reconstruction. The 1946 New Town Plan, the 1951 Festival of Britain, the various historicist revivals advocated by *Architectural Review* seemed in the Smithsons' eyes provincial attempts to reiterate a fictitious image of a traditional England, destroyed by the tragedy of war, through sentimentality and nostalgic compromises. As Banham wrote, 'It seemed of absolutely trivial value to a younger generation to whom the given elements of the planning situation seemed to be social chaos, a world in ruins, the prospect of nuclear annihilation, and what appeared to be a complete abandonment of architectural standards on the part of their elders.'[58]

Banham's book also helped to clarify some of the Smithsons' cryptic claims. For example, 'architecture needs to be objective about reality' should be understood, Banham explained, as a desire to free architecture from political and ideological dogmas that clash with the great course of international architecture marked by the masters of the Modern Movement. 'Like many others of their age,' Banham wrote, 'they [the Smithsons] were trying to see their world whole and see it true, without the interposition of diagrammatic political categories, exhausted "progressive" notions or prefabricated aesthetic preferences.'[59] The need to deduce architecture 'as a direct result of a way of life' contributed to a new aesthetic of everyday life that admitted disparate and sometimes subversive influences, ranging from vernacular to pop, as well as a renewed technological consciousness of the 'second machine age,' once again purged of ideological instances. Through the enhancement of technological processes, considered by Banham to be 'morally, socially and politically neutral',[60] the architecture of New Brutalism could eventually free itself from political dogmas.

Banham's fascination with American commodities, cars and the multidisciplinary and subversive universe staged in the exhibition 'Parallel of Life and Art'

56 Reyner Banham, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?*.

57 Banham, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?*, 11.

58 Banham, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?*, 12.

59 Banham, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?*, 47.

60 Reyner Banham, "On Trial 5: The Spec Builders—Towards a Pop Architecture", *Architectural Review* (July 1962): 42.

became a polemical act against the Left:

> 'Not only were "progressive" habits of thought still dominated by older, anti-American members of the Left, but from the time of Sigfried Giedion's book "Mechanisation takes Command", or even earlier, the styling of US commercial products had been specifically regarded as "bad design", so that to admire it in public was to adopt an anti-conformist or "angry young man", attitude. But for those whose views had not been polarised by the politics of the Cold War (or the politics of Modern Architecture) it was possible to admire the Cadillac or Plymouth for non-polemical reasons.'[61]

The phenomenon of New Brutalism culminated for Banham in the dead-end dilemma expressed in the book's subtitle. In an attempt to provide an answer to the emblematic battle between ethic and aesthetics, Banham could not but admit, with disappointment, that, at the end of the 1960s, Brutalism was reduced to 'just an affair of exposed concrete', consumed in the reiteration of the Lecorbuserian model. Despite Smithsons' heroic attempt not to crystallize New Brutalism into a style, and despite Banham's recognition that 'the ethic behind the aesthetic was British', ultimately 'it was Le Corbusier who printed his personal style upon the word'.[62] Among the various values that Banham recognized to New Brutalism only ethics resisted, the only bulwark erected against the conservative ideology of a Left with values that Banham continued to consider retrograde. 'The face of the world does not conform to the Brutalist aesthetic,' he wrote, 'but the conscience of the world's architecture has been permanently enriched by the Brutalist ethic.'

61 Banham, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?*, 63.

62 Banham, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?*, 75.

1

Fig. 1

Peter Reyner Banham, Nikolaus Pevsner and John Summerson. from: Nikolaus Pevsner, "Modern Architecture and the Historian, or the Return of Historicism", RIBA Journal, April 1961.

2

Fig. 2

Reyner Banham the 'lone voice' crossing the desert

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Guanghui Ding

Constructing a Constellation of Architecture Criticism in 1980s China: Zeng Zhaofen and a Tale of Two Journals

Architecture Criticism, Zeng Zhaofen, Jiànzhúshī (The Architect), Shìjiè Jiànzhú (World Architecture), Constellation, China.

/Abstract

In 1980, Zeng Zhaofen, an academic at Tsinghua University, co-founded *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* (World Architecture), a journal devoted to introducing global architecture to China. While steering the journal's operations by editing articles and organizing academic activities during his editorship (1980–1995), Zeng seldom published architecture criticism in his own periodical, but rather did so in the journal's local rival, *Jiànzhúshī* (The Architect). His writings, with their strongly committed, political and operative tendencies, became one of the leading voices advocating for abstract modernism in 1980s China. This essay uses Zeng's critical activities of writing and editing as a vehicle to examine the conditions of possibility for journal culture and architecture criticism. It argues that Zeng's works associated with the two journals maintained a special character as a constellation through juxtaposing multiple texts, architects, projects, and ideas and presenting coherent positions within an underlying structuralized pattern—reconstructing the repressed discourse of modernism. The historical appearance of this intellectual constellation was dependent on a vibrant ecosystem of architecture criticism that reached its heyday in the 1980s, characterized by the dynamic and productive interactions between critics, editors, architects, and other stakeholders in a relaxed socio-political climate.

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In 1995, the architecture critic Zeng Zhaofen made his final contribution as chief editor to the journal he had co-founded in 1980, *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* (World Architecture). He described with regret the sharp contrast between the prosperity of architectural creation and the silence of architectural theory and criticism that then prevailed in the field of architecture in China.[1] He noted that engaging in theoretical work inevitably led to poverty and neglect, and that scholarship could only be published at the author's own expense.[2] The reality is that few people were devoted to pursuing purely theoretical work. Owing to the omnipresence of economic pragmatism and uneven social development, the situation of architectural theory and criticism that Zeng described as withering at that time has not improved much today. Behind the prosperity of material production lies a crisis of discursive practices that is embodied in the barren landscape of architectural theory and criticism.

In quantitative terms, the silence of theory and criticism is in sharp contrast to the dynamics of material practice. Although professional journals are still the main platform and driving force for architecture criticism, the appearance of social media—or the digital revolution—has greatly changed the ways in which information is communicated and disseminated.[3] The popularity of information-sharing websites full of a large number of descriptive design introductions (*shèjì shuōmíng*) has also modified how professional architects and students of architecture access building resources. Architecture criticism has become increasingly overwhelmed by introductory texts released by design firms to promote their reputation. In qualitative terms, media reports and articles in periodicals have become homogenized and convergent in their opinions.

In the Chinese cultural context, the recent decades have witnessed the proliferation of architecture criticism in scholarly and professional journals, contributed by qualified academics and architects who often work as part-time critics and write design appraisals for familiar architects.[4] However, architecture criticism with a committed attitude, politicized position, and "operative" tendency is quite rare.[5] Why does such criticism matter? How can it be produced in contemporary social and academic contexts? To answer these questions, in this essay I investigate the conditions for the possibility of effectively producing architecture criticism in 1980s China, the period that marked a golden age

1 Zeng Zhaofen, "Chénji yǔ fánróng" [Silence and Prosperity], *Shìjiè Jiànzhú*, no. 2 (1995): 27–30, 60.

2 Ibid., 27.

3 In contemporary China, there are no professional architecture critics who write regularly for a major newspaper. People engaged in architecture criticism are predominately architects or academics.

4 For a brief summary of the condition of architecture criticism in China, see Zhu Jianfei, "Zǒuxiàng yīgè běntǔ de zhōngguó jiànzhú pīpíng: héjìngtáng, shèjì yuàn, dìyuán guānxì jí gètǐ—jítǐ hùnhé dònglì jīzhì" [Towards a Grounded Approach in Architectural Criticism in/on China: A Case Study on He Jingtang, the Design Institute, Geographic Relations and an Individual-Collective Hybridization], *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, 1 (2018): 6-12.

5 Tafuri had critiqued "operative criticism", an ideologically instrumental writing on architecture by well-established architectural historians such as Sigfried Giedion and Bruno Zevi. See Manfredo Tafuri, *Theories and History of Architecture*, trans. Giorgio Verrecchia (London: Granada, 1980), 141. For a detailed analysis on Tafuri's position, see Mark Wigley, "Post-operative History," ANY 25/26 (2000): 47-53; Susan Carty Piedmont, "Operative Criticism," *Journal of Architectural Education*, 40:1(1986): 8-13, DOI: 10.1080/10464883.1986.11102649

of architecture criticism.[6] In doing so, I focus specifically on Zeng Zhaofen's editing/publishing/writing practices, using his work associated with the journal *Jiànzhúshī* as a vehicle and taking his own journal *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* as a comparative reference, to examine the dynamic interaction between journal publication and architecture criticism.

Zeng (1935-2020) belonged to a group of emerging architects, critics, and intellectuals who were educated before the Cultural Revolution (1966–76). After graduating from the South China Institute of Technology in 1960, he was assigned to Tsinghua University, but his teaching career was interrupted and repressed by the socio-political turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s. His critical activities were partly influenced by his colleague, Zhou Buyi, who had trained in the United States.[7] In the 1950s, Zhou published a few articles promoting modernism and criticizing the domestic trend of eclecticism (for this reason, he was labeled a "rightist" and later persecuted); these were arguably some of the earliest pieces of architecture criticism to appear in Mao's China.[8] Zeng's other colleague Chen Zhihua was a renowned architectural historian and a prolific critic whose writings focused primarily on the social dimensions of architectural production while critiquing power domination, social injustice, and uneven development.[9] What made Zeng's criticism relevant to this essay is that he determinedly promoted young architects, advocated for modernist aesthetics, and criticized the eclecticism (*fùgǔ zhǔyì*) once practiced by established architects and supported by local officials. His often deeply grounded and passionate reviews made him one of the most influential architecture critics of his generation.

The study of writing and publishing practices has recently received growing scholarly attention in China, exemplified by the fact that several academic journals such as *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* (2014/08, edited by Zhang Li), *Jiànzhúshī* (2019/05, by Li Ge) and *Jiànzhú Xuebào* (Architectural Journal, 2020/11, by Huang Juzheng) had published special issues to examine the approaches, tools, principles, and practices of architecture criticism.[10] These valuable works reflected the interest, anxiety, dissatisfaction and expectation of committed editors,

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6 Compared with the condition of political repression in the 1960s and 1970s and of overwhelming commodification in the 1990s, intellectual debate arguably reached a peak in the 1980s, as the growing number of academic publications testified to this observation.

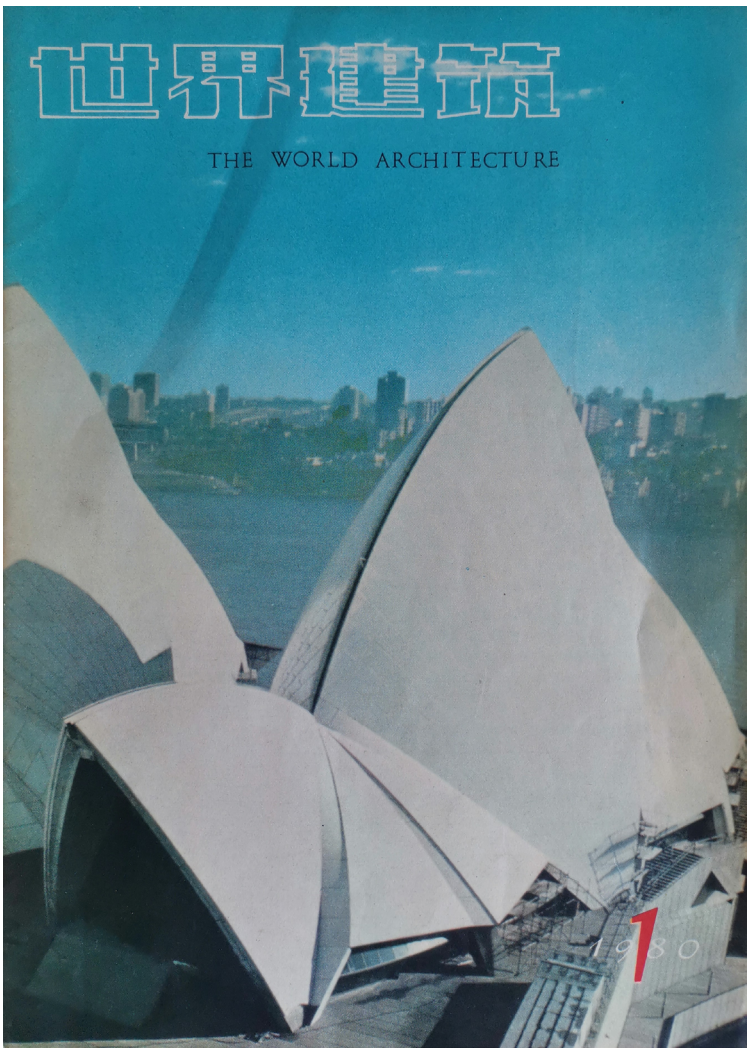
7 Zhou Buyi (1915-2003) studied architecture at the Central University in Nanjing before receiving master degrees from the University of Illinois in 1948 and Columbia University in 1949. He taught at Tsinghua University since 1950 and founded in 1982 the Architecture Department at Huazhong Institute of Technology in Wuhan.

8 The intellectual interactions between Zhou Buyi and Zeng Zhaofen are evident from Zhou having written the foreword to Zeng's 1989 anthology and Zeng having edited Zhou's anthology, which was published in 2003. See Zeng Zhaofen, *Chuàngzuò yǔ xíngshì: dāngdài zhōngguó jiànzhú pínglùn* [Design and Style: On Contemporary Chinese Architecture], with a foreword by Zhou Buyi (Tianjin: Tianjin Science and Technology Press, 1989); Zhou Buyi, *Zhōubǔyí wénjí* [Anthology of Zhou Buyi], Zeng Zhaofen, ed. (Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 2003).

9 Chen Zhihua, *Běichuāng zájì* [Miscellaneous Notes Taken by the North Window], (Zhengzhou: Henan Science and Technology Press, 2007).

10 Zhang Lufeng, "Jiànzhú pínglùn xiě gěi shéi kàn" [For Whom Is Architecture Criticism Written], *Shìjiè Jiànzhú*, no. 8 (2014): 76-77; Li Hua and Shen Yang, "Gàiniàn biànxī: jiànzhú pínglùn de sībiàn shíjiàn" [Conceptual Analysis: A Practice of Analytic Thinking for Architectural Criticism], *Jiànzhúshī*, no. 201 (2019): 4-5; Zhou Rong, "Zǒuxiàng 'xīn pīpíng': dāngdài jiànzhú pínglùn de jiàzhí tǐrèn, zhìshí fèngōng yǔ rènwù dìngwèi" [Towards "New Criticism" Value Identification, Intellectual Specialization and Mission Orientation of Contemporary Architectural Criticism], *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, 11 (2020): 1-5; Jin Qiuye, "Dǎpò fānlí bǎochí jùlí-zài tán jiànzhú pínglùn hé jiànzhú shíjiàn de guānxì" [Breaking Boundaries While Keeping Distance: On the Relationship between Architectural Criticism and Architectural Practice], *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, 11 (2020): 13-18.

critics and academics towards architectural writing. Similarly, the study of magazine culture has also expanded significantly, as demonstrated in a number of doctoral dissertations and published books.[11] Aside from these monographic researches, the study of periodicals is often bound up with the fifth or tenth anniversary celebration of specific journals, which commissioned relevant scholars and architects to summarize the periodical's academic and professional contribution through textual, image and editorial analysis.[12] Diverging from existing, separated study on architecture criticism and journal culture, this essay uses the works of Zeng Zhaofen, whose writing and editing practices were closely related to *Jiànzhúshī* and *Shìjiè Jiànzhú*, as a case study to examine the differential roles of periodicals in engaging with architecture criticism.[13] Despite the neglect of his voice in the twentieth-first century (thanks to the emergence of a new generation of Chinese architects and critics), the re-assessment of his critical projects in the 1980s could help readers to understand the dynamic intellectual interactions in building, writing, and publishing practices in the Chinese/East Asian cultural context.[14]



1

Architecture Periodicals in 1980s China

The emergence of architecture periodicals in 1980s China can be considered a product of the decade-long social, economic, political, cultural, and ideological reform. The first issue of the journal *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* appeared in August 1980, just one year after the third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, which marked the beginning of China's Reform and Opening-up program **[Fig. 1]**. Based in the Department of Architecture

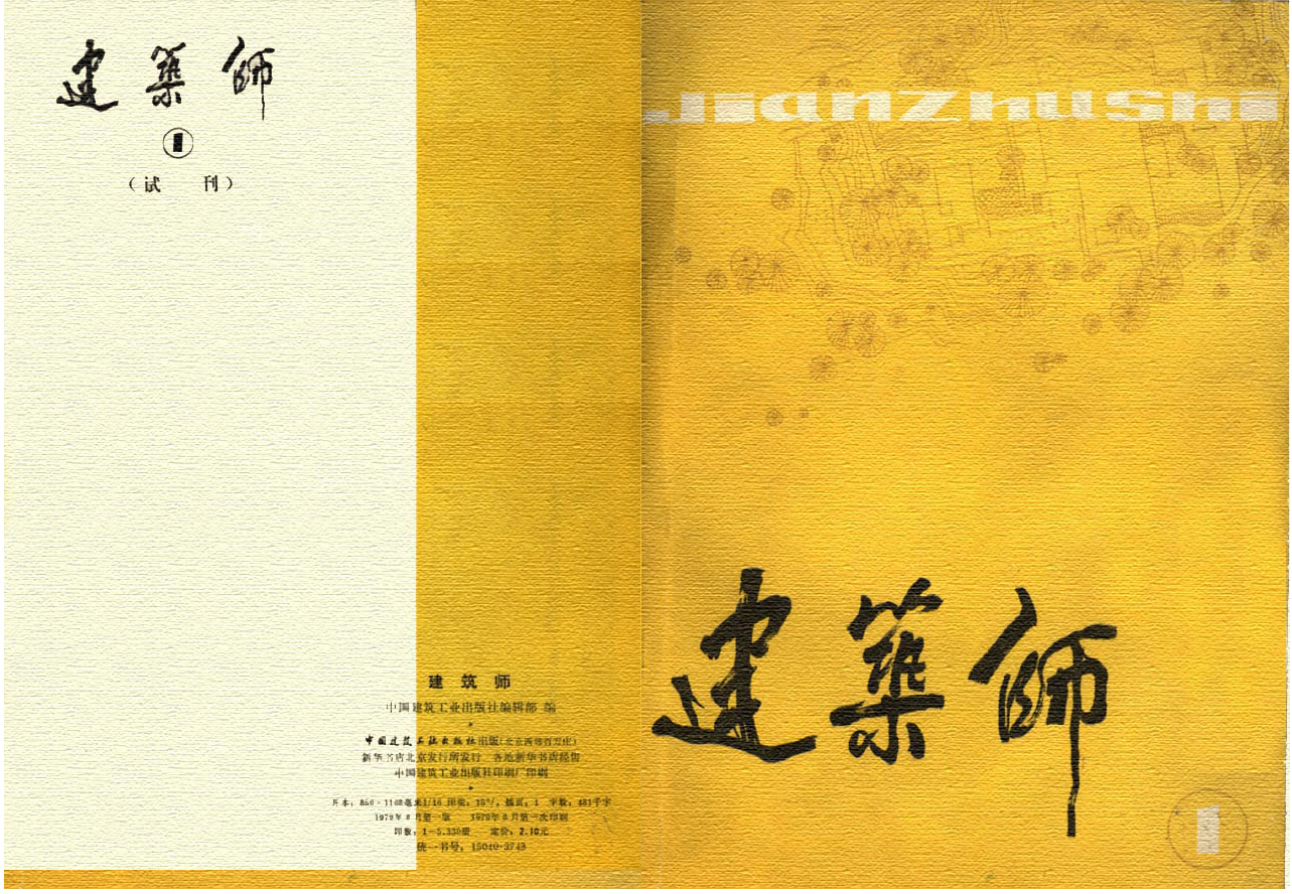
11 Liu Yuan, *Zhōngguó (dàlù dìqū) jiànzhú qíkān yánjiū* [A Study on the Architectural Periodicals in Mainland China], Ph.D. diss., South China University of Technology, 2007; Guanghui Ding, *Constructing a Place of Critical Architecture in China: Intermediate Criticality in the Journal* Time + Architecture (London and New York: Routledge, 2016).

12 See the special issues published by *Jiànzhú Xuebào* (2014/11) and *Jiànzhúshī* (2019/04).

13 Li Lingyan, "Méijiè shíjiàn shìjiǎo xià jiànzhú zhuānyè qíkān duìyú zhōngguó dāngdài jiànzhú pīpíng de zuòyòng yánjiū, 1980-1989" [Research on the Role of Architectural Journals in Chinese Contemporary Architectural Criticism from the Perspective of Media Practice, 1980-1989], *Shídài Jiànzhú*, no. 5 (2018): 140-144.

14 Although Zeng's editing and writing activities continued into the 1990s and even 2000s, in this essay I only focus on the 1980s, precisely because his works of this period reverberated through the dynamic landscape of intellectual and professional practices of contemporary Chinese architecture.

Fig. 1
The cover of *Shìjiè Jiànzhú*, 1980, no. 1



| 2

at Tsinghua University in Beijing, it was co-edited by Lv Zengbiao, Tao Dejian, and Zeng Zhaofen, and directed by their senior colleague Wang Tan.[15] Before its appearance, the department had already published several volumes of collected essays penned and translated by Tsinghua academics. Just several months before the establishment of *Shìjiè Jiànzhú, Jiànzhúshī* journal was launched by Yang Yongsheng and Wang Boyang for the China Architecture and Building Press in 1979, a state-owned publishing house in Beijing [Fig. 2]. Since *Jiànzhúshī* mainly focused on domestic theoretical issues, *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* deliberately positioned itself to introduce the international practice of architecture to China.

Given the Chinese architects' limited access to international publications and overseas projects in the 1980s, *Shìjiè jiànzhú* played a crucial role in bridging national and global architectural cultures. The journal's contents were fundamentally classified into two parts. First were translations of articles and appropriation of images from Western architecture periodicals, such as *Architectural Record, Architectural Review, Architecture + Urbanism, Casabella, Domus, Progressive Architecture, and Shinkenchiku* (New Architecture); because of the dominant ideology and the absence of copyright protection in 1980s China, these published materials overlooked international intellectual property law (in other words, the selection of materials was not based on copyright negotiations, but on editors' and contributors' scholarly interests).[16] The interests in and

15 These founding editors were once considered to have political problems during the Cultural Revolution, so they were not allowed to give lectures to students after the revolution. Before founding the journal, they were assigned to collect information, make drawings, and translate foreign literature. Ye Yang and Tian Ni, "Zéngzhāofèn fǎngtán" [Interview with Zeng Zhaofen], *Shìjiè Jiànzhú*, no. 1 (2016): 70–73.

16 Facing the US's sanctions against China due to piracy of U.S. intellectual property and trade losses in the 1990s, China committed to join and became a signatory to the Berne Convention in 1992.

Fig. 2
The cover of *Jiànzhúshī*, 1979, no. 1

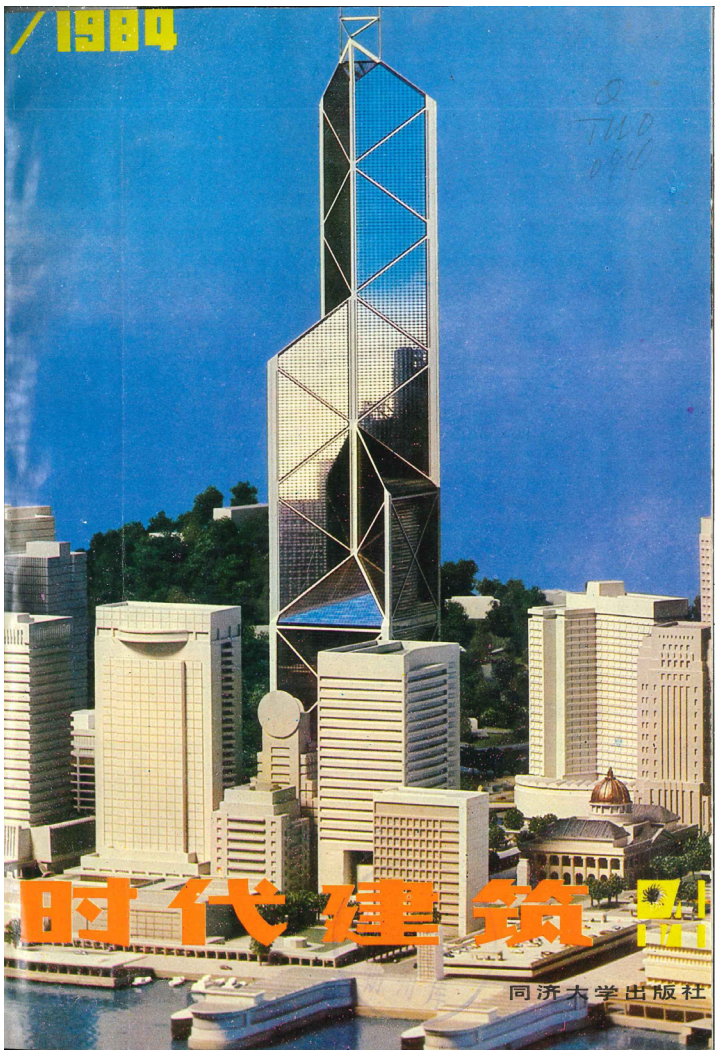
| 3

presentations of modern Japanese architecture, for example, both reflected the bourgeoning Sino-Japan relations in the early 1980s and the intention to learn from Japan's experience in mediating tradition and modernity [Fig. 3]. Then there were investigation reports provided by architects who were able to travel globally and study notes penned by scholars who were studying at or visiting Western universities. In the late 1970s, a number of Chinese architects were able to travel to the West for study tours or to work on architectural aid projects in Africa and Asia. At the same time, a first group of Chinese architecture students and academics was sponsored by the government to study in the United States, Japan, and Europe and to visit the latest projects built abroad. Their articles became an important channel to help national audiences understand what was going on in the world.

With its global scope, the journal's publications mainly concentrated on the architecture of advanced economies, such as the American, Japanese, European, Australian, Canadian, Singaporean, and the Soviet ones, but occasionally introduced buildings from Southeast Asia, Latin America, and Africa. The published projects were normally categorized into specific types, including hotels, housing, offices, hospitals, factories, galleries, laboratories, shopping malls, plazas, and many others. These publications compensated to a considerable degree for the lack of knowledge of international architecture that resulted from China's isolation from the Western architectural field. Perhaps more subtly, *Shìjiè Jiànzhú*'s publications had a significant influence on the younger generation of Chinese architects who were not able to travel abroad in the 1980s, as their design works showcased certain formal and spatial connections with global projects of the time.

Fig. 3
Shìjiè Jiànzhú's special issue on new Japanese architecture, 1981, no. 1.

Historically, *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, launched in 1954 and published by the Architectural Society of China, was the only professional journal with any political significance in the Mao era; it was a widely-circulated monthly periodical broadcasting the state's voice and guidelines on architectural practice. At times *Jiànzhú Xuébào* changed radically position from one issue to the other, the probable sign of its difficulty to stay behind a continuously evolving official line. From the point of view of the contents, *Jiànzhú Xuebào* was devoted to presenting both scholarly articles and the latest projects, focusing primarily on domestic architecture while also covering the issues of urban planning, gardens, and landscape. Owing to its limited space and official position, longer polemical articles were rarely accepted by *Jiànzhú Xuebào*. The journal occasionally introduced projects built in capitalist as well as socialist countries, depending on the changes in the national political circumstances. More importantly, it organized a series of symposia (*zuòtánhui*) in which leading architects and academics were invited to comment on a specific project after making an on-site visit to it. While a large volume of these criticisms tended to appraise the architect's skills and efforts, writings that took a critical position were rare in the pages of the journal. The absence of critical voice may leave some space for its competitors to fill the gap.



4

The 1980s witnessed the extensive appearance of scholarly-professional journals in China, for instance, *Nánfāng Jiànzhú* (South Architecture, 1981), *Xīn Jiànzhú* (New Architecture, 1983), and *Shídài Jiànzhú* (Time + Architecture, 1984) **[Fig. 4]**. Among these newly-established periodicals, *Jiànzhúshī* was arguably much more influential among the academic community in the late twentieth century. A number of reasons may explain why it had such a reputation. First, although its publication did not represent the official voice of the state apparatus, the journal was endorsed by top-level officials such as Yan Zixiang, the Deputy Head of the National Bureau of Architectural Engineering. Yan had recognized the journal and asked the editors of the local rival *Jiànzhú Xuebào* to learn from it with an open mind.[17] Second, in terms of its sponsors compared to those of other journals, *Jiànzhúshī* maintained a prestigious status in the Chinese architectural publishing scene and enjoyed a vast pool of contributors.

17 Yang Yongsheng, *Miǎnshù*[Memoirs], eds. Li Ge and Wang Lihui (Beijing: China Architecture and Building Press, 2012), 166–167.

Fig. 4
The cover of *Shídài Jiànzhú*, 1984, no. 1

While other journals were fundamentally local periodicals, *Jiànzhúshī* could be considered a national one. The origins of the journal's editorial committee members were a testimony of this remarkable national influence.[18] These committee members were in their forties and had graduated from architecture schools before the Cultural Revolution, but were not well established at that time. Nonetheless, they were committed to doing something different in the new historical period, with ambition, willingness, energy, and enthusiasm, which the journal's editors would fully recognize and acknowledge.

In the strict sense, *Jiànzhúshī* was not an academic journal *per se*. First of all, it did not have a periodical serial number (*kānhào)* issued by the state's press and publishing agencies. As an alternative to periodical publication, the press published each issue as a single book. This strategy was a form of soft resistance and a creative response to the official media censorship agency; as Yang later acknowledged, even if they had applied for such a number, the authorities might not have approved it.[19] Second, publication as a book rather than as a conventional journal brought with it a certain degree of freedom and flexibility in content and period. It included a variety of articles of different lengths. From August 1979 to December 1989, 36 issues were published (it was almost a quarterly publication), and each issue usually had more than 200 pages.

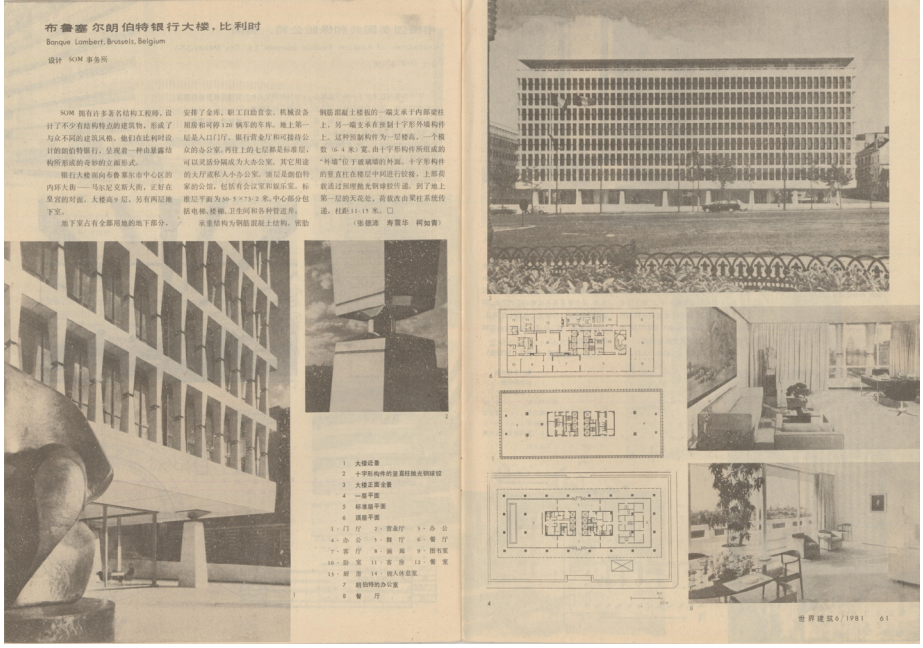
Comparison between *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* and *Jiànzhúshī*

The first significant differences between the two journals lay in their institutional backgrounds, organizational structures, and academic networks. *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* was closely associated with the Tsinghua Architecture Department but jointly sponsored by the Beijing Institute of Architectural Design. Thanks to the rich collection of Western architecture periodicals to which the department's library subscribed, the founding editors like Lv, Tao, and Zeng were able to access the latest information in the design and construction field. These academics, together with their colleagues from the department and a large number of alumni, played a significant role in providing essential source materials. The journal's position as a means of introducing international architecture to China not only reflected chief editor Lv's own interests but also was recognized and supported by the Head of Department, Wu Liangyong, and the President of the journal, Wang Tan.[20] Despite the change of chief editor over the past four decades, the direction of the journal has remained consistent to the present day.

18 Aside from the press's editor Wang Boyang, other editorial committee members included a professional architect from East China Institute of Architectural Design Fan Shouzhong, and eight academics from China's eight prestigious architecture schools, such as Deng Linhan (Harbin Institute of Architectural Engineering), Liu Baozhong (Xi'an Institute of Metallurgy and Architecture), Liu Guanping (South China Institute of Technology), Bai Zuomin (Chongqing Institute of Architectural Engineering), Lv Zengbiao (Tsinghua University), Yan Longyu (Nanjing Institute of Technology), Peng Yigang (Tianjin University) and Yu Weiguo (Tongji University).

19 Yang, *Miǎnshù*, 165.

20 Both Wu Liangyong (1922-) and Wang Tan (1916-2001) were senior professors who had studied architecture both at the National Central University in Nanjing and in the United States. Wu studied at the Cranbrook Academy of Art with Eero Saarinen from 1948 to 1950. Wang studied with Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin from 1948 to 1949. Both emphasized the importance of learning from Western experience.



Compared with *Shìjiè jiànzhú*'s rich internal resources, *Jiànzhúshī* relied more on external contributors. It was Yang Yongsheng, *Jiànzhúshī*'s *de facto* chief editor who played a pivotal role in steering the journal's direction and organizing and coordinating various scholarly networks. Despite the absence of his name on the journal's editorial committee, Yang was the decision-maker behind the scenes. The name's omission was a strategy to avoid making enemies in the Chinese political and social context and to foster intellectual debate and advance architecture criticism. Yang continued to be ambitious, courageous, visionary, and charismatic.[21] This unique character enabled him to attract, acknowledge, and unite a large number of contributors, ranging from leading and well-respected academics, to seasoned scholars and critics and to emerging practitioners and junior graduate students.

Whereas *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* tended to present concise introductory descriptive texts with rich professional black and white illustrations, *Jiànzhúshī* was inclined to publish analytic, interpretive, lengthy texts with monochrome and hand-drawn sketches of buildings. The former partly reprinted polished photographs originally published in international periodicals and partly presented images taken by Chinese architects and academics [Fig. 5]; the latter's graphic design was characterized by an extraordinary density of texts and sketches, probably because the authors and contributors were unable to access high-quality images [Fig. 6]. Whereas *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* concentrated on specific projects and buildings while lacking deeper analysis of background and context, *Jiànzhúshī* attempted to create an alternative mode of journal publishing focused more on academic research and intellectual debate and less on recording the details of new buildings.[22] Whereas *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* was image-oriented, reflecting the latest trends in global architecture, *Jiànzhúshī* was text-saturated, presenting domestic intellectual dynamics.

21 Yang Yongsheng (1931–2012) initially worked as a Russian interpreter for Soviet technicians in Northeast China in the 1950s and later as an editor in the Architecture and Building Press in Beijing. In 1971, he reestablished the press, taking the role of managing chief editor and recruiting a number of senior editors, including Wang Boyang, who later became his associate in editing the journal in the 1980s.

22 Yang, *Miǎnshù*, 163.

Fig. 5
Content of *Shìjiè Jiànzhú*, 1981, no. 6

结构构思与视觉空间的创造（四）

布正伟

（二）结构形式的特征与建筑形象的个性

通俗地讲，建筑形象的个性（individuality）就是指同一类型建筑反映在视觉空间上的差异特征，即可识别性。

建筑形象的个性是由建筑创作所依据的不同客观条件（自然条件、物质条件、技术条件、经济条件等）和主观条件（专业技能、创作思想、文化修养等）所带来的。正因为如此，所以说现代结构技术的发展并非就必然导致建筑形象的创造千篇一律和"冷酷无情"。奈尔维生前就曾赞美"钢、钢筋混凝土以及能使其合理利用的结构理论，是建筑师可以任意指挥的新乐器，他可以利用这些新乐器创作出远比过去曾有过的一切建筑更为丰富多彩的建筑交响乐来"。

在现代建筑的空间造型中，我们应当努力去发掘结构形式的特征与建筑形象个性之间的内在联系。无疑，这是我们克服建筑创作中模式化（即公式化）弊病的一条重要途径。

1.从单体建筑的背景着眼，利用结构形式的特征来表现建筑形象的个性。

象创作一幅画一样，你所着力刻划的主体总是脱离不开画面的背景的。利用结构形式的特征来表现建筑形象的个性，也必须与它的"背景"取得有机的联系。所谓建筑背景，就是与你所设计的建筑物相衬映的周围景物，即环境。但建筑背景的层次是可以随着人们平视、仰视和俯视的不同情况而变化的。从主次关系上看，构成建筑背景的大体上有以下两种画面：

（1）主要是以自然景物为建筑背景的画面。

（2）主要是以建筑群体为建筑背景的画面。

人们的建筑审美经验表明，巧妙地事想和利用结构形式的特征，努力使别开生面的建筑造型的艺术美与纲娜多姿的自然美相"匹配"，这是环境建筑设计获得成功的一个诀窍所在。悉尼歌剧院这个特殊的例子说明了这一点，而图61、62、63、64、65几个普通的实例不是也同样令人信服么？从美学的角度来讲，环境建筑设计对结构构思提出的一个要求就是，遵循因地制宜的原则，使结构形式的基本特征同建筑背景中的自然景物相得益彰。试想，如果我们把图65中的圆形帐篷结构用在图61所示的观景台上，那将会产生什么样的视觉空间效果？同样，图65那个座落在弯曲的海滨公路之旁的餐厅，如果采用双曲抛物面壳，恐怕也难以与该环境及其地段取得协调。可见，即使是以大自然为背景，新结构形式的特征也并不是可以随意加以利用和发挥的。

自然风景区的新型建筑不仅应当给人以轻松、愉快的视觉感受，而且在可能条件下，还应当努力使结构形式的特征富于

61
62
63

图61 日本佐世保城yumihari观景台——以天空为底景，面向主景方向的双曲抛物面壳给人以"登高远望"的预示

图62 苏联黑海边索契城马戏院——采用斜拉构的屋盖形式，同时考虑了环视和俯视的观赏效果

图63 罗马尼亚一游览地休息亭——马鞍形薄壳的尺度与小桥、溪流等十分合宜

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6 |

The two journals were neither independent publications nor "little magazines" in the Western sense.[23] They did not present editorials in each issue reflecting the individual editors' ideologies or positions. Their sponsors belonged to state-owned institutions. Owing to the existence of only a few journals in 1980s China, both enjoyed large circulation numbers—more than 20,000 copies each issue. Both journals organized a number of international and national design competitions. These events contributed to their good reception among professional architects, academics, and college students. Given their low price, lack of advertisements, limited financial support, and increasing costs, both journals struggled to maintain their operations in the first decade of their existence.

In terms of architecture criticism, *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* suffered from the absence of critical tension.[24] For instance, Chen Zhihua's 1995 comment on the journal's fifteenth anniversary revealed this intellectual deficiency. Chen, a longtime contributor to the journal, suggested that it should introduce more everyday buildings and fewer masterpiece works by well-known architects, present more analytic, creative, engaged writings and fewer random, discursive introductory texts, and provide more interpretations of buildings' social value and historical meaning, and less rhetorical theory.[25] Although he recognized the journal's contribution, Chen's comments subtly indicated discontent with its status quo and expressed a preference for rooted, grounded scholarship, as opposed to fragmentary, un-systematic architecture reviews.

When Zeng Zhaofen worked for *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* as an editor, he was engaged with translating texts, organizing events, and publishing articles; he later steered the editorial committee, ensuring that the journal operated in the direction of

23 See Beatriz Colomina and Craig Buckley, eds., *Clip, Stamp, Fold: The Radical Architecture of Little Magazines, 196X - 197X* (Barcelona: Actar, 2010).

24 In the first issue of 1988, *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* published a special issue on American architecture through translating parts of the essays of *Critical Edge: Controversy in Recent American Architecture* edited by Tod A. Marder. This issue explicitly reflected Zeng's and Wang's intention to promote domestic architecture criticism through introducing American colleagues' methods and experience.

25 Mei Chen (Chen Zhihua), "Shìjiè jiànzhú chuàngkān shíwǔ zhōunián bǐtán" [Notes on the Fifteenth Anniversary of Shìjiè Jiànzhú], *Shìjiè Jiànzhú*, no. 3 (1995): 15.

Fig. 6
Bu Zhengwei's article published in *Jiànzhúshī*, 1983, no. 17

introducing international architecture. As a critic, he rarely published his critical texts in the journal but submitted them instead to *Jiànzhúshī*. This interesting phenomenon implied that *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* maintained a collective (non-individual) editorial position—Zeng respected his colleagues' initial ideas, while *Jiànzhúshī*, under the editorship of Yang and Wang, encouraged the expression of critical debate. Perhaps, in this regard, nothing was more striking than the intensive presentation of Zeng's criticism in the pages of *Jiànzhúshī* in the 1980s. These writings to some extent became a bridge linking the two periodicals. Some of the architects that were discussed in his criticism had also written articles for *Shìjiè Jiànzhú*, introducing Western (including Japanese) architectural culture. These publications, together with other materials published in *Shìjiè Jiànzhú*, had a subtle but significant influence on emerging architects during the early reform period, as we can see later.

Intellectual Debate: Redefining the Field

In the first issue of *Jiànzhúshī*, architect Lin Leyi promoted intellectual debate through *zhēng míng*. In the Chinese cultural context, *zhēng* means debating and arguing against somebody's ideas, while *míng* refers to the expression of one's own thoughts and does not necessarily involve opposing or criticizing others; in this sense, it would hardly be likely to make enemies. The architectural scenario of *zhēng míng* was best manifested in the 1959 *zuòtánhuì*, a week-long conference on architectural arts held in Shanghai.[26] The outbreak of the Cultural Revolution and the subsequent shutdown of architecture schools and suspension of academic publications gave rise to a substantial decrease in *zhēng míng* in the public domain. Lin maintained that, even without big debates, scholarly discussion could still contribute to mutual understanding, learning, inspiration, and encouragement.[27]

One of the examples illustrating *zhēng míng* that appeared in the journal is the debate between tangible, formal similarity (*xíng sì*) and intangible, spiritual similarity (*shén sì*).[28] The former refers to the appropriation of traditional forms such as the predominant large pitched roofs on modern structures, as manifested in Zhang Bo's Beijing Friendship Hotel (1954). The latter refers to the transformation of traditional elements to represent tradition, exemplified in the Chairman Mao Memorial Hall (1977). A contribution to *Jiànzhúshī* by an architect from the Shaanxi Province Metallurgy Design Institute, also named Zhang Bo, identified the aesthetic principle of ambiguity (*sìshì érfēi, sìfēi érshì*) as being useful in

26 In the conference, many leading architects and academics articulated their opinions on the subject matter. For example, Liu Xiufeng, the then Minister of Architectural Engineering, proposed the highly challenging task of creating a new style of Chinese socialist architecture. The ambiguities of this slogans produced overwhelming anxieties and debates, which had previously been restrained and re-appeared in the early 1980s. See Liu Xiufeng, "Chuàngzào zhōngguó de shèhuì zhǔyì de jiànzhú xīn fēnggé" [Creating a New Style of the Chinese Socialist Architecture], *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, Z1 (1959): 3–12.

27 Lin Leyi, "Tántán wǒmen jiànzhúshī zhè yèháng" [Discussion on the Profession of Architects], *Jiànzhúshī*, no. 1 (1979): 7–9.

28 Zhang Bo, etc. "Guanyǔ jiànzhú xiàndàihuà hé jiànzhú fēnggé wèntí de yīxiē jiànyì" [Some Opinions on Architectural Modernization and Style], *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, no. 1 (1979): 26–30.

generating forms. He argued that the Memorial Hall, a project with double layers of roofs decorated by golden Chinese glazed roof tiles, which was reminiscent of the roofs of traditional imperial buildings such as Tiananmen.[29] To verify the importance of *shén sì*, Zhang also remarked that the courtyard design of hotels in Guangzhou and Guilin was reminiscent of traditional scholarly gardens, as they had similar spatial compositions.

Zhang's idea of *shén sì* was immediately criticized by his peer Zeng Zhaofen. In a 1982 article, Zeng asserted that the promotion of both *xíng sì* and *shén sì* considerably restrained formal innovation.[30] His article was initially submitted to *Jiànzhú Xuebào* but was unfortunately rejected without any reason. It was Xu Zhen, who became an editorial committee member of *Jiànzhúshī* in 1981 and knew Zeng personally, who recommended his article to Yang Yongsheng. After reading it, Yang asked Xu to take a message to Zeng, saying that if he dared to write anything, he would dare to publish it.[31] In fact, Zeng had coauthored papers with his colleague He Chongyi on traditional gardens such as the Old Summer Palace for the journal before writing criticism. This article marked the beginning of his two-decade-long career as an architecture critic. To present this piece of criticism, the journal's editors added an editorial passage before the main article, arguing that:

> Over the years, articles on architecture criticism have been very rare. When a building is completed, it is easy to see the introduction article, but the comments on its merits and demerits are rarely published. Is there no comment? Of course not. Despite maintaining diverse opinions, architects hesitate to write an article for the public. The reason is that they probably fear to offend their peers. However, architectural creation, like literary and artistic creation, is inevitably of good or bad quality. Thus, criticism is a necessary means to improve the level of creation. Therefore, we advocate architecture criticism, suggesting that architects should comment on their own or others' work, and encouraging architects to treat others' criticism correctly.[32]

In as much as *Jiànzhúshī* did not have a section for an editorial statement, this passage revealed the editors' position and their intention to engage with architecture criticism. This engagement created valuable and meaningful opinion spaces for the expression of sharp-edged dissensus or disagreement rather than consensus and therefore differentiated itself from other academic journals. Zeng's article claimed that the promotion of both *xíng sì* and *shén sì* was inclined to appropriate traditional forms, elements, and motifs and would ultimately lead to the appearance of eclecticism. In contrast, he praised the practice of South China Medical School teaching buildings (by Germany-trained

29 Zhang Bo, "Shénsì chúyì: shìtàn jiànzhú zàoxíng yìshù de jìchéng yǔ chuàngxīn" [Discussion on shensi: Exploring the Inheritance and Innovation of Architectural Art], *Jiànzhúshī*, no. 12 (1982): 13–18.

30 Zeng Zhaofen, "Jiànzhù xíngshì de xìjiù yǔ chuàngxīn" [The Appropriation of Old Architectural Forms and Innovation], *Jiànzhúshī*, no. 13 (1982): 28–40.

31 Ye and Tian, "Zéngzhāofèn fǎngtán," 72.

32 Zeng, "Jiànzhù xíngshì de xìjiù yǔ chuàngxīn," 28. [Author's translation]

7

architect Xia Changshi, 1956), Beijing Children's Hospital (by French-trained Hua Lanhong, 1954), and Beijing Telegraph Building (by US-trained Lin Leyi, 1958), as all of them were extraordinary examples of modernist expression in the context of Socialist realism dominating Chinese architecture production in the 1950s [Fig. 7].[33] For Zeng, these architects did not focus on the formal and spiritual similarities between the new and traditional buildings; rather, they created new images and fresh languages based on the subtle integration of abstract modernism and the local climate or traditional culture.

A Constellation of Architecture Criticism

As the press's senior editor Peng Hualiang summarized, Zeng's criticism maintained clarity and enthusiasm, in addition to a compelling argument and

33 Zeng, Zhaofen. "Jiànzhú pínglùn de sīkǎo yǔ qídài: jiān tán jiànzhú chuàngzuò zhōng de 'jīngpài', 'guǎng pài', 'hǎipài'" [The Thoughts and Expectation of Architecture Criticism: Also on the "Beijing School", "Guangzhou School" and "Shanghai School" in Architectural Creation]. *Jiànzhúshī*, no. 17 (1983): 5–18.

Fig. 7

Hua Lanhong, Beijing Children's Hospital, 1954, Photo by Hou Kaiyuan, Courtesy of BIAD

■ 为人民构思，为后代奔忙

吕俊华，女
1932年7月生
1953年南京工学院建筑系毕业
1956年清华大学建筑系研究生毕业
导师：吴良镛教授、华揽洪总建筑师
现为清华大学建筑系副教授
（照片右边是由她所指导的学生设计的坡地住宅模型）

"千篇一律"的方盒子！对大量性建造的公共住宅楼的指责，几乎是众口一词，成了定论了。

笔者曾经认为，目前各地仍在大量建造的许多公共住宅楼的标准设计，是住宅设计者和建设者们长期实践、精益求精的可贵成果。它们的适用、经济和美观是有目共睹的。以我们现有的经济能力、生活水准、造价及面积定额、材料及施工技术等条件来衡量它们，那么，它们不愧是一些高水平的设计。它们是在我国具体情况下、在极其苛刻的限制条件下的历史性产物，千篇一律似乎是它们的必然命运。

要向这一必然命运挑战，单凭主观愿望或采取某些装饰手段是不行的，用增加面积定额和大幅度增加造价的办法，也不能与当前的经济水平相适应——所以，在笔者的意识中，要克服千篇一律的状况，在当前几乎是不可能的。

正因为这样，当吕俊华设计的新住宅方案公诸于世并为实践所接受时，我们上述认识受到一次很大的震动——好像是，本该在几十年后才能实现的愿望，骤然在一个早上变成了现实！

在她的方案中，每户的建筑面积仍然只有五十平方米，仍然采用当前大家所熟识的材料和施工方法，居然做出了一系列花园住宅方案，为每一户居民准备了一个十平方米的花园平台。平面、造型、色彩都有新意（图1～5）。正如作者所说，这种台阶式花园住宅系列设计的出发点，是要打破目前一般多层住宅一抹平、一刀切、行列式、居住区面貌千篇一律的单调局面。它做到了：

标准化与多样化统一。用一种开间参数（3.3米）设计一套单元系列。单元组合灵活，建筑体型丰富；

基本间定型而户型多样；

高密度下的良好居住环境。多层住宅，多层绿化，绿化覆盖率大，而且接近居民。每家有一个10平方米以上的屋顶花园或地面花园；

2

图1 台阶式花园住宅实验小区模型俯瞰

图2 台阶式花园住宅实验小区模型透视

图3 台阶式花园住宅模型——正南面

3

8

straightforward tone.[34] For example, "The Gain and Inspiration of Architectural Creation", published in *Jiànzhúshī* in 1986 was initially submitted to *Jiànzhú Xuebào* for the 1985 conference in Guangzhou held by the Architectural Society of China, but was rejected with comments recommending that it should focus on senior architects rather than emerging figures and, moreover, that it should highlight their successes and achievements.[35]

Indeed, this was the very context that Zeng's article tried to express. It did not praise well-established architects but introduced eight emerging figures who were largely in their forties and had usually gone unrepresented in the architectural community. They had diverse backgrounds, ages, genders, locations, and approaches to design. The selection of these practitioners showcased Zeng's ambition to search for alternatives and legitimize such explorations, as their works explored modernist aesthetics rather than traditional languages.[36] The inclusiveness of this selection made his text intellectually dense and diverse, and differentiated it from conventional architecture criticism published in the periodicals of the day and today, which usually centered exclusively on one particular building. These projects, for him, were not the first to be published and nor did they represent the highest quality. However, their collective appearance formed an exciting scenario that challenged formal mediocrity and indicated a new possibility of aesthetic innovation.

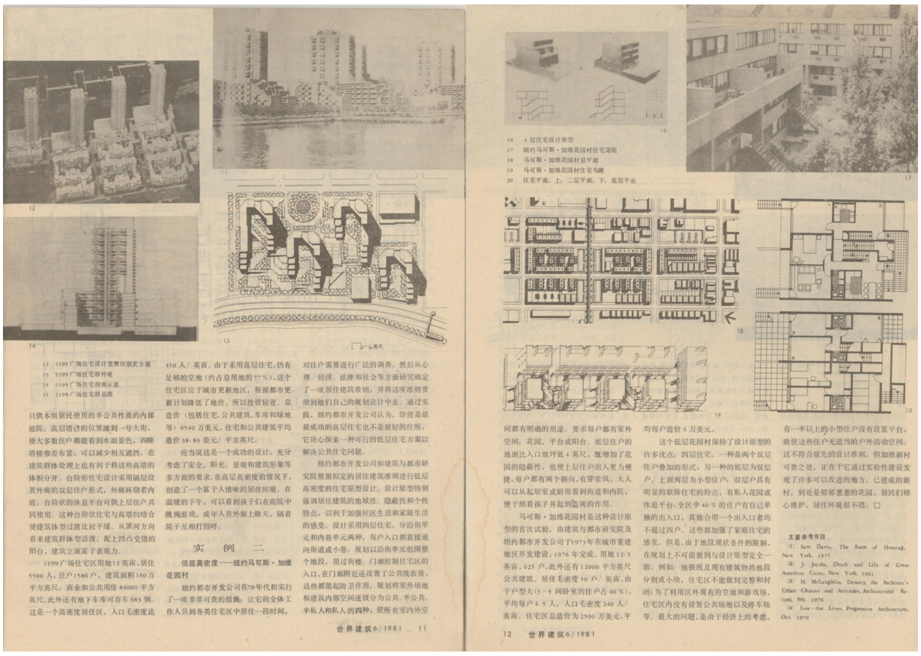
For example, the first architect that Zeng introduced is his Tsinghua colleague, Lv Junhua, whose five-story stepped housing project broke through the domination of multi-story urban housing with parallel layout **[Fig. 8]**. It is interesting to note that Lv had been a contributor to *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* before the appearance of her work in *Jiànzhúshī*. In her first article published in *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* (1981),

34 Peng Hualiang, "Huānyíng gèngduō de zhānkèsī shì de jiànzhú pínglùn jiā: dú zéngzhāofèn wénzhang ǒugǎn" [Welcoming More Charles Jencks-style Architecture Critics: Reading Zeng Zhaofen's Articles], *Jiànzhúshī*, 34 (1989): 132–135.

35 Ye and Tian, "Zéngzhāofèn fǎngtán", 72.

36 Zeng Zhaofen, "Jiànzhú chuàngzuò de shōuhuò yǔ qǐshì: xiàng zhōngnián jiànzhú shīmen xuéxí bǐjì" [The Gain and Inspiration of Architectural Creation: Learning Notes from Middle-aged Architects], *Jiànzhúshī*, no. 26 (1986): 1–46.

Fig. 8
The presentation of Lv Junhua's work in Zeng Zhaofen's criticism, published in *Jiànzhúshī*, 1986, no. 26



12　1199广场住宅设计竞赛原获奖方案
13　1199广场住宅群外观
14　1199广场住宅剖面示意
15　1199广场住宅群总图

只供本组居民使用的半公共性质的内部庭院。高层塔楼的位置挪到一号大街，使大多数住户都能看到水面景色，四幢塔楼参差布置，可以减少相互遮挡，在建筑群体处理上也有利于将这些高塔的体积分开。台阶形住宅设计采用隔层设置外廊的双层住户形式，外廊环绕着内庭，台阶状的休息平台可供上层住户共同使用。这种台阶状住宅与高塔的结合使建筑体型过渡比较平缓。从滨河方向看来建筑群体型活泼，配上凹凸交错的阳台，建筑立面富于表现力。

1199广场住宅区用地12英亩，居住5500人，住户1586户，建筑面积160万平方英尺，商业和公共用房84000平方英尺。此外还有地下车库可存车683辆。这是一个高密度居住区，人口毛密度达450人/英亩。由于采用高层住宅，仍有足够的空地（约占总用地的77%）。这个住宅区位于城市更新地区，根据都市更新计划降低了地价，所以投资较省。总造价（包括住宅、公共建筑、车库和绿地等）6540万美元，住宅和公共建筑平均造价38.84美元/平方英尺。

应当说这是一个成功的设计，充分考虑了安全、阳光、景观和建筑形象等多方面的要求。在高层高密度的情况下，创造了一个富于人情味的居住环境。在温暖的下午，可以看到孩子们在庭院中跳绳游戏，成年人在外廊上聊天，隔着院子互相打招呼。

实　例　二

低层高密度——纽约马可斯·加维花园村

纽约都市开发公司在70年代初实行了一项非常可贵的措施：让它的全体工作人员到各类住宅区中居住一段时间，对住户需要进行广泛的调查，然后从心理、经济、法律和社会等方面研究确定了一项居住建筑准则，并将这项准则贯彻到他们自己的规划设计中去。通过实践，纽约都市开发公司认为，即使是最最成功的高层住宅也不是最好的住所，它决心探索一种可行的低层住宅方案以解决公共住宅问题。

纽约都市开发公司和建筑与都市研究院根据拟定的居住建筑准则进行低层高密度的住宅原型设计。设计原型特别强调居住建筑的地域性、隐蔽性和个性特点，以利于加强社区生活和家庭生活的感受。设计采用四层住宅，分沿街单元和内巷单元两种，每户入口都直接通向街道或小巷。规划以沿街单元包围整个地段，用过街楼、门廊控制住宅区的入口，在门廊附近还设置了公共洗衣房，这些都能起防卫作用。规划将室外场地和建筑内部空间逐级分为公共、半公共、半私人和私人的四种，使所有室内外空

世界建筑6/1981　11

16　4层住宅设计原型
17　纽约马可斯·加维花园村住宅庭院
18　马可斯·加维花园村总平面
19　马可斯·加维花园村住宅鸟瞰
20　住宅平面。上：二层平面；下：底层平面

间都有明确的用途。要求每户都有室外空间：花园、平台或阳台。底层住户的地面比入口地坪低4英尺，既增加了花园的隐蔽性，也使上层住户出入更为便捷。每户都有两个朝向，有穿堂风，大人可以从起居室或厨房看到街道和内院，便于照看孩子并起到监视的作用。

马可斯·加维花园村是这种设计原型的首次试验。由建筑与都市研究院及纽约都市开发公司于1973年在城市重建地区开发建设，1976年完成。用地12.5英亩，625户，此外还有12000平方英尺公共建筑。居住毛密度50户/英亩，由于户型大（3－5间卧室的住户占40%），平均每户4.5人，人口毛密度240人/英亩。住宅区总造价为2500万美元，平均每户造价4万美元。

这个低层花园村保持了设计原型的许多优点：四层住宅，一种是两个双层住户叠加的形式，另一种的底层为双层户，上面两层为小型住户；双层户具有明显的联排住宅的特点，有私人花园或休息平台；全区中40%的住户有自己单独的出入口，其他合用一个出入口者均不超过四户。这些都加强了家庭住宅的感觉。但是，由于地段现状条件的限制，在规划上不可能做到与设计原型完全一致。例如：地铁线及现有建筑物将地段分割成小块，住宅区不能做到完整和封闭；为了利用区外现有的空地和游戏场，住宅区内没有设置公共场地以及停车场等。最大的问题，是由于经济上的考虑，有一半以上的小型住户没有设置平台，致使这些住户无适当的户外活动空间。这不符合原先的设计准则。但加维新村可贵之处，正在于它通过实验性建设发现了许多可以改进的地方。已建成的新村，到处是郁郁葱葱的花园，居民们精心维护，居住环境很不错。□

主要参考书目

⑴ Sam Davis, The Form of Housing, New York, 1977
⑵ J. Jacobs, Death and Life of Great American Cities, New York, 1961
⑶ H. McLaughlin, Density, the Architect's Urban Choices and Attitudes, Architectural Record, Feb. 1976
⑷ Low-rise Lives, Progressive Architecture, Oct. 1979

12　世界建筑6/1981

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1199 Plaza, New York, N.Y.

High-rise in Harlem

New housing by Hodne/Stageberg is a bold response to questions of livability and architectural form in a high-density urban situation.

A moderate- and middle-income cooperative housing development in New York City's East Harlem shows it can be done. Housing can respond dramatically and comprehensively to the need to accommodate a high density of residents (450 people per acre) in a decently designed humane setting. 1199 Plaza combines low-rise and high-rise apartments in a tower and stepped-U configuration that affords various options in living units to its residents while making an architecturally smooth transition between the two types.

The 32-story towers of flats are attached to the ten-, eight-, and six-story stepped wings of duplex units in such a way that a clear and definite separation of public and private open spaces emerges: At the entrance on First Avenue four towers embrace a public plaza lined with shops; at the rear the U-shaped wings enclose courtyards accessible only to those living in the complex. Semi-private outdoor galleries link the entrances of duplexes that overlook the courts. At the stepped-back ends of the low-rise portions, small terraces are formed to serve tenants on each mid-air street. In addition, 55 percent of the 1600 apartments come with balconies, in an arrangement that amplifies the waterfront views available to this East River location. (The major drawback, the FDR Drive separating 1199 from the water, has not been circumvented however. That would have required a commitment the city was not able to make.)

Architectural articulation is given the façades by alternately pulling out and recessing those balconies. The architects also vary the oversize brown brick surfaces to permit an easier identification of the separate apartments from the street. They staggered the towers in plan on the site to augment views and light for the apartments and aid in differentiation between towers.

SITE PLAN

Model shot of original competition entry.

View from First Avenue (above), East River (below).

64　Progressive Architecture 3:76

3:76 Progressive Architecture　65

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Marcus Garvey Park Village, Brooklyn, NY

Compromised ideal

The much-touted Low-Rise High-Density housing, developed in 1973 to prove multiple housing could be achieved as economically and more satisfactorily than high-rise housing, is now occupied. The final results? P/A investigates.

The development of the low-rise high-density housing prototype in 1973 by the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies and the New York State Urban Development Corporation was greeted by considerable fanfare and publicity. The housing was even displayed prominently at the Museum of Modern Art.

Only one of the two applications for the prototype, 625 low- and moderate-income dwelling units sited on 12.5 acres of land, in a bombed-out renewal area in Brooklyn, got built. Called Marcus Garvey Park Village, today it is fully occupied. The other scheme, designated for Fox Hills in Staten Island, was never realized.

It is curious that very little has been said or published about the Marcus Garvey Housing in the three years since its completion. A good part of the reason of course comes from the fact that the financially troubled UDC has not applied the prototype housing elsewhere. But more to the point, the reticence seems to come from the gap existing between the high degree of anticipation engendered by the publicity about the projects and the actual built result. Since both applications, plus the prototype, were extensively documented in P/A (December 1973, p. 56), this present discussion will not deal in detail with their intentions and programmatic considerations.

Constraints of reality

The prototype was deformed by certain physical and economic constraints that had nothing to do with the actual design. Some of the project's weak points, however, can't be so neatly excused.

The idea of having two basic configurations—one with the street units arranged to form a perimeter enclosure around the block, the other with mews units on small alleys cutting through the block—could not be strictly followed because the assemblage included half-block sites. Thus, as can be seen in the site plan (above) the mews units, usually kept to the interior of the block, are arranged to form culs-de-sac on the half-blocks. The placement presents a problem in terms of consistency: the "street" units having a frontal orientation affirm the continuity of the street; the others do not. On the other hand, this break in consistency offers variety and intimately scaled open space.

Subway tracks divide the site. Since the housing had to be placed 100 ft away from the tracks on each side, the unused strip of land was turned over to parking, and the original intention of incorporating parking in small clusters throughout the site abandoned. A good many units do have views straight toward this swath of asphalt and automobiles.

Because of playgrounds and a health center on the periphery of the site, programmatic pressure for such space was not too severe, and land in the blocks could be devoted to housing and other community facilities. In this respect, the housing form is intended to evoke the closely interwoven tapestry of terrace houses at Siedlung Halen, designed in Bern, Switzerland in 1962 by Atelier 5. The only trouble is that the Marcus Garvey

SITE PLAN

AXONOMETRIC

Looking from the street to the gardens (left), cross walk by mews units (right), rear yards of mews units (below).

50　Progressive Architecture 10:79

10:79 Progressive Architecture　51

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Fig. 9

Lv Junhua's article published in *Shìjiè Jiànzhú*, 1981, no. 6

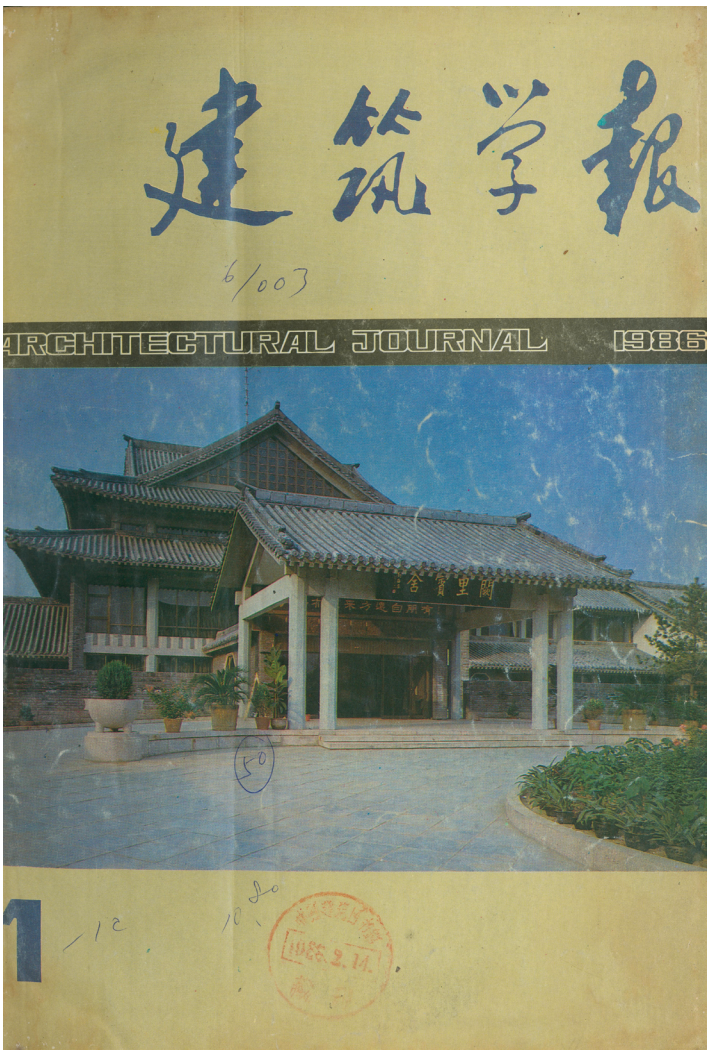
Fig. 10

Housing project published in *Progressive Architecture*, 1976, no. 3

Fig. 111

Housing project published in *Progressive Architecture*, 1979, no. 10

Lv reviewed the historical evolution of housing design in the United States and introduced a few high-rise, high density (1199 Plaza) and low-rise, high density projects (Marcus Garvey Park Village) built in New York City **[Fig. 9]**.[37] Perhaps more interestingly, the large part of her texts and images about the two projects were directly appropriated from the contents of *Progressive Architecture* (1976/3, 1979/10) and *Architectural Record* (1976/2) **[Figs. 10-11]**. Arguably, this article is the first piece of detailed introduction of American housing design to the Chinese audiences, although Lv had never been to the US at the time of its publication.[38] While its immediate impact on domestic professionals in the 1980s remains unclear, it did have a crucial influence on her own work. To some extent, her 1984 housing design creatively borrowed and combined the stepped forms of 1199 Plaza and the compact layout of Marcus Garvey Park Village.



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Zeng's criticism on Lv's work demonstrates three levels of meanings: Zeng's advocacy of creative explorations and modernist architecture by emerging architects; *Jiànzhúshī*'s engagement with architecture criticism; and *Shìjiè Jiànzhú*'s subtle influence on the exchange of architectural culture and its inspiration on domestic design practice. To this, we may add another text by Zeng that was published in *Jiànzhúshī* in 1989. This article classified architectural practice in 1980s China into three approaches.[39]

Firstly, Zeng expressed his discontent with the formally conservative instances embodied in Dai Nianci's Queli Hotel **[Fig. 12]**. In this project, Dai employed traditional formal languages in response to the surrounding historical context (Confucian Temple), while at the expense of extensive manpower in design and construction.[40] Zeng believed that it diverged from

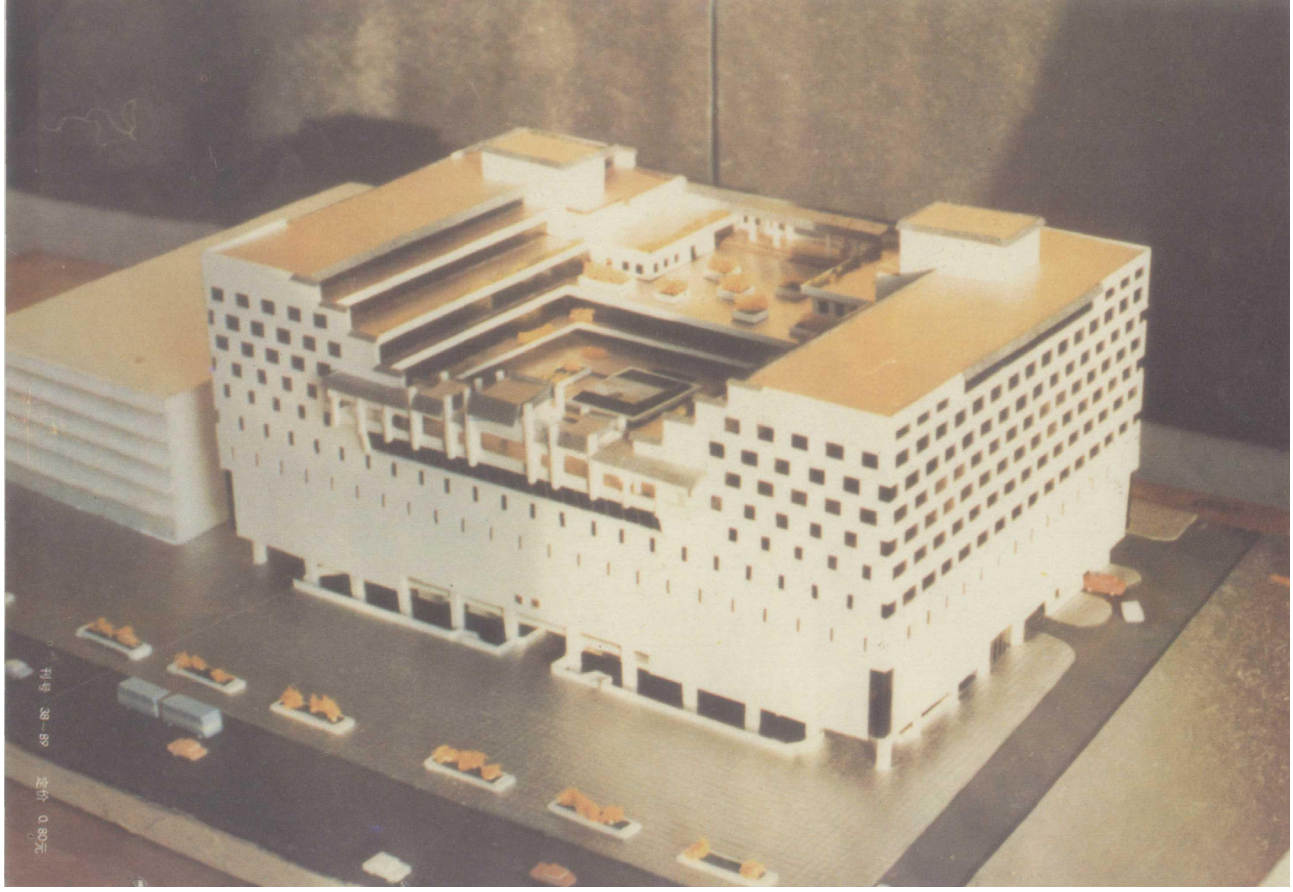
37 Lv Junhua, "Měiguó zhùzhái jiànshè zhōng de jūzhù mìdù hé céngshù wèntí" [The Dwelling Density and Number of Story in American Housing Construction], *Shijiè Jiànzhú*, no. 6 (1981): 6-12.

38 Lv's interests in housing design started from the mid-1950s when she studied for her master degree at Tsinghua University. Her community design project was appreciated by Hua Lanhong, who was a visiting critic in the architecture department at that time. Later, Lv was invited by Hua to assistant him to design Beijing Xingfu Village Community, a social housing project for low-income residents that reinterpreted traditional courtyard layout.

39 Zeng Zhaofen. "Yángguāndào yǔ dúmùqiáo: jiànzhú chuàngzuò de sānzhǒng tújìng" [Broad Road and Single-log Bridge: Three Approaches of Architectural Creation]. *Jiànzhúshī*, no. 36 (1989): 1-25.

40 Dai Nianci (1920-1991), whose works largely oscillated between Beaux-Arts eclecticism (National Art Museum of China, Beijing, 1963) and pure modernism (The Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 1973), had a deliberate consciousness to mediate tradition and modernity. Dai Nianci, "Lùn jiànzhú de fēnggé, xíngshì, nèiróng jí qítā: zài fánróng jiànzhú chuàngzuò xuéshù zuòtán huì shàng de jiǎnghuà" [On Architectural Style, Form and Content], *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, no. 2 (1986): 3-16.

Fig. 12
Dai Nianci's Queli Hotel, published on the cover of *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, 1986, no. 2



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modernization which required modern, fresh formal expression and industrialized construction. Worse, for him, is that such an approach was uncritically admired by the establishment and supported by official ideologies.[41]

Conversely, Zeng eulogized the innovative endeavor showcased in a range of formally experimental projects. He appreciated Fu Kecheng's appropriation of traditional motifs as decorations on modern structures. Fu's proposal of Beijing Xidan Commercial Complex rendered a monolithic volume with iconic façade—the size and distribution of windows with gradual change, alluding to the difference of functions. What is more striking is that the architects put a traditional *pailou* (a local gateway structure) in the middle of the building, creating a dramatic visual focus **[Fig. 13]**.

The design method and tactics of emerging architects were largely consistent with the discourses and practices of postmodern architecture, which were once debated in the Chinese architectural milieu through book translation and periodical publication in the early and mid-1980s.[42] Although *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* did not display an overt optimism for postmodernism, it was one of the earliest publications that introduced and discussed the topic. The method of employing historical references embodied in some postmodernist works, particularly in the projects of Japanese architects Arata Isozaki and Kisho Kurokawa, extensively presented in the pages of *Shìjiè Jiànzhú*, had significant influence on emerging architects. For instance, Fu Kecheng, who had contributed to the journal by introducing contemporary Japanese architecture, acknowledged

41 What made Zeng unsatisfied is not the appearance of the building's eclectic forms, but the social and intellectual climate that restrained the expression of critical ideas in the state-run *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, in which Dai had a say.

42 Ying Wang and Hilde Heynen, "Transferring Postmodernism to China: A Productive Misunderstanding", *Architectural Theory Review*, 22:3, (2018): 338-363, DOI: 10.1080/13264826.2018.1516680.

Fig. 13

Fu Kecheng, etc., Beijing Xidan Commercial Complex, published in *Xīn Jiànzhú*, 1985, no. 2

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that the design of the commercial complex both followed the theory of "forms following functions" and absorbed the attitude towards history and context proposed by postmodernism.[43] Fu's position reflected many professionals' ideas at that time, and was recognized by Zeng, who also maintained a dialectical attitude towards postmodernism—both partly supporting its critique on modernism and its democratic inclination to mass culture, while rejecting its superficial, playful aesthetics revealed in some works.[44]

The third design approach discussed in Zeng's criticism was better demonstrated in Chai Peiyi's building that showcased the vitality of modernist explorations and straightforwardly repudiated eclectic vocabularies. Chai's exhibition center building was composed of a group of white concrete blocks with deliberate geometric consideration, being based on very simple shapes **[Fig. 14]**. For Zeng, this abstract formal experiment broke the monotony of Beijing's urban environment and brought a sense of freshness in the domination of Beaux-art-informed eclecticism. The building was designed immediately after Chai returned from Japan, where he spent two years (from 1981 to 1983) working for Kenzo Tange. This state-sponsored overseas training experience, together with the introductions and publications of Japanese architecture (mainly in the pages of *Shìjiè Jiànzhú*), clearly influenced Chai's thoughts and deepened his understanding of modern architecture, as he claimed that this formal expression was inspired by some beneficial ingredients of postmodernism, such as the ideas of Tange's core system and Kurokawa's third type of space (*huī kōngjiān*, or intermediary space).[45]

43 Fu Kecheng, "Shèjì de lù yīnggāi hěn kuān: cóng běijīng xīdān zònghé shāngyè dàlóu shèjì tánqǐ" [Wining Design for Xidan Commercial Complex, Beijing], *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, no. 7 (1985): 19-23.

44 Zeng Zhaofen, "Hǒu xiàndài zhǔyì lái dào zhōngguó" [The Arrival of Postmodernism in China], *Shìjiè Jiànzhú*, no. 2 (1987): 59-65.

45 Chai Peiyi, "Zhōngguó guójì zhǎnlǎn zhōngxīn shèjì gòusī" [Design Concept of China International Exhibition Center], *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, no. 2 (1986): 51-55.

Fig. 14

Chai Peiyi, Beijing International Exhibition Center, 1985, Courtesy of BIAD

The three consecutive pieces of criticism described above show remarkable consistency in style and approach, "collecting and juxtaposing apparently disparate ideas and concepts for the purpose of mutual illumination."[46] Zeng's idiosyncratic writings constitute a "constellation" of architecture criticism, superimposing a variety of architects, projects, and ideas. His articles demonstrated an ambition to subvert the hegemonic position entangled with eclectic languages and official ideologies. His frank critique of work by established figures and his promotion of emerging figures' projects largely resonated with the "democratic atmosphere" for academic debate in the 1980s, as the latter's creative endeavors had largely been despised and repressed by the establishment.

For Zeng, the main task of architecture criticism was to observe significant tendencies, highlight outstanding achievements, introduce emerging architects, and identify flashing thoughts.[47] His critical activities represented an endeavor to rediscover the existence of "stars" and articulate the meaning of architectural explorations, or to grasp the constellation of architecture from a critical standpoint. His work implied a dynamic reading of the architectural field at that moment, bringing the past into the present with historical consciousness, with significant implications for our perception of architecture criticism.

Conclusion: Reconstructing the Discourse of Modernism

Historically, Zeng's advocacy of modernism was a delayed effort to resist the eclecticism influenced by the Beaux-Arts tradition. Previous endeavors to promote modernism had appeared in the 1950s, if not earlier. For instance, in 1956, two young undergraduate students from Tsinghua University vehemently embraced modernist architecture characterized by advanced materials and technologies.[48] Appearing in the particular socio-political context—the heyday of the Hundred Flowers Campaign—this somewhat naive tone presented a form of resistance to the dominant discourse, which followed the slogan "national in form, socialist in content." However, owing to the dramatic change in the political climate one year later, this manifesto became a catastrophic moment in the transformation of architectural discourse. Subsequently repressed by the ultra-leftist ideologies for more than two decades, the discourse of modernist architecture re-emerged in the 1980s, not as a radical break from the past but as a continuation of the unfinished task of modernity.[49]

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46 Graeme Gilloch, *Walter Benjamin: Critical Constellations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 235. For Walter Benjamin, the constellation alludes to an instantaneous, relational figure constituted by a group of visible stars that together comprise an intelligible, legible, and perceptible pattern. It is defined by the relation of the individual objects to each other and to the viewer. Also see Nassima Sahraoui and Caroline Sauter, "Introduction," in *Thinking in Constellations. Walter Benjamin and the Humanities*, eds. Nassima Sahraoui and Caroline Sauter (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), ix–xviii.

47 Zeng, "Jiànzhù pínglùn de sīkǎo yǔ qídài," 17.

48 Jiang Weihong and Jin Zhiqiang, "Wǒmen yào xiàndài jiànzhú" [We Need Modern Architecture], *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, no. 6 (1956): 58.

49 Timothy J. Reiss, *The Discourse of Modernism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985).

Modernist architecture in 1980s China can be considered the emergent culture, to use the terminology of British cultural theorist Raymond Williams, who saw culture as a constant process of negotiation with dynamic internal relations between the dominant, emergent, and residual cultures.[50] For Williams, the emergent culture represented new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships, and new kinds of relationships that were continually created.[51] This definition was tied to a full sense of the dominant. The emergent, which may be alternative or oppositional to the dominant, can be incorporated into the dominant culture through selection.[52]

The discourse of modernism is not merely a representation of social reality, but also an action constructed by various stakeholders. Whereas *Jiànzhúshī* consistently presented a remarkable constellation of texts, drawings, and projects in the 1980s, through which both editors and contributors communicated their understanding of modernist architecture, *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* was devoted to presenting global projects, writings and design news, through which domestic professionals were able to keep abreast of the latest international architectural trends, including postmodernism. The former presented alternative voices of emerging academics, architects, and young students once repressed by the dominant institutions and periodicals; the latter showcased dynamic architectural ideas and movements in the world that were otherwise unavailable for many domestic practitioners. These two kinds of commitment, both intellectual and professional, surprisingly converged in Zeng's writing and editing works which played a "double role" in promoting architectural culture in 1980s China.

Zeng's writings were characterized by a spatio-temporal constellation formed by the conjunction of time (both the past and the present), space (architecture erected in different locations), and subject (various architects/contributors). Like his criticisms, the two journals can also be considered a constellation of fragmented, disparate texts, drawings, images, and diagrams, which were painstakingly recomposed, juxtaposed, and presented in a critical way, generating illuminating projects with intellectual, aesthetic tensions and legible patterns in the present form.

Acknowledgements: In this essay, all the Chinese names follow surname first, given name second. I am grateful for the helpful comments from Hélène Jannière, Paolo Scrivano, and two anonymous reviewers. Thanks are also due to Elena Formia, Ilaria Cattabriga and Loreno Arboritanza for their editorial assistance and to Jiawen Han for her suggestions.

50 Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 121–127.

51 Ibid., 123.

52 Raymond Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (Verso, London. 1980), 42.

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Dijia Chen

On the (Mis)Use of Critical Discourse in Architecture: "Experimental Criticism" and its Entanglement with Postreform Art Movement in China

Post-reform China; Experimental Architecture; Criticism; Chinese Modern Art.

/Abstract

Tracing the origins of "experimental criticism" in China's postreform architectural production, this essay interrogates the architectural criticism revolving around experimental architects that was formulated in China's academic community during the early 2000s. Influenced by the Post-Cultural-Revolution liberal art movements, experimental architecture emerged as a marginal critique on political totalitarianism and cultural rigidity through installation-like, small-scale and conceptual projects. Despite its peripheral position in the state-regulated production system, experimental architecture was discovered and reframed by European curators as a revolutionary pioneer of contemporary Chinese architecture. While criticism has always been central to China's architectural development since the early twentieth-century, experimental architects and their works were the first to be evaluated through the lens of criticism in the academic discourse, marking the emergence of architectural criticism in Chinese scholarship in the early 2000s. The hasty recontextualization of the Anglo-American paradigm of architectural criticism and the absence of an architectural theoretical framework in China have left cultural differentiations unelaborated, resulting in a heated debate over the political implication and social commitment in experimental architecture's critical attitude. This essay argues that the specificities of experimental criticism are fundamentally shaped by the experimental architects' deep entanglement with postreform art movement. And experimental criticism only became problematic after the quick and mediatized generalization of their works across cultural borders. Tracing the postreform origins and elaborating the conceptual nuances of experimental criticism that were lost, distorted and reconstructed in the cross-cultural appropriation of contemporary critical discourse to China, this essay further evaluates its specificities in a local context.

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While criticism, by an inclusive definition, has always been central to China's architectural development since the early twentieth century, it was seldom considered and debated in China's academic discourse. Since the 1920s and 1930s, when architecture as a modern profession and discipline was imported to China by the first generation of architects, Liang Sicheng and Lin Huiyin's compilation of ancient Chinese architectural history has exemplified an intellectual agenda that interrogated and criticized the Western-dominated framework of world architectural history.[1] In search of a "national form" (*mínzú xíngshì*), Socialist experimentations from the 1950s to the 1970s projected a constructed national identity through an arguably American-originated Modernist language to criticize the "capitalist forms" in European-Modernist architecture.[2] Despite these efforts, the critical discourse in architectural scholarship was not developed until the early 2000s. The "experimental architecture" that emerged during the 1980s and blossomed through the 1990s was the first to be evaluated through the lens of criticism in the academic discourse, signaling the emergence of architectural criticism as a distinct discipline in Chinese scholarship.

In 2005, the publication of Zhu Jianfei's article "Criticality in between China and the West" marked the first attempt to include contemporary Chinese practices in the Anglo-American framework of architectural criticism. Zhu's text triggered a widespread discussion on relevant scholarship and practices in China's academic community, resulting in the organization of a symposium on architectural criticism and in the release of a special issue by one of the most respected academic journals at national level. At the time, a small group of independent Chinese architects, known in China as the "experimental architects", was repetitively staged in art and architectural galleries in Berlin, Paris, Rotterdam, Milan and Dusseldorf,[3] being frequently reported as "critical", "resistant" or "rebellious" in exhibition catalogs and periodicals.[4] Meanwhile, the increasing awareness of world cultural inequity also nurtured new discussions in global architectural criticism, as reflected in the texts by Jane Rendell and Murray Fraser that appeared in *The Journal of Architecture* in 2005.[5] These conditions dictated the background for Chinese practices to be discussed under the framework of criticism in the early 2000s.The critical discourse formulated by various overseas exhibitions and by Zhu's 2005 article was closely associated with the experimental

1 Shiqiao Li , "Writing a Modern Chinese Architectural History: Liang Sicheng and Liang Qichao", *Journal of Architectural Education* 56, no. 1 (2002): 35-45.

2 Ke Song and Jianfei Zhu, "The Architectural Influence of the United States in Mao's China (1949–1976)", *Fabrications* 26, no. 3 (2016): 337-356.

3 These exhibitions included "TUMU: Young Architecture of China" at Aedes Architecture Forum, Berlin; "Alors, la Chine?" at the Centre Pompidou, Paris; "CHINA Contemporary" at the Nederlands Architectuurinstituut, Rotterdam; "Unpacking Chinese Architecture: Tradition and Transformation" in Milan; "Bauen + Bauen: Contemporary Chinese Architecture" in Dusseldorf, etc.

4 See, for instance: Linda Vlassenrood, "Making Change Sensible", China *Contemporary: Architectuur, Kunst, Beeldcultuur* (Rotterdam: NAi, 2006), 41. Eduard Koegel and Ulf Meyer, "Positions Far from the Architectural Crowd", *TU MU: Young Architecture of China*, (Berlin: Aedes Architekturforum): 12-15. Chantal Beret, "Polarités Chinoises: Entre Epopée et Mémoire", *Alors, la Chine? Catalogue de l'exposition présentée au Centre Pompidou, Galerie Sud, du 25 juin au 13 octobre 2003* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 2003), 224.

5 Both Rendell and Fraser talk about the influence of cultural globalization on the western post-criticalism, urging for more inclusive scholarship on non-western cultures to emerge. See: Jane Rendell, "Critical architecture: Introduction", *The Journal of Architecture* 10, no. 3 (2005): 227-228. And Murray Fraser, "The Cultural Context of Critical Architecture", *The Journal of Architecture* 10, no. 3 (2005): 317-322.

architects and their successors, even though they were nothing more than a small and marginal group of around 5-10 mid-aged, unlicensed designers, hardly representing the general condition of architectural production in China then dominated by state-owned design institutes. It was essentially through a transnational discursive construct that the experimental architects were framed as "critical". Though the notion of "experimental" came from China's experimental art movement at the time, and stood for a vague and seldom radical position that accommodated diversified practices, international curators and scholars replaced the term "experimental" with "critical" to describe the group and make it more recognizable in the West. The hasty recontextualization to China of a supposed critical discourse centered on experimental architecture caused wide disputes over the interrelationship between experimental architecture, contemporary architecture and architectural criticism for over a decade.[6]

In recent years, renewed attention on the postreform origins of contemporary Chinese architecture (the 1980s and 1990s) has drastically increased in western scholarship, with a more nuanced introduction of the term "experimental architecture" as a specific phenomenon in recent Chinese architectural history.[7] The issues revolving around the relationship between the "critical" and the "experimental", however, have never been fully resolved. Challenging existing research, this essay holds experimental architects' deep entanglement with postreform art movement as the fundamental contribution to the specificities of experimental criticism, which only became problematic after the quick and mediatized generalization across cultural borders of the works attributed to those associated to the term. Tracing the 1980s and 1990s origins of criticism in the rise of architectural experimentation, this essay probes the conceptual nuances that were lost, distorted and reconstructed in cross-cultural terminological appropriation, and tries to evaluate locally contextualized specificities.

The Postreform Rise of "Experimental Criticism" in Architecture

After the end of the Cultural Revolution in the mid-1970s, the 1980s in China marked the enactment of the opening-up policy under Deng Xiaoping's regime. Ideological emancipation, economic boosts and social reforms quickly provoked cultural pluralism . The 1950s concept of "architectural creation" (*Jiànzhù chuàngzuò*), suppressed for being individualistic, capitalistic and unpragmatic during the decade-long cultural turmoil, resurfaced after architectural design was recognized as a "creative profession" by the Architectural Society of China

6 The debates between Zhu Tao, Zhu Jianfei, Wang Mingxian, Li Xiangning, Jin Qiuye, etc. are collected in the first four chapters of the book New Observations (Xīn Guānchá). See: Jian Shi, *New Observations: Anthology of Architectural Criticism*, (Tongji University Press, 2015).

7 See, for instance, Ding Guanghui's paper, dissertation and book published between 2014 and 2016, including: Guanghui Ding, "'Experimental Architecture' in China", *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 73, no. 1 (2014): 28-37; Guanghui Ding, *Constructing a Place of Critical Architecture in China: Intermediate Criticality in the Journal Time+ Architecture*, (Routledge, 2016). See also other works revisiting 1980s and 1990s Chinese architectural production, including: Ying Wang and Hilde Heynen, "Transferring Postmodernism to China: A Productive Misunderstanding", *Architectural Theory Review* 22, no. 3 (2018): 338-363. Ke Song, and Jianfei Zhu, "The Architectural Influence of the United States in Mao's China (1949–1976)", *Fabrications* 26, no. 3 (2016): 337-356.

(*Zhōngguó Jiànzhù Xuéhuì*).[8] Eager to catch up with the western world both in practice and theory, many established scholars enthusiastically introduced postmodernism in mainstream professional journals, including *Architectural Journal* (Jiànzhù Xuébào) and *World Architecture* (Shìjiè Jiànzhù). Due to a long-standing disaffection with the dogmatic Beaux-Arts design system, Wang Tan, a professor at Tsinghua University, organized the translation of a series of books that to various degrees discussed postmodern design philosophies, including Eiler Rasmussen's *Experiencing Architecture*, Christopher Alexander's *A Pattern Language*, Christian Norberg-Schulz's *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, and Charles Jencks' *The Language of Postmodern Architecture* and *What is Post-Modernism*. He also actively participated in the founding of unofficial organizations such as the Research Group for the Creation of Modern Chinese Architecture (Xiàndài Zhōngguó Jiànzhù Chuàngzuò Xiǎozǔ, 1984) and the Salon of Contemporary Architectural Culture (Dāngdài Jiànzhù Wénhuà Shālóng, 1986).

The obsession with postmodern theory in China left out the discussions on architectural criticism then dominating the American and European academic community. As Wang's student Lai Delin observes, the introduction of postmodernism in the 1980s was "open to pluralism but uncritical."[9] Even until the 1990s, figures such as Michael Hays, Peter Eisenman, Bernard Tschumi and Rem Koolhaas were seldom mentioned in China's recognized scholarship, and thus had little direct impact on the country. In the meantime, the scene of postreform architectural design was still dominated by a Beaux-Arts-postmodern hybrid and by a "regionalist-late-modernist" approach in state-regulated design institutes.[10] The combination of substantial investments with socialist aesthetic traditions led to the quick emergence of high-rises and over-large superblocks in big cities, collaging crude and disconcerting Chinese cultural elements and ultra-modern western imageries.[11] Criticism rarely appeared in the mainstream discourse of both design practices and academic circles. Foreign-based researchers in the late 1990s, including Zhu Jianfei and Rem Koolhaas, put their emphasis on the artificial and heterogeneous urban spectacle being built in China,[12] with little attention to the experimental architects, a marginal and scattered group that had already been publishing and practicing throughout the 1990s. Even until the last decade, describing it as "the shocking silence of the 1990s",[13] domestic scholars still believed that the postreform architectural production was incapable of producing criticism for its detachment from contemporary literature and

8 Andong Lu, "Responsive Experimentalism 1978-2018: Evolution of Contemporary China's Architectural Experimentation and its Keywords", *New Architecture* 3 (2019): 40-45.

9 Quoted in Wang and Heynen, "Transferring Postmodernism", 341.

10 Jianfei Zhu, "Beyond Revolution: Notes on Contemporary Chinese Architecture", *AA files* 35 (1998): 3-14.

11 Zhu, "Beyond Revolution", 13.

12 See: Zhu, "Beyond Revolution". And Rem Koolhaas, Sze Tsung Leong, Chuihua Judy Chung, and Jeffrey Inaba, eds., *Great Leap Forward*, (Köln: Taschen, 2001).

13 Duan Yi, and Xiaodan Yang, "The Lost of Critique: Analysis of the Phenomenon of the Sociologism in Architectural Criticism Since 1990 in China", Interior Design 1 (2009): 7-10.

art movements.[14] Indeed, the majority of the architectural community seemed to be "self-marginalizing"[15] and distancing from the art world, eager to catch up with the "latest" design philosophy by absorbing imported theories without establishing a comprehensive epistemological framework. The experimental architects, however, kept a curious intimacy with modern artists and art events, exemplifying an alternative approach amid this vibrant and turbulent time. This essay argues that it was the close relationship between experimental architecture and postreform art movement, as well as the marginalized position of independent architects in the socialist production model, that determined the specificities characterizing the problematic "criticality" of the experimental architects and their successors.

The term "experimental architecture" came from the "Experiment and Dialogue: Seminar of Chinese Young Architects and Artists" (nán běi duì huà : zhōng guó qīng nián jiàn zhù shī yì shù jiā xué shù tǎo lùn huì). Held in Guangzhou on May 18th, 1996, this seminar was organized by Wang Mingxian, the deputy editor of the journal *Architect*, to officially bring together young, independent architects and avant-garde artists and to break through the conceptual stagnation in disciplinary development. Named after the prevalent "experimental art" of the time, the experimental architecture was deeply entangled with the thoughts, figures and events in the art scene. In 1979, the Stars Group (xīng xīng pài) hung its first unauthorized exhibition on the railings of Beihai Park, marking the beginning of a new and controversial art movement that developed into the '85 New Wave (85 Xinchao) which radically eradicated the ideologized art traditions under the socialist regime with new approaches. The artists experimented with bodily expression, performances, and sought rationality and individualism against the totalitarian ideology at the time. The success of the Stars Group not only brought politicized criticism into the art scene, but also encouraged artists and poets to form independent groups outside the state-regulated establishments.[16] One of the most radical groups at the time, the Xiamen Dadaists Group led by Huang Yongping, deeply influenced Wang Mingxian, a proactive art and architecture critic who in 1986 organized various salons on postmodernism. As recalled by Wang, the salon was an opportunity for him to reach out to the emerging alternative architects, who later became the protagonists of experimental architecture.[17] The ideological criticism rooted in the progressive literature and art works of the 1980s was later reflected in the writings and the practices of experimental architects. Struggling between the newly established western-style liberalist economy and the unchanged Communist centralist state, the modern art movement in China culminated in the *China: Avant-Garde* exhibition in February 1989, and was soon silenced by the authorities. In his capacity as exhibition curator, Wang included in the show also a few architectural projects by young

14 Wang, and Heynen, "Transferring Postmodernism".

15 Mingxian Wang, and Jian Shi, "Chinese Experimental Architecture in the Nineties", *Studies in Literature and Art* 1 (1998): 117-126.

16 Michael Sullivan, "Art in China since 1949", *The China Quarterly* 159 (1999): 712-722.

17 Mingxian Wang, interviewed by author, July 2019.

and progressive architects. While these works did not receive much attention, they still indicated the close connection between emerging alternative direction in architecture and the rebellious ideals dominating the postreform art movement.

Another background promoter of the experimental architecture were the architectural competitions held in the 1980s. As art historian Gao Minglu points out, China's architectural experimentations lagged far behind China's art movement in time,[18] for the production of architecture requires the support of investment, governmental policy and the social collaboration, and is never the sole creation of an individual. During the 1980s and the early 1990s, it was nearly impossible for freelance architects outside the state-owned design institutes to get commissions on their own. Competitions, on the other hand, provided an alternative approach for young architects to test their design philosophy on paper. Intrinsically different from the built projects, conceptual designs were not bound to pragmatic purposes, including function, budget and site. Determined by its medium, the prevalence of "architecture on paper" (zhǐ shàng jiàn zhù)[19] marked the proliferation of conceptual projects characterized by symbolic formal operations, extravagant visual effects and artistic appropriations.

In a time when there was little chance to realize alternative designs, the young architects expressed their positions against the mainstream production model by retreating to writing and to the publication of conceptual designs. Both approaches were welcomed by Wang Mingxian, the protagonist in the promotion of experimental architects since he had begun working as an art critic and an editor. During his tenure at the journal *Architect*, Wang promoted the dissemination of alternative designs/approaches through the publication of critical texts and conceptual projects. Among them were Dong Yugan's "Sun and Monument" (tài yáng yǔ bēi),[20] a Cultural Revolution memorial hall with abstracted cultural symbols; Dong Yugan's "Furniture-Building", designed out of stacked bookshelves **[Fig. 1]**; Rao Xiaojun's critique of Zhao Bing's "Spatial Calligraphy" (kōng jiān shū fǎ); Li Juchuan's critique of the Parc de La Villette[21]; and the discussions on the appropriation of Western Modernism in Chinese cultural traditions and local construction methods by Liu Jiakun, Yungho Chang

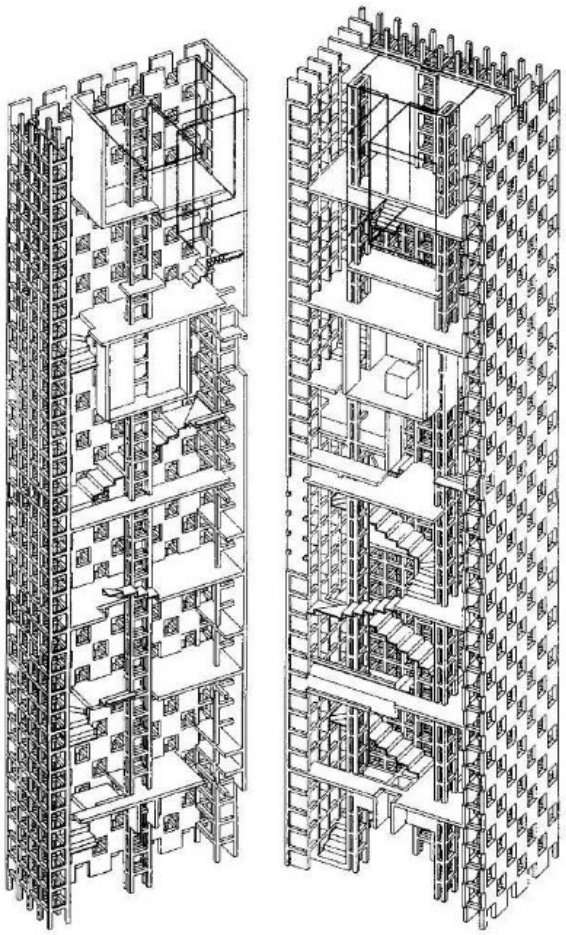


Fig. 1
Furniture-Building: Writer's House, designed by Dong Yugan, 1999. Zhaofen Zeng, "The "Experimental Architecture by Young Chinese Architects" Exhibition at the 20th UIA Congress", *New Architecture* 5 (1999): 69-70.

18 Minglu Gao, *Modern Chinese Art History (1985-1986)* (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press,1991).

19 Lu, "Responsive Experimentalism", 40.

20 Yugan Dong, "Sun and Monument", *Architect* 2 (1996), 101-102.

21 Juchuan Li, "Parc de La Villette and Others", *Architect* 57 (1994): 79-83.

and Wang Shu.[22] The journal, the symposium and the seminar provided a discursive platform to explore alternative positions before independent architects were able to enter the design market.

Influenced by the ideals and models of the modern art movement, these architects were combined under the designation of "experimental architects" by Wang Mingxian and Rao Xiaojun during the late 1990s.[23] The group was composed of several geographically scattered and middle-aged artist-architects without a unified position, though they all consciously distanced themselves from the commercialized stylizations, the rootless appropriation of postmodern theory and the symbolic revivalism that characterized China at that time.[24] Some of the architects, such as Liu Jiakun and Wang Shu, were prolific writers connected to the Chinese literati tradition; Li Juchuan and Zhao Bing had little interest in the built projects and were creative conceptual designers mobilizing cultural symbols; Yungho Chang and Ma Qingyun had overseas education backgrounds and stood as intermediaries between distinctive knowledge traditions. Each of them explored the possibilities of alternative practices with different theoretical frameworks and design philosophies, as suggested by the vague appellation of "experimental architects".

Their positions, therefore, could not be simply assumed as "avant-garde" or "criticism against the status quo". As suggested by Rao Xiaojun, the "experimental-critical view" – as expounded by the "experimental architects" – differed profoundly in its ideological outlook from the Western notion of avant-garde. While the radical, absolute and holistic ideals of European avant-garde movements were for the most part anti-historical and anti-traditional, the "experimental criticism" was test-based by selecting, reorganizing, decomposing and reassembling the existing material; and through continuous dissection and reconstruction of the recognized criteria, it aimed for the unknown, while at the same time firmly rooting itself in the social realities.[25] Experimental architecture, therefore, sought to stimulate transformation under the existing social and institutional framework without the necessity for a subversive revolution or a new orthodoxy. The "experimental criticism", as elaborated by Rao, was a flexible, vague, modest and even playful position that accommodated diverse approaches marginalized by the mainstream discourse. Stemmed from a culture apparently without critical traditions, experimental criticism integrated the tactful, unradical Chinese attitude towards change and the politicized criticism towards the dominating ideology that was influenced by the modern art movement. Wang applied the Zen Buddhist verse "A special transmission outside

22 See: Jiakun Liu, "Descriptive Discourse and Low-tech Strategy", *Architect* 10 (1997): 46-50. Shu Wang, "Spatial Poetics: Notes on Two Architectural Designs", *Architect* 61 (1994): 85-93. Yungho Chang, "Two Spatial Relationship", *Architect* 62 (1995): 60-64.

23 The initial members of the group included Yungho Chang, Dong Yugan, Tang Hua, Wang Shu, Zhao Bing, Li Juchuan, Liu Jiakun, Zhu Wenyi, Xu Weiguo, as explained in Wang Mingxian's essay. See: Mingxian Wang, "Architectural Experiments", *Time Architecture* 2 (2000): 8-11.

24 Wang, "Architectural Experiments", 10.

25 Xiaojun Rao, "Marginal Experimentation and the Transformation of Architecture", *New Architecture* 3 (1997): 20-21.

the teaching not based on the written word" (Kyōge betsuden, Furyu monji) to describe the organization and dissemination of experimental architecture.[26] Architects practicing the experimental-critical view, in fact, were more united by what they were against than by what they stood for. As Rao noted, "there are no set rules or methods; it's just an attitude, a tendency to constantly innovate, and in the meantime, to eliminate itself."[27] The movement of experimental architecture was marginal and self-marginalized and it did not aim for a clear-cut critical voice, either in practice or in theory.

The Mediatized Recontextualization of Experimental Architecture and its Discontent

Despite its peripheral status at home, the experimental architecture movement was nevertheless discovered and reframed by European scholars and curators in the early 2000s. Although the 1999 exhibition "Experimental Architecture by Young Chinese Architects" at the UIA Conference in Beijing was shut down as a result of state censorship, the German architectural critic and curator Eduard Koegel was fortunate to observe the works of the staged architects in the half-closed exhibition hall.[28] In 2001, Koegel brought some of the experimental projects to the Aedes Architecture Forum in Berlin where the display of this group of mostly marginal Chinese architects caused immediately an international sensation. Under the title of "TUMU: Young Architecture of China", the exhibition at Aedes staged the newly built works of nine architects, including those from a younger generation born in the late 1960s and 1970s, as well as an artist, Ai Weiwei. The exhibition was held with a clear purpose: as it was emphasized in the press release and in the catalogue, it aimed to promote the independent architects as the emerging and rebellious force signaling "the first promising hints for the development of an independent architectural language"[29] that would "contribute to the renewal of Chinese architecture."[30] In local newspapers the works and figures on display were presented as being part of a "revolution".[31] As the show's curator recalled, the organizers of the exhibition intentionally abandoned the existing Chinese term of "experimental architects" in order to "free it from the experimental situation" and to cause a "bigger impact".[32] Although the curators were not directly referring to "avant-garde" or "critical" architects, the discourse framing them was modified from Rao's original description of the late 1990s. The Chinese critics, Rao and Wang, perceived the experimental architecture

26 Wang, interviewed by author, July 2019.

27 Rao, "Marginal Experimentations", 21.

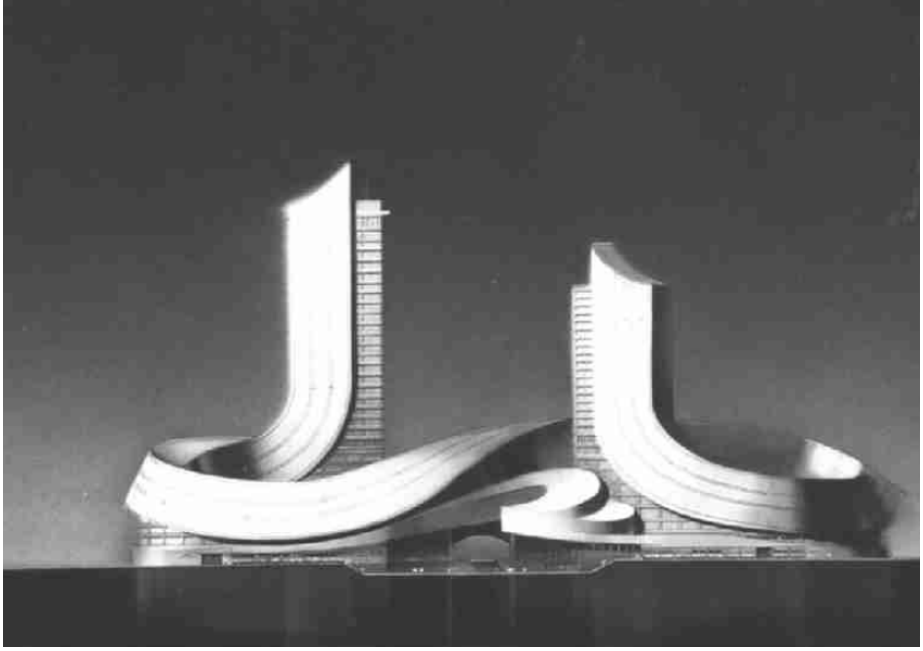
28 Eduard Koegel, trans. Hang Su, "The Perception of Chinese Architecture in the West: TU MU - an Exhibition at the Aedes Gallery in Berlin and its Context", *Time Architecture* 2016 (2): 26-30.

29 Aedes East Forum, "Press Release 'TU MU - Young Architecture from China'", (Berlin: Aedes East Forum, 2001).

30 Eduard Koegel, and Ulf Meyer, "Positions far from the Architectural Crowd", *Tu Mu: Young Architecture of China: Ai Wei Wei, Atelier Feichang Jianzhu, Liu Jiakun, MRMADA, Wang Shu, Nanda Jianzhu* (Berlin: Aedes East Forum, 2001): 12-13.

31 Hans Wolfgang Hoffmann, "Bausteine einer Revolution", *Frankfurter Rundschau* September 27, 2001.

32 Eduard Koegel, Interviewed by author, March, 2019.



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as the uncertain, marginal negotiations with the status quo, emphasizing the experimentation for new possibilities. The German exhibition, on its part, framed the emerging practices as a sort of manifesto, quickly bringing experimental architecture into controversy and criticism.

Compared to "TUMU", the 1999 exhibition curated by Wang Mingxian was more centered on conceptual projects and unbuilt works. Dong Yugan's "Furniture House", a residential building composed of stacked bookshelves, explored the ontological issue of space, architecture and artifacts. Zhao Bing's Calligraphy Series **[Fig. 2]** sought to generate architectural forms through the flow of written Chinese characters. Absurd yet thoughtful, Zhao's work tested the Chinese artistic metaphysics in design operation. The rendering of Yungho Chang's gallery project was displayed amidst a traditional Chinese ink and wash painting **[Fig. 3]**, challenging the relationship between modernist architectural

Fig. 2

Calligraphy Series", designed by Zhao Bing, 1998. Xiaojun Rao, "Experimental Architecture: a Conceptual Exploration," *Time + Architecture* 2 (2000): 12-15.

Fig. 3

China Small Contemporary Gallery, designed by Yungho Chang, 1999. Zhaofen Zeng, "The "Experimental Architecture by Young Chinese Architects" Exhibition at the 20th UIA Congress", *New Architecture* 5 (1999): 69-70.

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form and the indigenous cultural environment. The exhibition even included a video on Yuanming Yuan filed by Qiu Zhijie and Zhan Wang. The exhibited works, therefore, implicitly criticized and reflected over the mainstream ideology and the existing production model through formal language and visual effects. Whether the projects were pragmatically built was irrelevant, nor were functionality, budget, or social engagement considered. The German exhibition "TUMU" strictly requested all displayed projects to be built works **[Fig. 4]**, even though most of the independent architects were still at an early stage of their professional careers and had no more than one or two built projects in their portfolios. Starting from there, the curators foregrounded pragmatic issues such as the emerging privatized design market, the new production model, and the pedagogical revolutions, to demonstrate the possibilities kindled by these architects. While the 1999 exhibition blurred the disciplinary boundary between art and architecture and presented the ideological critical character of architectural experimentations like art installations, the German show collected built works from architects of a wider age range without distinguishing the generational difference between them, and foregrounded them as hints of a forthcoming revolution over the existing production system. The sole focus on built works, to a certain extent, distorted the original intent of experimental criticism in Rao's late 1990s text. Conceptual artist-architects Zhao Bing and Li Juchuan were not included and gradually faded out of sight, though they made indispensable and inspiring contributions to the movement of experimental architecture during the late 1990s.

The discourse initiated by "TUMU" soon disseminated across European countries, leading to the organization in the Old Continent of a series of exhibitions on contemporary Chinese architecture that focused on independent Chinese

Fig. 4

exhibited works at "TUMU: Young Architects of China", Aedes Architecture Forum, Berlin, Germany, 2001. Courtesy of Aedes Architektureforum, Berlin.

architects with alternative positions, thus inaugurating a recognition of the experimental architects in both China and the rest of the world. As reflected in subsequent exhibitions in Paris, Rotterdam, and Milan, and in journal issues published in Germany, Switzerland, Japan and Italy, the experimental architects and their successors were acknowledged for their intentional distancing from the mainstream socialist production model as well as for their critical reflection over Chinese traditional legacy and Western references.[33] In 2005, Zhu Jianfei published the article "Criticality in between China and the West" in *The Journal of Architecture* explicitly framing the experimental architects' practices in the western "critical/post-critical" discussion for the first time.[34] Zhu's text compared Peter Eisenman's critique on western world's critical posture which projects itself on Asia, and Rem Koolhaas's research on the pragmatic urgencies in China's urban development which urges for a more comprehensive understanding of the emerging critical practices from the perspective of cross-cultural communication. The rise of the "autonomous, critical, and discursive architecture" exemplified in his article not only included first-generation experimental architects like Yungho Chang, Liu Jiakun, Ma Qingyun and Wang Shu, but also younger private firms such as Atelier Deshaus. While Zhu saw China as "the largest exporter of the impetus that is effectively 'post-critical'",[35] he briefly described the architects' basic design strategies without any in-depth discussion on where their criticality lay. Zhu's description of the experimental architects as "making a breakthrough in a country that has been dominated by decorative social-realism originating from the Beaux-Arts tradition"[36] put more emphasis on the stylistic and spatial qualities, and therefore differed from the social-and-culturally engaged criticism stemming from a western Marxist tradition.

The position exemplified in Zhu's article aligned with the discourse constructed by the European exhibitions, prioritizing visual properties and conceptual novelty over pragmatic and situated issues, as characterized by the mediatized nature of curatorial narratives. Clearly, Zhu's article was geared towards an English-speaking audience that was familiar with some traditions of western knowledge but had little to no information on emerging Chinese architectural practices. It is understandable that Zhu applied the "critical/post-critical" theoretical framework to communicate the Chinese situations effectively, but the article was also problematic in its articulation of the critical attitude of the experimental architects. Zhu's text caused immediate controversies in the domestic academic community, resulting in a forum organized by the editorial team of the professional journal *Time + Architecture* (shí dài jiàn zhù). The subsequent special issue, published in 2006, marked one of the first official

33 See, for instance: *Bauen in China: Archithese: Zeitschrift und Schriftenreihe für Architektur* 6 (2004). Luis Fernández-Galiano, *China Boom: Growth Unlimited*, (Madrid: Arquitectura Viva, 2005). *China Overview: Area* 78, (Milano: Federico Motta editore, 2005). Stichting Archis, Office for Metropolitan Architecture, and C-lab (Columbia University Graduate School for Architectural Broadcasting), *Ubiquitous China: Volume* 8 (Amsterdam: Archis Foundation, 2006).

34 Zhu, "Criticality", 485

35 ibid.

36 Zhu, "Criticality", 487.

discussions on architectural criticism and critical practices in contemporary China.[37] It was a timely collection of diverse positions in relation to Zhu's 2005 article, not only presenting the opinions of Chinese scholars, but also including commentary texts from major Anglo-American theorists and critics including Peter Eisenman, Michael Speaks, Joan Ockman, and George Baird. This issue started the appropriation of Anglo-American critical paradigms into the critique of Chinese contemporary practices, even though the object of criticism was confined to the small group of experimental architects and their successors.

American critics were more open-minded towards Zhu Jianfei's article, seeing experimental architecture as "strategic thinking" and "design intelligence,"[38] and affirming the potential of the emerging practices in challenging the mainstream critical discourse in the Western world.[39] A Chinese critic, Zhu Tao, then a doctoral candidate at Columbia University, explicitly questioned the notions of criticism adopted by Zhu Jianfei's article as "value-free explorations of architectural language" with "generalized liberal political preference." Tao Zhu problematized what he deemed as an elitist tendency to popularize independent architects in media, which in turn mobilized artistic creativity as cultural capital in the emerging design market and fueled the formulation of a "bourgeois" discourse that suppressed mass culture. Zhu Tao stated that, without social engagement and environmental concerns, the experimental architects were uncritical by nature for they left out the pressing issues plaguing most of Chinese society.[40] Zhu Tao was not the only scholar who pointed out experimental architects' lack of social responsibility in practice. Sun Jiwei, for instance, criticized experimental architecture as "high jump without gravity",[41] since the conceptual novelty and aesthetic values were accomplished without pragmatic concerns. Peng Nu and Zhi Wenjun, the chief editors of *Time + Architecture*, also noted experimental architects' uncritical stance for their tendency to bypass societal orthodoxy by sheltering themselves in the aesthetic realm and, therefore, lacking a social commitment as their counterparts in the West.[42] The protagonists at the center of these critiques were aware of their situation as well. One of the representatives of experimental architects, Yungho Chang, acknowledged the importance of social responsibility but also argued that social betterment is a mission far beyond the architects' possibilities and capacities. To take an intermediate position, Chang described his critical stance as "the third criticality", in between politicized criticism and social commitment and returning to the physicality

37 The only introduction to architectural criticism available to Chinese readers before the 2006 issue was an article by French critic François Chaslin published on *World Architecture* in 1999, which provided a general definition of architectural criticism without articulating the major figures and positions worldwide. The text did not consider China's specific situations and apparently did not prompt any discussion. See: François Chaslin, trans. Xinan Su, "Situation of Architectural Criticism", *World Architecture* 6 (1999): 60-66.

38 Michael Speaks, "Ideal, Ideology, Intelligence in China and the West", *Time + Architecture*, 91/5 (2006): 63–65.

39 George Baird, "The Criticality Debate: Some Further Thoughts", *Time + Architecture*, 91/5 (2006): 62-63.

40 Tao Zhu, "The 'Criticality' Debate in the West and the Architectural Situation in China: Thoughts on the Essay 'Criticality in between China and the West'", *Time + Architecture* 91, no.5 (2006): 71-78.

41 Quoted in Guanghui Ding, "Constructing a Critical Discourse: Time + Architecture and contemporary Chinese Experimental Architecture", *Time + Architecture* 3(2018): 116-120.

42 Nu Peng, Wenjun Zhi, "A Mosaic of Contemporary Experimental Architecture in China: Theoretic Discourses and Practicing Strategies", *Time + Architecture* 5 (2002): 20-25.

and materiality of architecture.[43] Chang's "criticality" made clear that notions of criticism derived from Marxist theory, as called for by Zhu Tao, were not on the agenda of experimental architects from the start.

The controversies over the supposed critical nature of experimental architecture during the early 2000s, whether appreciative or skeptical, indeed ignored the fact that the positions of experimental architecture derived from its 1980s and 1990s entanglement with the modern art movement in China. The "experimental criticism", therefore, should not be judged solely from its social engagement. The popularization of experimental architecture, primarily through overseas exhibitions, was media-saturated in nature and created a discourse that was easily turned into a creative asset for the emerging real estate developers. This situation further problematized the relationship between independent architects and the "critical" label they carried – and perhaps still carry – in the academic discourse. The visual and conceptual properties of experimental architecture, as captured and rendered "critical" by international scholars and curators, characterized the specificities of "experimental criticism", and could only be comprehensively understood by tracing its inseparable interrelation with the modern art movement.

Architecture or Art Installation? Specificities of Experimental Criticism

The postreform art movement shaped the outlook and production of experimental architecture in two ways. On the one hand, most architects' activities were decisively filtered through the personal background, critical perspective and assessment criteria of their key promoter, Wang Mingxian. On the other hand, most experimental architects were themselves enthusiastic about the latest trends in the avant-garde art community and engaged in critical approaches in their conceptual and practical design endeavors.

Wang Mingxian actively initiated the gathering of the first members of experimental architects under the influence of '85 New Wave art movement, organizing the young figures who positioned themselves outside the official system through seminars, exhibitions and journal publications throughout the late 1980s and 1990s. An editor with a background in Chinese Literature during the 1990s, Wang was exposed to liberal art and literature from a very young age. Even when progressive academic and cultural activities were entirely silenced during the Cultural Revolution, Wang managed to have access to Western Modernist poetry, literature and artworks that were secretly circulating among the intellectuals. During his university education in the 1980s, Wang passionately breathed the liberal reforms led by various artistic and literary groups in Xiamen, including the famous radical Xiamen Dadaists. After he arrived in Beijing, Wang developed a particular interest in modern architecture through the public lectures organized by the editorial team of the journal *Architect*, for

43 Yungho Chang, "Criticality or What the West Meant to Me", *Time + Architecture*, 91/5 (2006): 66-67.

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which he later served as the deputy editor.[44] Wang not only coordinated the first exhibition on experimental architects at Beijing UIA Conference in 1999, but also edited and published a series of anthologies exclusively dedicated to the promotion of experimental design philosophy, including Yungho Chang's *For a Basic Architecture* (jī běn jiàn zhù), Wang Shu's *Beginning of Design* (shè jì de kāi shǐ), Liu Jiakun's *Now and Here* (cǐ shí cǐ dì), Cui Kai's *Projects Report* (gōng chéng bào gào), and Tang Hua's *Building Utopia* (yíng zào wū tuō bāng). In a time when architects were anonymous cogs in the huge system of state-owned design institutes, the anthology signaled the emerging consciousness of architects as creative authors, even though most independent architects had completed very few works at the time. Wang was not only an editor, curator and critic, but also the connoisseur and sponsor of experimental architecture.

Wang's background, interests and experiences deeply affected his criteria for selecting, assessing and critiquing the alternative architectural works. For instance, he saw Wang Shu's sensational and improvisational works as "architectural Dadaism", and read Yungho Chang's black bicycle wheels applied in the Xishu Bookstore project **[Fig. 5]** as "weird signs".[45] Wang deciphered architectural works in terms of formal operations, spatial experiences, visual effects and symbolic connotations. In his commentary texts, Wang discussed how novel experiences were created, how culturally symbolic forms were generated, and focused on the creative process rather than on the end-product. He also explicitly noted that the development of experimental architecture, despite its dubious positions, had to be understood as part of the modern art movement,[46] praising architects like Yungho Chang for having "[…] demonstrated in-depth understanding of avant-garde art." Wang's efforts and attitudes towards a possible reform of Chinese architecture indicated his understanding of experimental architecture as experiential installations rather than design and building activity with practical or functional purpose.

Fig. 5

Xishu Bookstore, designed by Yungho Chang, 1993. Courtesy of Atelier FCJZ archive. https://www.fcjz.com/archive/p/5b4720396918e75d6-d70822f.chive/p/5b4720396918e75d6d70822f.

44 Wang, interviewed by author, July, 2019.

45 Wang and Shi, "Chinese Experimental Architecture": 117-126.

46 Wang, interviewed by author, July, 2019.

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The architects themselves kept up closely with the modern art movement too. As recalled by Wang Mingxian, Wang Shu, one of the core members of the experimental architects, eloquently lectured at the 1988 architectural salon, invoking the courage to "wrap up the Mausoleum of Chairman Mao" as Christo and Jeanne-Claude did with the Berlin Reichstag. Liu Jiakun's first built projects were the studios he designed for his artist friends Luo Zhongli and He Duoling. Another architect, Yungho Chang, invited avant-garde artists including Wang Jianwei, Sui Jianguo and Song Dong to his newly established studio after its renovation. In a time when independent architects seldom received commissions, Chang explored a series of conceptual designs redefining traditional Chinese visual and spatial culture while communicating with the artists. For instance, in one of his projects, Chang selected and transformed sixteen Chinese characters from the Kangxi Dictionary[47] into spatial orders. In a text published in 2006, Chang explicitly noted that his critical stance derived from both the suppression lived under the Cultural Revolution and the avant-garde artists – Marcel Duchamp, Flann O'Brian, and Chantal Ackerman among others – he had learned about thanks to his education in the United States.[48] Chang's works and writings explained why the architects favored cultural symbolism and formal manifestations over social considerations in their experimentations. As reflected in their works and speeches, the architects were critical against totalitarian political systems on the one hand, and against a rigid cultural climate on the other. In this sense, the outlook of experimental architecture kept in line with the goals and the approaches of the modern art movement.

47 Kangxi Dictionary is an authoritative dictionary named after a famous emperor during the Qing Dynasty in 1897.

48 Chang, "Criticality", 66.

Fig. 6

Xiangshan Campus, designed by Wang Shu, 2000. Courtesy of Amateur Architecture Studio.

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Stemming from a transitory historical background and practiced by a specific group of people, what we could call "experimental criticism" catalyzed heterogeneous and inspirational designs, artworks and theories seeking alternative possibilities to crack the dominant production and academic system. However, this particular critical orientation also led to problematic practices. The cultural symbolism of crude and indigenous textile, for instance, sacrificed the original sense of scale of the material, as Wang Shu's Xiangshan School Campus project made evident **[Fig. 6]**. The overlarge curve of the roof, covered with small pieces of roof tiles, created a novel yet awkward scene owing to their formal incompatibility. Dong Yugan's signature red-clay-brick architecture also mismatched the building materials with the architectural structure, exaggerating the visual impact yet neglecting the architectonic logic **[Fig. 7].** The loss of scale was also reflected in the appropriation of western architectural languages. Luo Zhongli's studio, for instance, was designed with "a Guggenheim-style path" **[Fig. 8]**, as the architect

Fig. 7

Qingshui Huiguan, designed by Dong Yugan, 2003-2006. Accessed February 14th at: http://www.redbrickartmuseum.org/.

Liu Jiakun described,[49] which appeared somewhat cold, monumental, alienated and inappropriate for a private house. Ma Qingyun's projects including Well Hall (Jingyu) and Father's House (Yushan Shichan) were loaded with extensive use of traditional Chinese materials, architectural forms and symbols. The intensified imagery legibility of these projects consolidated Ma's position as the representative of contemporary Chinese architecture in Western media. Prioritizing formalistic operations over pragmatic concerns, experimental architecture developed starting from the 1980s and 1990s installation-like experimentations that were on the one hand relatively weak on the practical aspects of construction, sense of scale, or functionality and on the other obsessed with the mobilization and appropriation of both modernist architectural forms and Chinese cultural symbols. Although the discrepancies of these experimentations were undeniable, their design philosophies and conceptual ideas were visually identifiable in photographic representations and easily communicated across cultural borders through texts and images. As a result, experimental architects quickly attracted European scholars and curators for both their "critical" positions and the visual legibility of their works. One of the earliest members of the group, Wang Shu, was awarded the Pritzker Prize in 2012, as an acknowledgment of "the role that China will play in the development of architectural ideals."[50] As one can infer from the above analysis, the so-called experimental criticism seemed to favor uncertainty, tentativeness and flexibility over aggressive radicality, exemplifying a moderate critical stance that stemmed from China's traditional intermediation between architecture and installation art.

It should be reinstated that the rise of a critical discourse in China, centering on experimental architecture, was in the first place determined by a Western perspective. Critical debates in the early 2000s focused apparently on built projects that had been recognized and selected by European scholars and curators, somewhat sidelining the more conceptual schemes and artistic works that Rao Xiaojun and Wang Mingxian had originally espoused and promoted.

49 Quoted in: Dong Li, and Tiecheng Xu, "Three Narratives about the Past Ten Years in the View of Critique: the Analysis of the Criteria of China Contemporary Architects", *Architect* 6 (2010): 22-27.

50 Grace Ong Yan, "The Infinite Spontaneity of Tradition", accessed July 28, 2020, http://www.pritzkerprize.com/2012/essay.

Fig. 8

Luo Zhongli Studio, designed by Liu Jiakun, 1994. Courtesy of Jiakun Architects.

The controversy generated by Zhu Jianfei's 2005 article brought China's contemporary architectural production into the world's theoretical and critical arena and set the discursive foundation for ensuing discussions mostly based on an Anglo-American critical framework. The consequences were felt locally too: as Hong Kong scholars Laurent Gutierrez and Valérie Portefaix have recently pointed out, the "duality" of building in China and exhibiting abroad contributed greatly to the acceptance of alternative architectural discourses at home.[51] Under these circumstances, the previously marginalized theoretical and practical production of experimental criticism was also gradually recognized in the domestic academic community in part because it had first entered the Western academic discourse. The hasty recontextualization of West-centered critical discussions and the relative absence of a locally established architectural theoretical framework left in this process many conceptual nuances unelaborated.

In addition, inspired by conceptual and installation art in postreform China, experimental architecture positioned itself within the avant-garde movement, for it criticized the totalitarian production system and the cultural rigidity through formal expression, cultural symbolism, and spatial qualities based on empirical knowledge and bodily experiences. As asserted by Rao Xiaojun, criticism expressed by experimental architects refused "[…] to suppress architecture in the history of society and culture, asserting that architecture is an autonomous language and denying that it is a reflection of the reality."[52] Rao made it clear that experimental architecture intentionally distanced itself from functional considerations and social engagement, partly as a result of systematic suppression from the state-regulated production model at the time. Perceiving architecture as a cultural production like literature and art, in their criticism experimental architects were less committed to social betterment than to the politicized interrogation of the status quo in general, creating novel experiences and testing conceptual ideals. Dong Yugan's conceptual design "Sun and Monument", for instance, mobilized allegorical symbols as a preposterous metaphor for the political trauma of the Cultural Revolution. Unfortunately, although many of these works were created through architects' interactions with artists and poets, most of them seemed to express a less critical position than the artworks, in part because of the inevitable social and functional nature of architecture.

Another fundamental feature of the so-called "experimental criticism" stemmed from its deep embedment in the cultural context of China, where the term "critical" tends to imply antagonism and possesses a rather confrontational connotation compared to the more moderate term "experimental". "Experimental criticism", therefore, indicated at once flexibility and ambiguity of interpretation. As observed by French sinologist François Jullien, the Chinese "critical" view allows for a stance of deference that nevertheless marks a difference. It implies "a readerly contract to be attentive to a play between the said and the

51 Quoted in Guanghui Ding, "Reformulating a critical process: architectural exhibitions in the journal Time + Architecture", *Time Architecture* 1 (2019): 178-181.

52 Rao, "Marginal Experimentations", 20.

unsaid."[53] The discussion around the critical nature of experimental architecture that emerged around 2005 and 2006 did not explore the specificity of criticism in the Chinese cultural context, but directly appropriated the "critical/post-critical" debate, that is, only a small portion of the Western tradition of criticism. As a result, the lack of a localized dimension limited a comprehensive evaluation of experimental criticism in China. As Stanislaus Fung warns, the use of foreign terminologies might sometimes "disorient" cultural mediation, because of the ambiguity of concepts, the partial ability to grasp nuanced arguments, and the hypostatization of gestures of thinking into static "information".[54] While radical criticism might be incompatible with Chinese's habitual attitude towards change, experimental criticism presented itself as more performative than constative. Anchoring to Chinese cultural conventions the criticism that experimental architecture tried to express not only adds nuance to the understanding of a cultural movement that still remains little known, but also casts a light on a case that stands out within the history of architectural criticism for its originality.

It should also be noted that the development of experimental criticism relied heavily on the effort of promotion by very few protagonists, especially by Wang Mingxian, who was at the core of a loose network across the country that later developed into the group of experimental architects. While experimental architecture was very marginal at that time, as pointed out in several passages in this article, the seminars, exhibitions and publications organized by Wang constituted an academic environment outside the mainstream system within a small circle, allowing experimental ideas to circulate and be exchanged. Wang's upbringing, educational background, personal interests, occupational advantage and connections formed the basis on which experimental works and theories were selected, discussed, and disseminated. His perspective and criteria for judging architecture were inevitably imprinted by the cultural trauma he had endured during the 1970s, and the liberal, rebellious and critical ideologies which he embraced as a progressive intellectual during the 1980s. Although the subsequent popularity of experimental architecture at home and abroad would be promoted by various forces, including foreign academics, the domestic real estate sector, and the government's Ministry of Culture, the initial development of experimental architecture almost originated from Wang Mingxian's own efforts.

Lastly, there is a time lag between the emergence of criticism linked to experimental architecture and the critique to it that led to much scholarly controversy during the early 2000s. After the turn of the century, with the development of the market economy, the visually-appealing design style of the experimental architects were easily captured and marketed by real estate developers. The former marginal architects quickly became part of the elite culture of the urban

53 François Jullien, *Detour and Access: Strategies of Meaning in China and Greece*, (trans. Sophie Hawkes, New York: Zone Books, 2000).

54 Stanislaus Fung, "Orientation: Notes on Architectural Criticism and Contemporary China", *Journal of Architectural Education* 62, no. 3 (2009): 16-96.

upper-middle class. In the process of becoming mostly composed by recognized practitioners, their community has expanded thanks to the instigation by mass and professional media, while the image held since the 1980s and 1990s as a critical actor has in fact changed and dissolved. As architectural critic Andong Lu has observed, more practical projects have led experimental architects to focus more on the modus operandi of construction than on the expression of a liberal and artistic attitude.[55] The recognition by the media and the real estate world of the experimental aesthetic is not a triumph of critical values, but the capitalization of novel aesthetics and stylized formal operations. As Theodor Adorno once noted, criticism is time-bounded[56]. The fading conflict between the independent architects and the mainstream socio-economic forces has weakened and transformed their critical positions. However, due to the limited development of any critical discourse in Chinese academia during the 1990s, criticism fostered by experimental architecture acquired center stage in the debates about contemporary architecture in China only through literature circulated abroad and after the gradual withering of the so-called "experimental criticism" during the early 2000s.

Continuing Criticism with Diversified Paradigms

In China in the past decade, as discourses around contemporary architecture gradually stabilized at home and abroad, architectural criticism diversified into several trends. Reflections over criticism have more scholars are proposing new perspectives on the criticality of experimental architects and their successors and contributing to the diversification of global critical discourse. As Baird argues, while the post-critical, "cool" architecture distances itself from the radical, "hot" architecture, it is not necessarily incompatible with the idea of resistance. Architecture without criticality is easily conceptually and ethically adrift, becoming value-free, formalistic manifestations serving the capitalist market. Eisenman also argues that the criticality based on capitalist production has almost come to an end in the '60s, replaced by an escalation of geopolitical tension, in which the relatively backdropped Asian countries were subjected to more pressure in cross-cultural communication, and thus are more likely to develop a different critical architecture from that of the West. These calls from the Western scholars hint at the possibility of new critical paradigms in the increasing inter-connection of global architectural culture. In China's case, many scholars have moved beyond the framework of the American-imported "critical/post-critical" discourse, mobilizing various theoretical paradigms in the theorization of the contemporary local conditions of China. The "expedient

55 Lu, "Responsive Experimentalism": 42.

56 Theodor Adorno, Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, eds., trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor, *Aesthetic Theory* (London - New York: Continuum, 2004).

architecture" (*quán yí jiàn zhù*) proposed by Li Xiangning,[57] the "intermediate criticality" advanced by Ding Guanghui,[58] as well as the "civil architecture" (*gōng mín jiàn zhù*) suggested by Zhu Tao[59] all indicate the rising awareness of integrating Chinese thinking traditions and practice patterns into the wider real of architectural criticism. Yet compared to the experimental-critical views promoted by Wang Mingxian and Rao Xiaojun, the subjects of both descriptions are no longer the marginalized and conceptual experimentations of the 1990s, but the more diversified, practical and "weakened" positions that, since the 2000s, have sought a compromise with the design market. Compared to the approaches to criticism adopted earlier, the above-mentioned scholars' works have proposed new and time-sensitive critical paradigms that keep pace with the emerging developments in contemporary Chinese architecture.

57 Li argues that the "critical/post-critical" perspective is not applicable to China, summarizing the independent Chinese architectural practices as an "expedient architecture, a clever strategy to strike a subtle balance between the ultimate ideals of architecture and the reality." As Li puts, "it is rather an appropriate assessment of one's strengths and limits. It is not reckless pursuit of glories, but a roundabout way to achieve realistic results. It doesn't blindly pursue high-tech glamour, but focuses on 'low-tech' based on One's available means." See: Xiangning Li, "'Make-the-Most-of-It' Architecture: Young Architects and China Tactics", *Sixty Years of Chinese Architecture* (2009): 285-295.

58 Inspired by Maurice Merleau-Ponty's analysis of bodily perception and Karl Marx's notion of struggle/emancipation, Ding argues that "critical architecture" in China draws on the progressive forces of society to challenge the discipline and the status quo within the framework of established rules. It is a position "alternating between commercial production and critical exploration," which explains why it was harmoniously accepted in the Chinese political and cultural system. See: Ding, *Constructing a Place*.

59 Moving away from the alleged politicized critical stance of experimental architects and their successors, "civil architecture" characterizes the socially-committed, critical architecture that engages in advancing a civil society, breaking through the obsession with cultural symbols and visual expressions. See: Jun-Yang Wang and Liu He, "'Toward a Civil Architecture': Memorandum of a Critical Agenda in Contemporary Chinese Architecture", *Global Perspectives on Critical Architecture: Praxis Reloaded* (2015): 183-210.

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Aldo Rossi in the Turmoil of "German identity." The German Historical Museum Competition of 1988

Aldo Rossi, Max Bächer, German Historical Museum, Architecture Competitions, Politics

/Abstract

The 1988 competition for the German Historical Museum in Berlin was on several layers a controversial project that testifies to the publics' potential to embrace a diverse culture of dispute. Even before the competition, the idea of a museum on German history was fiercely debated, especially in the face of National Socialism. Aldo Rossi's proposal that won the competition featured a collage of typological forms reminiscent of historical German monuments. But critics contested its monumentality and naïve use of iconography, while the jury was accused to have violated competition regulations. The fall of the Berlin Wall eventually ended the debate, but this did not go without reaction: The head jury Max Bächer protested to the then-chancellor Helmut Kohl, demanding compensation for Rossi's lost prize.

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Introduction

Aldo Rossi's winning design for the 1988 competition of the *Deutsches Historisches Museum* (DHM, German Historical Museum) came as a surprise to everyone, including Rossi himself.[1] In a tense political climate, the Italian architect surpassed more than two hundred German and international architects, with a cathedral-like building in a historicist composition of typological elements. The vivid discussions that this project caused came to an abrupt end with the fall of the Berlin wall a year later. But the controversies over the museum had been instigated long before the announcement of the architectural competition and accompanied the process since its initial conception.

The DHM-project offers a case study of how decision-making, negotiation between different interest groups and criticism shape an architectural project over a long period of time. What role do politicians, critics, jury members, awarding authorities, architects, the public and history itself play in such a competition? Architectural production, especially when examining larger public buildings, is often defined by the relationship between client, builder and architect, along with the ongoing public debate. The hundreds of newspaper articles, in which the conception and the political will for a museum on German history, the location of the museum, the competition and its proceedings, Rossi's design and finally the historical situation of the fall of the Berlin Wall were discussed, testify to the influence of diverse agencies and conflicts that take place before, during and after the process of architectural production.

In *On the political* Chantal Mouffe writes against the "post-political" belief in a "consensual form of democracy" where consensus and reconciliation can be obtained through dialogue. Following the concept of an agonistic pluralism, she reminds us that conflict is constitutive for "the political" and does not need to be completely resolved. Democracy, according to Mouffe, means to envision "the creation of a vibrant 'agonistic' public sphere of contestation where different hegemonic political projects can be confronted."[2] Differing and opposing opinions—divided not along moral but political criteria—offer the public a real choice between alternatives, and it takes political arguments rather than moral statements to convince. Rather than criticising the DHM competition or the decisions that accompanied its planning, we would like to highlight the importance of conflict in this project. The public was actively involved, not only through various newspaper reports and discussions, but also through consecutive public hearings and the collective procedures of the architectural competition. Whether the mayor of Berlin was a Social Democrat or a Christian Conservative made a real difference in these ten years of debate regarding the opening of a museum on German history.

1 Gian Luigi Paracchini, "Un architetto Milanese per Berlino," *Corriere della Sera* (October 6, 1988).

2 Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge 2005), 3.

The specific German context and history are crucial to understand the controversy surrounding the DHM. Not only was the conception of a museum dedicated to German history overshadowed by the recent National Socialist past, Rossi's design was also judged against the backdrop of the architecture built in the Third Reich. This past was not at all "past and overcome" in the 1980s. Despite earlier works by Hildegard Brenner[3] and Joseph Wulf[4] as well as Anna Teut's comprehensive publication *Architektur im Dritten Reich. 1933–1945* (1967), in which she combined historical classifications with contemporary documents, extensive studies on architecture and National Socialism only took off in the mid-1970s.[5] Above all, Joachim Petsch's *Baukunst und Stadtplanung im Dritten Reich* (1976) should be mentioned here. A large number of relevant publications were finally published in the 1980s and 1990s by Dieter Bartetzko, Werner Durth and Winfried Nerdinger. Albert Speer, architect for the Nazi-regime and former Minister of Armaments and War Production in Nazi Germany, died in 1981 and only then Speer's involvement and architecture's relation to the crimes and politics of the Third Reich started to turn public.[6] In the 1980s, when the concept of the DHM and Rossi's design were discussed, both the German public and the German architectural discourse were still struggling with their Nazi past.

The idea of a museum of German history

The growing historical interest

The introduction of a museum of German history triggered several and varied debates. In the 1970s historians, politicians and journalists introduced the idea of a German Historical Museum in West Berlin, especially in contrast to the developments in the eastern half of Germany. In the German Democratic Republic the *Museum für Deutsche Geschichte* (Museum for German History) had been hosting since 1952 a permanent exhibition in line with Marxist and accordingly materialist understanding of history. This institution moved in 1953 to the *Zeughaus* (Arsenal) on *Unter den Linden* where the DHM is situated today. The debate over a possible museum of German history in West Germany, as a counterpart to the communist version of German history,[7] gained momentum with three very successful historical exhibitions: the "Zeit der Staufer" (Time of the Staufer) Stuttgart 1977; the "Wittelsbach und Bayern" (Wittelsbach and Bavaria) Munich 1980; and above all, "Preußen – Versuch einer Bilanz" (Prussia – Attempting a balance sheet) in Berlin 1981. These exhibitions are often seen

3 Hildegard Brenner, *Die Kunstpolitik des Nationalsozialismus* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1963).

4 Joseph Wulf, *Die bildenden Künste im Dritten Reich* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1963).

5 In 1968 Barbara Miller Lane published the book *Architecture and Politics in Germany 1918–1945*, which was only translated into German in 1986.

6 See Isabell Trommer, *Rechtfertigung und Entlastung: Albert Speer in der Bundesrepublik* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2016).

7 In addition, the new Historical Museum was opened in Frankfurt am Main in 1972, which, in the tradition of the Frankfurt School, also showed a Marxist view of history: Christoph Stölzl, ed., *Deutsches Historisches Museum* (Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen, 1988), 32–34. Like the GDR Museum for German History, this served as a deterrent example. See Wolf Jobst Siedler at the hearing on November 18, 1983. Ibid., 134.

as evidence of a new interest in history.[8] The 1981 exhibition on Prussia took place in the Martin-Gropius-Bau, the former Museum of Applied Arts, and since 1922 the Museum for Prehistory and Early History, which was severely damaged during World War II. The governing mayor of West Berlin Richard von Weizsäcker (CDU[9]), who eventually became Federal President in 1984, set up a committee of four historians with different political orientations, Hartmut Boockmann, Eberhard Jäckel, Hagen Schulze and Michael Stürmer, to come up with a concept and a suitable location for a future museum of German history. In their exposé from January 1982, they declared that "history is the form in which a nation, a people or a society accounts for itself," and that it plays an important role in the society's search for identity.[10] Berlin was seen as the best place for such an undertaking because here "the grandeur and the catastrophes of German history" are exemplified. Specifically, the Martin-Gropius-Bau was proposed as the most suitable location.[11] In response to the exposé, two strands of criticism emerged.

Concerns about a national museum of history

First, critics worried that the DHM would be a "national museum" that aims to reconstruct a "national identity" through history. The question was, if Germany in the face of the Holocaust and all the other crimes of the Nazi-regime should sincerely build a museum for its history. It was discussed whether it would even be possible to visually present a somewhat "unified" image of such a problematic history. This criticism was fuelled by the actions of the then-chancellor Helmut Kohl (CDU), whose agenda was named "geistig-moralische Wende" (spiritual and moral turning point) and referred to a new consciousness of German history.[12] In a government statement on May 4, 1983, Kohl stated that with the help of the federal government the DHM would open its doors in Berlin—"the old capital of the Reich" and as a "divided city, a symbol of the German question"[13]—to mark the 750th anniversary of the city of Berlin. "German history in its European context and conditions must once again become a spiritual home for the young generation,"[14] he stated. Two years later the chancellor called the DHM a "national mission of European stature"[15] and "a place of

8 Moritz Mälzer, *Ausstellungsstück Nation Die Debatte um die Gründung des Deutschen Historischen Museums in Berlin* (Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2005), 51.

9 *Christlich Demokratische Union* (Christian Democratic Union).

10 Stölzl, *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, 61. Translation by the authors. This concept of history relates to the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga.

11 Other options discussed were the Spandau Citadel, the Congress hall in the Tiergarten, and the Reichstag building, where the exhibition "1871 – Fragen an die deutsche Geschichte" (1871 – Questions for German History) has taken place since 1971.

12 See Benedikt Dettling and Michael Geske, "Helmut Kohl: Krise und Erneuerung," in "*Das Wort hat der Herr Bundeskanzler*." *Eine Analyse der Großen Regierungserklärungen von Adenauer bis Schröder*, ed. Karl-Rudolf Korte (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2002), 229.

13 Stölzl, *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, 249. Translation by the authors. The "German Question" refers to the question of how to re-unite Germany.

14 Stölzl, *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, 249. Translation by the authors.

15 Stölzl, *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, 641. Translation from Charles S. Maier, *The Unmasterable Past. History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 127.

self-determination and self-knowledge."[16] While, Kohl declared the DHM as the state's birthday present to the city of Berlin, critics warned against the introduction of an official government image of German history.[17]

An alternative vision was the idea of a *Forum für Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Forum for history and the present).[18] Instead of a museum with a permanent exhibition, and a permanent museum director who runs the risk of providing one static image of German history, a forum with short-term directors would offer temporary exhibitions with alternating views of history. The historian Hans Mommsen, who was a member of the SPD,[19] declared that the idea of the forum was better suited to the current German situation: "The cultivated, elitist notion of a museum, which was the reflex of nation-state formation, cannot be credibly imitated in the twentieth century."[20] The forum idea was for some time favoured but never reached the decision-making stage and was eventually abandoned when the new mayor Eberhard Diepgen (CDU) declared in May 1984 that the forum could only be a temporary solution until a museum would be formally established.[21]

It is important to note, that this first strand of criticism merged with the so-called *Historikerstreit* (historians' dispute). Between the summer of 1986 and the spring of 1987 a controversy over the uniqueness of the National Socialist extermination of Jews marked the press. The triggering factor was an article by the historian Ernst Nolte,[22] who—in the form of rhetorical questions—argued that with the October Revolution of 1917 Bolshevism in particular, as well as the socialist workers' movements in European countries in general, posed a threat to what he called the "liberal system" of society and thus provoked the rise of Fascism as a counter-reaction. The crimes of the Nazi regime, Nolte said, could be compared to those of the Soviet Union, such as the Gulag camps. It was the philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas who opposed Nolte in a critical article titled "Eine Art Schadensabwicklung" (A kind of damage settlement).[23] For Habermas, Nolte was part of a tendency towards historical revisionism and neo-conservatism. In Nolte's narrative the Holocaust loses its devastating uniqueness and appears as the regrettable result of an understandable reaction to Bolshevism. Habermas referred to the plans for the DHM as well and saw this

16 Stölzl, *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, 641. Translation by the authors. In addition to the DHM and with a special focus on the history of the Federal Republic after 1945, the government planned the *Haus der Geschichte* (House of History) in Bonn, which was founded in 1986 and opened in 1994.

17 Cf. e.g. Hans Mommsen, "Verordnete Geschichtsbilder. Historische Museumspläne der Bundesregierung," *Gewerkschaftliche Monatshefte*, no. 37 (1986): 13–24.

18 This was proposed by the Senator for Cultural Affairs, Volker Hassemer (CDU) in "Vergegenwärtigung der Vergangenheit," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (October 6, 1983). Cf. Stölzl, Deutsches Historisches Museum, 123ff.

19 *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (Social Democratic Party).

20 Mommsen, "Stellungnahme zur Errichtung eines Historischen Museums in Berlin," n.d. [ca. 1985], cited in Maier, *The Unmasterable Past*, 128. Mommsen very actively criticised and influenced the DHM conception. In May 1985, he and the SPD parliamentary group in the *Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin* (Berlin House of Representatives) established a committee to develop its own concept for a future DHM. Cf. Mälzer, *Ausstellungsstück Nation*, 114.

21 Stölzl, *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, 59.

22 Ernst Nolte, "Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (June 6, 1986).

23 Jürgen Habermas, "Eine Art Schadensabwicklung," *Die Zeit* (July 11, 1986).

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as a risk of historical revisionism with national aspirations.[24] The members of the DHM committee participated in the *Historikerstreit* too. Especially Stürmer, who was one of Kohl's political consultants, insisted on the necessity for a people to value its history in order to imagine a positive future: "If German history continues to be told as a collection of catastrophes and crimes, the Germans will never stand up again."[25] The *Historikerstreit* marked a political discussion of how to tell the history of Germany closely linked to the debate over the organisation of a museum of German history.

Problems finding the right location

The second strand of criticism was targeted towards the location of a future DHM. The Berlin cultural scene envisioned the Martin-Gropius-Bau as an open forum for temporary art exhibitions of various institutions and associations. This was primarily promoted by the *Akademie der Künste* (Academy of Arts), which at that time was headed by the writer Günter Grass. In September 1983, they organised a discussion that led to an open declaration of protest.[26] In response, the Senator for Cultural Affairs, Volker Hassemer (CDU) organised a hearing in November 1983 and a second one in January 1984, which intensified the debates between supporters of the idea of the forum and the advocates of a museum. The historicity of the Martin-Gropius-Bau and its surroundings stood out as well **[Fig. 1, C]**. The committee of the four historians preferred the

Fig. 1

Map of Berlin in its current state, showing (A) *Reichstag* building, (B) *Zeughaus*, (C) Martin-Gropius-Bau, (D) former Prinz-Albrecht-Palais, today the Topography of Terror documentation center, and (E) site for the DHM, now the *Bundeskanzleramt*. The former wall is shown hatched.

24 *"Historikerstreit" – Die Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung* (München: Piper, 1987), 72. English Translation: *Forever in the shadow of Hitler? Original documents of the Historikerstreit, the controversy concerning the singularity of the Holocaust* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1993).

25 "*Historikerstreit*," 295. Translation by the authors.

26 Cf. Stölzl, *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, 101–22.

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Martin-Gropius-Bau because of its proximity not only to the border, but also to the Prinz-Albrecht-Palais **[Fig. 1, D]**, where during the Third Reich the head of the Gestapo and the top management of the security service of the *Reichsführer-SS* were accommodated. This proximity to historically charged sites gave some cause for concern. For instance, the architecture historian Julius Posener stated: "Either the historical museum will blur the claim of this place, or the claim will be so great that the entire German history will only be seen *sub specie* of National Socialism, and that is wrong! [...] The best thing would be to build a new house."[27] Effectively, in 1985 it was decided to build a new building in the *Spreebogen* near the Reichstag building **[Fig. 1, A]**.[28] There was a reported myth about how the location was determined: "It is said that Helmut Kohl stood at a window of the Reichstag building and pointed out: That's where it should go! The story is true, although the place has been discussed before. That this story is so easily replicated is not a good sign: a little dictatorial, the gesture: with Louis XIV, yes, with Hitler, certainly. But with Helmut Kohl?"[29] This myth expressed the fear of a museum that was authoritatively decided by those in power.

The foundation of the DHM

In October 1985, a Committee of Experts was set up to finalize a concept and a permanent exhibition for the future DHM. The first conception, released in April 1986, rejected one single historical image and proposed a pluralistic representation of German history in its European context in a new building with three different types of exhibition approaches: epoch halls, theme rooms and in-depth study spaces. The museum "should provide a survey of German

27 Stölzl, *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, 118. Translation by the authors.

28 Stölzl, *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, 666.

29 Julius Posener, "Geschenkt bekommt Berlin ein Geschichtsmuseum," *ARCH+*, no. 96–97 (November 1988): 20. Translation by the authors.

Fig. 2
Chancellor Helmut Kohl and founding director of the DHM Christoph Stölzl at the foundation ceremony in 1987.
(© Hans Peter Stiebing)

history in its European connections and its inner diversity—neither excusing nor accusatory, but sober, self-critical, and self-aware."[30] This concept was communicated to obtain opinions and was discussed in three successive hearings from December 1986 to March 1987. The final concept from June 1987 led to the official establishment of the DHM on October 28 on the occasion of the 750th anniversary **[Fig. 2]**. Kohl personally handed over the founding certificate to the new director of the German History Museum Christoph Stölzl, who was previously director of the Munich City Museum and had made various critical exhibitions on Bavarian history. Meanwhile, in December 1986, the "Platz der Republik" competition was launched in search of a general urban planning solution for the *Spreebogen* area surrounding the Reichstag and to locate the lot for the DHM. The jury could not agree on a first prize[31] and subsequently, it was concluded that the property in the north-western part of the *Spreebogen*, as suggested by individual competition entries, was the most suitable for the DHM **[Fig. 1, E]**. In August 1987, the architecture competition for the new museum building was announced.

The competition and Aldo Rossi's winning design

Competition brief

According to the public announcement text, the call was inviting German professionals to an open, one stage and anonymous architectural competition.[32] As stated, the museum would cover German history "as comprehensively as possible from its beginnings to the present" and the competition's objective was to "further the historical awareness of the visitor and his understanding of the social and cultural life in this country;"[33] to "encourage interest in questions concerning German history;"[34] and to "promote critical debate and also offer possibilities of identification."[35] From these first steps, the whole process was bound to tread on a fragile course balancing between the aim of honouring German history while at the same time opening up to critical discourse and subjective interpretation. As such, the architects' proposals would have to please both the political administration in national and regional levels, as well as the public sentiment, with the brief referring repeatedly to the "historical importance"[36] of the project.

The expansive brief went on to delineate the elaborate programmatic needs of the museum, the on-going landscape and urban developments of the area

30 Cf. Stölzl, *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, 310–33, here 311.

31 Wolfgang Pehnt, "Stadtgestalt statt Stadtgehalt – Museen mitten in der Brache," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (June 2, 1986): 25.

32 *Public Announcement Text*, Bundesbaudirektion, August 3, 1987, typed copy of the original document translated in English in Rossi fonds, CCA, reference number: AP142.S1.D122.P2, 4.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

to which design entries would need to adapt, and construction regulations that they should conform to. Moreover, the issue of history was prevalent as a design prerequisite in itself. An extensive part of the brief was recounting the history of Berlin, and the specific site emphasised the historically charged context. There were listed 18th century landscape paintings of the *Spreebogen*; 1845 plans for the *Kroll'scher Wintergarten* (Kroll Opera House); a lengthy and richly illustrated account of the 1872 Reichstag competition; and equally informative descriptions of 20th century architectural and planning developments in the greater area of Berlin including the Royal Opera competition of 1912, Hugo Häring's and Peter Behrens' 1927 proposals for the *Platz der Republik*, and planning studies of the recent post-war era.

Raising the stakes high, during the following "Enquiries Colloquium" in October 1987, that was meant to answer interested architects' questions, the director of the museum Stölzl repeated Kohl's expression, that the museum would be "a national task of European stature."[37] The Committee of Experts, he said, decided on a "real museum of a classical type," one that poses a question of remembering, introspection and making certain with all the rigor provided by the various historical disciplines.[38] At the same time, he said that the Museum must be a "house that unites all the means and experiences of the art museum," a mixture of an art museum, laboratory and production facility.[39]

Making the promises real and opening the museum to the European and international stage, the jury invited a list of nineteen well-known architects from outside Germany. Although not all responded, included in the list were architects like Norman Foster, Aldo van Eyck, Hans Hollein, James Stirling and Aldo Rossi, the last of whom managed to steal the limelight.[40]

With the entries submitted in February 1988, the jury consisting of 11 *Fachpreisrichter* (Technical jurors), 10 *Sachpreisrichter* (Consultant jurors), 5 advisors and 28 preliminary examiners, and led by Max Bächer came to a final decision in June 10, 1988 awarding, with 14 to 7 votes, the first prize to the Italian architect, followed by the Germans: Peter Schweger (2nd prize), Axel Schultes (3rd), Florian Musso (4th) and Eckhardt Gerber (5th); the Austrian architect Wilhelm Holzbauer (6th).

37 Enquiries Colloquium minutes, Aldo Rossi fonds, CCA, reference number: AP142.S1.D122.P4.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 The complete list of invited international architects was: Dissing + Weitling (Denmark); Norman Foster (United Kingdom); Ralph Erskine (Sweden); Aldo van Eyck (Netherlands); Hans Hollein (Austria); Wilhelm Holzbauer (Austria); Arata Isozaki (Japan); Helmut Jahn (USA); Richard Meier (USA); Elmar Moltke-Nielsen (Denmark); José Rafael Moneo (Spain); Jean Nouvel (France); Ieoh Ming Pei (USA); Reima Pietilä (Finland); Kevin Roche (USA); Aldo Rossi (Italy); James Stirling (United Kingdom); Robert Venturi (USA); and Yitzhak Yashar, Dan Eitan, Moshe Kogan (Israel). Source: Bundesbaudirektion, *Wettbewerb Deutsches Historisches Museum. Auslobungstext* (Berlin: Bundesbaudirektion, 1987), 6.

Aldo Rossi's design

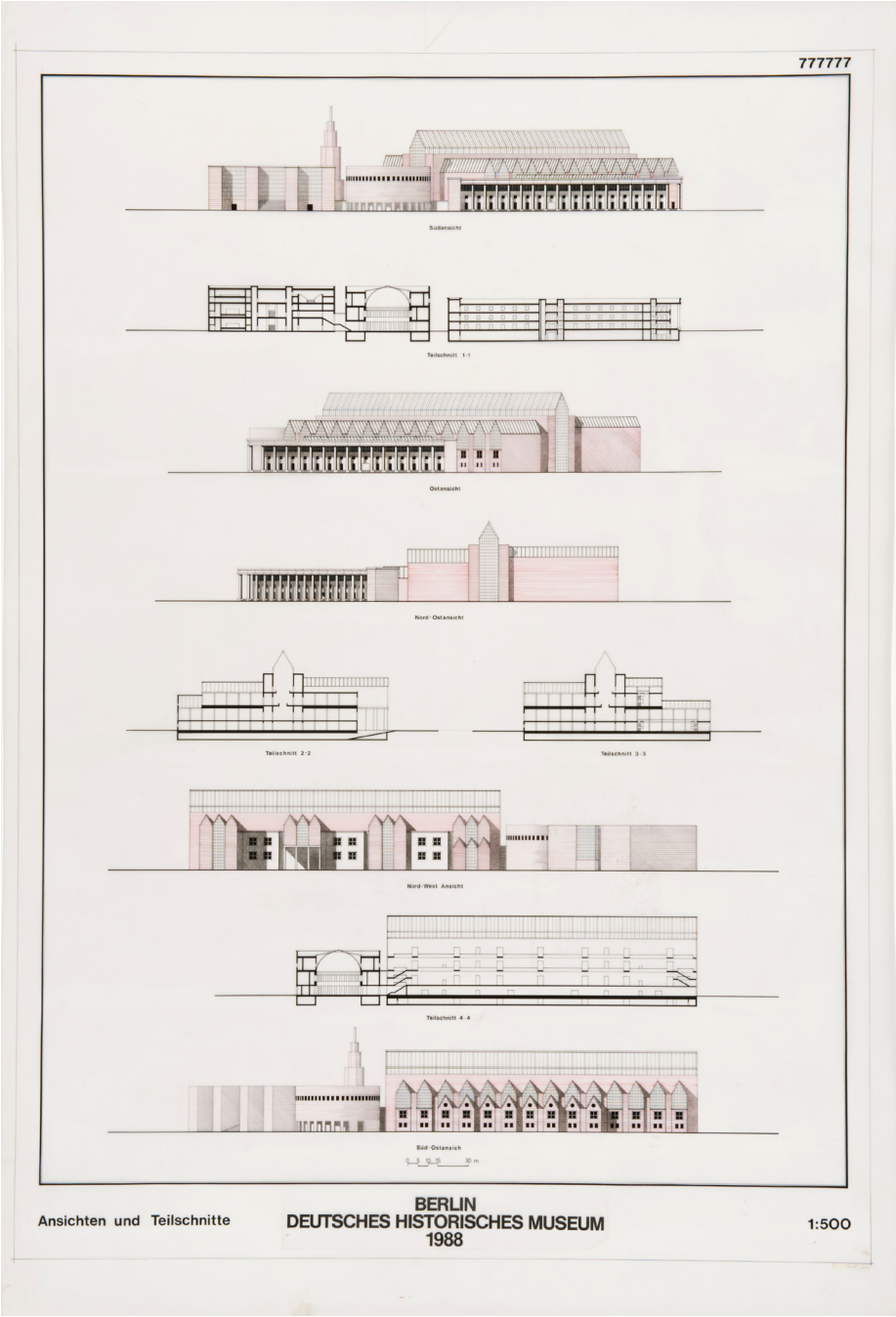
The winning design of the Aldo Rossi Studio di Architettura[41] is best described as an assemblage of historicist building types, dominated by a cathedral-like building. The project's segments are individually identifiable while forming a richly structured composite all together. Apart from their formal differentiation, these building blocks were also different in terms of their programmatic function. A massive, cylindrical "rotunda" served as the visitors' entrance point. On its one side, an elongated "colonnade" housed the Museum's administration, and on the other, an E-shape building with wide staircases inscribed as "palazzo" served the museum's instruction spaces. The "rotunda," "colonnade" and "palazzo" constituted the main, formal facades of the complex facing the *Tiergarten* park on the south, and the *Platz der Republik* on the east of the lot **[Fig. 3]**. The longer back side of the triangular site facing the Spree was visually informal, partly reminiscent of an industrial environment with chimneys and warehouses, and partly of a vernacular townscape with a series of houses facades grouped together. The central, inner part of the lot was reserved for the "red cathedral," a massive longitudinal structure accommodating the exhibition spaces on both sides of a "nave" of 120 meters long, and 28 meters high covered by a pitched glass roof. While in its interior this building was essentially a covered street, not unlike the Milanese *Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II*,[42] from the outside, the mass of the "cathedral" rose higher to top the architectural composition. Its sides, one facing the Spree, and the other the Reichstag, were visually forming an accumulation of houses. Rich in analogies, the complex would look from afar as a massing of houses or a small city, rising above a collection of formal, monumental buildings.

The city-metaphor, with the formal and programmatic differentiation of its parts brought together in a miscellaneous, asymmetrical way, pitted Rossi's design against the vast majority of the competition entries that featured monolithic buildings of well-defined geometrical shapes and which weighed on their functionalism or one-dimensional, easily-identifiable visual appeal. Instead, Rossi's iconography and autonomy of parts brought forward the idea of a museum-city as a means to give a public character and sense to the massive program without needing to provide an architectural icon as a single solution. As he described in his competition entry: "[…] the process of the autonomy of the parts, defines a small and complex part of the city that identifies with the functions, the image and the urban role of the museum."[43] But more than the abstract concept of an architectural composition of urban forms, Rossi's design bore also specific historical references which became central points

41 The team members credited for the DHM winning design from Aldo Rossi's office, in order of appearance in the entry, were: Aldo Rossi, Giovanni da Pozzo, F. Saverio Fera, Ivana Invernizzi, Daniele Nava, and Massimo Scheurer.

42 In fact, amongst concept sketches in the Rossi archive were several photos of glass-roofed public markets and the *Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II* in particular. Rossi fonds, CCA, reference number: AP142.S1.D122.P4.

43 Alberto Ferlenga, ed., *Aldo Rossi: Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlino* (Milan: Electa, 1990), 11. Translation by the authors.



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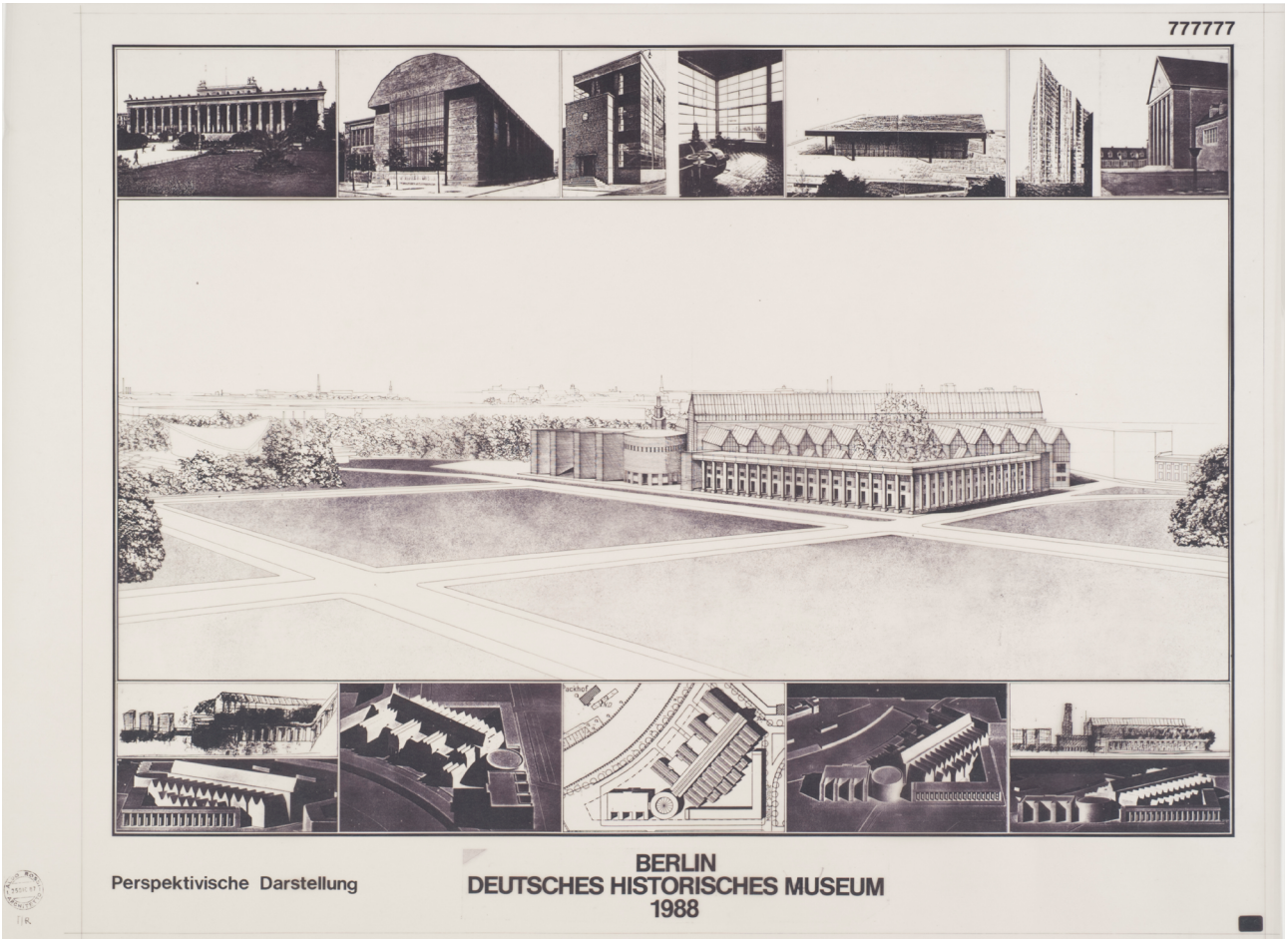
of critics that dismissed the design as "kitsch historicism"[44] or a return to 19th century eclecticism.

Historical references

The decision of Rossi to feature historical references in such a politically charged competition raised questions about their meaning. Accentuating this impression, the first panel of the submission framed a grand perspective sketch of the proposed museum complex with a series of 19th and 20th

Fig. 3
Panel of the Rossi Studio competition entry, showcasing the project's facades. Note the monumental south façade on top, the industrial-looking north-east and the vernacular house-shapes of the south-east one. (© Eredi Aldo Rossi)

44 Mathias Schreiber, "Ein Triumph der alten deutschen Italiensehnsucht," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, no. 135 (June 13, 1988): 27.



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century architectural projects of Germany, as if the architect wanted to provoke a historical dialectic with them **[Fig. 4]**. As such, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's 1921 Glass skyscraper[45] for *Friedrichstraße* was to be related to the red cathedral's glass roof, Behrens' AEG factory to the palazzo of brick and metal, Karl Friedrich Schinkel's *Altes Museum* to the rotunda and classicist colonnade, Walter Gropius' Fagus factory to the industrial-looking riverside, and Heinrich Tessenow's *Festspielhaus* to the pitch-roofed house-forms.

Even on the issue of the landscape design of the project, Rossi managed to incorporate symbolic references, by posing a single German oak tree surrounded by columns in white Italian marble in the courtyard between exhibition and administration buildings. Rossi himself explained that this German oak tree is "sacred and connected with the *Waldesnatur* and the beginning of the Germanic culture."[46] The marble columns shall indicate the German passion for Italian Journeys—in this courtyard Germany and Italy are supposed to come together. The oak tree is traditionally considered to be an archetypical symbol of the German admiration of nature.[47] Decorative oak leaves are added to orders,

45 This project has also been referred as a "cathedral of the future" by historians, making their relation with Rossi's "red cathedral" starker. Mies van der Rohe, "Building Art and the Will of the Epoch!" in *Der Querschnitt* 4, no. 1 (1924): 31–32; Fritz Neumeyer, *The Artless Word: Mies van der Rohe on the Building Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 99.

46 Architects' report, page 6. DAM Archive, 408-100-152. Translation by the authors.

47 The reference to the oak tree was curiously mentioned in a Dutch regional newspaper: "Aldo Rossi wint prijsvraag Duits Historisch Museum," *Leeuwarder courant: hoofdblad van Friesland* (June 17, 1988): 2.

Fig. 4

Panel of the Rossi Studio competition entry, framed above by a line of historical references to architectural monuments of Berlin, in addition with Tessenow's *Festspielhaus* in Hellerau, Dresden on the far right. (© Eredi Aldo Rossi)

honorary marks, national emblems and the like, at the latest since the proclamation of the German Empire in 1871—one reason why the German oak tree in Rossi's design was met with unease among the German public.

In the end, what was the underlying incentive of the design's historical references and their parallelization with German buildings? To the architect's own accord, there was no hidden meaning, other than the intention of admitting that what we have inherited is a fractured history: "Does our building wish to provide a picture of German history? No, this is surely impossible from todays' point of view. The possibility for synthesis is broken at the present time, we can at the most provide fragments: fragments of life, fragments of history and fragments of buildings."[48] In the same passage, Rossi stated that he was against "reducing the museum to a clinic for history and art, a unity comprising white, antiseptic walls, windows, repeated and repeating galleries, that take it in turns to house this or that piece of history (or art or ethnology)." In addition, the idea of the city gave to the project both a programmatic solution and the identity that the competition was in search of: an accumulation of monuments that fit a museum and offer a space where history and the present may come to terms with each other. On the one hand, the historical references can be read as fragments of a history that cannot be seen as a unity, and certainly not a positive one; on the other hand, they also provide stereotypical ideas about what is German, with an emphasis on "the German."—a conflict between these two ways of interpretation was pre-programmed. But both the historical references as well as the broken down volumes were not developed specifically for this competition and the German context but were part of Rossi's typical design process and his so-called rationalist architecture.[49] It should be added that this rational architecture, especially in Germany, has been accused several times of a dangerous proximity to the architecture of the Nazi period, which made a neutral assessment of Rossi's design difficult.

Design process

Developed rapidly between December 1987 and March 1988, the first sketches of Rossi's team consisted of literal interpretations of the programmatic diagrams provided by the competition brief.[50] The structured *Funktionsschema* (functional diagram) of the interlinking "epoch," "theme" and "study" rooms of the brief led to the first diagrams of how to structure these programs around a central pivot serving the main entrance. A second element that defined the early design concept was the projected urban development also provided by the brief.

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48 Architects' report that accompanied the submitted panels, page 4. CCA, Aldo Rossi fonds, reference number: AP142.S1.D122.P8.

49 Rossi, was the main representative of the Italian variant of the rationalist architectural movement, otherwise called "La Tendenza," that protested to the idea of the "avant-garde" and the constant search for new, innovative architectural forms. On the contrary, Rossi and his colleagues developed a transcendental rationalism, which is about the search for a universal architectural language with invariants ("permanenzas"), such as typological and historical elementary forms. The central thesis there is that architecture has autonomous principles and forms.

50 A more detailed description of Rossi's DHM design process, and its particular ties to the idea of the museum-city can be found in: Phoebus Panigyrakis, "'La città dell'architettura': Rossi, Stirling and the image of the city in their Berlin projects," in *Aldo Rossi, perspectives from the world: Theory, teaching, design and legacy*, ed. Marco Bovati, Michele Caja, Martina Landsberger and Angelo Lorenzi (Padova: Il Poligrafo, 2020), 267–77.

Willing to set the museum in its urban context, Rossi's sketches set a hard border to the south and east sides of the lot, therefore anticipating the longitudinal formal facades that would continue the urban front of their surroundings. The rotunda as the point of entrance, was a result of the programmatic structure colliding with the perimetral border. The first sketches of the rotunda, were in fact accompanied by an early sketch showcasing the project's main concept: the image of a town made up of typologically different blocks breaking over a formal façade of lower height. This scheme, turned diagonally, was developed into the cathedral that was initially portrayed as a massing of houses. In itself, the glass and red brick cathedral, was an idea that recurred for almost a decade in Rossi's firm, as historians have noted for example, in his 1979 Karlsruhe library competition entry.[51] These ideas and design processes, while being particular to Rossi, found in the Berlin museum a new meaning. Discussing the importance of the museum to Berlin, Rossi said that: "[…] it was a similar matter in former times when the ancient cathedrals were erected. I believe that the Berlin museum is a cathedral in this sense […] Cathedrals, basilicas, museums and town halls are sites of the collective memory. Which site encompasses the collective memory more strongly than a museum?"[52] The question for the German public was certainly much more about what should and should not be included in this collective memory, and how this memory should best be represented.

The decision of the Jury

The jury's statement, released on June 10, 1988, positively viewed Rossi's playfulness towards history, characterised by the "exciting structure of different, partly fragmentary components" and "style elements" that reference history. The problem of history and its possible glorification in a museum of such scale found resolution in Rossi's "interplay of grand form and small-scale form" where monumentality emerged only to be swiftly de-constructed.[53] Despite being a "certain ironic" design with a "quote-character," the jury issued that the "small town" of Rossi is "confident in itself" and resolves the problem of the discontinuity of history. The jury also replicated a part of the architects' own description embracing his appeal for a museum that would neither provide a clear picture of German history, nor remain passive and pretend of not being part of it by building an "aseptic clinic of history."[54] His design was judged to balance successfully between these two tendencies, with an additional poetic touch.[55] Applauding the jury's decision, the museum director Stölzl, who was also part of the jury, underlined Aldo Rossi's status as "an architect-thinker of international standing," whose design would contribute to the completion of the theoretical formulation of the museum, and to raise the problem of German history to a European

51 Ferlenga, *Aldo Rossi: Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlino*, 9.

52 Aldo Rossi, "Prefazione," in Ferlenga, *Aldo Rossi: Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlino*, 7. English Translation: *Aldo Rossi – Architect*, ed. Helmut Geisert (London: Academy Editions, 1994), 65

53 Stölzl, *Deutsches Historisches Museum,* 693.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

and global level.[56] Stölzl emphasized that Rossi was not a German architect, but an Italian, European and international one who had submitted a "European" museum design, probably to counter the frequent criticism towards the DHM of creating an official image of German history sanctioned by the goverment. The architect's nationality was thus turned into a political argument to give the project a European pretense and to appease the heated debate.

Practical considerations were also deemed positive aspects of the project. Mainly the fact that Rossi's complex allowed the partial construction of the project, and that its "urban qualities" meant that the museum would not have to wait for the urban developments around it to be completed.[57] But not all about Rossi's entry was viewed positively. A lack of connection was noted to the administration wing, and "strong deviations" in individual programmatic needs, and that "unanswered questions" remained over the orientation and actual function of the exhibition hall that was meant to be completed in the first construction phase.[58] With these issues in mind, the jury directed the architect to continue working on the design by commissioning a study on the technical, construction and economical aspects of the project in consultation with the *Bundesbaudirektion* (Federal Building Directorate) and DHM officials in December 1988. This resulted in an altered design presented in May of the following year.[59] In the meantime, Rossi's victory had provoked various debates. Two main controversies dominated the discourse: the criticism of Rossi's design, and the criticism towards the jury.

Criticism to Rossi's design

German responses

In the newspapers, architecture critics such as Manfred Sack (*Die Zeit*), Gottfried Knapp (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*), Falk Jaeger (*Tagesspiegel*) and Christian Marquart (*Stuttgarter Zeitung*) complained that a "big hit,"[60] an architectural "stroke of genius,"[61] had not taken place. While Jaeger associated the exhibition hall with a huge prison,[62] Knapp drew a parallel to Nazi buildings:

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56 Bundesbaudirektion, *Wettbewerb Deutsches Historisches Museum: Dokumentation* (Berlin: Bundesbaudirektion, 1988), 12.

57 Stölzl, *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, 693.

58 Ibid.

59 Explained in detail by Rossi in his text "The definitive project," the most important changes were the transformation of the central axis of the "exhibition" into a cruciform plan; the addition of a second tower on the Spree riverbank acting as a landmark; the reworking of the facades of the exhibition sides and the rotunda (now called foyer); the redesign of the instructive and the administrative blocks; the enrichment of the landscape design now featuring a "garden promenade." Other changes included the addition of a bookshop, a bar, an IMAX movie theater and technical treatments to acoustic, lighting and fire-escape issues. Despite these changes, the character of the complex remained intact. In addition to his own team, Rossi credited the architect Dieter Kroos and Fritz M. Sitte of the *Bundesbaudirektion*, and Christoph Stölzl and Hans Gerhard Hannesen of the DHM. Cf. Rossi, "Il progetto definitive," in Ferlenga, *Aldo Rossi: Deutsches Historisches Museum*, 71–115.

60 Christian Marquart, *Stuttgarter Zeitung* (1988), cited in press review, *Bauwelt*, no. 28–29, (1988): 1219. Translation by the authors.

61 Manfred Sack, "Klötzchenspiel für die Geschichte," *Die Zeit*, no. 25 (June 17, 1988). Translation by the authors.

62 Falk Jaeger, "Wie ein riesiges Gefängnis," *Der Tagesspiegel* (June 26, 1988).

> "It was above all this provocative columned hall […] that caused horror at the press conference. Because, of course, at first glance all German observers uttered rejection words such as 'Haus der Deutschen Kunst' [House of German Art], or 'Reichskanzlei' [Reich Chancellery]. In fact, the design presented as a colourless model is reminiscent of some cult buildings from the Nazi era."[63]

The House of German Art in Munich was built by Paul Ludwig Troost from 1933 to 1937 and was one of the first Nazi-propaganda architecture. According to journalist Bernard Schulz (*Tagesspiegel*) Rossi's design provoked "reminiscences of Troost"[64] and Jaeger wrote that "one cannot build such monstrous, two hundred meter long colonnades in Berlin for an understandable reason."[65] Rossi's use of columns and the monumentality of some of the building parts were the main cause of concern. The museum itself was seen by many liberal and left-wing intellectuals as an attempt to politically exploit German history. The fears that National Socialism would be relativized as a normal "building block" among many others seemed to be confirmed by Rossi's design. As evidenced in the debate, reference was repeatedly made to the similarity with the House of German Art. Allegations that designs were fascist or similar to Nazi buildings were not uncommon in the 1970s and 1980s in West Germany. Designs with colonnades or natural stone facades were defamed as "Nazi architecture," for example James Stirling's contribution to the competition for the expansion of the *Staatsgalerie Stuttgart* (State Gallery) in 1977.[66] Rossi's rationalist architecture faced similar accusations. For instance, Rossi's housing in Gallaratese near Milan has been accused of showing formal parallels to the architecture that was built in Fascist Italy.[67] Rossi himself replied, when faced with these allegations in an interview for *Ambiente* in September 1988:

> "There is no connection between certain forms and a certain politic. That was precisely the modern error in identifying form with progress. Glass was progressive and stone was reactionary. It's just stupid. If you attack fascist or Stalinist architecture, you have to explain why you can find the same architectural elements in democratic metropolises, in Paris as in New York. And you have to know that during Mussolini some of the best examples of modern architecture in Italy were created."[68]

Bächer, the chairman of the jury, was very familiar with this topic. From 1971 to 1974 he held lectures on the connection between fascist politics and

63 Gottfried Knapp, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (June 13, 1988), cited in press review, *Bauwelt*, no. 28–29 (1988): 1219. Translation by the authors.

64 Bernhard Schulz, *Der Tagesspiegel* (June 11, 1988), cited in Mittig, "NS-Motive in der Gegenwartskunst: Flamme empor?" 95. Translation by the authors.

65 Falk Jaeger, "Wie ein riesiges Gefängnis," *Der Tagesspiegel* (June 26, 1988). Translation by the authors.

66 Cf. Rosenfeld, "The Architects' Debate. Architectural Discourse and the Memory of Nazism in the Federal Republic of Germany, 1977–1997." *History and Memory* 9, no. 1–2 (Fall 1997): 193.

67 Cf. Magnago Lampugnani, "Eine neue faschistische Architektur? Eine Tendenz im Bauen bricht mit den formalen Tabus der Machtdarstellung," *Die Zeit*, no. 49 (December 1, 1978): 52.

68 Rossi, cited in *Aldo Rossi. Deutsches Historisches Museum* 1989, ed. Kristin Feireiss (Berlin: Aedes Galerie für Architektur, 1989), 50.

architecture which are little known today because they were never published. Similar to Rossi, Bächer assumed an "international classicism" with regard to the architecture of the 1930s, whereby the specificity of the National Socialist buildings lay in the exaggeration of the classic formal vocabulary with the aim of demonstrating power. For him, "neoclassical" forms were at most an indication, but not evidence of fascism in contemporary architecture.[69]

Rossi's design for the DHM continued to be judged against the backdrop of the heritage of National Socialism and the architecture built in the Third Reich. Partly in response to that criticism, in 1989 the Senate of Berlin organised three hearings about the concept, the location and the architectural design. In the last hearing on Rossi's design on November 27, most of the participants criticised Rossi's use of images of buildings from German history as naive. Jaeger made it clear that Rossi was not doing himself a favour when he made connections to Schinkel's classicist architecture or to the atmosphere of a German *Bierhalle* (beer hall).[70] In his article in *ARCH+*, Posener had already sarcastically questioned the meaningfulness of Rossi's proposal to plant a German oak tree between the exhibition and the administration buildings.[71] The architecture critic Christoph Hackelsberger called Rossi's design a "superficial interpretation which is flooded with simple allusions, a sloppy handling of common rationalist components such as rotunda, colonnade and an archetypical house, which induces a sloppy handling of history."[72] In a similar direction pointed the architecture critic Dieter Bartetzko. According to him, it is not correct to accuse Rossi of having designed Nazi architecture, but it should not be forgotten that architects such as Troost and Albert Speer had used the rotunda and the colonnade, with references to Schinkel's *Altes Museum* and the Pantheon, to create Nazi propaganda buildings: "After the misuse of these forms in the Third Reich, […] public buildings, especially in Berlin, can only be designed as antitheses, as literally and figuratively broken, questioning, sceptical and frightened recourses to this misused architecture of antiquity and classicism."[73] What Rossi offered was, according to Bartetzko, not this type of architecture but a collage of fragments that are linked to form a new, not bulky, but harmonious unity.

Not everyone agreed with Bartetzko's assessment at the hearing. The architecture critic Mathias Schreiber highlighted that the collage is not harmonic, but a disparate collection of fragments of monumental forms. He concluded that Rossi's handling with monumentality "is much more sympathetic to me than the sweaty German handling of monumentality."[74] Schreiber was one of the few who already responded positively after the competition result was announced

69 Frederike Lausch, *Fascism and Architecture. Max Bächer's Confrontation with Albert Speer* (Weimar: mbooks, 2021).

70 Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen Berlin. *Protokoll der Anhörung über die Architektur für das Deutsche Historische Museum*, Reichstagsgebäude November 27, 1989, 60.

71 Posener, "Geschenkt bekommt Berlin," 20–21.

72 Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen Berlin. *Protokoll*, 1989, 33.

73 Ibid., 41–42. Translation by the authors.

74 Ibid., 54. Translation by the authors.

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in 1988. In his article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, he complained about the uncreative solutions of German architects, which are clearly revealed in comparison with Rossi's design.[75] The critic Werner Strodthoff (*Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger*) reacted similarly: Instead of trying to symbolize the newly won democracy after World War II with a transparent glass building—as was customary at that time for German architects like Günter Behnisch—Rossi offered a varied and evocative, by no means clumsy building collage that perfectly matches the Berlin city collage.[76] These arguments were broadly consistent with the evaluation of the competition jury.

Similarly positive in the assessment of Rossi's design, in July 1988, *Bauwelt* dedicated an entire issue to the DHM competition **[Fig. 5]**. The editor Peter Rumpf argued that the task of architecture is to deal with history, but one should not confuse cause and effect: the use of historical references in architecture does not mean that the social and political past is resurrected.[77] He further

75 Mathias Schreiber, "Ein Triumph der alten deutschen Italiensehnsucht," 27.

76 Werner Strodthoff, "Entwurf von Aldo Rossi 'herausragend'," *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger* (August 5, 1988).

77 Peter Rumpf, Lead of *Bauwelt*, no. 28–29 (July 1988): 1194.

Fig. 5
Issue of *Bauwelt* (Nr. 28–29, 1988) devoted to the DHM. The cover shows the jury with Max Bächer on the far right.

emphasized that, firstly, a museum "to promote historical awareness" was not compatible with enlightened and future-oriented thinking and, secondly, that the location in the immediate vicinity of the Reichstag was "out of place." However, this has nothing to do with Rossi's design, which answered the task correctly: "It challenges answers to the questions of how building tasks of this extreme size can be solved in terms of urban planning *and* how architectural spaces which enable a contemporary presentation of historical exhibitions have to look like."[78] According to Rumpf, Rossi was the only one who broke up the programme into smaller volumes and who offered open and versatile exhibition spaces. In the *Bauwelt* issue, Bächer described the jury meetings and represented its decision. According to him, it was rather decisions that had previously been made, such as the location in the *Spreebogen*, that had to be viewed critically. That is why he judged that "the *Spreebogen* would be the most beautiful as Axel Schultes [3rd prize] suggested."[79] Schultes' introverted project offering a complex arrangement of rooms and voids, hidden behind a high exterior wall, was definitly appreciated by the jury, but eventually lost, because the unconventional project was seen as running the risk of overshadowing the exhibits.[80] Bächer himself preferred Schultes' over Rossi's design, but as chairman, his job was to defend the jury's decision, and he acted on his role.[81] He welcomed the public discussion about how the DHM should be designed, because for him one of the general aims of a museum was to promote debates. In his notebook he wrote: "How right + necessary Aldo Rossi's design is, is confirmed by the discussion and its manner – it seems to promote political [discussion], that is the meaning of the 'museum'."[82]

International responses

As for the response to the competition results from Rossi's home country of Italy and abroad, they ranged from laudatory to questioning and concerning. The *Corriere della Sera* entertained its readers with the Italian architect's win over 200 local professionals that led to an interrogation of chancellor Kohl about how this could have possibly happened.[83] Schreiber's article titled "Ein Triumph der alten deutschen Italiensehnsucht" (A triumph of the old German longing for Italy), in which he embraced Rossi's design, was reprinted in *Tribuna Tedesca* where he stated that the project of the third prize winner Schultes was "less ostentatious but no less valid" in comparison to Rossi's. [84] But in most newspapers, the design, as well as the whole endeavor of the museum was a point

78 Peter Rumpf, "Ein Kommentar," *Bauwelt*, no. 28–29 (July 1988): 1201. Translation by the authors.

79 Max Bächer, "Worte des Vorsitzenden," *Bauwelt*, no. 28–29 (July 1988): 1199.

80 Rumpf, "Ein Kommentar," 1201.

81 Cf.: "Max Bächer speaks frankly. He particularly likes the third prize, but he represents the decision of the jury against the waves of indignation that is now spilling over everyone involved." Falk Jaeger in Festschrift for Max Bächer, 1990, n.p.

82 Handwritten note by Max Bächer, no date. DAM Archive, 408-100-152. Translation by the authors.

83 Gian Luigi Paracchini, "Un architetto Milanese per Berlino."

84 Mathias Schreiber, "Trionfo del vecchio amore tedesco per la cultura italiana," *Tribuna Tedesca* (June 10, 1988): 10.

of contestation for aiming to give an overview of German history "including the time of Hitler."[85]

As for architectural press, the project saw significant exposure in all major American and European journals. The late 1980s was a period even called "Tempus Rossi"[86] that brought the Italian architect to a wide audience, and "portfolio issues" of his projects and writings were a commonplace in professional magazines and only two years later, in 1990, he was to be awarded the Pritzker prize. Reporting on the DHM, the American *Architectural Record*, wrote that "Rossi's elusiveness has become an advantage, and greater successes are likely to follow."[87] Similarly, in the *Architectural Digest*, Rossi had found an enthused supporter in the face of Vincent Scully, who called his architecture one of "love and memory."[88] On the other hand, *Progressive Architecture* called it a "surprising" win and warned that several German architects' entries had received more positive reactions making it uncertain whether Rossi would be finally commissioned to build or not.[89]

The French *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, publishing a special issue on Rossi, noted that the museum was in line with the tradition of the "Age of Enlightenment, which tends to recount history following criteria of continuity."[90] A list of selected projects, the DHM being the last one, was followed by an article from Rossi, translated in French twenty years after its original publication, titled "Une architecture pour les musées" (An architecture for museums).[91] The combination of Rossi's design for Berlin and his article implicitly staged Rossi as the most suitable architect for museums and for a contemporary, architectural approach to history. On the contrary, in Britain, the critic Stephanie Williams commented on the project in both architectural and art journals, noting its "colossal" site and investment,[92] that in combination with Rossi's design, resulted in a puzzling and dangerous project that attempted a simplistic yet urgently needed reconciliation with the past.[93]

Similar to the German press, the international reception worried more about a "great" museum of German history and, unlike most German architecture critics, less about Rossi's design—probably because the controversial comparisons with the architecture of the Third Reich were not prevalent outside Germany.

85 "Aldo Rossi wint prijsvraag Duits Historisch Museum." *Leeuwarder courant: hoofdblad van Friesland*.

86 Karen Stein, "Tempus Rossi," *Architectural Record* 176, no. 8 (August 1989): 74–89.

87 Ibid., 75.

88 Vincent Scully, "Aldo Rossi, Architect of love and memory," *Architectural Digest* 45, no. 10 (October 1988): 148.

89 Mary Pepchinski, "Berlin win for Aldo Rossi," *Progressive Architecture*, no. 8 (August 1988): 88.

90 "Musée d'histoire de Berlin," *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, no. 263 (June 1989): 181.

91 Original: Aldo Rossi, "Architettura per I musei," in *Teoria della progettazione architettonica*, ed. Guido Canella et al. (Bari: Dedalo Libri, 1968), 122–37.

92 Stephanie Williams, "Reconciliation with history: The future German Historical Museum in Berlin," *Apollo* 128, no. 322 (December 1988): 413–16.

93 Stephanie Williams, "Rossi in Berlin," *The Architect's Journal* 187, no. 32 (August 1988): 24–27.

Criticism towards the jury

Questioning Anonymity

The second criticism focused on the competition proceedings, and one has to ask how the two strands of criticism were connected. Architecture critic Paulhans Peters (*Baumeister*) was one of the first to express his mistrust of the jury's decision-making: "It seems to the outsider as if the jury wanted to push a certain work at all costs because one suspected a name behind it."[94] Because of the confidential nature of jury meetings, he could not prove this. He therefore took up an old demand that competition decisions should be made in public. Peters' article was less influential. Rather, it was Ingeborg Flagge's editorial in *Der Architekt* in September 1988 that sparked further discussions; especially since both Flagge and Bächer were members of the editorial board of *Der Architekt*. Flagge argued similarly to Peters, but more decisively. She accused the jury members that the anonymity of the contestants was not warranted. As evidence, she named a jury member who called her four days before the jury's decision and said that it had already been decided that Rossi would be the winner. What Flagge reported here would mean that, first, the judges would not have decided on the premise of anonymity and, second, violated the ban on contact. The alleged lack of anonymity is an accusation that poses problems. Even if the design was submitted anonymously, Rossi's drawing style is so unique that it can be easily recognized. Can this be blamed on the jury? Besides, Flagge criticised the general competition procedures, where a chairman—"especially an eloquent one"—can exert a lot of power: "No more jury in which a great chairman speaks and keeps down all other judges; no more decisions that ignore entire criteria such as cost-benefit ratio, user interests, etc.; no longer an award-winning design that is measured against purely formal-aesthetic or formal criteria, but cannot be realized."[95] In her comment on the influence of a great chairman who prevails against the will of others, she implicitly pointed towards Bächer, the head of the jury.

Bächer was known for his eloquence and was considered a string puller. Between 1960 and 2010, he participated in over 400 competition juries. In some competitions, it is obvious that Bächer skilfully played with the rules to influence the composition of the jury and invite additional international architects who then won the competition. This was the case with the Fellbach town hall. The Swiss architect Ernst Gisel, who was invited to participate, finally won the competition. In a long letter to Gisel, Bächer described the jury meetings and how he campaigned for his design.[96] In the case of the DHM there is no direct evidence of such behaviour on Bächer's side, especially because Rossi's design was not the one he personally preferred. But in his notes on the opening speech

94 Paulhans Peters, "Zur Entscheidung des Wettbewerbs Deutsches Historisches Museum," *Baumeister* 85, no. 7 (July 1988): 11. Translation by the authors.

95 Ingeborg Flagge, "Wettbewerbe?" *Der Architekt*, no. 9 (September 1988): 477. Translation by the authors.

96 Cf. Lausch, Frederike, Oliver Elser, Carsten Ruhl and Christiane Salge, ed. *Max Bächer – 50 Meter Archiv* (Weimar: mbooks, 2019), 37–39.

of the jury meeting, one can read, that he insisted several times that the jury was not looking for a functional and trivial design. He imagined an architecture that amazes people as an event. He added that "foreign and famous architects have been invited to support this effort." He also asked the jury members not to be afraid of historical and "generation-laden" forms: "Culture is not possible without taking a risk," he stated.[97] His opening speech shows that he was open to a rather bold architecture which may even use historical forms as in the rationalist architecture that Rossi and the "Tendenza" movement represented.

The reaction of the jury chairman

Bächer immediately responded to Flagge's editorial. He publicly rejected her accusations in an open letter, published together with numerous letters to the editor leading to a reply from Flagge herself in the December issue of Der Architekt. He blamed her of distorting reality for journalistic eagerness and sensationalism: "From a questionable phone call, a misinterpretation of confidentiality and her personal attitude, Ms. Flagge constructed a dramatic distortion of the architectural competition in order to be outraged by it with journalistic zeal."[98] Bächer was supported by his friend Eberhard Weinbrenner who was also a member of the jury and chairman of the *Bundeswettbewerbsausschuss* (Federal Competition Committee). He also contributed an open letter in which he defended the jury and its decision. He stated that Flagge's criticism was based more on the political debates related to the DHM than on the actual proceeding of the competition which was, according to Weinbrenner, completely irreproachable: "The German Historical Museum is controversial as a project and because of its location. The so-called *Historikerstreit* has added explosives. In this respect, the assumption is allowed that this could be about things that have little to do with competition proceedings and more with ideology."[99] Weinbrenner basically accused Flagge that her criticism of the architecture competition actually served political goals. In her public statement on the letters to the editor, Flagge rejected the accusations and expressly reiterated that she was not looking for a spectacular story, but was seriously concerned about the state of architecture competitions.[100]

An invitation to the hearing

In letters to friends and colleagues, Bächer expressed his regrets over Flagge's allegations that were being spread and believed.[101] When he was invited to the third hearing organised by the Senate of Berlin on November 27, 1989, Bächer declined. It must be said that in the public discourse, the hearings were seen as a political assault: On the one hand, the opposition, a coalition of the Social

97 Max Bächer's notes. DAM Archive, 408-100-152. Translation by the authors.

98 Max Bächer, "Richtigstellung," letter to the editor, *Der Architekt*, no. 12 (December 1988): 634. Translation by the authors.

99 Eberhard Weinbrenner, "Falsch," letter to the editor, *Der Architekt*, no. 12 (December 1988): 636. Translation by the authors.

100 Ingeborg Flagge, "In eigener Sache," *Der Architekt*, no. 12 (December 1988): 636.

101 See for example his letters to the architect Rambald von Steinbüchel, January 23, 1989, and March, 1, 1989: DAM Archive, 408-700-004.

Democratic Party and The Greens[102] which ruled the Senate of Berlin since March 1989, and on the other hand, the government of Germany which at that time consisted of a coalition of the Christian Democratic Union and the Free Democratic Party. The DHM was mainly a project relating to Kohl and the CDU. Until 1981 the Berlin mayor was from the SPD, while from 1981 to 1989 from the CDU (von Weizsäcker and Diepgen respectively) and again in March 1989 Walter Momper took back the mayorship for the SPD. Bächer's reason for rejection was the impression of a political instrumentalisation of architecture: "The handling of expert decisions by the Senate of Berlin destroys the basis for the process of the architecture competition and turns it into a game ball of political arbitrariness. Against this dismantling of the competition I call on protest on behalf of the architects."[103] In his rejection letter, he interpreted the hearing as an attack on the architectural competition as a democratic instrument to decide what a society wants to build. For him the competition went according to the rules and therefore its result cannot be called into question because of "political despotism." Bächer also criticised the fact that the moderator of the hearing was the journalist Flagge. According to him, in this setting, the hearing would not lead to new and objective findings. He called for the democratic decision of the jury members to be accepted.

A decision-making conflict

At the hearing, Peter Conradi (SPD), member of the *Bundestag* (German federal parliament), deputy chairman of the Committee for Spatial Planning, Building and Urban Development in Bonn and, according to Bächer, at the time romantically linked with Flagge, indirectly responded to Bächer's criticism. He made it clear that the parliament and the government respect and take the majority decision of the jury seriously, but responsibility for what will ultimately be built rested with the political body: "[…] the decision of a free jury does not take away the decision of the parliament and the government elected by the people."[104] It is interesting to note that for the professional politician Conradi, the political takes place primarily in the parliament and in the federal government through elected deputies.

In 1989 and 1990 Bächer and Conradi exchanged letters in which they respectfully discussed the conflict between the jury's and the political body's claims to power. This was essentially a decision-making conflict. Bächer continued to deem the hearing as an SPD-attack on the CDU. That is why, according to Bächer, SPD members always referred to it as the "Kohl-Museum," although the idea had already been coined in the 1970s when Berlin was ruled by the SPD: "Or does it bother that Aldo Rossi is a communist? In any case, Kohl

102 At that time it was the *Alternative Liste für Demokratie und Umweltschutz* (Alternative list for democracy and environmental protection) that joined *Bündnis 90* (Alliance 90) to *Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen Berlin* in 1993.

103 Max Bächer, Erklärung zum Hearing des Berliner Senats über das Deutsche Historische Musuem, November 24, 1989: DAM Archive, 408-100-152.

104 Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen Berlin. *Protokoll*, 1989, 71. Translation by the authors.

didn't mind," wrote Bächer as a provocation.[105] Conradi refused this accusation and pointed to the now changed German situation. The Berlin Wall fell on November 9, 1989. It soon became clear that the two German states would reunite. The *Spreebogen* had already been discussed as a place for future parliament and government buildings. "Under these circumstances, no responsible planner and politician can continue to pursue the DHM project as if nothing had happened," wrote Conradi to Bächer.[106] At the hearing, Conradi stated that it does not feel right to build a history museum in West Berlin while at the same time the Eastern German people with the *Friedliche Revolution* (Peaceful Revolution) make history.[107]

The two strands of criticism, one aimed at Rossi's design and another one at the jury, were both connected to political debates between different parties and discussions about how to deal with history, especially with German history. While architecture in the first strand of criticism was viewed as a representation of how German society deals with its history, architecture, in the second criticism, appears as a decision-making process in which it is debated who has the right and the power to decide what should be built.

The fall of the Berlin wall and Max Bächer's letter to Helmut Kohl

The historical event that changed everything

In the end, the actual history, as a result of a collective political will, turned the tables of the architectural competition. The fall of the Berlin wall changed the whole debate tremendously. In the article "Was nun? Mauer und Museum" (What now? Wall and museum), Schreiber stated that for the first time the claim to reconsider the DHM-project has factual and not merely party-tactical validity.[108] But they were not just party-tactical decisions, nor was the fall of the Berlin Wall a factual matter. The issue was which alternative had the upper hand in the current political situation and was able to convince. In this respect, the fall of the Wall was a very convincing argument against the construction of a German history museum. One question that came up was how to deal with the situation where two historical museums would exist in a city that would probably be reunited, the former GDR museum and the new historical museum in West Berlin. The famous GDR architect Hermann Henselmann who attended the third hearing spoke in favour of Rossi's design because he brings "the Attic salt" that the Germans lack.[109] This is why Schreiber imagined that "perhaps the East

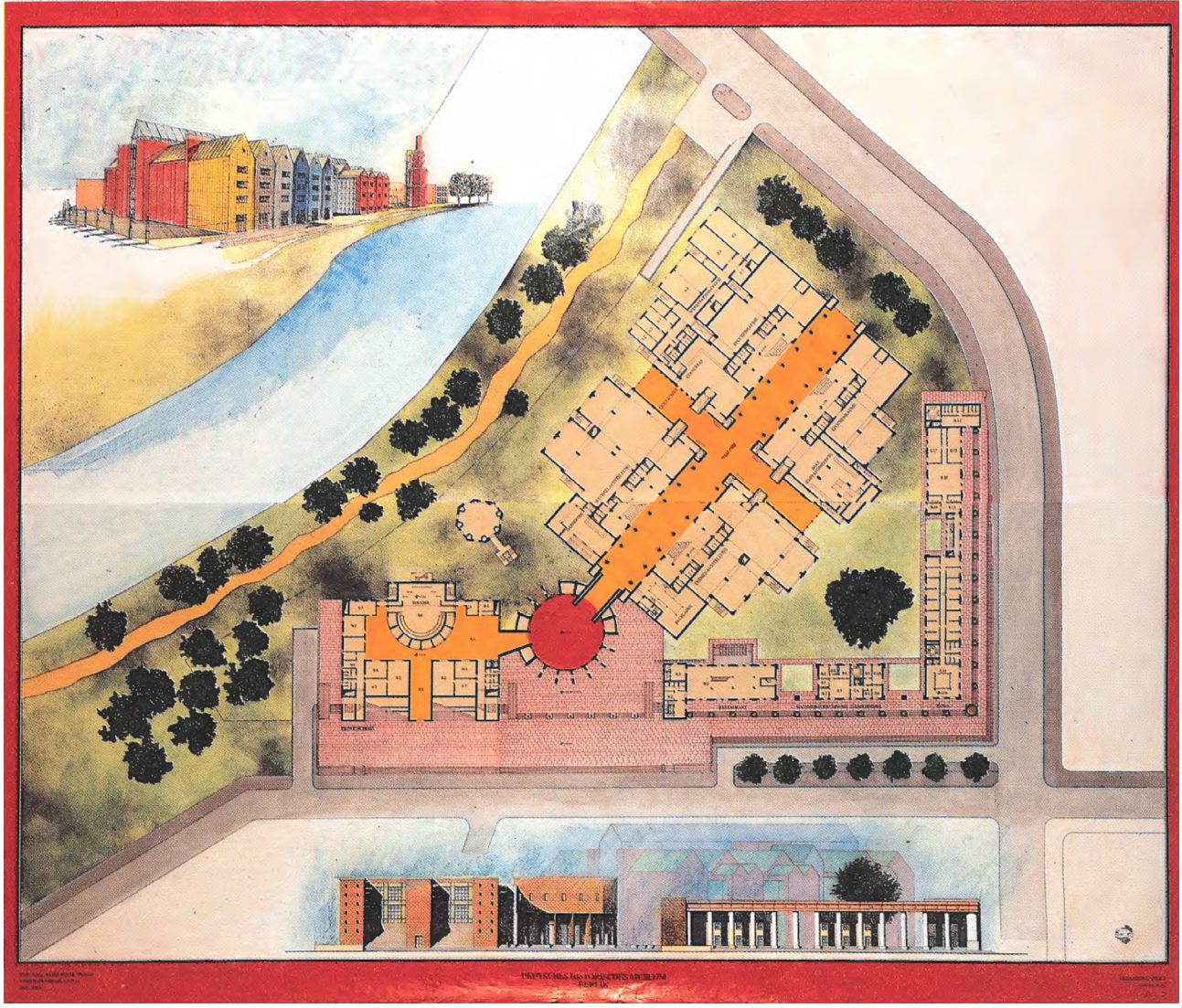
105 Letter from Max Bächer to Peter Conradi, April 10, 1990: DAM Archive, 408-700-004. Translation by the authors.

106 Letter from Peter Conradi to Max Bächer, April 26, 1990: DAM Archive, 408-700-004. Translation by the authors.

107 Cf. Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen Berlin. *Protokoll*, 1989, 72.

108 Mathias Schreiber, "Was nun? Mauer und Museum," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, no. 277 (November 29, 1989): 33.

109 Cf. Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen Berlin. *Protokoll*, 1989, 64.



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Berlin people will save Rossi's design in the end."[110] This was not the case, of course, because the debate about the DHM was neither an East German nor an all-German affair.

A few months before the *Mauerfall*, an exhibition promoting Rossi's design was opened by Stölzl on August 31, 1989, at the *Aedes Galerie für Architektur* in Berlin. He declared that, despite some new hearings, the time has come to make peace and to let Rossi realize the museum.[111] Stölzl received support from the architecture historian Werner Oechslin, who pointed out in the exhibition catalogue the German inability to design representative buildings and deal with the subject of monumentality. He ended his essay with an appeal: "The shameful commentaries and resentment should be ignored and these qualities, well suited to a museum for German history, should be given the consideration they deserve."[112] Until September 22, visitors were able to find out about the changes that Rossi had made in accordance with the demands and comments of the jury and in cooperation with the museum management.[113]

110 Schreiber, "Was nun?", 33. Translation by the authors.

111 Cf. Kurt Geisler, "Ein Ort der Begegnung, Bildung und Unterhaltung," *Berliner Morgenpost* (September 1, 1989).

112 Werner Oechslin, in *Aldo Rossi. Deutsches Historisches Museum 1989*, 13.

113 From December 8, 1989 to February 18, 1990 Rossi's design was exhibited in the *Schweizerisches Landesmuseum* (Swiss National Museum) in Zurich. The title was "Aldo Rossi. Entwürfe für das Deutsche Historische Museum."

Fig. 6

The reworked design, produced in collaboration with the *Bundesbaudirektion* (Federal Building Directorate) and delivered in May 1988. The coloured plan was a central feature of the following exhibition of 1989. (© Eredi Aldo Rossi)

New drawings produced in Rossi's studio were particularly designed for this exhibition [Fig. 6], most specifically a painted panel of several meters long and a large physical model that has since been a major exhibit in recurring presentations of his work.[114] In addition, several sketches of the early phase were edited and re-drawn[115] from scratch in the signature art-style of Rossi that deliberately depicts crude and quickly-drawn elements, as expressions of spontaneity. What is important in these exhibits was that they showed emphasis on the element of colour of the DHM. While the competition panels and technical plans were in black and white, these ones were vividly coloured depicting the museum uniformly in bright red, except from the riverside facades rendered in multiple colours. This change in the project's presentation was arguably done in anticipation of the wider public that the exhibition and the publications addressed, and perhaps even to avoid comparisons with the blank and austere Nazi representational buildings by using bright colours.

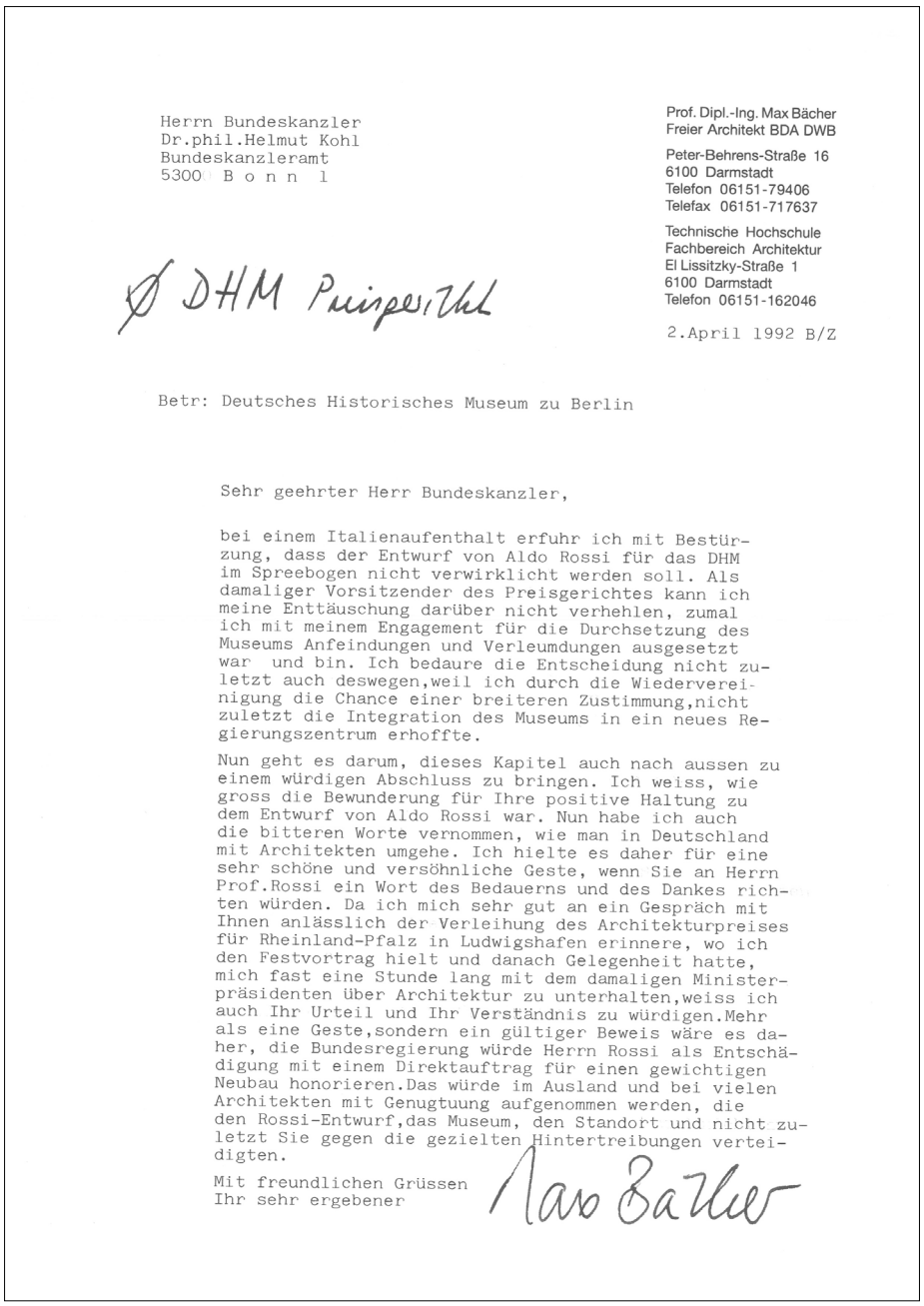
The DHM project is cancelled

Despite such efforts, Rossi's design was never executed. In September 1990, the journalist Gabriele Riedle titled an article in the *taz* with "Ost-Berlins Ulbricht-Tempel wird Kohl-Museum" (East Berlin's Ulbricht temple becomes the Kohl museum). She informed the public that in August the *Ministerrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (Council of Ministers of East Germany) had decided to give the Eastern museum of German history over to the West Berlin's DHM, without previous public discussion and without involving the museum employees concerned. Thereby, the DHM not only received a huge collection, but also a building: the *Zeughaus* on *Unter den Linden* [Fig. 1, B]. This transfer was decided without the involvement of neither the Senate of Berlin (West) nor the Magistrate of Berlin (East). Yet, the coalition of SPD and the Greens, who governed West Berlin, may not have been unhappy with this rather undemocratic development. When the government was taken over, the coalition had decided to reject "Kohl's present," but soon the SPD made concessions—certainly because Bonn insisted on linking all donation to Berlin to the approval of the Rossi building—thus provoking dispute with the Greens, who categorically refused a new building for the DHM.[116] The move of the DHM into the *Zeughaus* solved this dilemma. In 1991, the Senate elections led to the re-election of Diepgen (CDU). Despite the political change, the plan to construct Rossi's design in the *Spreebogen* was not taken up again. Instead, the plans for the construction of parliament and

114 One recent exhibition of this kind was the 2017 "Aldo Rossi. Il gran teatro di architettura" in Milan, with the DHM being one of the seven selected projects to be exhibited in detail.

115 A large percentage of Rossi's sketches of the DHM at the CCA are dated between 1988 and 1989. The design phase took place in November and December 1987 and the competition entry was submitted in February 1988. Since the submitted panels contained no such sketches, these later reworkings were produced for the purposes of publications, and exhibitions, that took advantage of Rossi's popular status as an "artist-architect" to promote the museum. For instance, such sketches were the sections of the rotunda's interior that made part of promotional leaflets as well as a combined sketch of "the DHM and other Berlin buildings" that was often featured as an opening concept sketch of the project, e.g. in: Ferlenga, *Aldo Rossi: Deutsches Historisches Museum*, *Berlino*, 8. For studying Rossi's work, the blurring between working, finished and re-drawn material is both a methodological problem and a manifestation of his ideal for the never-ending design process.

116 Cf. Gabriele Riedle, "Ost-Berlins Ulbricht-Tempel wird Kohl-Museum," *taz. die tageszeitung,* no. 3215 (September 20, 1990): 7.



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2.April 1992 B/Z

Ø DHM Preisgericht

Betr: Deutsches Historisches Museum zu Berlin

Sehr geehrter Herr Bundeskanzler,

bei einem Italienaufenthalt erfuhr ich mit Bestürzung, dass der Entwurf von Aldo Rossi für das DHM im Spreebogen nicht verwirklicht werden soll. Als damaliger Vorsitzender des Preisgerichtes kann ich meine Enttäuschung darüber nicht verhehlen, zumal ich mit meinem Engagement für die Durchsetzung des Museums Anfeindungen und Verleumdungen ausgesetzt war und bin. Ich bedaure die Entscheidung nicht zuletzt auch deswegen,weil ich durch die Wiedervereinigung die Chance einer breiteren Zustimmung,nicht zuletzt die Integration des Museums in ein neues Regierungszentrum erhoffte.

Nun geht es darum, dieses Kapitel auch nach aussen zu einem würdigen Abschluss zu bringen. Ich weiss, wie gross die Bewunderung für Ihre positive Haltung zu dem Entwurf von Aldo Rossi war. Nun habe ich auch die bitteren Worte vernommen, wie man in Deutschland mit Architekten umgehe. Ich hielte es daher für eine sehr schöne und versöhnliche Geste, wenn Sie an Herrn Prof.Rossi ein Wort des Bedauerns und des Dankes richten würden. Da ich mich sehr gut an ein Gespräch mit Ihnen anlässlich der Verleihung des Architekturpreises für Rheinland-Pfalz in Ludwigshafen erinnere, wo ich den Festvortrag hielt und danach Gelegenheit hatte, mich fast eine Stunde lang mit dem damaligen Ministerpräsidenten über Architektur zu unterhalten,weiss ich auch Ihr Urteil und Ihr Verständnis zu würdigen.Mehr als eine Geste,sondern ein gültiger Beweis wäre es daher, die Bundesregierung würde Herrn Rossi als Entschädigung mit einem Direktauftrag für einen gewichtigen Neubau honorieren.Das würde im Ausland und bei vielen Architekten mit Genugtuung aufgenommen werden, die den Rossi-Entwurf,das Museum, den Standort und nicht zuletzt Sie gegen die gezielten Hintertreibungen verteidigten.

Mit freundlichen Grüssen
Ihr sehr ergebener

Max Bächer

7 |

government buildings were pushed ahead. A year later, it was officially decided to abandon the realisation of Rossi's design for the DHM, and remodelling work on the *Zeughaus* and the creation of a permanent exhibition began.[117]

After this decision, Bächer wrote a personal letter to Kohl **[Fig. 7]**. He expressed his disappointment and suggested compensation for Rossi's missed opportunity to build the museum: "I deem it a nice and conciliatory gesture if you wrote Rossi a word of regret and gratitude."[118] Bächer went on to propose to the chancellor what he considered an appropriate response: "More than a gesture, it would be an effective proof if the federal government rewarded Rossi with a direct commission on a major new building." We do not know whether chancellor

Fig. 7
Letter from Max Bächer to chancellor Helmut Kohl from April 2, 1992. (© DAM Archive, 408-100-152).

117 Cf. Mälzer, *Ausstellungsstück Nation*, 129.

118 Letter from Max Bächer to Helmut Kohl, April 2, 1992: DAM Archive. Translation by the authors.

Kohl followed Bächer's request and wrote a letter to Rossi. It seems to be that Rossi had not received a direct commission.[119] Bächer's behaviour testifies to a self-confident assessment that his role as chairman of the jury empowered him to make direct demands on the chancellor for Rossi.

To his credit, Rossi's reaction to these developments was more docile than would be expected for an architect deprived of such a commission. In the face of the historic developments undergoing in the process of the reunification of Germany, Rossi called the project "already a fortunate one" and gave the priority to the people's fights. He stated that in the face of history, architecture and art cannot do much other than recount and celebrate it.[120]

Conclusion

In this paper the history of the *Deutsches Historisches Museum*'s early instigation as an institution and the entanglement of architectural discourse in this process was recounted. What is significant from this retelling is that the political quarrels over the treatment of history by West Germany which struggled with the past and was anxious over the future, were projected onto the architectural competition and its subsequent debates. The criticism of a possibly glorified German history in the DHM was meant to be absorbed by the choice of a foreign architect. This architect delivered a design that could be read in various ways and further fuelled the public debate. At the same time, however, the design and its playful approach to history was also a good and ultimately welcome occasion to literally argue about the way German representative buildings should look after the National Socialist era. Both the competition process and its public communication can take unpredictable courses. The claims regarding the lack of anonymity in the competition process and malpractice from the part of the jury, or the mixed and ambiguous responses from popular and professional media showcase how architecture is both a collective construction and deconstruction, how architecture is deeply political, and how it functions through a fragile system that arbitrarily perseveres or fails.

Society appears here as truly political as well, in the sense of Mouffe's theoretical body. The "post-political" is aiming for consensus ignoring the existing conflicts between different interest groups, while the political is always a struggle where agonistic demands collide. There are arguments and negotiations, power battles and temporary victories and this is not necessarily problematic. It constitutes a public which is willing to debate over what is going to be built. Mouffe reminds us that there is no rational decision and there will be the "inescapable moment of decision – in the strong sense of having to decide in an undecidable terrain."[121] The final decision to abandon the plan for a new building

119 After the DHM, Rossi executed a project for a complex of residential and office buildings in the *Schützenstraße* area, Berlin, Germany from 1992 to 1997.

120 Aldo Rossi, "Prefazione," in Ferlenga, *Aldo Rossi: Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlino*, 7.

121 Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political*, 11.

for the DHM was to some extent made by uninvolved people—the East German society. And the fact that the DHM moved into the *Zeughaus* and took over the collection of the GDR Museum for German History was a deeply undemocratic decision taken behind closed doors. One wonders what would have happened if the Berlin Wall had not fallen. Would Rossi's design today be the built testimony to German society's struggle to find the best way to deal with its history—a play of historical references as a house for a German history that, in contrast, cannot be viewed playfully, or the gift of a conservative chancellor who wanted to relieve German society of a so-called guilt of German history through a cheerful building? Probably there would have been public discussion about it again and again, with each new exhibition.

Considering the architecture that emerged in Berlin after the unification of Germany, the DHM proposal of Rossi's studio was starkly different from the so-called "Berlinische Architektur"—a conservative architectural tendency, which was about closing gaps, resuming old building lines, returning to block development, respecting old eaves heights and reinterpreting classical arrangement principles. While Rossi's close engagement with history left a bitter taste to critics and public alike, compared to the deadly serious return to old building styles in the 1990s, his collages of historical references offered a joyful view of the past. This playful approach is—despite the unease it provoked—more convincing than ever in view of the external reconstruction of the baroque *Berliner Schloss*.

Rossi's design, even unbuilt, and the debate which it triggered are a testament to the publics' potential to embrace a diverse culture of dispute, and to architecture's resilient ability to host and mediate it.

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Alessandro Benetti

Italy, 1980s: Touring Club Italiano's Guides and the Non-monumental Heritage

Non-monumental heritage, cultural dissemination, Touring Club Italiano, 1980s, tourist guide

/Abstract

Between 1983 and 1985, the T.C.I. (Touring Club Italiano) published the three hardcover, large size volumes of the collection *Città da scoprire. Guida ai centri minori, literally Cities to be discovered. A guide to Italy's secondary towns*, directed by historian and geographer Lucio Gambi.

The guide label is misleading for such an ambitious editorial project. A notable series of long form essays by prominent scholars reconstruct the architectural and urban development of each of the more than 200 selected Italian towns. All texts are accompanied by a rich iconography, also featuring specifically commissioned aerial views, and cartography, including diagrams detailing the main phases and events of the agglomeration's growth.

The *Guida ai centri minori* seamlessly fitted into the T.C.I.'s cultural agenda of the time, aimed at rerouting mass tourism away from its traditional destinations. As a matter of fact, the three books reached a wide, lay public, as they were delivered as Christmas gifts to hundreds of thousands of the association's members.

They were more than a practical tool for tourists, though. The focus on the centri minori was the occasion to shape an innovative, comprehensive representation of a non-monumental Italy, one which could replace the outdated stereotypes of the Bel Paese. Moreover, thanks to its one-of-a-kind positioning between scholarly research and dissemination, the *Guida ai centri minori* acted as a powerful tool to mainstreaming this up-to-date representation.

Starting from this case study, this paper aims at outlining the 1980s T.C.I.'s cultural project for the dissemination to a larger audience of the latest advancements of the high-culture debate on Italy's non-monumental heritage.

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Alessandro Benetti (1987) is a PhD candidate in History of Architecture, as well as a licensed architect.He studied at the ENSA Paris La Villette and at the Polytechnic University of Milan.

He has worked for several firms in the fields of architecture and urban design, such as Laboratorio Permanente (Milan) and in 2014 he co-founded, with Francesca Coden, Margherita Locatelli and Emanuele Romani, the architectural firm oblò – officina d'architettura.

He has collaborated on numerous architecture exhibitions. From 2015 through 2017 he was co-curator of the gallery SpazioFMG per l'Architettura in Milan, alongside Prof. Luca Molinari. In 2014 he was main researcher for *The Landscape has no Rear*, curated by Prof. Nicola Russi, in the frame of the 14th International Architecture Exhibition at la Biennale di Venezia.

He has authored various essays on a vast range of topics about contemporary architecture, focusing specifically on such themes as Italian architecture in the 20th and 21st century, Milan's urban and architectural history in the modern and contemporary era, and the theory and practice of contemporary public space design. He has contributed, among other publications, to the *Guida all'architettura di Milano*. 1954-2014, edited by Marco Biraghi (Hoepli, 2014), and to *Background. Il progetto del vuoto*, by Nicola Russi (Quodlibet, 2019). He is co-editor, with Nicola Russi, of the catalogue *Premio Gubbio 2018. Evoluzione e continuità* (Ancsa, 2018).

He is a regular contributor to the Italian magazine *Domus*.

In 2016 he started to collaborate with Rennes 2 University as an assistant researcher within the international program *Mapping Architectural Criticism*. Since September 2017 he is a PhD candidate in History of Architecture at Rennes 2 University and at the Polytechnic University of Milan. His thesis research focuses on the debate on the transformations of coastal territories, in France and in Italy, between the 1950s and the 1980s.

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1

Introduction

Between 1983 and 1985, the T.C.I. – Touring Club Italiano delivered to its half million members the three volumes of the collection *Città da scoprire. Guida ai centri minori*[1] *(Cities to be Discovered. A Guide to Italy's Secondary Towns)* [Fig. 1]. The guide label is diminishing for this ambitious editorial project, featuring essays by prominent scholars and an extraordinarily rich iconography. The Guida fitted into the T.C.I.'s cultural agenda of the time, trying to reroute mass tourism away from its traditional destinations. It also coincided with an advanced phase of a decades-long debate on the transformations of the Italian territory, and on the country's non-monumental heritage.

I will argue here that the *Guida* was more than a practical tool for tourists. The focus on the *centri minori* shaped an innovative, comprehensive representation of a non-monumental Italy, one which could replace the outdated stereotypes of the *Bel Paese*. Moreover, thanks to its one-of-a-kind positioning between scholarly research and dissemination, the *Guida* acted as a powerful tool to mainstreaming this up-to-date representation.

This paper consists of three parts: first, some background is provided on the T.C.I. and its editorial production; a focus on the *Guida* follows, describing its general features, its authors and their approach; finally, its main elements of originality are highlighted.

Fig. 1
The covers of the three volumes of the collection *Città da scoprire. Guida ai centri minori*, directed by Lucio Gambi and published by the Touring Club Italiano between 1983 and 1985.
Courtesy of the Archivio Touring Club Italiano

1 Touring Club Italiano, ed., *Città da scoprire. Guida ai centri minori*, 3 vols. (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 1983-1985).

The T.C.I. and the debate on the transformations of Italian territories

Founded in 1894 to promote a culturally-oriented tourism, the T.C.I. has remained since then consistent with a liberally-inspired approach to cultural dissemination, which believed that cultural elites had a responsibility for educating the common people[2]. According to historian Stefano Pivato, it has contributed to "a broader educational project, targeting the average Italian, promoted by the liberal establishment."[3] The T.C.I. has steadily published maps, magazines and guides, their remarkable circulation ensured by their automatic delivery to the association's members[4]. The latter steadily increased from an average of about 170 thousand in the early 1950s[5] to 500 thousand in 1965[6]. By the late 1970s, art critic Filippo Zevi could claim that "no Italian family exists that hasn't heard of the T.C.I.'s outreach activities."[7]

Beginning in the 1950s, the heavy transformations of Italian cities and territories[8] were the subjects of an intense debate. In a period of economic growth and hectic building speculation, this debate focused in the first place on the denunciation of the destruction of the country's heritage and traditional landscapes. At the same time, new categories were elaborated on a theoretical level to interpret Italy's changing territories, with a more constructive and design-oriented approach, as opposed to simply lamenting the destruction of the country's heritage. The notion of *centro storico*[9] now operated on two levels: first, it shifted attention from the monument to the urban fabric as a whole; and second, it attempted to reconcile history and modernity, presenting the preservation of the ancient

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2 In a sense, the T.C.I. shares the fundamentals of its liberal-inspired approach to cultural dissemination with other associations that in the second half of the 20th century were advocating for the preservation and a correct use of the national heritage, such as Italia Nostra (founded in 1955), the ANCSA – National Association for Historic and Artistic Centers (founded in 1960) and the FAI – Fondo Ambiente Italiano (founded in 1975). They all believe in what is, according to German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, one of the basis on a liberal interpretation of the relationship between cultural élites and public opinion, namely that: "Educated and powerful citizens must form an elite public, and their arguments must influence the public opinion". *Storia e critica dell'opinione pubblica* (Bari: Editori Laterza, 2015), 157. 1st German edition Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1962. (translation by the author)

3 Stefano Pivato, *Il Touring Club Italiano* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006), 9. (translation by the author)

4 Between 1914 and 1926, for instance, the T.C.I. publishes the first edition of the *Guida rossa* (Red Guide), the very first Italian guide to Italy, whose 16 volumes are printed in more than 6 million copies. Pivato, *Il Touring Club Italiano*, 85.

5 Pivato, *Il Touring Club Italiano*, 138.

6 Ibid., 151.

7 Filippo Zevi, "Le altre città e il paesaggio italiano", in *Gli Alinari fotografi a Firenze 1852-1920*, eds. Wladimiro Settimelli and Filippo Zevi (Florence: Edizioni Alinari, 1977), 255, cited in Leonardo Di Mauro, "L'Italia e le guide turistiche dall'Unità ad oggi", in *Storia d'Italia. Annali*, vol. 5, *Il paesaggio*, ed. Cesare De Seta (Turin: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1982), 406. (translation by the author)

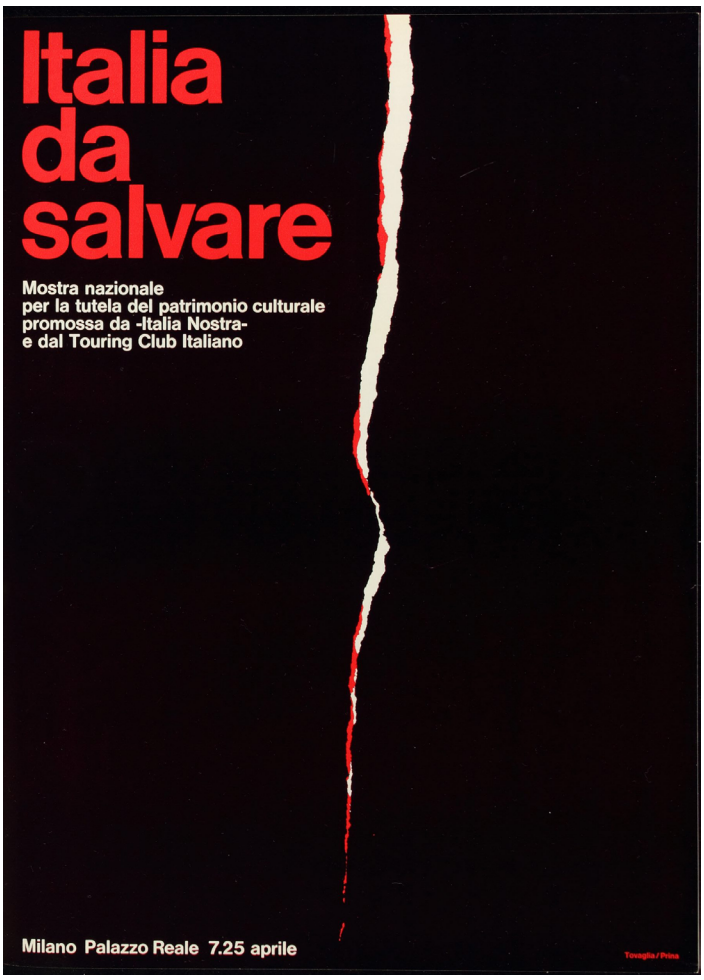
8 On the history of Italy in the second half of the 20th century see, amongst the others: Guido Crainz, *Il paese mancato. Dal miracolo economico agli anni '80* (Rome: Donzelli Editore, 2005); Paul Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia dal dopoguerra ad oggi* (Turin: Einaudi, 2006, 1st edition 1989). On the history of Italian architecture and urbanism during the same decades, as related to the transformations of the country's landscapes, see, amongst the others: Giovanni Durbiano and Matteo Robiglio, *Paesaggio e architettura nell'Italia contemporanea* (Rome: Donzelli Editore, 2003); Arturo Lanzani, I paesaggi italiani (Rome: Meltemi Editore, 2003).

9 The notion of *centro storico* acquires new centrality after the publication of the seminal Gubbio Charter, in 1960. The charter was drafted on the occasion of the *Convegno sulla salvaguardia e il risanamento dei centri storici* (Conference on the Preservation and the Rehabilitation of Historic Centers), held in Gubbio on September 17-19, 1960, organized by a group of architects, urbanists and intellectuals, as well as by several municipalities. Although it doesn't provide a clear definition of *centro storico*, the charter is a seminal reference for the reflection on the ancient centers, stressing the relevance of coordinating planning and preservation. On the occasion of the conference, the ANCSA – National Association for Historic and Artistic Centers, was founded, primarily aimed at pursuing the charter's goals. An in-depth reconstruction of the establishing of the notion of *centro storico* in the Italian and European urban culture, see for instance Davide Cutolo and Sergio Pace, *La scoperta della città antica. Esperienza e conoscenza del centro storico nell'Europa del Novecento* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2016).

centers as an integral part of the planning of the contemporary city.

This debate, which unfolded between the 1950s and 1980s, was characterized by a continual interplay between these two poles: public criticism and theoretical elaboration[10]. Large-circulation newspapers and magazines regularly featured articles by such scholars and architecture critics as Bruno Zevi and Antonio Cederna[11], functioning as shared platforms between the high-culture of specialists and mass culture. A similar role was played by the journals, symposiums and campaigns promoted by such associations as Italia Nostra, the ANCSA – National Association for Historic and Artistic Centers and the T.C.I.

In 1967, in Milan, it co-organized with Italia Nostra the exhibition *Italia da salvare* (Saving Italy)[12] **[Fig. 2]**, a bold denunciation of the Italian territory's decay. Hundreds of shots by photographer Renato Bazzoni offered the first visual overview of the country, as it had been reshaped in the previous two decades. Italy was shown as ravaged by unplanned, unsympathetic modern constructions, and by the neglect of its historic heritage.



2

The T.C.I.'s publications, though, seemingly ignored these changes for quite a while. In 1982, architectural historian Leonardo Di Mauro wrote a history of Italian tour guidebooks, from the 18th century's Grand Tour to the 1980s. Concerning T.C.I.'s most famous guide, the *Guida Rossa* (Red Guide), he stated: "as Italy changes its appearance rapidly (…), [the T.C.I.'s] editors and authors seem not to notice (…). Italy is often described as it was, as one would like it to be, seldom as it is."[13] By that time, though, the association had already started

10 On the connections and differences between academic criticism (tightly connected to theoretical elaboration) and public criticism (more directly responding to the transformations of the built environment), see the reflections of Suzanne Stephens on the US context in the 20th century. "La critique architecturale aux États-Unis entre 1930 et 2005. Lewis Mumford, Ada Louise Huxtable et Herbert Muschamp", in "La critique en temps et lieux", eds. Kenneth Frampton and Hélène Jannière, special issue, *Les Cahiers de la recherché architecturale et urbaine* 24-25 (December 2009).

11 Architect and architecture historian Bruno Zevi (1918-2000) was a regular columnist for the weekly magazine *l'Espresso*, founded in 1956. His articles for *l'Espresso* were later collected in Bruno Zevi, *Cronache di architettura*, 7 vols. (Bari: Editori Laterza, 1971-1979). Archaeologist Antonio Cederna (1921-1996) wrote about architecture and urbanism on the main national newspaper (*Il Corriere della Sera*), as well as on several weekly magazines (including *Il Mondo*, published between 1949 and 1966) and monthly magazines (including *Abitare*, where he will be responsible for the column *Il giardino d'Europa*). A selection of his articles was collected in Antonio Cederna, *I vandali in casa* (Bari: Editori Laterza, 1956).

12 Pivato, *Il Touring Club Italiano*, 149. In 1963 the association's monthly magazine *Le vie d'Italia* (Routes of Italy) launches the five-year-long campaign *Italia a pezzi* ("Italy, Falling Apart"), whose results are displayed in the exhibition *Italia da salvare* ("Saving Italy"), co-organized with Italia Nostra at Milan's Royal Palace in 1967.

13 Di Mauro, "L'Italia e le guide turistiche", 413.

Fig. 2

The cover of *Italia da Salvare*, the exhibition organized by Italia Nostra and the T.C.I. at Milan's Royal Palace in 1967. Cover design by Pino Tovaglia. Courtesy of the Archivio Touring Club Italiano

3 |

an update process of its representations of the Italian territory, which would achieve remarkable results, in particular through two publications.

The first one is *Attraverso l'Italia*[14] (Crossing Italy) [Fig. 3], a collection of photographic books portraying the Italian regions, launched in 1980. In order to update its iconography, the T.C.I. commissioned photographic campaigns by the leading figures of the rising Italian landscape photography movement[15]. Such photographs as Luigi Ghirri's image of an exhibition in Reggio Emilia [Fig. 4], Mario Cresci's shot of Giuseppe Garibaldi's monument hidden by a bus in Trapani [Fig. 5], and Gianni Berengo Gardin's photographs of the outskirts of Milan [Fig. 6], show both Italy's historic heritage and the most recent additions to it, the two layers co-existing factually, if not pacifically.

The *Guida* participates in the same process as *Attraverso l'Italia*, and takes it to a higher level of ambition.

14 Touring Club Italiano, ed., *Attraverso l'Italia*, 21 vols. (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 1980-1990). The volumes published in the 1980s are the third edition of the collection. The first edition was published between 1930 and 1955; the second edition was published between 1956 and 1972.

15 Luigi Ghirri (1943-1992) is widely recognized as the initiator of the landscape photography movement that rises starting from the early 1970s in Italy. The collective exhibition *Viaggio in Italia*, held in 1984 at the Pinacoteca provinciale in Bari, organized by Luigi Ghirri, Gianni Leone, Pina Belli d'Elia and Enzo Velati, and involving 20 photographers, is usually considered as the most remarkable accomplishment of a group of artists, sharing a common sensitivity and all engaged in the re-interpretation and re-representation of the national territory, almost unrecognizable after the profound changes that it underwent in the previous decades.

Fig. 3

The cover of Attraverso l'Italia. Emilia Romagna, vol. 2, part of the 21 volumes collection about Italian regions, published by the T.C.I. between 1980 and 1990.
Courtesy of the Archivio Touring Club Italiano

1984, Vecchia struttura pubblica di Reggio-Emilia recuperata per attività culturali. Emilia Romagna/1 (Attraverso l'Italia), 1985.

4 |

1986, Monumento a Giuseppe Garibaldi a Trapani. Sicilia/1 (Attraverso l'Italia), 1987.

5 |

1971, Le case a torre del quartiere Gallaratese. Milano (Attraverso l'Italia), 1972.

6 |

Fig. 4

A photograph by Luigi Ghirri from the first volume about Emilia Romagna of the collection *Attraverso l'Italia* (1980-1990).
Courtesy of the Archivio Touring Club Italiano

Fig. 5

A photograph by Mario Cresci from the volume about Sicilia of the collection *Attraverso l'Italia* (1980-1990).
Courtesy of the Archivio Touring Club Italiano

Fig. 6

A photograph by Gianni Berengo Gardin from the first volume about Lombardy of the collection *Attraverso l'Italia* (1980-1990).
Courtesy of the Archivio Touring Club Italiano

The "Guida ai centri minori" between scholarly research and cultural dissemination

As the T.C.I.'s archives from the 1980s are not accessible to the public, the sources for this study include the three volumes of the *Guida ai centri minori*, some interviews with their editors and authors and some general, mainly self-promotional publications by the T.C.I..

The three volumes were published in 1983 (*Northern Italy*), 1984 (*Central Italy*) and 1985 (*Southern Italy*), printed in more than 500 thousand copies, and delivered as Christmas gifts to every member of the T.C.I.[16]. They contain between 368 and 400 pages, each measuring 17 by 29.5 centimeters, which make them remarkably larger than a typical guide's pocket size. They were laid out by renowned Dutch-Italian graphic designer Bob Noorda.

Towns are presented through dedicated chapters or through chapters grouping up to four municipalities **[Fig. 7-8-9]**. 201 towns are covered overall. A number of intermediate chapters focus on wider territories and function as a shared introduction for several towns.

Each town's presentation consists of an essay on its urban history and of one or more recommended itineraries. Illustrations include specifically commissioned photographs: an opening aerial view[17], bird's-eye and eye level views, from wide angle urban shots to close up of architectural details, and maps, both historical and newly created by the T.C.I.

A short focus on the guide's authors will help outline its cultural framework, including its positioning on the threshold between scholarly culture and popular dissemination. Two figures are particularly crucial to these ends: Lucio Gambi and Franco Mancuso.

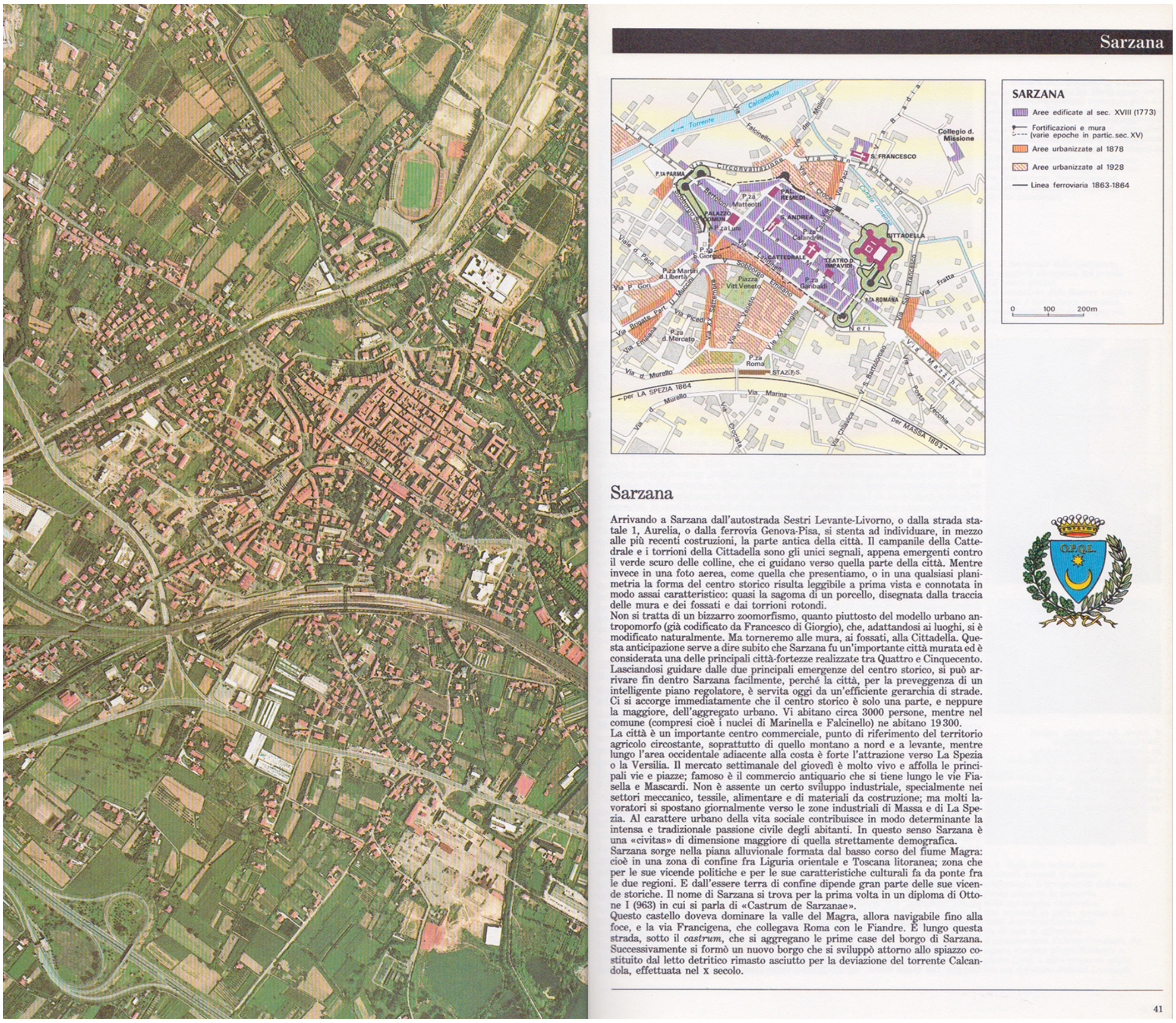
Geographer Lucio Gambi was the publication's general coordinator. Historian Alberto Saibene defines Gambi as "Italy's greatest geographer (…) interpreting the relationship between men and their environment through the *longue durée* perspective of the Annales school."[18] Gambi also shared architect Carlo Cattaneo's

16 Adriano Agnati (T.C.I.'s editorial director from 1975 to 1996), in discussion with the author, at the T.C.I.'s headquarters in Milan, on December 9, 2019. Official reports on the print-run of the publications from the 1980s are part of the non-accessible section of the T.C.I.'s archives. The same figures were confirmed by several contributors to the *Guida ai centri minori*, including Franco Mancuso and Daniele Vitale. It should also be noted that all T.C.I.'s publications were made available in bookstores one year after their first publication. Final circulation figures may therefore be higher.

17 Aerial views were commissioned to the *Compagnia Generale Ripreseaeree di Parma*, which is credited on all the three volumes.

18 Saibene specifically refers to Gambi's famous essay on *I valori storici dei quadri ambientali* (which literally translates to "Historical Values of the Environmental Frames"), published in *Storia d'Italia*, vol. 1, *I caratteri originali*, eds. Ruggero Romano and Corrado Vivanti (Turin: Einaudi, 1972). Saibene states that the essay "is an extraordinary synthesis that clearly relies on the lesson of such a master as Carlo Cattaneo (and further back in time of Cuvier's and Darwin's), which crosses from a bird's-eye perspective five thousand years of the Italian peninsula's modifications, interpreting the relationship between men and their environment through the *longue durée* approach of the Annales school". "Carte, mappe, guide; 1975 e dintorni", in *Comunità Italia. Architettura, città, paesaggio*. *1945-2000*, eds. Alberto Ferlenga and Marco Biraghi, 162. (translation by the author)

7


Sarzana

SARZANA
Aree edificate al sec. XVIII (1773)
Fortificazioni e mura (varie epoche in partic. sec. XV)
Aree urbanizzate al 1878
Aree urbanizzate al 1928
Linea ferroviaria 1863-1864
0 100 200m

Sarzana

Arrivando a Sarzana dall'autostrada Sestri Levante-Livorno, o dalla strada statale 1, Aurelia, o dalla ferrovia Genova-Pisa, si stenta ad individuare, in mezzo alle più recenti costruzioni, la parte antica della città. Il campanile della Cattedrale e i torrioni della Cittadella sono gli unici segnali, appena emergenti contro il verde scuro delle colline, che ci guidano verso quella parte della città. Mentre invece in una foto aerea, come quella che presentiamo, o in una qualsiasi planimetria la forma del centro storico risulta leggibile a prima vista e connotata in modo assai caratteristico: quasi la sagoma di un porcello, disegnata dalla traccia delle mura e dei fossati e dai torrioni rotondi.

Non si tratta di un bizzarro zoomorfismo, quanto piuttosto del modello urbano antropomorfo (già codificato da Francesco di Giorgio), che, adattandosi ai luoghi, si è modificato naturalmente. Ma torneremo alle mura, ai fossati, alla Cittadella. Questa anticipazione serve a dire subito che Sarzana fu un'importante città murata ed è considerata una delle principali città-fortezze realizzate tra Quattro e Cinquecento. Lasciandosi guidare dalle due principali emergenze del centro storico, si può arrivare fin dentro Sarzana facilmente, perché la città, per la preveggenza di un intelligente piano regolatore, è servita oggi da un'efficiente gerarchia di strade. Ci si accorge immediatamente che il centro storico è solo una parte, e neppure la maggiore, dell'aggregato urbano. Vi abitano circa 3000 persone, mentre nel comune (compresi cioè i nuclei di Marinella e Falcinello) ne abitano 19 300.

La città è un importante centro commerciale, punto di riferimento del territorio agricolo circostante, soprattutto di quello montano a nord e a levante, mentre lungo l'area occidentale adiacente alla costa è forte l'attrazione verso La Spezia o la Versilia. Il mercato settimanale del giovedì è molto vivo e affolla le principali vie e piazze; famoso è il commercio antiquario che si tiene lungo le vie Fiasella e Mascardi. Non è assente un certo sviluppo industriale, specialmente nei settori meccanico, tessile, alimentare e di materiali da costruzione; ma molti lavoratori si spostano giornalmente verso le zone industriali di Massa e di La Spezia. Al carattere urbano della vita sociale contribuisce in modo determinante la intensa e tradizionale passione civile degli abitanti. In questo senso Sarzana è una «civitas» di dimensione maggiore di quella strettamente demografica.

Sarzana sorge nella piana alluvionale formata dal basso corso del fiume Magra: cioè in una zona di confine fra Liguria orientale e Toscana litoranea; zona che per le sue vicende politiche e per le sue caratteristiche culturali fa da ponte fra le due regioni. E dall'essere terra di confine dipende gran parte delle sue vicende storiche. Il nome di Sarzana si trova per la prima volta in un diploma di Ottone I (963) in cui si parla di «Castrum de Sarzanae».

Questo castello doveva dominare la valle del Magra, allora navigabile fino alla foce, e la via Francigena, che collegava Roma con le Fiandre. È lungo questa strada, sotto il *castrum*, che si aggregano le prime case del borgo di Sarzana. Successivamente si formò un nuovo borgo che si sviluppò attorno allo spiazzo costituito dal letto detritico rimasto asciutto per la deviazione del torrente Calcandola, effettuata nel X secolo.

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Fig. 7

The six page essay about Sarzana, from the first volume of the *Guida ai centri minori*, published in 1983.
Courtesy of the Archivio Touring Club Italiano

8

1 *Sarzana e Sarzanello nell'Atlante Vinzoniano (metà del XVIII secolo). La città vi appare inserita nel suo territorio più prossimo. Si leggono le fortificazioni, l'intatto perimetro delle mura, le porte, i principali monumenti, e perfino gli orti interni al tessuto edilizio.*

2 *Sopra. La Cittadella, potente fabbrica militare costruita da Lorenzo il Magnifico in luogo della distrutta Fortezza di Firmafede.*
3 *Sotto. La cosiddetta Fortezza di Castruccio, in realtà costruzione più tarda, iniziata dai Genovesi e modificata radicalmente dai Fiorentini alla fine del '400.*

Si ebbero quindi, per un certo periodo, due borghi distinti, come si rileva anche nella denominazione degli abitanti («illi de burgo» e «illi de carcandula»). Con la definitiva decadenza di Luni, dovuta oltre che alla crisi imperiale romana anche all'insabbiamento del porto e all'impaludamento della fascia costiera, si determinò la fusione dei due borghi lungo la via Francigena, ormai più sicura e transitabile dell'antica Emilia Scauri, corrente sul litorale. Il «burgus Sarzanae» acquista poi via via maggiore autonomia dal castello. C'è l'edificio comunale, vi si svolge un mercato settimanale; c'è la Cattedrale, di cui Gregorio VIII benedice la prima pietra nel 1163, e nel 1204 per una convenzione fra i borghesi locali e il vescovo di Luni vi trasferisce la sede di questo episcopato. Nella prima metà del '300 Sarzana è già una città fortificata: ha una cinta difensiva, in gran parte di legname, circondata da fossati, con 5 porte tutte con ponte levatoio. La città è divisa in quartieri ed elementari norme urbanistico-edilizie stabiliscono che le case siano riunite in isolati lunghi circa 20-30 metri e larghi 9-10; tra di essi correvano strade lastricate di ampiezza variabile tra 10 e 14 braccia (5-6 metri).
Ben presto su Sarzana si accentrò l'interesse dei centri economicamente e politicamente maggiori: Pisa, Lucca, Firenze, Genova, che per alcuni secoli se ne contesero il dominio. Nel secolo XV fu oggetto di una disputa particolarmente aspra (la «guerra de Serrazzana») tra Genova e Firenze. Nel 1484 i Fiorentini distruggono la fortezza Firmafede costruita dai Pisani. Tre anni dopo Lorenzo il Magnifico, alla testa del suo esercito, la conquista. Il motivo di tanto interesse verso Sarzana risiedeva nella sua essenziale importanza strategica. Pertanto i Fiorentini attuarono un preciso piano di ricostruzione e di fortificazione: furono ricostruite le case, le mura e rifatti i fossati, e nel 1487 fu dato incarico ai «maestri de forteze» (tra cui il famoso Francione) di edificare la nuova fortezza, la cosiddetta Cittadella, nello stesso luogo della precedente. L'incarico era così importante e prestigioso che vi fu anche un tentativo di Giuliano e Antonio da Sangallo di scalzare i progettisti per subentrare ad essi. I lavori terminarono nel 1492.
La fortezza, complessivamente a forma di rettangolo (m 30×75.60), è costruita quasi interamente in pietra, con sei bastioni rotondi ed è circondata da ampi fossati. È costituita dalla cittadella e dal dado con al centro il mastio. Il grande manufatto è oggi praticamente vuoto dopo aver ospitato a lungo il carcere. Da anni si discute di restauro e di riuso.
Con la costruzione della fortezza che si salda alle mura, il cui completamento è dei primi del '500, la città diviene un vero e proprio caposaldo militare. Al fine di completare il sistema difensivo i Fiorentini, nel 1493, ristrutturarono radicalmente la rocca di Sarzanello (impropriamente detta Fortezza di Castruccio) su progetto dello stesso Francione e di Luca Caprina. Il complesso si articola in due corpi distinti: il forte turrito triangolare al cui interno si trova il mastio a pianta quadrata, e il rivellino, anch'esso triangolare, con funzione di difesa del lato d'ingresso al forte. Attorno gira un fossato ed il terreno è modellato a scarpa. L'insieme è di notevole bellezza plastica; dagli spalti e dal terrapieno si domina la città e si vedono in un arco panoramico completo Bocca di Magra e Montemarcello, la costa versiliese e l'inizio delle montagne Apuane. Ma poi con la calata di Carlo VIII i Fiorentini perdono la città che si vende al Banco di San Giorgio. Dal quale infine, nel 1572, essa viene trasferita stabilmente in possesso

4 *A sinistra. Via Mazzini, la strada assiale del centro storico di Sarzana. Su di essa si affacciano i principali palazzi, la Cattedrale e la chiesa di S. Andrea. È un tratto dell'antica via Francigena, o Romea, che collegava Roma con il Nord Italia e le Fiandre.*
5 *Via Torrione Stella, una delle strade secondarie che, tagliando ortogonalmente le principali, formano un fitto reticolo. Sovrappassoggi collegano i palazzi tra loro e con gli orti retrostanti.*

6 *Il campanile della Cattedrale, la maggiore emergenza nel profilo del centro storico. La successione delle finestre polifore crescenti è tipicamente romanica, probabilmente però di disegno più tardo.*

alla repubblica di Genova. Ma da quest'epoca fino ad oltre la metà del '700 la città si chiude progressivamente. Delle numerose porte ne rimane aperta una sola: la «Porta a mare», ai lati della quale erano dislocati gli accasermamenti e la dogana (oggi via della Dogana Vecchia). Controllo militare, ma ormai soprattutto daziario. La strada Romea o Romana non attraversa più la città, ma gira all'esterno attorno ai fossati. In questo periodo la città stabilisce nei confronti del territorio un rapporto di chiusura antagonistica. Le trasformazioni sono tutte interne e riguardano singoli edifici o singole proprietà. È soprattutto nella seconda metà del XVIII secolo ed ai primi del XIX che diversi palazzi signorili si costruiscono o meglio assumono nuova forma architettonica.
In epoca napoleonica la città incomincia ad uscire dalle mura. Nel 1830 viene costruito l'ospedale; nel 1840 viene demolito un considerevole tratto di mura in prossimità della Porta a mare; con l'apertura di altre porte, tra cui Porta S. Francesco e Porta Romana, si ha un'ulteriore espansione e comincia in modo massiccio l'abbattimento delle mura – che oggi deploriamo – e il riempimento dei fossati, ceduti dallo Stato sabaudo al Comune. Fattori determinanti di questo sviluppo sono l'arrivo della ferrovia (1863) e la crescita industriale di La Spezia determinata dalla presenza dell'arsenale. In quegli anni l'entrata in funzione del canale Lunense (interessante opera idraulica a mezza costa già costruita nel 1866, ma rimasta poi inattiva) provocò una ripresa dell'attività agricola nella pianura adiacente. Una nuova fase di rianimazione si accenna negli anni '30 del nostro secolo quando anche Sarzana sente l'eco della nuova industrializzazione della Versilia settentrionale. Durante la seconda guerra mondiale però la sua posizione di nodo ferroviario e stradale attira su di essa un buon numero di bombardamenti. E la ricostruzione del dopoguerra si esprime in una continua notevole espansione edilizia. Ai nostri giorni la Sarzana entro le mura è ormai una parte della città: è il «centro storico». Ma questa parte della città, sia pure con qualche incrinatura, conserva il suo ruolo di principale polo cittadino.

Itinerario di visita
Nel visitare Sarzana occorre prestare attenzione – almeno in egual misura che agli edifici considerevoli – all'insieme dell'organismo urbano e ad alcuni suoi aspetti di grana più sottile.
Assumendo come capisaldi dell'itinerario alcuni punti focali – piazza Matteotti, la Cattedrale, la Cittadella – è bene percorrere i tratti intermedi soffermandosi ad osservare le molte edicole votive, gli stipiti dei portoni, i pavimenti degli androni, certi ferri battuti, persino i sottogronda e i pluviali, ciò che caratterizza il minuto tessuto edilizio.
L'asse portante della visita è costituito dal tratto urbano dell'antica via Francigena entro le mura, cioè le attuali *vie Bertoloni* e *Mazzini*, tra la Porta Parma e la Porta Romana. Quasi a metà percorso si apre la *piazza Matteotti* (l'antica piazza della Calcandola), di forma irregolare: nel lato obliquo settentrionale gli edifici hanno un lungo porticato a volta (vi erano situate le antiche botteghe artigiane); nel lato orientale si trovano il *palazzo Remedi*, ristrutturato nel '600 (portico trecentesco murato; nell'atrio, sculture, tondi e medaglioni dei secoli XVII e XVIII) e il *palazzo Podestà Lucciardi*, progettato da Carlo Barabino (1819; sul tetto, un'altana neoclassica). A dividere questa piazza dall'adiacente piazza Luni è posto il *Palazzo Municipale*, interessante edificio cinquecentesco (1554) impostato su una corte passante su cui si affaccia il principale percorso interno del primo piano (sotto al duplice loggiato, frammenti architettonici romani, da Luni, stemmi e lapidi).
Da piazza Luni, subito dopo il palazzo Martini (vera da pozzo nell'atrio) ha inizio la via Torrione Genovese, limitata da un voltone medioevale facente parte della struttura difensiva della città.

7, 8 *Nelle due vedute, piazza Matteotti durante il mercato settimanale. L'irregolarità della sua forma conserva la memoria della sua origine «naturale». Qui scorreva in antico (prima del 1000) il torrente Calcandola. Su di essa si affacciano il cinquecentesco Palazzo Comunale che separa e unisce piazza Matteotti e piazza Luni, e altri prepotli edifici tra cui il palazzo Podestà Lucciardi.*

Fig. 8

The six page essay about Sarzana, from the first volume of the *Guida ai centri minori*, published in 1983.
Courtesy of the Archivio Touring Club Italiano

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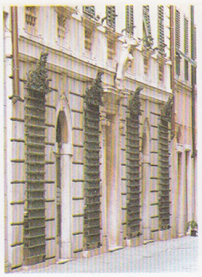
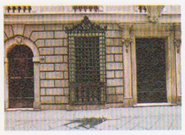


9 *Le finestre a piano terra del palazzo Picedi Benettini, in via Mazzini. Esse sono protette da forti e ricche inferriate in ferro battuto, arte che a Sarzana è stata vitale fino ai primi decenni di questo secolo.*
10 *Il portale cinquecentesco, con inserti quasi neoclassici, dell'antica pieve di S. Andrea.*



11 *Particolare del piano terreno del palazzo Picedi Benettini.*

Da piazza Matteotti si svolge in direzione nord-ovest la *via Bertoloni*, caratterizzata da un'edilizia pesantemente ottocentesca. In direzione sud-est, invece, in asse con la prima si sviluppa la *via Mazzini*, la principale arteria del centro storico. Sul suo lato sin. si apre la via dei Fondachi (notare gli archi di controspinta); sul lato destro, n. 28, inglobati in un edificio posteriore, i resti di una *casa-torre* trecentesca (appartenuta alla famiglia Buonaparte, emigrata in Corsica nel 1529). Subito dopo, prospettante su uno slargo, è la chiesa di *S. Andrea*, il più antico monumento sarzanese, pieve eretta forse nel sec. XI (è documentata nella prima metà del sec. XII) all'incrocio tra la via Francigena e la strada per Fosdinovo-Parma: dal 1204 fu battistero della città e sede giurisdizionale del Comune (fino al '300). La chiesa è giunta a noi attraverso molte trasformazioni ed è stata in parte ripristinata (il campanile è rimaneggiamento trecentesco di una torre): notare il portale cinquecentesco, fiancheggiato da cariatidi classicheggianti (di provenienza pagana) e, nell'interno, dipinti e sculture tra cui il fonte battesimale marmoreo di scultore carrarese del sec. XVI.
Il tratto seguente di via Mazzini è fiancheggiato da palazzi sette-ottocenteschi, ristrutturazioni di edifici più antichi. Al n. 35, il *palazzo Picedi Benettini*, dalla facciata settecentesca in pietra, il cui piano terra ha finestroni protetti da inferriate in ferro battuto del tempo, animate da fiammelle a tortiglione (nell'atrio, busti marmorei del '700). Al n. 64, il *palazzo Magni Griffi* tardo settecentesco, con scalone marmoreo. Sul lato d., il *Palazzo Vescovile* (ingresso ad arco settecentesco), adiacente alla *piazza Nicolò V*, dominata dalla Cattedrale. Al n. 102 della piazza è il *palazzo Neri*, eretto nel '700 su un antico convento (atrio e cortile ornati di statue); accanto è un palazzetto settecentesco (balaustre marmoree e doppio loggiato sul vicolo Bonicella); di fronte, ad angolo con via Mazzini, è il *palazzo Picedi*, d'origine cinquecentesca ma pesantemente rimaneggiato nell'800.
La *Cattedrale* (S. Maria Assunta) fu edificata sull'area dell'antica pieve di S. Basilio dopo il trasferimento della sede vescovile da Luni (1204). L'impianto è del sec. XIII, ma è stata ampliata e modificata più volte; molti lavori furono eseguiti verso la metà del sec. XV essendo papa Nicolò V, sarzanese. Osservare nella facciata il portale strombato (1355) e la parte superiore con il finissimo rosone gotico e il coronamento ad archetti trilobati, di Lorenzo da Pietrasanta (1474, anno del primo completamento dell'edificio); le statue di santi sono settecentesche, mentre il campanile merlato è di disegno due-trecentesco. L'interno, a tre navate ad ampie arcate su pilastri ottagonali, è arricchito da importanti opere di scultura e pittura, tra cui si segnalano: la cosiddetta Croce di Maestro Guglielmo, artista toscano non meglio identificato (firmata e datata 1138), nella cappella del Crocifisso; le due ricche ancone marmoree agli altari del transetto (a d. la Purificazione, a sin. l'Incoronazione), scolpite (1432 e 33) da Leonardo Riccomanni da Pietrasanta, opere significative del momento d'incontro della tradizione gotica con le nuove espressioni artistiche del Rinascimento; dello stesso Riccomanni è anche l'Assunta (già pannello dell'ancona della Purificazione), in fondo al presbiterio, alla cui parete d. è una buona tela di Francesco Solimena. Tra gli altri dipinti, notare quelli di Domenico Fiasella (cappella a d. del presbiterio e terza a sin., la cui pala d'altare è dovuta a Giuseppe Maria Crespi, 1772).
Lungo il fianco della Cattedrale si passa nella *piazza Calandrini*, sede

12 *La facciata della Cattedrale. L'originario impianto (XIII secolo) è stato ampliato e modificato più volte. La facciata, appunto, rivela gran parte delle stratificazioni: il rosone gotico, il portale trecentesco, il quattrocentesco coronamento ad archetti, le statue dei Santi settecentesche.*
13 *Cattedrale: «Croce dipinta» di Maestro Guglielmo (1138). L'autore e la data, straordinariamente precoce, ci sono rivelati dalla scritta rimata che si intravede nel tabellone soprastante la figura del Cristo: «Anno milleno centeno ter/quoque deno octavo pin/xit Guillelmo et hanc metra finxit». La Croce è pervenuta alla Cattedrale di Sarzana dalla chiesa di S. Andrea, ma vuole una tradizione non documentata che, in origine, si trovasse nella Cattedrale di Luni. È l'esempio più antico a noi noto di grande croce dipinta e, insieme al Volto Santo di Lucca, servì di modello a tutte le croci monumentali di area toscana. La continuità della sua fortuna presso i fedeli è documentata dal fatto che la figura del Cristo ha subito una completa ridipintura nel corso del XIII secolo.*

14 *I cortili, le scale, gli androni: un aspetto non secondario della qualità ambientale del centro storico di Sarzana. Qui, il cinquecentesco cortile del Palazzo Municipale, popolato di resti romani di Luni.*
15 *A sinistra, il settecentesco scalone marmoreo del palazzo Magni Griffi.*

dell'antico Mercato, poi nella via Castruccio Castracani: da questa si staccano a sin. la *via Mascardi*, fiancheggiata da antichi edifici ristrutturati nel '700 (portali marmorei), e la *via Torrione S. Francesco* che termina nell'omonimo baluardo cinquecentesco (adattato ad abitazione). Dopo il neoclassico edificio dell'*ospedale S. Bartolomeo* si è alla chiesa di *S. Francesco*, fondata nel '200 ma notevolmente ristrutturata: notare sulla facciata il portale trecentesco (alterato) e il tabernacolo (seconda metà del '500). L'interno mantiene la struttura gotica con sovrapposizioni barocche; tra le opere d'arte, notare soprattutto il sepolcro di Guarnerio degli Antelminelli, figlio di Castruccio Castracani, morto bambino nel 1322, opera di Giovanni di Balduccio (1324-28).
Tornati in piazza Nicolò V, si prosegue per via Mazzini che si apre nella piazza Garibaldi, su cui prospetta il *Teatro degli Impavidi*, costruito in forme neoclassiche (1809) sull'area del convento dei Domenicani; accanto è un bellissimo cancello di ferro battuto «art nouveau».
La via conduce alla *Porta Romana*, aperta nel 1783 nella bastionata di Testaforte (fronte neoclassica). Subito prima della porta, a sin., la *via Cittadella*, il cui tracciato segue l'andamento della cinta muraria, oltrepassa l'oratorio della Misericordia (sconsacrato) e sale alla *Cittadella*, imponente fortezza a pianta rettangolare con torrioni cilindrici, fatta erigere, nello stesso luogo della distrutta duecentesca fortezza pisana di Firmafede, da Lorenzo il Magnifico tra il 1488 e il 1492 su progetto di alcuni «maestri» tra cui Francesco di Giovanni detto il Francione.
Dalla città si può salire (km 2 di strada panoramica) alla *fortezza di Sarzanello* m 120, che sorge in forte posizione strategica a controllo della bassa Lunigiana; erroneamente attribuita a Castruccio Castracani, fu probabilmente iniziata dai Genovesi, ma prese forma compiuta sotto i Fiorentini per opera del Francione e di Luca Caprina alla fine del '400 e fu completata, dopo un'interruzione dovuta al passaggio di Carlo VIII, dai Genovesi nel 1502. Dall'alto dei suoi spalti si potrà rintracciare la forma perduta della città murata.

Fig. 9

The six page essay about Sarzana, from the first volume of the *Guida ai centri minori*, published in 1983. Courtesy of the Archivio Touring Club Italiano

vision of territory as "an immense accumulation of labor."[19] For the *Guida*'s first volume, Gambi authored a general introduction, which set the tone for the entire collection on these bases. He stated that all selected *centri minori* were small towns, in terms of their population and extension, but they all showed a strong

"historic individuality", basically meaning that their distinctive architectural and urban heritage had been well preserved to the present.

Gambi selected 19 regional coordinators, which would author essays and select more than 80 further contributors, including scholars, such as Giovanni Cislaghi and Daniele Vitale[20], and journalists, such as Aldo Gorfer. Let us briefly focus on Franco Mancuso, who was one the regional coordinator for Friuli, Trentino-Alto Adige and Veneto. Mancuso's role was crucial as he was commissioned to develop the first sample essay on Castelfranco Veneto, later shared with all the authors, with guidelines specifying their tasks[21]. These guidelines included the urban history essay on their *centro minore*, commissioning photographers for a precise list of shots and writing their captions. In addition to this, authors would also define the itineraries and communicate with the T.C.I.'s cartography department to produce annotated maps.

Mancuso is also representative of the guide's contributors as a whole in terms of his academic, professional and intellectual activity. A former teaching assistant of Giancarlo De Carlo, in the early 1980s Mancuso was a scholar, teaching at the Architecture faculty in Venice, a professional, running his own firm, and a member of the ANCSA association which was, as mentioned, one of the most active in the debate on the Italian territory.

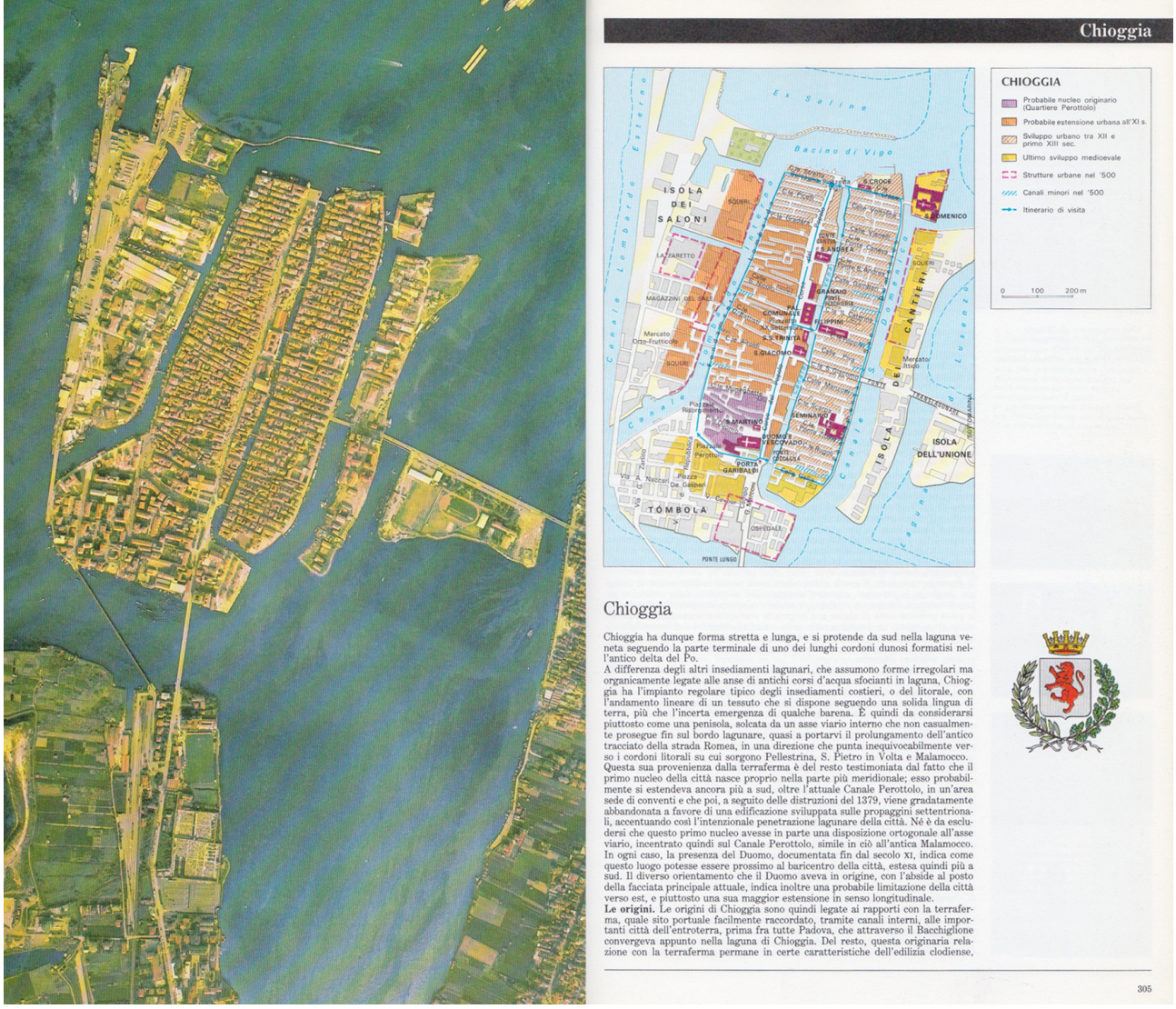
Mancuso recalled an episode from 1971, at the beginning of his decades-long collaboration with the T.C.I., providing a valuable insight into the relationship between scholarly and popular culture that the association was striving for. He explained: "When I delivered my first essay[22], I was summoned to Milan by the book's coordinator. 'Your incomprehensible text' he told me 'needs to be rewritten from scratch. Amongst our main readers are families and children, using our books for their school projects. (…) I sometimes emulated Giuseppe Samonà's intricate style of writing, but I was now explicitly asked to follow the basic scheme subject-verb-object."

19 Carlo Cattaneo, "Agricoltura e morale", in *Atti della società d'incoraggiamento d'arti e mestieri. Terza solenne distribuzione dei premi alla presenza di S.A.I.R. il Serenissimo Arciduca Viceré nel giorno 15 maggio 1845* (Milan: 1845), now also in *Carlo Cattaneo. Scritti sulla Lombardia*, eds. Giuseppe Anceschi and Giuseppe Armani (Milan: Ceschina, 1971), 327. (translation by the author)

20 Interviews to both were realized on December 2, 2019 (Giovanni Cislaghi, phone interview) and December 19, 2019 (Daniele Vitale, interview in his flat in Milan).

21 Franco Mancuso, in discussion with the author, at his office in Venice, on December 11, 2019. Franco Mancuso works on the *Guida ai centri minori* together with his wife Ernesta Serena Mancuso.

22 Mancuso refers to the first draft of his introduction to the volume *Italia meravigliosa. Piazze d'Italia*, ed. Touring Club Italiano (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 1974).



10

An innovative representation of a non-monumental Italy

By dedicating a guide to the *centri minori*, the T.C.I. aligned itself with a trend in the publishing sector of that time. The tourist boom from the 1960s had led to a diversification of tourist destinations and of the related guides. Rerouting tourists towards unexplored territories was considered urgent in Italy, where the most established destinations' congestion was leading to the deterioration of their material structures, social environment and the tourists' experience. Thus, the T.C.I.'s president Franco Brambilla declared that the *Guida* "corresponds to a precise stance taken by the T.C.I. (…). The 'tourism pressure' (…) threatens to jeopardize the very survival of certain areas and to diminish the visitor's encounter with reality to a trivial mandatory step (…). Luckily enough (…) Italy is particularly suitable to offer relevant opportunities of 'decentralization' of the tourist activity."[23]

The identification of new tourist destinations, that is this shift to the *centri minori*, went hand in hand with a substantial update of the way the T.C.I. represented Italy as a whole. Quite remarkably, this update was enabled by the establishment of a link to specialist and scholarly culture.

Fig. 10

An example of the pairing of aerial views and annotated maps from the first volume of the Guida ai centri minori: the town of Chioggia, Veneto. Courtesy of the Archivio Touring Club Italiano

23 Franco Brambilla, "Prefazione", in *Città da scoprire 1. Guida ai centri minori. Italia settentrionale*, ed. Touring Club Italiano (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 1983), 6-7.

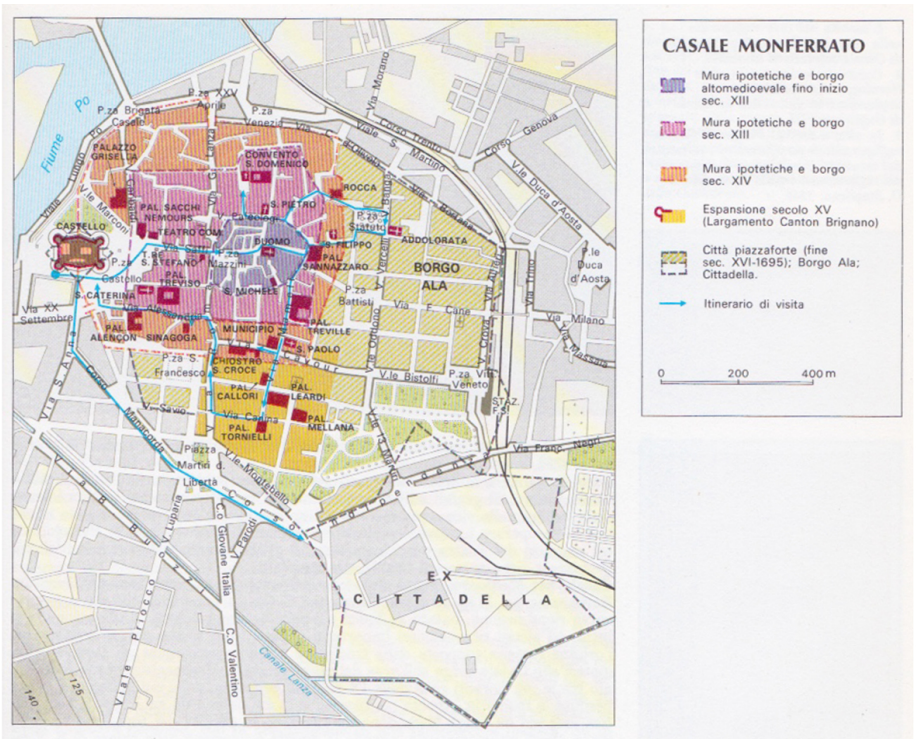
Specialist and scholarly culture is firstly seen in the texts. In fact, the *Guida* collected numerous essays on urban history, based on high-quality, original investigation by scholars and experts, complete with bibliographies, and edited in relatively accessible language. For the first time, an entire guide was centered on such notions as *centro storico, tessuto urbano* (urban fabric), and *patrimonio* (heritage), that were presented in their manifold meanings to at least half a million non-specialist readers. History (the *longue durée* of urban transformations, as interpreted by Gambi) and geography (the *centri minori* described within their territory, as intended by Cattaneo) were summoned to contextualize the evolving configurations of Italian cities and territories.

Specialist and scholarly culture is secondly seen in the images: aerial views were still uncommon at the time, and mostly used by professionals as technical tools. Hundreds of them were reproduced here at full page scale, paired with an annotated map of the same area [Fig. 10]. The latter shows the main phases and events of the town's developments (such as expansion areas from different ages and opening of new roads or squares), the most valuable elements of its heritage (walls, monuments and parts of the urban fabric), both existing and demolished, and the boundaries between the *centro storico* and the contemporary city [Fig. 11-12-13]. All aerial photographs and maps were reproduced at the same scale, facilitating direct comparison. In this regard, geographer Umberto Bonapace talks about the creation of "a fascinating relationship between reality and symbol, evocation and representation (…). Traditional tourist maps were conceived as tools to move through space (…). These maps try instead to represent things and facts that sometimes do not exist in the landscape, or that are embedded into it as coded signals referring to other, different things and facts, sometimes far back in time."[24]

Overall, it can be said that the change of the objects, from established tourist destinations to *centri minori* corresponded to a change of the focus of attention: from the building to the urban fabric; from the monument to the whole *centro storico* as heritage in its own right; from the urban center to its territory; and from the here and now to the long times of history. From the guide's texts and images emerged a comprehensive representation of Italy's non-monumental, diverse heritage, or even better: of a non-monumental, stratified Italy. This representation was based on the most up-to-date contributions of several disciplines, made accessible to a lay audience. This is what makes the *Guida* a one-of-a-kind-publication of great cultural value.

Yet, this commendable framework shows at least one weak point. The modern and contemporary cities, strongly denounced by the 1967 exhibition *Italia da salvare*, and explored with curiosity by the collection *Attraverso l'Italia* of the 1980s, are here dramatically under-represented. Within two or three-page essays, reconstructing in principle each *centro minore*'s entire history, few lines

24 Umberto Bonapace, "I progressi della cartografia turistica", in *90 anni di turismo in Italia*, *1894-1984*, ed. Touring Club Italiano (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 1984), 64. (translation by the author)



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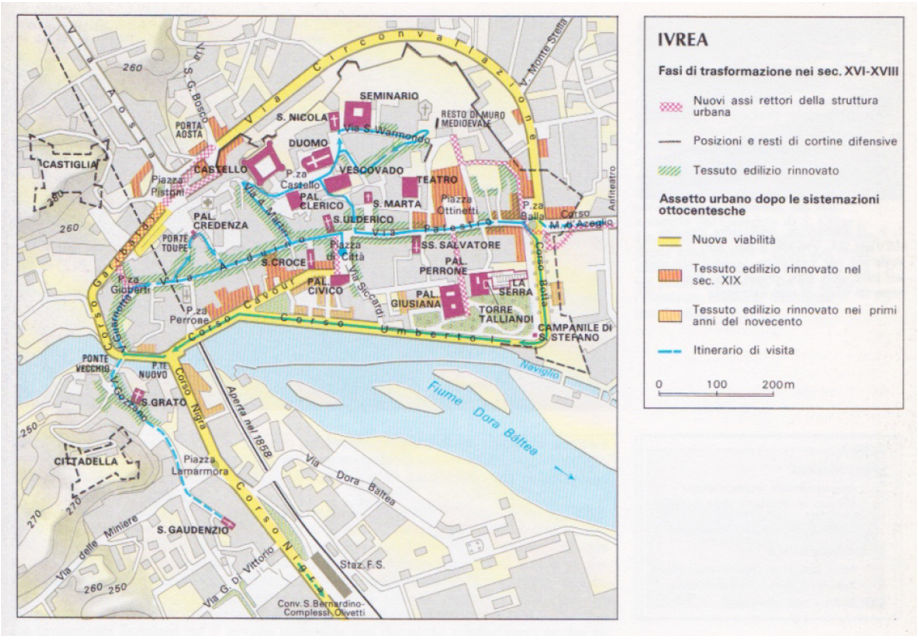

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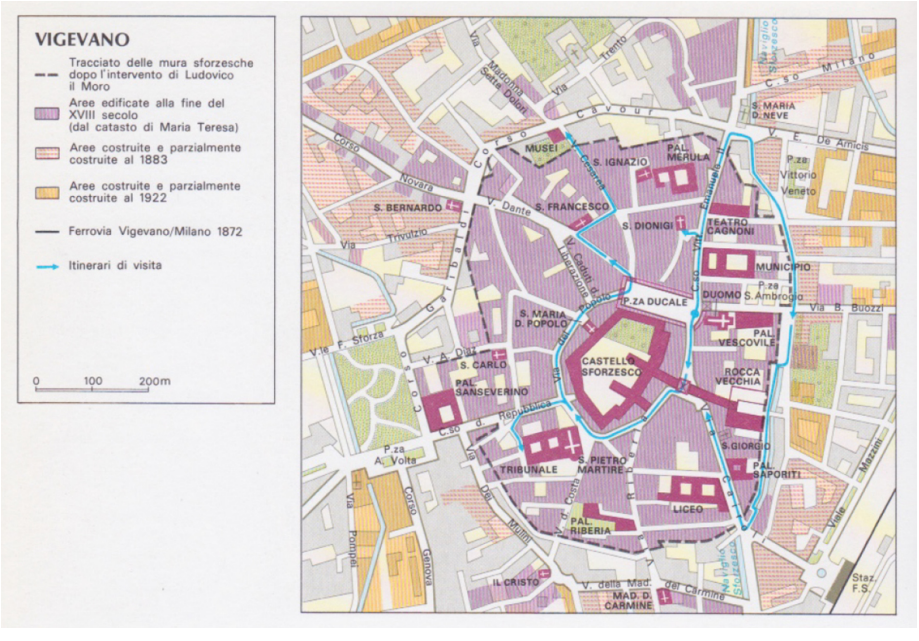

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Fig. 11-12-13

A few examples of annotated map from the first volume of the Guida ai centri minori: Casale Monferrato and Ivrea, Piedmont; Vigevano, Lombardy. Courtesy of the Archivio Touring Club Italiano

describe its evolutions following the Italian unification in 1860. Furthermore, these essays portray a consistently negative vision of modernity, distorted by simplifications and ideological biases. This is in line with Gambi's claim in the book's introduction that towns were selected only if they had been spared "the construction mess which has vilified and soiled the identity of countless historical places."[25] This bias against modernity, replicating a fear of destruction of some idealized past, also borrowed from the general debate, would certainly deserve further investigation.

To conclude, a few remarks on the *Guida*'s reception. Adriano Agnati, the T.C.I.'s editorial director of the time, underlines that several municipalities considered it an effective promotional tool, and asked to be included in the collection. But the project to create a template, to be filled in by the local administrations and reviewed by the T.C.I., was finally dismissed[26]. The average tourist-reader apparently had some difficulty with the *Guida*'s format and contents. Hundreds of complaint letters were received by the T.C.I., lamenting its lack of ease of use. Agnati himself admits that to publish such complex essays the T.C.I. "definitely wringed its neck, compared to other more accessible publications." It is probably not by chance that the collection remains a one-off experiment, never updated, nor extended to the present.

25 Lucio Gambi, "Città fuori dai capoluoghi", in *Città da scoprire 1. Guida ai centri minori. Italia settentrionale*, ed. Touring Club Italiano (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 1983), 11.

26 Agnati estimates that the mayors of no less than 90% of the selected towns attended the first volume's general presentation, held in Guastalla, Emilia Romagna, in 1983. Although the idea of the template was never put in place, the steady increase in the number of towns from the first to the third volume (from 50 to 82) might result from the same demand.

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