

FORGOTTEN ARCHITECTURE

AN ARCHIVE OF OVERSHADOWED PROJECTS
EDITED BY BIANCA FELICORI

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This book is a translation on paper of a virtual group experience that started on a social network space on May 28, 2019, as a new form of dialogue about neglected 20th-century architecture. The reasons that have led me to envision this project are several, but the most important one is not actually connected to my interests nor to my studies. The main reason that led me to create this project was a childhood memory.

As a child I would spend summer holidays at my maternal grandmother’s house. Her surname is Delneri, which is an Italian translation of the word *črn*, that in Slovenian means “black.” I would go to her house as soon as school was over, and from June to September we stayed in her small semi-detached house in Monfalcone, in the province of Gorizia, a few kilometers from the Slovenian border. “Your grandad Adorino built this house,” she would tell me. He died before I was born, but I always believed this story. And then remembering him, grandma used to say: “He built several houses in this town.” My grandfather worked for Fincantieri, he built cruise ships, but he also did some extra work on the side. When my grandmother would drive me around the town in the car, I would look at the houses and think “my grandfather made this one,” because the window frames, the roof or some other detail somehow reminded me of his house.

My sister Matilde and I used to spend the summers there, while my parents had to stay in Bologna working. Every day my grandmother taught us how to do housework, which we were not very interested in, and how to cook, which on the contrary did interest us: together we would prepare *gnocchi de pan triestini* and *in tecia* potatoes, which I still cook occasionally. She would take us to the River Isonzo for a swim, to the market, and to the swimming pool. We often went to Marina Julia with our cousins who lived near Paris and who would come to Italy every summer.

But things got into full swing when my parents arrived. They could stay only a week or so, but those were the happiest days of the whole season. The program was always the same: they would give us a ring upon leaving Bologna early in the morning,

around seven. I would be already up, waiting excitedly for the phone call. It would take them about three hours to reach Monfalcone, so from around ten, every now and then, I would go out in the courtyard to look from the gate to see if our dark aubergine Ford Escort was anywhere in sight.

During those days we would go on lovely trips with my parents, we went to Duino, at the foot of the castle, where my mother and I would go for long swims; on rainy days we went to Trieste, to the Museo Revoltella designed by Carlo Scarpa, or towards Udine, to Villa Manin.

Our favourite destination was Grado, a well-known and very popular seaside town where middle-class families from Friuli and Bisiacaria used to buy holiday homes. My mother had worked there as a waitress during the summer when she was younger, at the Hotel Ariston by the sea, which no longer existed when we used to go there on holiday. She still talks about those summers at the Ariston when she wants to let us know how hard she had to work, unlike us, who have been luckier in life. I believe she is right.

After lunch we were not allowed to swim, so we would go to an amusement arcade there in Grado. I always went with my sister, and sometimes with some local friends. And when our cousins from Paris joined us, we were more than ten.

We always used to go to this amusement arcade called Zipser, on the ground floor of a gray building overlooking the sea, that when I was a child looked extremely tall to me. The monochromatic appearance of this architecture was interrupted by the colorful bright and bold lettering of the arcade sign.

Over ten years later, in 2014, I enrolled in Architecture at the Milan Polytechnic. I distinctly remember the day, during my second year at university, my History of Architecture professor assigned us a group research project we were to present for the exam. I was always with Giovanni and Ilaria, my trusted fellow students. “Shall we work on a building by D’Olivo?” asked Giovanni. “Who the hell is D’Olivo?” we answered. We had never heard of him, but after all we were young and had only recently started university.

Giovanni was born in Udine and like me had always gone to the seaside in Friuli as a child.

“You know that building they call Zipser in Grado? That’s by Marcello D’Olivo.”

At that moment I discovered that a great part of my childhood has been connected to an architect who over the years was to become an obsession of mine. And thanks to that History of Architecture course, I discovered that Luca Sossella, a publisher from Bologna and a friend of my father’s, had worked with D’Olivo in the past. So one day I decided to pay him a visit and pester him with questions about D’Olivo, his studies, and what they had done together.

A graduate in Architecture from IUAV in Venice, D’Olivo always distinguished himself for his love of mathematical sciences, and physics in particular. The daring shapes of his architectures were inspired by sine waves—risky choices that perhaps prevented him and many other of his colleagues from achieving fame.

Sossella had plenty of material in his studio: the monograph published by Electa, the Casamassima editore book set, and *Discorso per un’altra architettura* by Marsilio. He even had some newspaper articles that had been written about D’Olivo over the years. I remember, in particular, an interview with Luca Sossella that appeared in *la Repubblica*, May 15, 2000. Already at the time the title read: “Friuli has forgotten D’Olivo.”¹ The subtitle quoted the architect’s words to the publisher in 1985, the year he had returned to Udine: “They don’t even let me build a canopy roof.”

That very bitter and prophetic statement piqued my interest and prompted me to look into this story: why did D’Olivo’s work remain on the sidelines? Why compared to many other architects of his time was he so depreciated? Studying his work I then understood that his design choices, his love for organic sinusoidal shapes stemming from mathematical sciences, had cost him his success, probably because his style was considered too daring by a school of architecture and critique that was still devoted to celebrating modernism.

Thanks to D’Olivo I discovered a number of protagonists of Italian organic architecture and in the years that followed, being of-

ten in Naples, I had the chance to visit some of Aldo Loris Rossi’s projects I had learned about in the course of this research. That was how I had the opportunity to interview the film director Francesco Lettieri who in 2017 shot the video for LIBERATO’s song “NOVE MAGGIO” in the Piazza Grande housing estate designed by A.L.R. in 1979.²

This is how *Forgotten Architecture* was born, by seeking new details, new stories, new inspiration. For some time, I had been wondering if there was a place where I could try to do something,³ a space where all these inputs could turn into a sort of conversation, into an exchange of information. I decided to start a community chat on Facebook. Ultimately the idea was very simple: to start a group to collect projects by little-known or unknown architects, whose works had been overshadowed by the masters of architecture, to learn more about “minor authors,” to combine different educational backgrounds in a history of architecture framework, and integrate my university studies.

My idea was apparently greeted with favour, because before long the project exploded becoming popular on a national and international level. The Facebook group—in its activity between 2019 and 2021—had more than 30,000 members, with a fair number of active members, participating in the interaction and the exchange of opinions in terms of comments, likes and reactions.

It is interesting to note, in retrospect, how the ambiguous use of the word “forget” occasionally sent the *Forgotten Architecture* community into a tailspin. Forgotten by whom, and why? Of course, I found this ambiguity also pleasing, because at times it became a matter of debate and discussion. Many architecture historians were outraged by some architecture that was being shared on the page: “This is not at all forgotten,” “Professor so and so wrote his/her PhD on it,” “There is a monograph (that was never reprinted) which mentions this project,” and so on. It is certainly correct to point out the presence of a bibliography, but the majority of the group members were not professionals as they were, and the sharing of information regarding the consultation of texts was always very useful.

1. “Il Friuli ha dimenticato D’Olivo,” interview with Luca Sossella, *la Repubblica*, May 16, 2000.

2. Bianca Felicori, “L’architettura di Aldo Loris Rossi nei video di LIBERATO,” interview with Francesco Lettieri, *Artribune*, May 12, 2018.

3. Reference to one of Ettore Sottsass Jr.’s essays published in *Casabella* in the years of Global Tools’ activity. See Ettore Sottsass Jr., “Per ritardato arrivo dell’aereomobile. C’è un posto dove provare?,” *Casabella*, no. 377 (May 1973): 7.

Like in any proper community with many users, I think it is normal for a project to be unknown to most, but not to all, members.

Furthermore, we must avoid the error of attributing a scientific quality to something that is not scientific at all, like a Facebook group. And I believe that we should not see *Forgotten Architecture* as an architectural phenomenon, but rather as a social one; *Forgotten Architecture* in fact stems from the idea of exploiting the dynamism and interactivity of a platform to create a dialogue on a topic that is ultimately almost irrelevant compared to the beauty of the social aspect. It was never a page or a display of “nice projects” but a generous group where members could exchange information. This virtual world has been inhabited by professionals with different backgrounds, students, architects, and people working in other sectors: *Forgotten Architecture* re-

moved social barriers and transformed human beings into users on the loose.

This experience has taught me that social networks can also be a means of popularization, we just need to find solutions that stop the mechanism that makes us move our finger on our smartphone screen in search of content. We must therefore think of new channels for architectural communication and of new solutions to fight against the indigestible daily overload of information and images. *Forgotten Architecture*, with its potential and its critical aspects, made me love what I am doing even more. I think it has been a sort of “reality comeback,” an experience in which we found ourselves talking about architecture in everyday life, without necessarily restricting the dialogue to professionals working in this sector. And ultimately, we all developed a taste for it.



PROJECTS

1. Paul Ricœur, *La Mémoire, l'Histoire, l'Oubli* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2000).
2. More on this subject in Paul Ricœur, *La Mémoire*, 205-250.
3. See Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996). The original title of the text, written for a seminar in London in 1994, is *Mal d'Archive: Une Impression Freudienne*.
4. These “ephemeral apparatus” were three-dimensional constructions, typically in wood or papier-mâché made during the 17th century for religious or non-religious celebrations, especially in Rome and Naples.

In *La Mémoire, l'Histoire, l'Oubli*,¹ Paul Ricœur explains how archiving is a process that gives us the possibility to classify a trail, which is first mental, then emotional, and then documentary, by internalizing it. In the individual this trail, absorbed by memory, becomes more tangible than the experiential testimony. The relation between physical reality and the act of memorizing obviously does not have one single correspondence, but unfolds in infinite and endlessly different interpretations. Everybody remembers in his or her own personal way, and over time we can modify our memory of the previously archived piece of data.²

It is interesting to note that the etymology of the word “archive,” from the Greek ἀρχεῖον, descends from ἀρχή—the primeval force also included in the word “architecture.” The ἀρχεῖον was the house of a magistrate (ἀρχων) where the documents regarding political authorities were stored.³ Since their institution, archives therefore have been quintessentially conceived, as necessary architectures devoted to memory, for the conservation of what is considered indispensable. On the contrary, if we consider the life cycle of a building as something transient, as connected to physical deterioration, can we acknowledge the possibility of architecture fatally pacing towards oblivion?

At the beginning of time, every architecture was intended with specific functions, which evolving in turn changed the buildings themselves. In some cases, architectures were built to have a very short life-span or for a specific temporary occasion. These so-called “ephemeral architectures”⁴ made their first appearance as part of traditional baroque celebrations. Thanks to technical innovation, they gradually evolved and assumed the current meaning we associate with this expression, identifying with the pavilions of the 19th-century world fairs and becoming authentic seasonal fetishes.

In the *Forgotten Architecture* virtual group, ephemerality connotes a relevant portion of the projects that were shared, classified in the heterogeneous macro-section named #forgottenpavilion. This was established, strictly speaking, on June 3, 2019 (so during the first

days of the platform's existence), in the comments about a post on the pavilion designed by Yutaka Murata for the Fuji Group, one of the most spectacular pavilions of the 1970 Osaka Expo.

This section contains the most diverse architectures, completed and not completed, many of which are small sized buildings, pneumatic structures and seasonal settlings, besides many expo, triennial and biennial projects, but could include most of the other shared items bearing a different tag.

This is the #forgotten category par excellence. It consists of time-bound projects, conceived and realized for a specific event. Although they were taken down at the end of those events some projects remain part of the collective memory of several following generations. And this regardless of political-social evaluations and of technological experimentations at the basis of the specific architectural solution. Although of a predetermined duration, some projects were preserved and reused, or even rebuilt by popular demand in the same or a completely different place. A post of May 29, 2019, contains a reference to Le Corbusier's *Espirit Nouveau* (Paris, 1925) commemorating the architect Glauco Gresleri, promoter of its reconstruction in Bologna in 1977.

We might ask: when we reconstruct a pavilion originally intended as ephemeral, what are we memorializing? Architecture itself? Or perhaps the project, the given historical event, or the architect? In which cases does architecture, when it trespasses its time limit, become instinctively forgettable?

An emblematic post regarding the sharing of forgotten ephemeral architecture is that of June 25, 2019, which includes the Blur Building (2002) designed by Diller&Scofidio, among the masterpieces of *Forgotten Architecture*. Forgotten, one trusts, by few, if we consider the monographic studies published to date. Reply no. 1: “Waiting for the first reactionaries crying ‘where is the architecture here?’”

The Blur was the temporary pavilion built for the Swiss Expo “I and the Universe” representing the host country itself. Apart from

that, it is an architecture no longer capable of affirming a meaning, nor a place, nor an identity, nor a mass or a surface, but able to make its boundaries indistinguishable. Floating on a pontoon on the edge of Lake Neuchâtel, it consisted of a software capable of controlling 31,500 nozzles creating a

cloud of pumped and atomized water vapour. Borrowing Keller Easterling's words we might ask ourselves if, whatever the pleasures and prodigious efforts associated with erecting architecture, could they be as equally compelling or satisfying as the art of causing it to disappear.⁶

6. Keller Easterling, *Subtraction*, part of the *Critical Spatial Practice* series (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014): 1. The essay is preceded by Metahaven's artwork *LEBBEUS WOODS + H. R. GIGER + AZEALIA BANKS + VOIVOD + MILEY CYRUS + SNAPCHAT = ???*, 2014.



01-02

01-04.
Diller Scofidio, Blur Building,
Swiss Expo 2002, Yverdon-les-
Bains (Switzerland), May 15 -
October 20, 2002.

COORDINATES:	46°46'44"N 6°38'24"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	dismantled
PROJECT:	temporary pavilion
IMAGE CREDITS:	Diller Scofidio + Renfro
MENTIONED BY:	Marco Petroni, Francesco Rosadini



03



04

Ken Isaacs, Beach Matrix, Westport, Connecticut, 1967



COORDINATES:	41°08'29.35"N 73°21'28.42"W
CURRENT CONDITION:	dismantled
PROJECT:	modular living system
IMAGE CREDITS:	Kenneth Dale Isaacs Papers; courtesy of Cranbrook Archives, Cranbrook Center for Collections and Research
MENTIONED BY:	Ciro Priore

Ken Isaacs (February 7, 1927, Peoria, Illinois) is one of the key figures in the American “radical” movement that led to a revision of architecture and design during the 1960s and 1970s. His highly personal practice is a reinterpretation of the theme of home living, through the study of new environmental and spatial solutions far removed from the conventions of modern architecture. In the early 1950s, Isaacs began working on structures that, in addition to applying the technologies offered by advances in building science, could be produced in-

expensively and were easy to assemble and even self-design—as Isaacs himself wrote in the handbook *How to Build Your Own Living Structures* (1974). These projects, based on Isaacs’ “Matrix” or “Total Environment” concepts, are constructed using a three-dimensional grid and modular units in which furniture and architecture generate an osmotic relationship. Isaacs opted for the term “Matrix” while studying at the Cranbrook Academy of Art (Michigan) to describe his design concept: a total environment integrating all the functions of the living

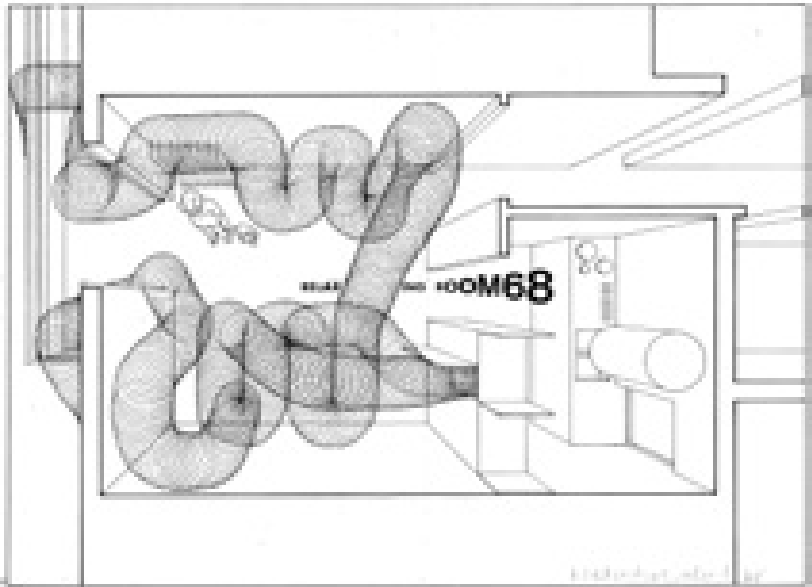
unit in one single solution. An iconic example of this new modular system is Beach Matrix, first built in Westport, Connecticut, in 1967. The metal structure is the base of the module, whose tubes are connected by scaffolding joints that are readily available on the market. The panels, on the other hand, are made of waterproof laminated plywood. Inexpensive, easy to build, infinitely repeatable and transportable wherever you want, to feel at home even at the seaside.



Gernot Nalbach, Relaxing Room, Vienna, Austria, 1968



In the 1960s, Austria began a process of revision of architecture, its methods, and ideological values. Gernot Nalbach, born in 1942 in Vienna, was part of that generation of young Viennese, alongside Hans Hollein, the Coop Himmelb(l)au, the Missing Link, who revised the discipline by depriving it of all reference to its technical and functional aspects in favour of an exaltation of fanciful architectural processes. In those years, the use of inflatable structures took on an ideological value, becoming a counter-response to the rigidity of design as it had been conceived in the first half of the 20th century. Gernot Nalbach's Relaxing Room is in fact a room in which inflatable objects become the defining element of the interior space, whose flexibility allows the room to quickly adapt to any function. In addition, the lightness of these structures and their playful character had, according to Nalbach, a therapeutic function for those in the room. Nalbach experimented with the use of inflatable structures on every scale, taking the concept of living to the extreme. In these years, in fact, he went from designing a transparent inflatable sofa to houses (Low-cost House or Pneumatic House, 1961–62), and cities (Pneumo City, 1965–66).



COORDINATES:	48°12'30"N 16°22'21"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	dismantled
PROJECT:	temporary inflatable structure
IMAGE CREDITS:	Archiv Gernot und Johanne Nalbach
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori

Dream Cloud, Ben Holmes in a Parachute, Freeport Beach, Texas, 1969; Ant Farm, Inflatocookbook, 1971

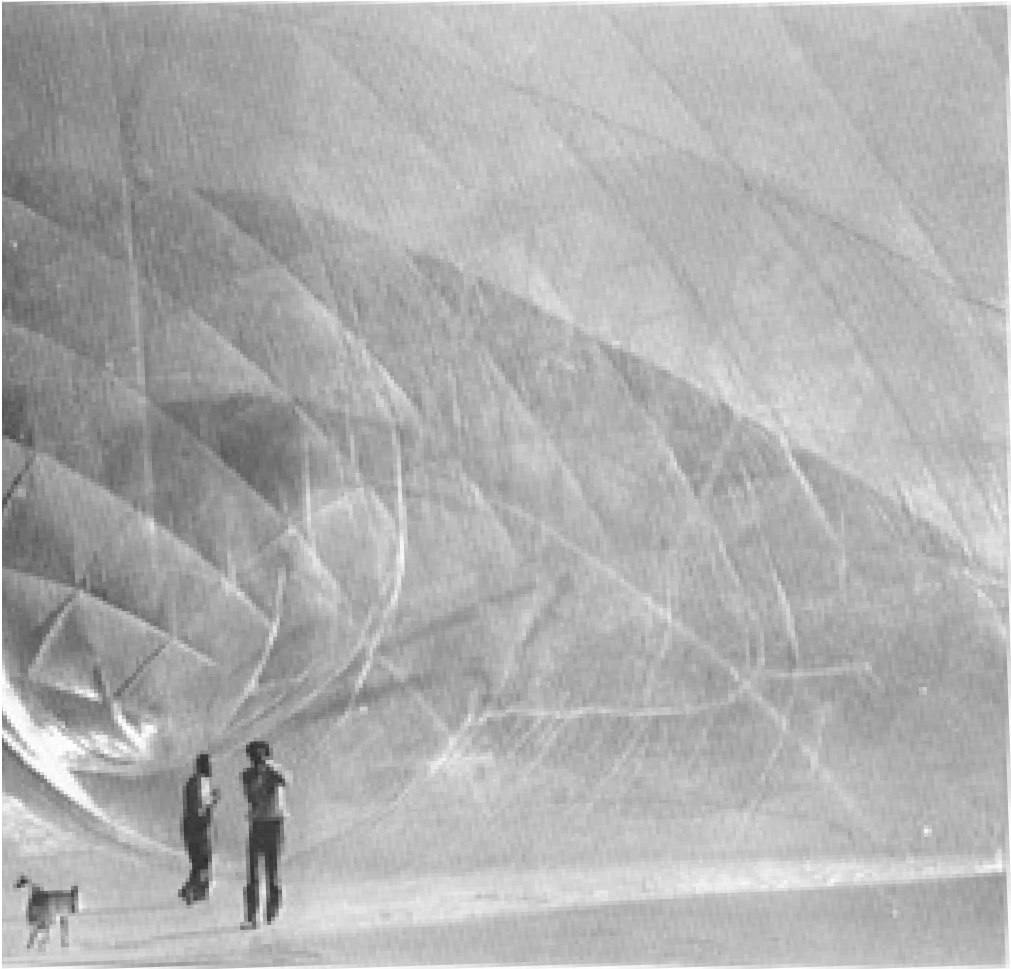


COORDINATES:	28°57'33.84"N95°21'24.84"W
CURRENT CONDITION:	dismantled
PROJECT:	temporary inflatable structure; self-construction manual
IMAGE CREDITS:	Ant Farm Archive - Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA)
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori

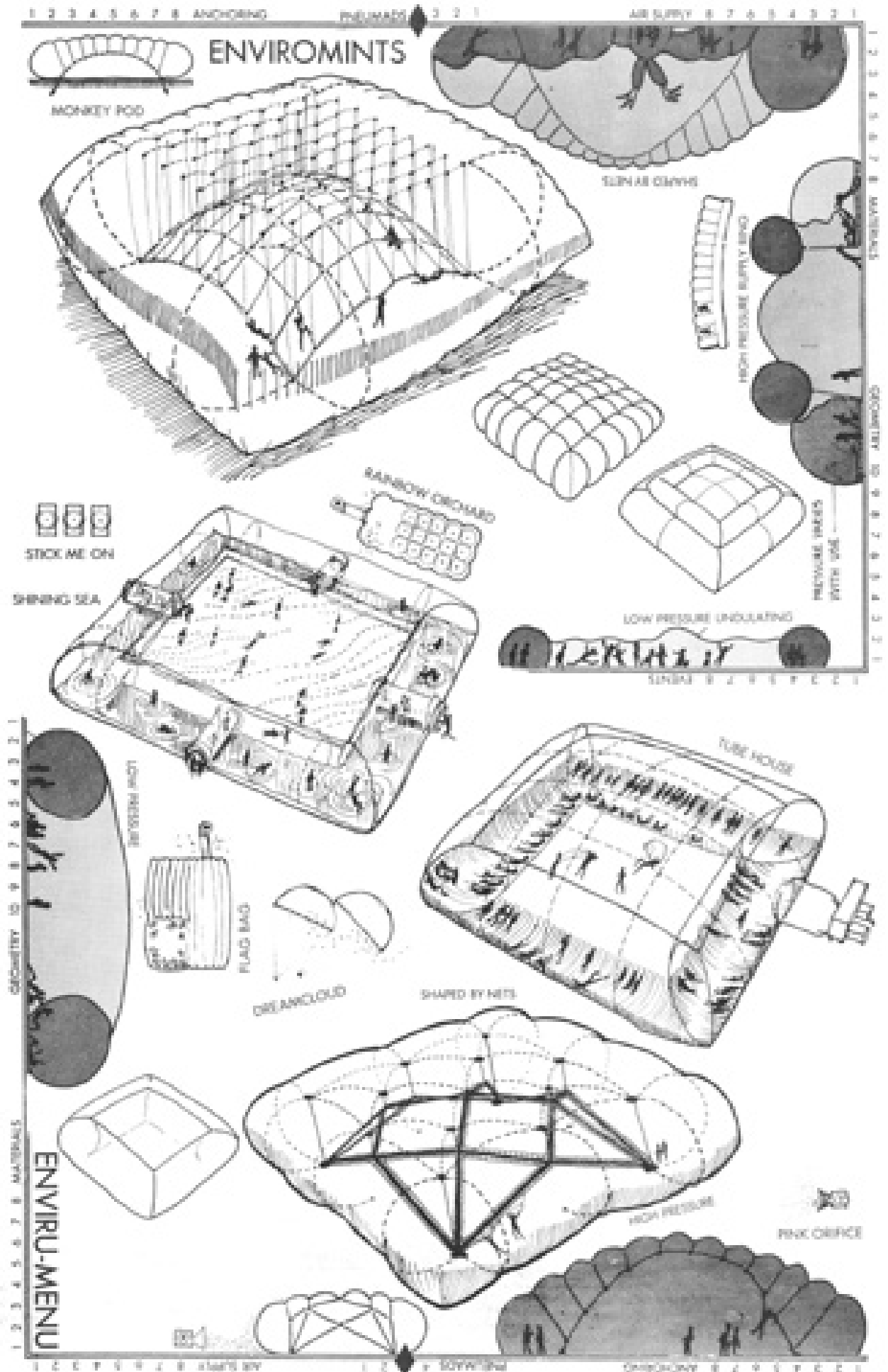
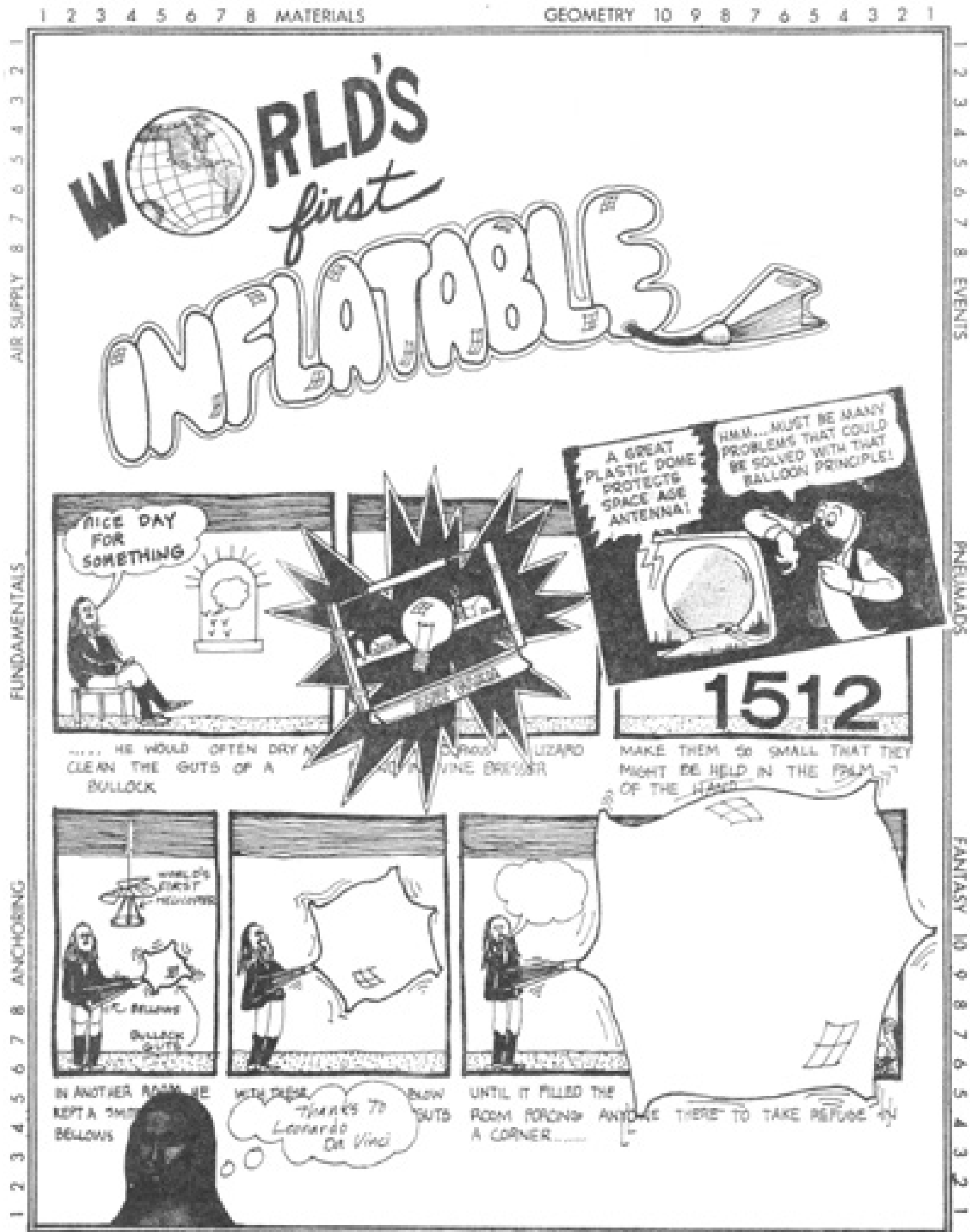
In 1968, Doug Michels and Chip Lord founded Ant Farm, a collective of architects working in San Francisco and Houston, Texas. The duo was later joined by Curtis Schreier, Hudson Márquez, Douglas Hurr and many others. The Ant Farm's projects are directly inspired by the hippy movement happenings and existential models. Their projects take the form of provocative and protest actions, like those of the Fluxus artists or Anna Halprin: from the *Inflatocookbook* (1971), a manual for self-constructing

inflatable architecture, to the exhibition at the Contemporary Art Museum in Houston (1973), where they show architecture and porn films while throwing stale bread at the spectators to ridicule the American capitalist middle-class; Ant Farm explores all forms of artistic and architectural expression (video, installations, fire performances, behavioural art, and inflatable structures). In the 1960s and 1970s, the group devoted itself to “inflatable architecture” as a spatial and living solution for a no-

madic society constantly on the move. Their architecture becomes a communication and experimentation tool, a symbol of opposition against an immobile, constructed, and permanent compartmentalization of the discipline. “Inflatable architecture” projects in fact have no form, are mobile and transparent and adapt to the movement of people in space. The manual is literally a humorous “cook-book” that provides readers with the necessary information to build their own inflatable structure.



ANT FARM
Inflatocookbook
A PAPERBACK BOOK



Yutaka Murata, Fuji Group Pavilion, Osaka, Japan, 1970



COORDINATES:	34°41'37"N 135°30'07"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	dismantled
PROJECT:	temporary pavilion
IMAGE CREDITS:	Dante Bini
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori

The 1970 Osaka World Expo, the first to be held in Asia, has gone down in history for the high level of experimentation and inventiveness of its architect-designed pavilions. Set up in Senrikyuruo, not far from Osaka, on an area of 330 hectares, the theme of that year’s expo was “Progress and Harmony for Humanity” and aimed to show the public the application of modern techniques to improve the quality of human life on planet Earth, while also emphasizing

the negative impact that industrialization and scientific progress have had on global ecology. For Expo 1970, Yukata Murata, with Mamoru Kawaguchi, designed the large Fuji Pavilion. The pavilion had a base formed by a circle 60 meters in diameter, was 30 meters high, and consisted of sixteen enormous inflatable tubes (4 meters in diameter, 72 meters long) joined together creating the roof vault. While being set up, the tubes were inflated on site until they reached

the exact position defined in the executive design. The succession of arches was stabilized by a steel cable structure. Two groups of domes—consisting of three and four interconnected units respectively—were constructed in front of Mamoru Kawaguchi’s Fuji Group Pavilion using the Binishell system patented by Dante Bini. The peculiarity of these domes is their coloring, obtained by spilling paint from helicopters, giving rise to their unevenly red and yellow streaked exterior.

Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.), Pepsi Pavilion, Osaka, Japan, 1970



COORDINATES:	34°48′11″N 135°32′0.8″E
CURRENT CONDITION:	dismantled
PROJECT:	temporary pavilion
IMAGE CREDITS:	Shunk-Kender, E.A.T.'s Pepsi Pavilion at Expo 1970, Osaka, Japan; courtesy of J. Paul Getty Trust
MENTIONED BY:	Gabriela Galati

Expo 1970, held in Osaka (March 15-September 13, 1970), was one of the international exhibitions that best reflected the major social and cultural issues of an era. Entitled “Progress and Harmony for Humanity,” this world fair welcomed a large number of projects inspired by Buckminster Fuller’s geodesic domes, reflecting a progressive, optimistic, and even utopian vision of the future of the world and architecture. Among its various pavilions, the one designed for the Pepsi-Cola company stood out not only for its “Fullerian” form, but also and most importantly because it was the outcome of an art, architecture, building science, and corporate strategy partnership. For

such an ambitious project, Pepsi had turned to Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.), a collective whose transdisciplinary practice was as closely linked to the world of architecture as it was to the artistic neo-avant-gardes of the 1960s. E.A.T. was an organization founded in 1966 to create collaborations between artists and engineers, developing projects that expanded the role of the artist in contemporary society. It was founded by Billy Klüver, a young electrical engineering professor from Sweden, his colleague Fred Waldhauer, and the artists Robert Rauschenberg and Robert Whitman. For the Pepsi Pavilion, the group created a kind of geodesic laboratory where vis-

itors could step into an authentic participatory experience and become part of a total work of art. The outside structure was shrouded in a vaporous mist that visitors had to pass through, (an ephemeral work by artist Fujiko Nakaya), while inside, one had to walk through a dark tunnel to reach the heart of the pavilion, a mirrored mylar dome created by artist Robert Whitman. A sound installation designed by David Tudor echoed in the spaces, consisting of thirty-seven speakers in a rhomboid grid mounted behind a mirror, with wireless headphones for visitors. Artist Tony Martin designed the lighting, which amplified the sound while lending it a spatial quality.



José Miguel de Prada Poole with Carlos Ferrater and Fernando Bendito, Ciudad Instantánea, Cala San Miguel, Ibiza, 1971



COORDINATES:	38°59'N 1°26'E
CURRENT CONDITION:	dismantled
PROJECT:	inhabitable inflatable structure
IMAGE CREDITS:	Carlos Ferrater; photographs by José Manuel Ferrater
MENTIONED BY:	Renzo Scotto d'Abusco, Riccardo Simioni

In October 1971, the 7th Congress of ICSID (International Council of Societies of Industrial Design), was held in Cala Sant Miguel, Ibiza. Ibiza, which at the time was still a wild and sparsely built-up island, became the perfect location for this experimental experience. ICSID did not have a definitive program and the various interventions that emerged during this event were in continuity with the experiments carried out by the Austrian neo-avant-garde architecture (Haus-Rucker-Co, Hans Hollein, etc.) and its

Italian counterpart (two years later the Italian Global Tools laboratory system was founded), and by many other European and American players. On this occasion, José Miguel de Prada Poole designed the *Ciudad Instantánea*, a huge inflatable architecture that was to welcome the students attending the Congress who had not found accommodation in hotels. The city is a self-built structure made by the participants themselves simply by stapling together inflatable plastic elements. Carlos Ferrater and Fernando

Bendito were also involved in the project. They were both architecture students at the time and were responsible for drafting the *Manifiesto of the Ciudad Instantánea*, also setting up the executive committee, Comité Ad Hoc. The Manifesto was then sent to schools of architecture and design around the world as an invitation to participate in the Congress initiative and became the symbol of a period of radical revision of the discipline and academy itself.

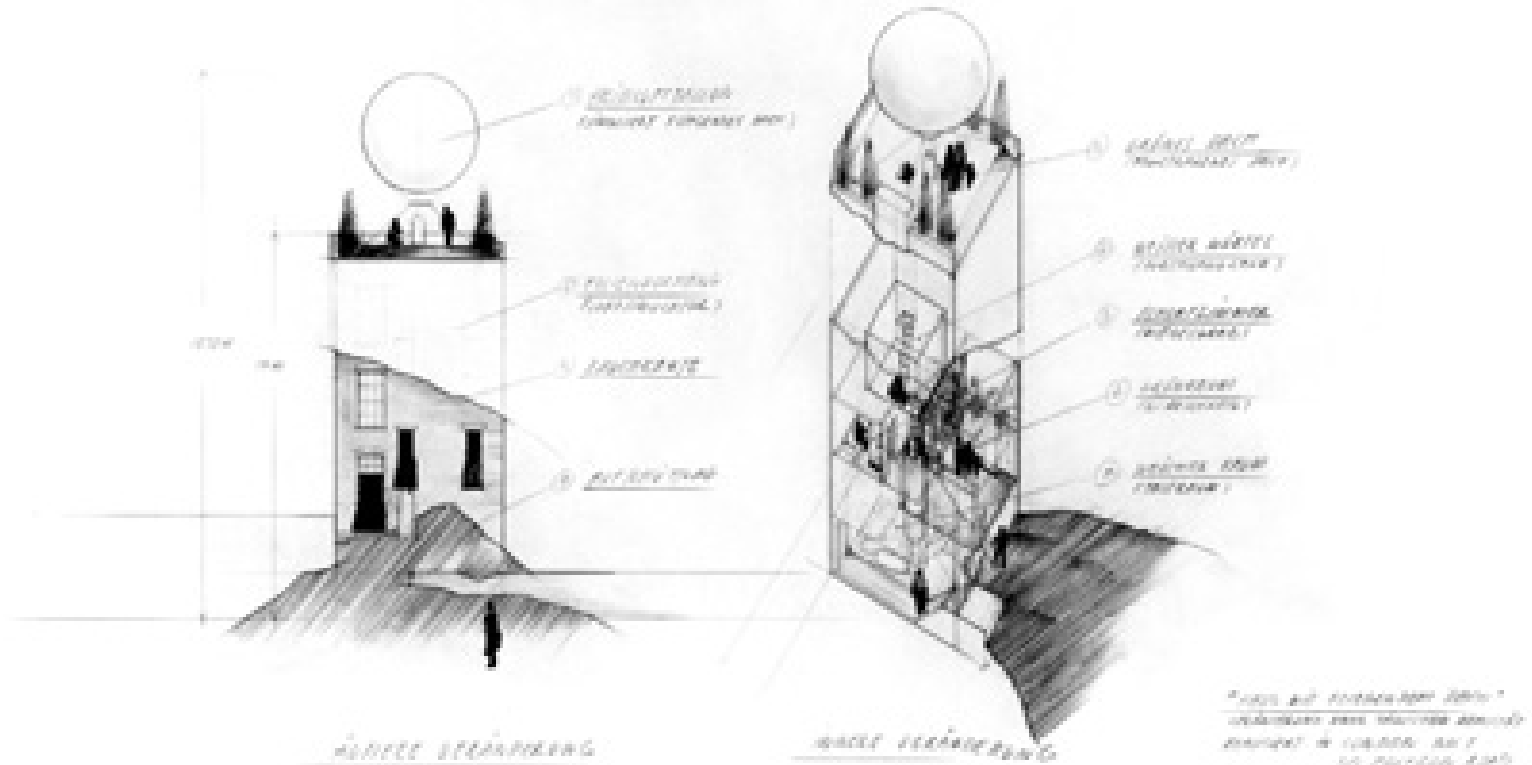


Coop Himmelb(l)au, House with the Flying Roof, London, 1973



COORDINATES:	51°31'54.0"N 0°07'57.6"W
CURRENT CONDITION:	dismantled
PROJECT:	temporary inflatable structure
IMAGE CREDITS:	Coop Himmelb(l)au
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori

In the spring of 1973, the Viennese architects Coop Himmelb(l)au, together with a group of twelve students from the Architectural Association School in London, organized a workshop and realized the House with Flying Roof, an experiment in inflatable architecture inside and around a house that was about to be demolished. The London Borough of Camden had in fact made available to the AA School a three-storey house in London NW1, 30 Polygon Road, which provided the opportunity to experiment with a new form of architecture. The project was presented as a public action to protest against the destruction of entire rows of terrace houses being carried out in various areas of London. The aim was to demonstrate the possibilities of unprecedented and unorthodox transformations which emerge when architecture sets aside its formal approach and allows more space for the designers' creativity and imagination. In six weeks, the architects and students developed the project on the assumption that, with the removal of the external elements of the house (the roof, the windows that were already without the windowpanes, etc.), they could transform this urban skeleton into an ephemeral operation becoming an "action-object." Guided by the theme "Transformation of an Everyday Reality," the students created a project whose small transformations told the story of the importance of public and political actions that could revitalize London's old urban neighborhoods.



Ignazia Favata, Studio Joe Colombo, TV Sorrisi e Canzoni Showroom, Milan, Italy, 1982



In 1982, Ignazia Favata of Studio Joe Colombo designed the showroom of the entertainment magazine *TV Sorrisi e Canzoni* located in the center of Milan. The aim was to create a space where the singers and the public could meet, where fans could see their favourite TV celebrities, far from the spotlights and off stage. The project reflected the illusory and striking atmosphere of a pop music show, full

of ephemeral features and characterized by strong, bright colors and shimmering, artificial materials. The space was structured on two levels: the lower floor was dedicated to staff activities (archive material search systems, film plots, film clips, TV programs, etc.) while on the upper floor (gallery floor) there was a large, multifunctional and flexible space for the public, with two perpendicular screens used

during award ceremonies or for choreographic projections. The firm also made compartments for specific meetings with artists that served as curtain theatres, with three fixed walls and two folding walls and a metal-framed kaleidoscope roof with colored perspex inserts. Pouffes and bar units were the same as those used in the bar area of Joe Colombo's 13th Triennale.



COORDINATES:	45°27'52.9"N 9°11'45.1"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	dismantled
PROJECT:	showroom
IMAGE CREDITS:	Ignazia Favata, Studio Joe Colombo
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori



Gaetano Pesce, Pink Pavilion, Milan, Italy, 2007



In November 2006, Triennale Milano built its “branch” in the Bovisa district, with the aim of creating a new pole of attraction to revive a suburban area, a symbol of Milan’s industrial development. Called “Triennale Bovisa” and abbreviated to TBVS, this project was intended as a temporary and ephemeral structure to welcome the people living in the area, from professionals to students and visitors, and was destined to be dismantled once it had carried out its functions. The main building, designed by architect Pierluigi Cerri, includes an exhibition space, a bookshop, catering areas and services for the public. The outdoor public space is also designed in collaboration with

the students from the Communication Design degree course of the Milan Polytechnic’s Faculty of Design, and Milanese graffiti writers. Triennale, which has always been committed to the experimentation of new living spaces, called on architect and designer Gaetano Pesce to create the Pink Pavilion, a polyurethane structure intended to host children’s workshops connected to the exhibitions held at Triennale Bovisa. Located on the side of the Villapizzzone station, the Pink Pavilion is the outcome of Pesce’s years of experimentation with polyurethane, silicone, rubber and many other unconventional materials. The internal structure consists of a reinforced and buffered

skeleton onto which polyurethane is sprayed, becoming a self-supporting wall. In addition, Pesce used the insulating properties of this material to conceive a vertical garden on the roof and external surfaces of the Pink Pavilion. The pavilion, with its fairytale and elastic appearance, was to be a pilot project for testing the resistance of this material when exposed to the weather, with the idea of utilizing this type of structure as an emergency architecture solution. Although the TBVS was closed in October 2011, today this pavilion is still in Bovisa and can be seen from the train or from the street, standing as an emblem of how temporary architecture can become permanent.

COORDINATES:	45°30'07.3"N 9°09'08.6"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	mediocre-degraded
PROJECT:	temporary pavilion
IMAGE CREDITS:	courtesy of Gaetano Pesce's Office, New York
MENTIONED BY:	Jacopo Gik, Marco Galloni, Diego Longoni



The now famous sculpture by Ugo Nespolo in San Benedetto del Tronto in the very heart of the Adriatic Riviera does not actually quote a poem by Dino Campana. The sculpture reads: *Lavorare lavorare lavorare / preferisco il rumore del mare* (Work, work, work / I prefer the sound of the sea), while the poet in his *Canti Orfici* wrote: *Fabbricare, fabbricare, fabbricare / Preferisco il rumore del mare* (Produce, produce, produce / I prefer the sound of the sea).

Little does it matter: the part that both the artist and the poet preferred, the part we all prefer, remains the same. When the sculpture was unveiled in 1998, there was also some controversy over its simple but free and perhaps anarchic message, and a right-wing party even went so far as to collect signatures for its removal. Very many signatures they were too. Maybe they thought working is only a right-wing thing, and not working a left-wing thing. Maybe being unhappy is more right-wing than left-wing, and the sound of the sea can become something divisive. When I think of the opposite of work, I always think of the sea. It must be a natural reflex, something instinctive and linked to centuries of Mediterranean, or indeed Italian, DNA. To generations growing up in a country surrounded by warm, transparent waters and with land, except in rare cases, at a relatively short distance from the coast. The waters that lap the shores of faraway northern lands, described in the ancient sagas from those gelid latitudes, are home to monsters and fearsome pirates. Mediterranean waters instead gave birth to Venus.

For all these reasons, and a list of others too long to include here, in Italy we have always dedicated plenty of time to constructing, improving and inventing buildings and architectures connected to the seaside experience. To that time when one should not be allowed to work, a time ultimately associated with pleasure.

Italians are a people of sailors and travelers, as a former dictator from Romagna proclaimed in an ugly speech that has remained engraved in the EUR district in Rome. They have also always been a people of architects and speculators, a people apparently unable to leave these beaches to their wild and inaccessible nature. This is the reason behind design dedicated to beautifying leisure time, to get the most out of it before going back to work. Because free time is always a freed time, a time that in this world, sooner or later, will unfortunately and necessarily once again be occupied by work.

And this is still true today. In the summer, when we can finally free ourselves from work, we search for the shabby Alicudi and Lampedusa arcadias to avoid the rows of beach umbrellas and the Riviera Romagnola organized beach activities. But it is also true that those rows of umbrellas and those entertaining group activities were factors that greatly contributed to the democratization of seaside holidays and pleasures that for some were still exotic dimensions.

Not that our summer holiday postcards are only about beaches. They may tell of dance clubs where secret fleeting or illicit loves can blossom, or ships on which we can dream about the final destination that will be reached. But only after having sipped a few drinks by a small pool, or spent time in melancholic dancing venues, or in tourist resorts entirely taking care of the invention and the management of our longed-for moments of happiness.

Guy Rottier, an architect and most importantly an experimenter, envisioned a sort of small beehive-like cardboard tourist village, made of basic cells. No kitchen, no restrooms, nothing too specific. Just an indication: *à bruler après usage* (to be burnt after use), as if they were memories of a summer happiness, whose loss must not be mourned too much once back at home in the city.

Gio Ponti with Nino Zoncada and Piero Fornasetti, Zodiac Suite, Andrea Doria Ocean Liner, 1950-51



COORDINATES:	44°25'06.4"N 8°51'00"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	no longer existing
PROJECT:	cruise ship interiors
IMAGE CREDITS:	Archivio Fornasetti
MENTIONED BY:	Andrea Mologni

In 1950 Gio Ponti, with Nino Zoncada and Piero Fornasetti, designed the interiors of the liner Andrea Doria, named after the 16th-century Ligurian admiral. Launched on June 16, 1951, the project was commissioned from Ponti by the Italian Shipping Company and until 1956, when the ship sank due to a tragic accident, it was considered the most beautiful passenger ship of

the Italian liner fleet built in the post-war period. 212.3 meters long and 27.4 meters wide, on eleven decks, the ship's interiors were a celebration of Italian-made furniture and craftsmanship, the result of an incredible partnership between Ponti (one of the greatest advocates of Italian arts), Zoncada and Fornasetti. In addition to the common areas, such as the first-

class lobby, the designers Carlo Pouchain, Giulio Minoletti, Gio Ponti and Nino Zoncada each designed a luxury suite. The most famous still remains the Zodiac Suite, by Ponti and Fornasetti, in which every furnishing element was covered in drawings: constellations, stars, planets in the bedroom, vegetable and zoomorphic marine shapes in the bathroom.



Filippo Rovigo, Lido di Mortelle, Italy, 1955-58

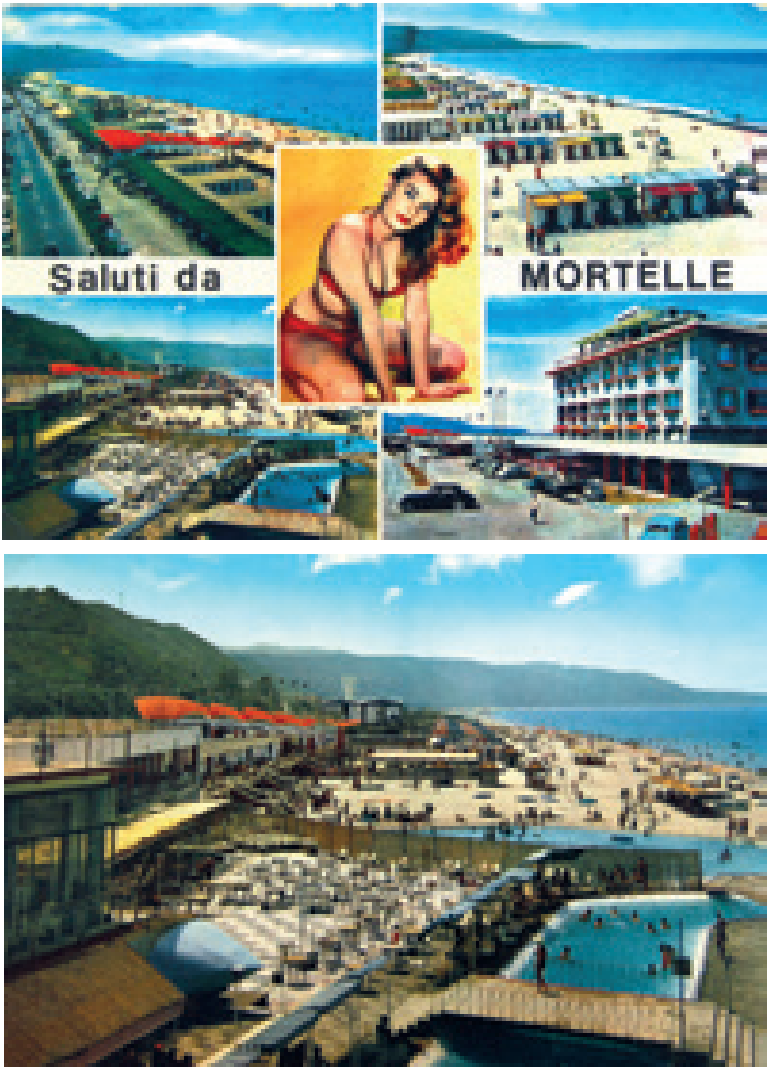


In the early 1950s, entrepreneur and engineer Leopoldo Rodriguez commissioned architect Filippo Rovigo to design the Lido di Mortelle beach club, which was completed in 1955. The project was to be part of a major naval and tourist project by Rodriguez on the Tyrrhenian coast of Messina, which was never completed. In the same years, engineer Napoleone Cutrufelli was engaged in designing the Lido del Tirreno, not far from Mortelle and commissioned by G. Alberto Costa, a firm competing with Rodriguez's; the proximity between the two establishments gave rise to a sort of linear city, providing a coherent coastal landscape. With the support of engineer Domenico Cannata in charge of

structural calculations, the architect designed a beach complex consisting of several buildings with common areas and functional cells housing cabins, accommodation, spaces for family or individual use. These serial elements of the project are countered by the figurative and structural exceptionality of the "lobster," the colorful, sloping overlapping sail roof marking the entrance, and the articulated, organic forms of the pools on the beach side. "The permanent cabins are arranged symmetrically with respect to an entrance axis, and laid out around double-height courtyards; these are served on the first level by galleries, and linked to the beach level by steps, where a hexagonal

landing connects the initial ramp to the next two [...] The overall volume is characterized by a thin projecting roof sloping toward the street, which marks the sea horizon. The double-level linear bodies of the Wannsee (Berlin) in the late 1920s, linked by the continuity of a walkway, also developed symmetrically around a central element; a pier seems to anchor a platform that has the silhouette of a ship. The symmetrical layout is functional to the pathways, but also reminiscent of the traditional division between male and female sectors, although by the 1950s culture had already changed sufficiently to no longer make this kind of arrangement mandatory."

¹ Isabella Fera, *L'architettura moderna va in vacanza* (Siracusa: LetteraVentidue, 2011), 83-84.



COORDINATES:	38°16'16.9"N 15°37'44.0"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	mediocre-degraded
PROJECT:	beach club
IMAGE CREDITS:	Isabella Fera; pictures and drawings from Isabella Fera, <i>L'architettura moderna va in vacanza</i> , LetteraVentidue, 2011
MENTIONED BY:	Marginal Studio, Andrea Galli

Guy Rottier, Cabanons pour Enfants and Cabanon de Vacances, Nice, France, 1958-61



COORDINATES:	43°42'07"N 7°16'06"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	prototypes that were never realized
PROJECT:	transportable prefabricated structures
IMAGE CREDITS:	Archives Nice Côte d'Azur – Ville de Nice, fonds Guy Rottier
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori

Toward the end of the 1950s, Guy Rottier collaborated with Charles Barberis, a major timber industrialist, to design transportable prefabricated houses suitable for holiday occasions. Barberis introduced the architect to moldings and showed him how to handle the material, and with passion and creativity the two created wooden houses that were easy to assemble, transportable, and ready to use. These holiday cabins were made for children (*enfants*) and for adults,

with different layouts, materials, and structures. The project immediately turned out to be unsaleable because, after its being presented at the Nice Fair, the municipal institutions instantly opposed the idea of having these prefabricated houses distributed along the Côte d'Azur. However, what remained was the concept of providing maximum comfort at a reduced price and in a short time. The project, despite the obstacles, captured and interpreted at an early

stage the needs of families during the economic boom period (in French *Trente Glorieuses*). What remains of this project is the radicality of a design concept exploring mass production and breaking with the building and aesthetic traditions of the time. The drawings, the photographs of the prototype sites, and the sales leaflets for customers, show the very idea of creating an architecture representative of a new lifestyle: that of the lower middle-class family on holiday.



Zvi Hecker with Alfred Neumann and Eldar Sharon, Club Méditerranée, Achziv, Israel, 1961-62

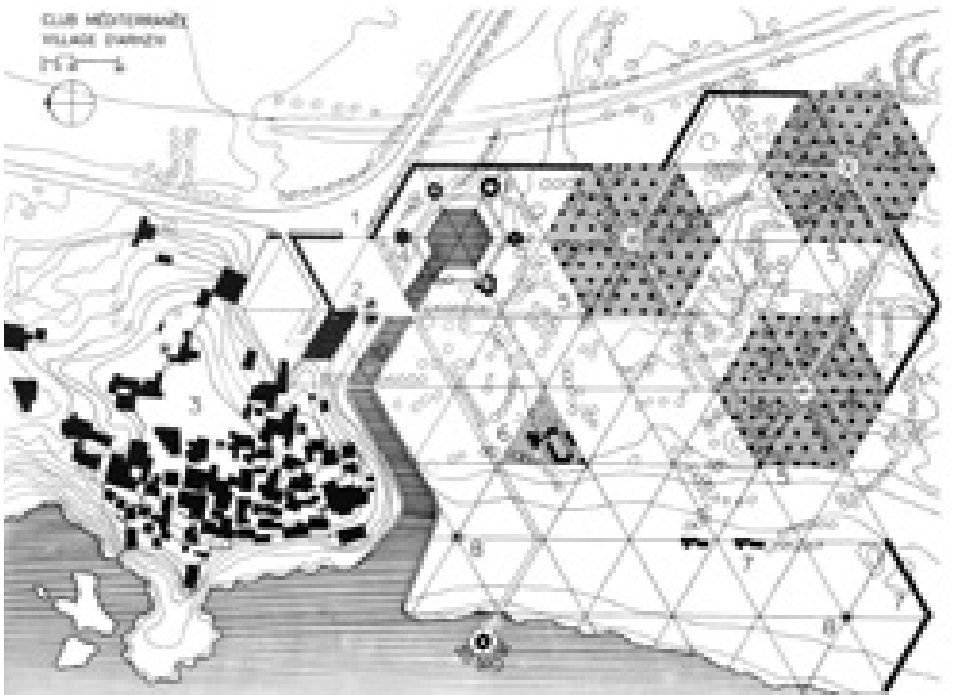


COORDINATES:	33°02'53.7"N 35°06'05.9"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	dismantled
PROJECT:	holiday resort
IMAGE CREDITS:	Zvi Hecker Architect
MENTIONED BY:	Davide Ganeo, Martina Russo

Zvi Hecker was born in Poland in 1931 and spent his teenage years in Samarkand and Cracow, before moving to Israel in 1950, where he currently lives. Here he studied architecture at the Technion in Haifa and painting at the Avni Institute of Art and Design in Tel Aviv, graduating in 1957. In 1960 he opened his own firm and worked with Alfred Neumann and Eldar Sharon until 1965. During this period together

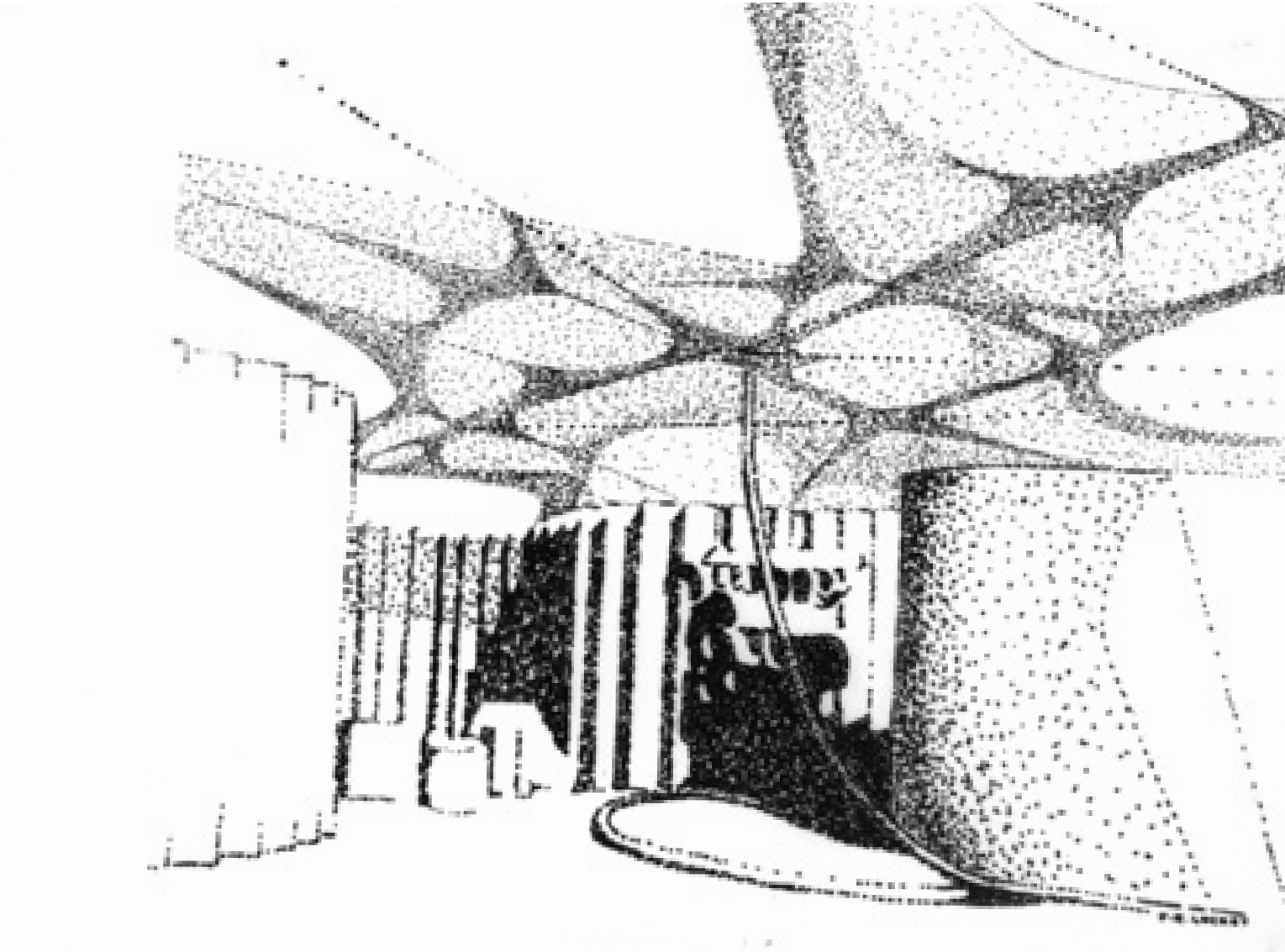
they designed the Club Méditerranée, a resort in Achziv, Israel. The architects designed low-cost structures, housing cells built with an inexpensive construction system that ensured that each unit could be built and taken down quickly. The cabins were an alternative to the typical Polynesian fabric huts, cheaper and easier to make. The resort was set up on a beach near the ruins of a Phoenician settlement.

The village contained 350 cabins, built on site with pressed rushes, bound to form panels and set in wooden frames. The basic unit of the cabin was a truncated tetrahedron formed by three slightly convex hexagonal panels. The triangular roof panel could be opened for ventilation. Each cabin contained three small beds, while the dining and bathroom facilities were in the common area of the resort.





Guy Rottier, City of Leisure, to Be Burnt after Use, 1969

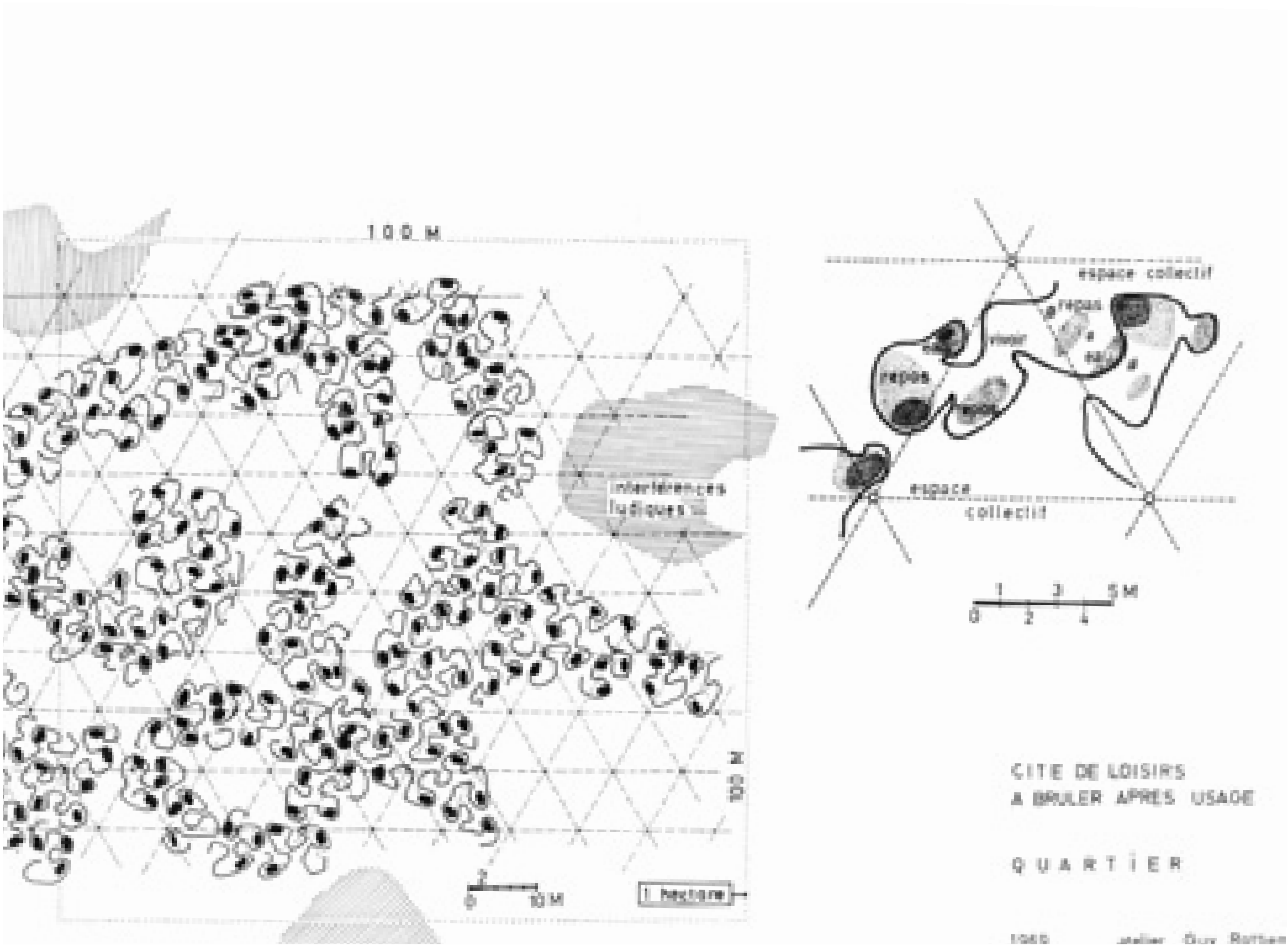


The City of Leisure, to Be Burnt after Use, is an example of how one can live peacefully, for a limited time, in the open air, driven by a spirit of independence and total freedom. Considering the ephemeral nature of the phenomenon, Guy Rottier noted the need to create short-lived architecture and urbanism, utilizing cheap materials: from paper to unused glass bottles. The city was an immense expanse of living cells covered by a spiderweb-like surface and a plastic film (which could be either

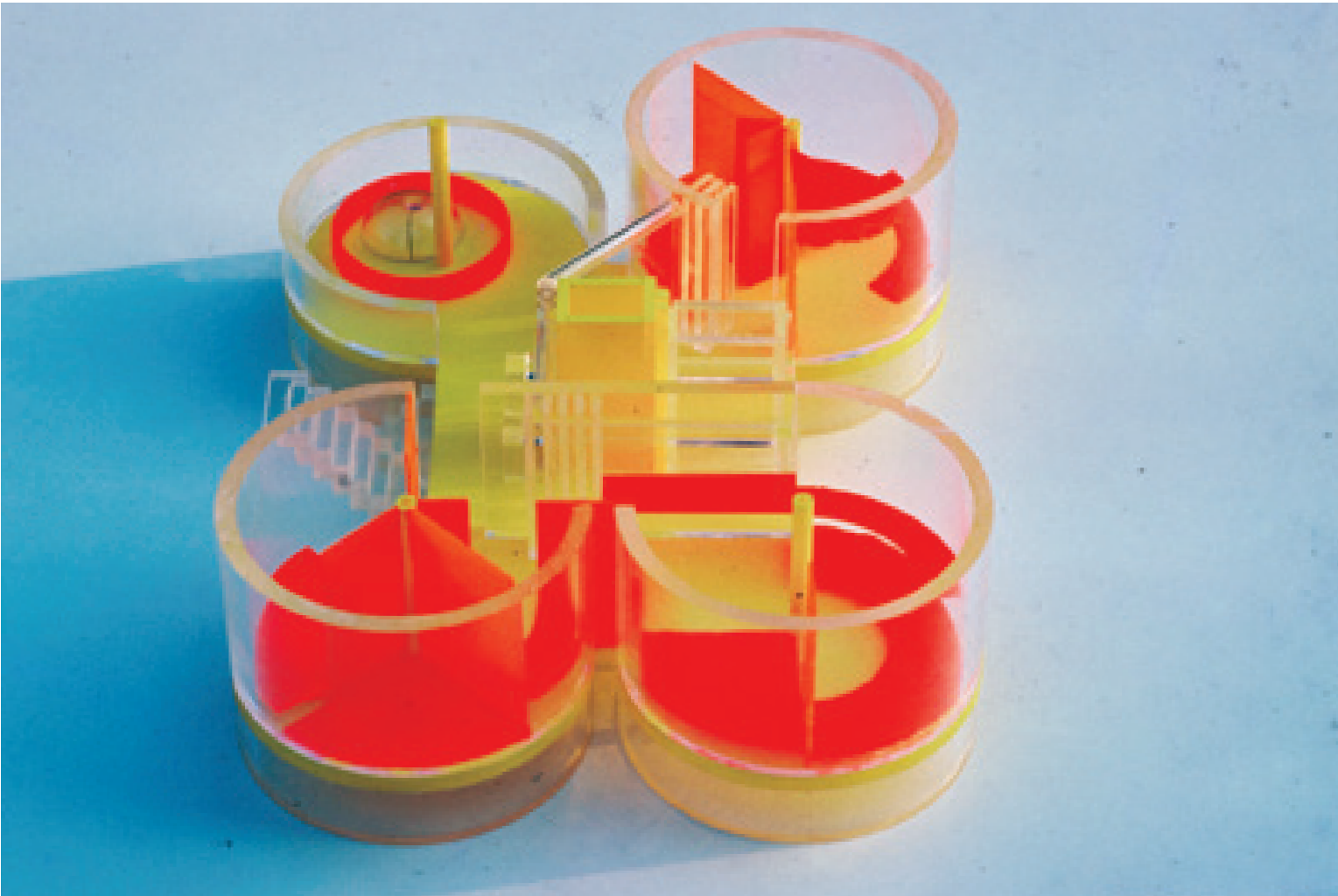
transparent or opaque). The cells were made of cardboard, with triangular vertical walls that could be destroyed after use, and each was installed anarchically by its inhabitant. The city was conceived as horizontal but with a very high density and the dwellings did not have traditional features such as kitchen, bathroom, etc., but were shelter-like spaces available to the occupants who could decide every day to change cells and move to another according to taste and affinity of the moment.

The experience had to be short-lived, to be enjoyed during the holiday period, because it was linked to an illusory idea of happiness and peace. True recreation, according to Rottier, was then to take place in the city, where man can best express himself despite the efforts of everyday life. That is why the City of Leisure, had to disappear (be burned down) after use, because it was linked to a concept of de-reality. By disappearing, the place where it was built and the surrounding nature could remain completely intact.

COORDINATES:	43°42′07″N 7°16′06″E
CURRENT CONDITION:	never realized
PROJECT:	holiday resort
IMAGE CREDITS:	Archives Nice Côte d'Azur – Ville de Nice, fonds Guy Rottier
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori, Mauro Marrani



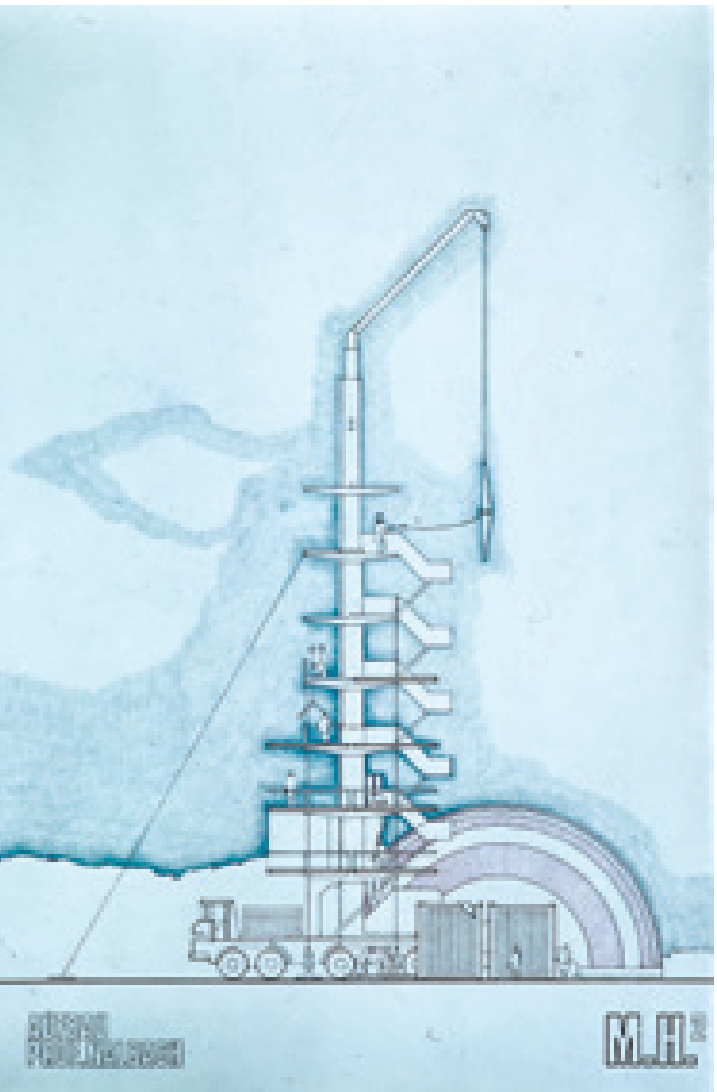
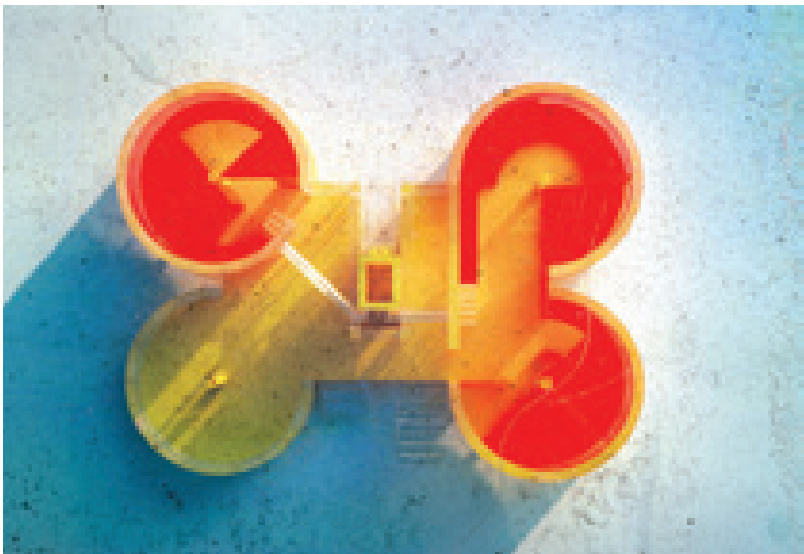
Gernot Nalbach, Mobile Hotel, Berlin, Germany, 1972



In 1972, the German architect Gernot Nalbach designed a mobile hotel at the ITB (Internationale Tourismus B rse), which could be assembled and disassembled in a single day, for trade fairs, congresses, sports competitions, festivals, etc. The project stemmed from the architect's criticism of the holiday-resort boom that was spreading in the tourist areas during the 1970s. Nalbach's solution in fact offered the chance to experience itinerant holidays and to use the struc-

ture in different seasons throughout the year and in multiple locations. The mobile hotel stands on a five-axle truck, 3 meters wide and 12 meters long, which can travel at a maximum speed of 53.6 km/h and can bear up to 162,000 tons when stationary. A second truck carries two containers of prefabricated elements composing the cells. A crane is attached to the truck, which is also the supporting structure of the hotel, to which the living cells are hooked. The cells can ac-

commodate two to five people per flat, are equipped with every comfort, such as TV and even a piano bar, and furnished with modern plastic furniture. The transparency of the surface can be adjusted thanks to a three-layer curtain system that regulates the quantity of natural light coming in. The hotel also has a restaurant and a swimming pool, set up inside inflatable structures that can be set up in five hours.



COORDINATES:	52°31'N 13°23'E
CURRENT CONDITION:	never realized
PROJECT:	Hotel on wheels
IMAGE CREDITS:	Archiv Gernot und Johanne Nalbach
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori

Studio65, Barbarella Night Club, Dubbione di Pinasca, Italy, 1972



“*Mesdames et messieurs* step into the hyper music shack, to see an authentic sidereal fleet returning from a millennial voyage, to listen to melodies of another cosmos, of other planets, and other star systems that orbit to the sound of mazurkas, of meteors, swaying with the fox-trot. You can sit in the queen spaceship to steer the game of this hallucinatory journey, you can

perch in the grand stadium of the space palace to applaud love duels. Our Barbarella has transformed Dubbione di Pinasca, Piedmont, into the Place Pigalle of the pre-Alpine valleys.”¹ This is how in 1972 Studio65 described its design of the interiors of a night club near Turin, whose main theme was the Queen Spaceship, that during week-ends could be boarded by the local

Flash Gordons. The underground venue was accessed through a tunnel that led from the outside to the underground space, a square room with an amphitheater. The disc jockey’s booth and the bar were two spaceships; the ceiling was made of “fake” gold and segments of an Ionic column—archaeological relics of ancient terrestrial civilizations—were used as tables.

¹ www.studio65.eu/progetto/barbarella/



COORDINATES:	44°56'24"N 7°13'57"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	dismantled
PROJECT:	night club interiors
IMAGE CREDITS:	Archivio Storico Studio65; photographs by Paolo Mussat Sartor
MENTIONED BY:	Ste Lik, Renzo Scotto d’Abusco



Sottsass Associati, Espace 2000, Zouk, Lebanon, 1980



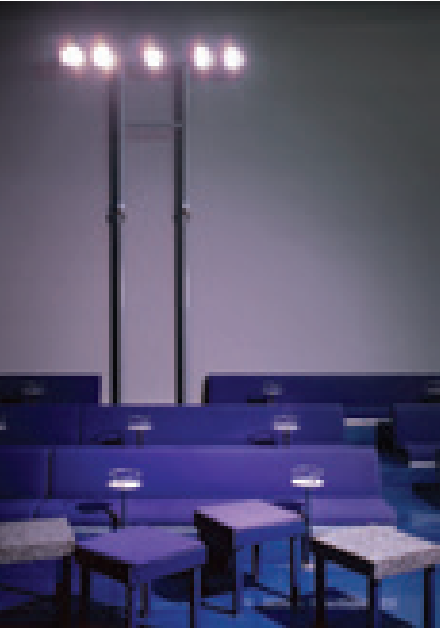
In the early 1980s, the Sottsass Associati firm designed a night club in Zouk, 30 kilometers from Beirut, inside the Espace 2000 shopping center. The club was inaugurated the day after Christmas, December 26, 1980. It was a colorful dance space with electric blue flooring downstairs and pink carpeting upstairs. On the ground floor three padded stadium steps offered comfortable seating,

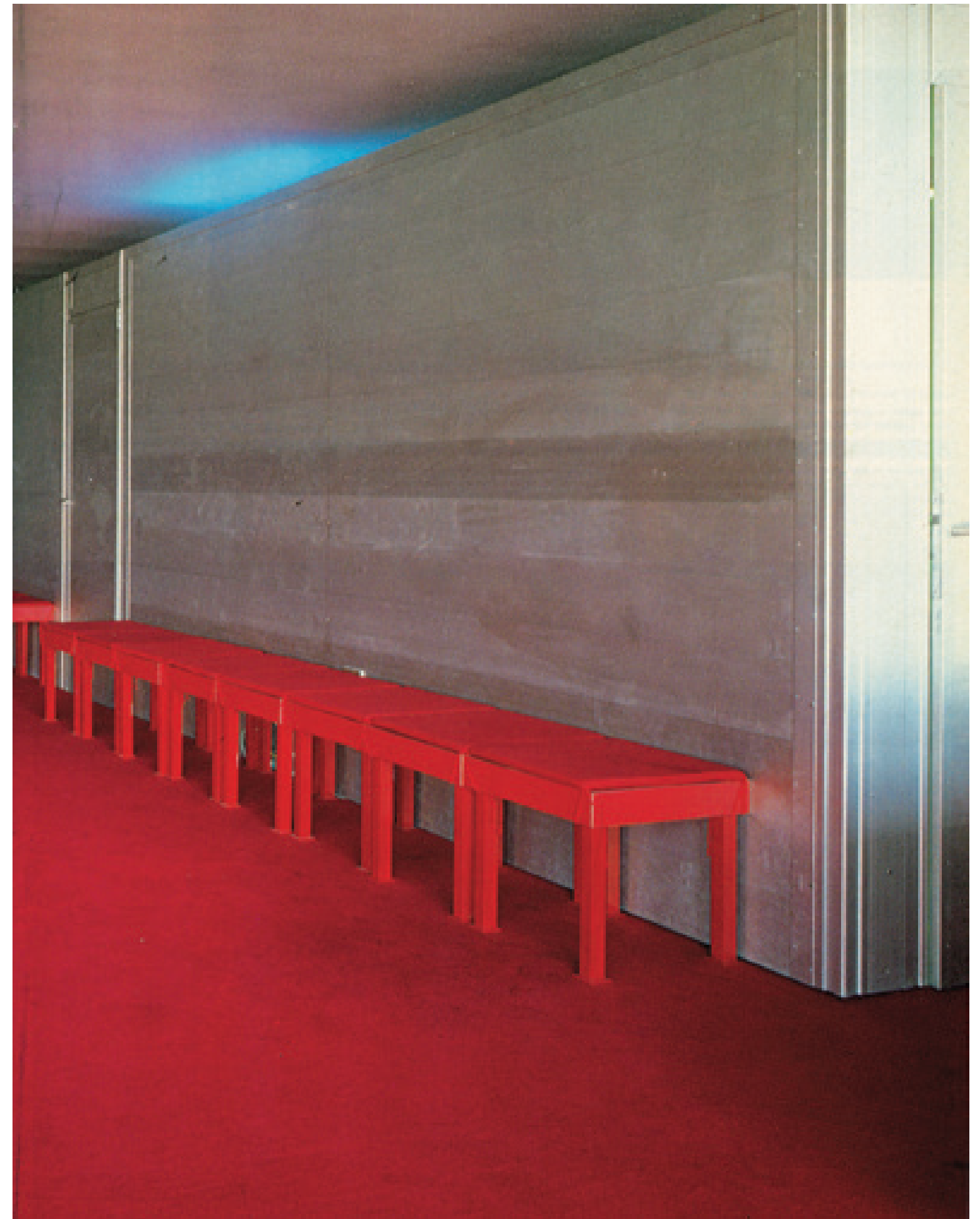
with a bar area on the opposite side. Small chairs, tables and stools were casually arranged around the space defined by a series of columns. The second floor, from where one entered the club, was for those who wanted to relax and take a break from the busy dance floor; it was furnished with black armchairs and featured a large 21-meter-high window with a spectacular view of Beirut. “It is a space

rich in color, but with no rhinestones and sequins, abat-jours, or mirrors; it intends to establish a direct relationship between the music and the audience without going through the decor filters and soft lights [...] Going to a disco is a bit like dancing to disco music on an airport runway with the other travelers, under the lights, laser beams, smoke and soap bubbles of a landing spaceship.”¹

¹ Marco Zanini, “Libano in pista,” *Modo*, no. 39 (1981), 42.

COORDINATES:	33°58'21.5"N 35°36'35.9"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	dismantled
PROJECT:	night club interiors
IMAGE CREDITS:	Santi Caleca
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori





Denis Santachiara with Douglas Skene, Epsilon Night Club, Reggio Emilia, Italy, 1989



COORDINATES:	44°42'N 10°38'E
CURRENT CONDITION:	dismantled
PROJECT:	night club interiors
IMAGE CREDITS:	Studio Santachiara; photographs by Miro Zagnoli
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori

In 1989, Denis Santachiara designed the Epsilon night club in an early post-war building in the center of Reggio Emilia. The club, marked on the outside by a photovoltaic lightning bolt, stemmed from the designer’s wish to go beyond the stereotypes of the classic Emilia-Romagna discotheque. First of all, this disco was characterized by a light palette and the lights were soft and indirect,

avoiding the classic night club dark tones. Santachiara also chose to distance himself from the concept of the dance floor as being the only heart of the space, extending the dancing area to other parts of the club. The furnishings were not conceived as constructions of volumes but as light mobile supports. The cash register area featured a Fresnel lens that magnified the cashier’s face, while the entrance

to the bar area was marked by a precipice created by a large floor glass. The passage from the bar to the dance floor consisted of two large platforms where the designer placed armchairs and small tables. The cladding was made of expanded sheet aluminum, made specifically for Epsilon; the columns had large fabric “capitals” lit from within.





1. “If childhood is a journey, let us see that the child does not travel by night,” Aldo van Eyck, in Rodrigo Pérez de Arce, *City of Play: An Architectural and Urban History of Recreation and Leisure* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 124.

2. Carl Theodor Sørensen, “Junk Playgrounds,” in *Danish Outlook*, no. 4.1 (1951), 314.

OUR SUBJECT MATTER
In this chapter we address playgrounds, how they have evolved over the years and what has been their impact on the social fabric. The book you are reading started on the Internet, in a Facebook group that in its (almost) completely democratic nature showed interactions between users around various subjects. One day, a conversation about safety began, following the publication on the group page of a project by Enzo Mari, The Big Stone Game, built in Carrara in 1968. “Safety first I see (lol),” “Countless head injuries I guess” were but some of the comments. Safety today is so crucial that it has become the only parameter in evaluating a project. We can ask ourselves whether safety has always been such a major criterion and whether it has now become more important than the design concept itself when it unfolds into an actual project. We will try to understand how this issue has played a substantial role in the transition from playgrounds to #forgottenplaygrounds.

A LITTLE HISTORY
The history of playgrounds began in the 1940s, at the height of the World War. Already in the first half of the century, figures such as Jean Piaget and Maria Montessori, following in the footsteps of Friedrich Fröbel, had placed childhood at the center of their research, recognizing it as a crucial season in human life and considering children as the protagonists of the social project of the 20th century. It is in this light that we must look at the design of playgrounds from the 1940s onwards.

“If childhood is a journey, let us see to it that the child does not travel by night.”¹
ALDO VAN EYCK

Not that the 20th century was particularly kind to young humans: while pedagogues, doctors, architects, urban planners, psychologists, and enlightened minds of all kinds sought to nurture creativity and meet

the needs of every child, two World Wars devastated the family and social fabric. In the post-war period, the economic boom and the uncontrolled growth of cities made cars the undisputed protagonists of urban spaces, denying children access to those areas that had always been their best playgrounds: the streets. The history of playground design thus stemmed from critical contexts, such as the degraded and poverty-stricken urban areas, as an attempt to respond to social problems, exacerbated by war and enemy occupation.
Early playground experiments were carried out in Northern Europe, by Carl Theodor Sørensen, a Danish landscape architect, and Lady Alien of Hurtwood, a British pacifist and educator. Both placed their *Skrammellegepladser* [junk playground] and Adventure Playgrounds on building sites, in plots that had not been occupied by urbanization or that had been cleared by bombs. It is no coincidence, in fact, that experimental playground research began during and immediately after the war. The war, which destroyed cities and transformed them—either wiping them out as in Dresden or leaving behind shreds of concrete—created those spaces that were naturally compatible to play: located often in poor, densely populated neighborhoods, and full of all sorts of waste material. Sørensen himself later stated: “Of all the things I have contributed making, the *Skrammellegeplads* is the ugliest; yet, for me it is the best and most beautiful of my works.”²
It seems significant to us that for this great landscape architect, his most successful project was an anti-design project, curated by child-builders, marginally assisted by an adult designer, without any deliberate aesthetic implication. Following these early experimenters, many innovative projects combining figurative and abstract sculpture and play emerged from the mid-century to the 1980s. There are even those who, like Mitsuru Senda, carried out an authentic anthropological and

pedagogical study: a survey of children’s behavior in the open air to define the standards of a good playground.³ Another key figure was Aldo van Eyck, who built over 700 playgrounds in all neighborhoods of Amsterdam, often in surprising locations, such as empty lots between houses or in narrow alleys, each time with a specific design. Inspired by van Eyck was Charles Forberg’s 1967 Cypress Hills Playground in Brooklyn, New York. Rectangular concrete bays rise from a circular base and delimit an area with three play structures, consisting mostly of curved concrete slabs. The use of simple geometries, without a specific function, left children free to imagine their function when they approached them. Shortly after its construction, this playground was criticized due to safety reasons: the very structure of the project prevented parents from keeping an eye on their children while they were playing.

The theme of “free function” accompanied many experimental works of the 1960s and 1970s, such as Group Ludic’s structure in Hérouville-Saint-Clair in 1968, or Mitsuru Senda’s *Ping Pong* of 1979. Impossible not to mention Riccardo Dalisi and his experimental work in the Traiano district in Naples between 1971 and 1974. Dalisi, as a university professor, took his students to the neighborhood where he had been entrusted with the design of a kindergarten. This project provided the occasion to carry out a series of experiences involving Dalisi himself, his students, and the children of the neighborhood, with experimental projects ranging from garden design to the manufacture of play equipment. The designer would later say he was fascinated by how those children imagined forms, free of preconceptions and conventions.⁴

WHAT ABOUT TODAY?

The common trait of these and other projects, all very diverse in their intentions and outcomes, is the fact that, if they were proposed today, no administration would ever approve them: “Too dangerous,” “nonstandard,” “unclear function,” “what is a child supposed to do with this?” And so, over the years, these playgrounds were subject to adverse fortunes. Some were demolished (such as Torsten Johansson’s am-

bitious Tivolaj Art Playground), others dismantled and stored goodness knows where, and others have been “modernized” and made to meet the required safety standards: non-slip mats, parapets with a mesh size of less than 10x10 cm, no clear height above 40 cm; a fate worse than destruction.

By this we do not mean that the revision, demolition, and loss of the memory of these projects is caused solely by the spread of safety-oriented policies; there may be many other causes: video games, time spent on social networking or the Internet, busy streets, apprehensive parents, or generally the tendency families have to structure and saturate their children’s free time. The effects of these new ways of experiencing childhood can be varied: from obesity to hyperactivity, from lack of knowledge of natural and artificial reality, to indifference to the concept of community. However, it is clear that today playgrounds are no longer central to children’s free time. It is basically impossible to establish the exact cause-effect relationship between these themes and the decline of the playground space typology in design, but we can certainly delimit the golden age of playground sculptures between the 1940s and the 1970s. With the increase in safety standards, the multiplication of lawsuits filed by overprotective parents and the over-commercialization of public space, in fact, the playground project has now turned into yet another standardized creature of a society obsessed with control, safety, and overprotection. An effective representation of this phenomenon is offered by the animated series *The Simpsons*, to be precise in episode 22 of season 27, where Marge is in prison for having left Bart, her eldest son, alone in the park. In a later scene we see Homer, the father, walking Bart and his friends while holding them on a leash, scared at the idea of going through the same trouble as his wife. Returning to more traditional sources, we can quote the architect Richard Dattner, who affirmed:

“If a kid fell in my playground in the 1960s their mother or father would kiss the boo-boo. If it happened twenty years later, they would pick up the phone and call their lawyer.”⁵

3. For more on this topic, see the chapter “Open spaces for children: what makes a good park?” in Mitsuru Senda, *Design of Children’s Play Environments* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 1992).

4. For more on this topic, see Riccardo Dalisi, *Architettura d’animazione* (Rome: Carucci Editore, 1975).

5. Carol Kino, “The Work Behind Child’s Play,” in *The New York Times* (July 3, 2013).

6. Palle Nielsen, in the work by Lars Bang Larsen and Bartomeu Mari, *Palle Nielsen, The Model, A Model for a Qualitative Society* (Barcelona: MACBA, 2010), 51.

Let’s just hope we won’t need another war to return to sufficiently empty spaces and less obsessive and more sustainable safety standards.

ALL IN ALL

So what is the unifying element in this story of design and anti-design? Playgrounds always seem to appear in a free space: Post-war bomb craters, Amsterdam alleys taken over by van Eyck. What are these free spaces today? Are they habitable? How many permits does it take to occupy them with playground facilities? The only concern of the political establishment seems to be the possibility of aggregation spaces becoming drug dens, and the only solution offered to this problem the complete dismantling of such spaces. If there is one thing children have plenty of, that is imagination. Playground designs that seem to work best are those that leave it up to the children to create the game, to determine it. Ideally, the abandoned space, the wasteland—hence the Junk Playground, as Sørensen taught us—is the perfect playground space: a blank area with a few loose, indeterminate materi-

als; think for example of van Eyck’s sand. On the contrary, the standard playground, that of the western suburbs, with its all strictly standardized slides, swings, and light-blue roundabout, associates each piece of equipment with a function, in a perfect two-way correspondence that is as sterile as it is boring: it imposes a choice on the child, who would instead like to create and imagine. The only interaction we can trace today is the activity of users such as skaters and traceurs (who practice parkour); these categories are in fact able to create their own playgrounds and *activate* space, perfectly attuning with Marjory Alien’s belief that it is fundamental to leave it up to the users themselves to conform the space to their intended use, each and every time. As perfectly summarized by Palle Nielsen, an artist who has worked extensively on the subject:

“The frame will contain no fixed play functions—only the children’s use of it will determine its function.”⁶

Otherwise?



THE SIMPSONS, “ORANGE IS THE NEW YELLOW,” S27E22



Torsten Johansson, Tivolaj Art Playground, Copenhagen, Denmark, 1958



Torsten Johansson (December 5, 1917, Idre, Sweden) was a Swedish sculptor, designer and artist. In 1958, he realized the Tivolaj Art Playground in the Tivoli Gardens amusement park in Copenhagen, a playground resulting from a brilliant application of sculptural concepts in the design of public

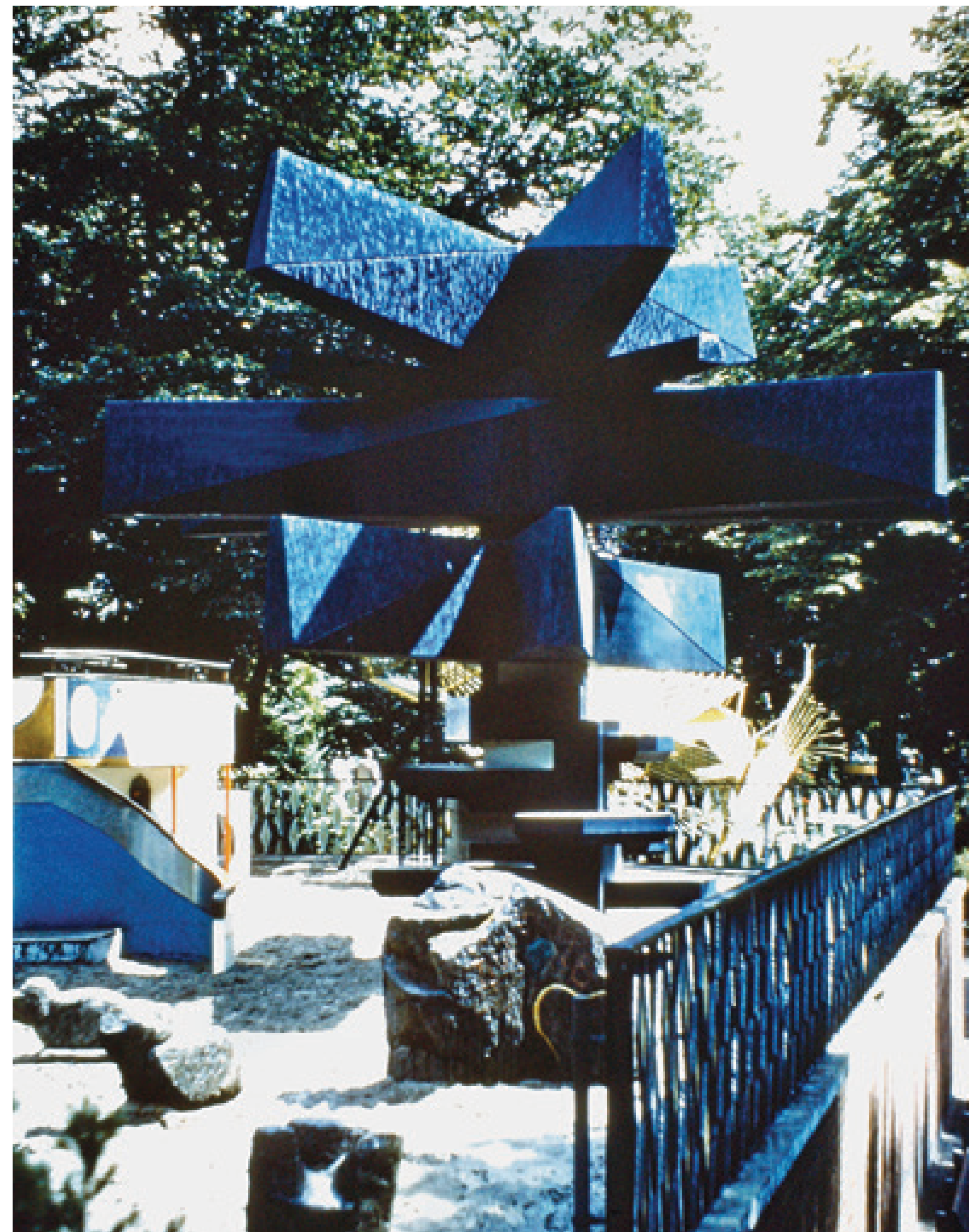
space, which was dismantled in 2009. The playground was developed as a collective project between visual artists and architects and was an early example of the social function of a meeting place in which visitors actively participated. The result was a harmonious composition of integrat-

ed games: the children's slide, incorporated into a structure of wooden elements with a sculptural and dynamic quality, the climbing tree made of light blue colored concrete, the drawing pavilion with black and white boards and tables, and the firework tree.



COORDINATES:	55°40'26.1"N 12°34'05.5"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	dismantled
PROJECT:	public park
IMAGE CREDITS:	Jesper Johansson
MENTIONED BY:	Davide Ganeo





Costantino Nivola, Stephen Wise Towers Playground, New York, 1963-64



Between 1963 and 1964, Costantino Nivola in collaboration with landscape architect Richard Stein created his largest public project: the Wise Towers Playground in New York. The project was realized as part of the early-1960s West Side renewal program. For the square, the sculptor created eighteen colored concrete horses, an approximately ten-meter graffito, a double-sided sculpted wall, a monumental fountain in the shape of a double diamond and a three-dimensional statue. Nivola’s small horses, inspired by the rocking horses of childhood and oriental statuary, were made using the “sandcasting” method, a technique pioneered and perfected by Nivola, who created concrete sculptures from sand molds, so that the figures appeared to emerge from the ground. Unfortunately, in March 2021 these sculptures were removed from the square to make space for a project for the renovation of the area. There is talk that the works, including the wall, will be restored and relocated to the space once the Wise Towers redevelopment project is completed.

COORDINATES:	40°47'22.6"N 73°58'18.8"W
CURRENT CONDITION:	dismantled
PROJECT:	public park
IMAGE CREDITS:	Fondazione Costantino Nivola
MENTIONED BY:	Stefano Serusi





Enzo Mari, The Big Stone Game, Carrara, Italy, 1968



In 1968 Enzo Mari, commissioned by the Marmo di Carrara Institution, designed The Big Stone Game for the Third National Marble Exhibition, a playground composed of eight identical slabs of travertine that, sunk into the ground and arranged in symmetrical pairs, circumscribed a square space, alternating the four large openings on the sides with four smaller pas-

sages at each corner. Interaction between the children, at playtime, mainly happened through the eye-shaped cuts that Mari drew to make them spy on each other. In the center of each slab (at child's eye-level) there were in fact two identical ellipsoidal holes: in one slab they were vertical, in one horizontal, in one oblique, and so on. The interior space was paved with black-

board slabs surrounded by greenery. Here, children could unleash their creativity using colored chalk, drawing whatever they liked on the floor. The aim was to create a space with which they could identify, a cathartic and liberating space where they could feel part of a (in this case, child) community.



COORDINATES:	44°05'N 10°06'E
CURRENT CONDITION:	dismantled
PROJECT:	Playground
IMAGE CREDITS:	©Comune di Milano - CASVA. Photographs: Toni Nicolini ©Toni Nicolini/ CRAF (Centro di Ricerca e Archiviazione della Fotografia) - Spilimbergo
MENTIONED BY:	Nina Bassoli

Guy Rottier, Circuit pour Enfants, La Trinité, France, 1969

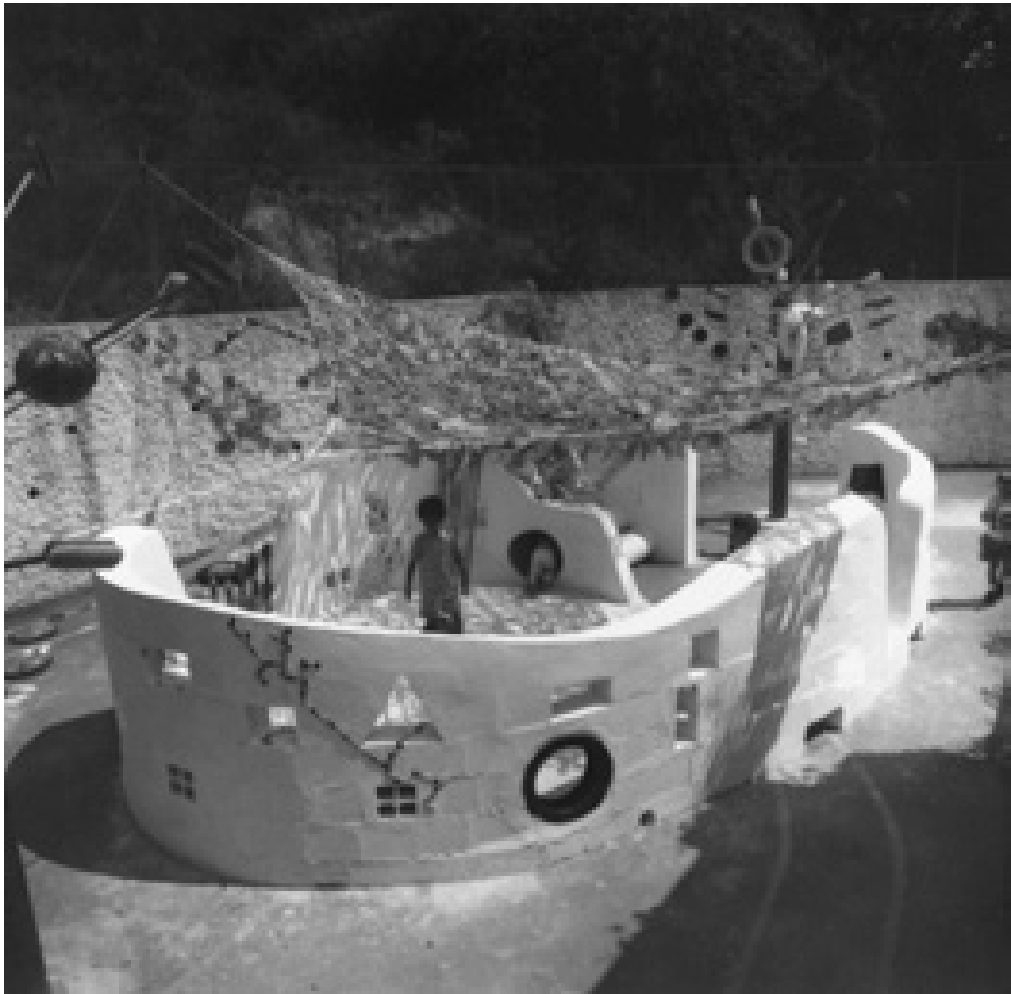


COORDINATES:	43°45'N 7°19'E
CURRENT CONDITION:	dismantled
PROJECT:	Playground
IMAGE CREDITS:	Archives Nice Côte d'Azur – Ville de Nice, fonds Guy Rottier
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori

The children’s playground that Rottier created in Les Chênes Verts kindergarten in Nice is the result of a participatory architecture process. Rottier, in fact, conceived and built this *Circuit pour Enfants* by directly involving the school pupils, parents and teachers, even the municipal technical ser-

vices, who shared their ideas with the designer. The result was an open-air space dedicated to the education of children, a labyrinthine journey in which they could establish a dialogue with the environment, colors, and materials. The principle of self-construction and the use of poor and reused materials

(tires, bottles, lids, bags, etc.) drew him very close to the Neapolitan experiences of Riccardo Dalisi. In the same years, both architects worked on the application of poor techniques in didactic and educational projects, toward a participative, human, and experimental architecture.



Pierre Székely, La Dame du Lac, Évry-Courcouronnes, France, 1970-75



COORDINATES:	48°37'02.5"N 2°25'08.7"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	good
PROJECT:	climbing sculpture
IMAGE CREDITS:	Giaime Meloni
MENTIONED BY:	Giaime Meloni

In the early 1970s Pierre Székely created a sculpture for mountaineering in Courcouronnes, now Évry-Courcouronnes, south of Paris. The sculpture is located on the Évry Lake, not far from the Évry-Courcouronnes Center station. Székely, who has always been fascinated by the Sun, the Moon, Space and Matter, designed a sculpture guided by the ima-

gination of those who choose to operate in these kinds of spaces. 17.5 meters high and facing south, *La Dame du Lac* is designed for those who want to learn to climb and want to practice different types of climbing techniques. Thanks to its shape, reminiscent of a crag, it blends into the surrounding landscape whilst standing as a landmark that

can be spotted from afar. The sculpture curves upwards, becoming increasingly steeper as it rises, generating the impression of a powerful upwards thrust toward the sky. At the top it bends slightly backwards, producing a shallow concavity. It is embellished with a central chimney, ledges, and handholds.



Riccardo Dalisi, Experiments and Activities in the Traiano District, Naples, Italy, October 1971-January 1974



COORDINATES:	40°50'23.9"N 14°11'31.2"E
PROJECT:	educational workshop
IMAGE CREDITS:	Archivio Riccardo Dalisi; Riccardo Dalisi / Semi di Laboratorio; images from Riccardo Dalisi, "La partecipazione creativa è possibile," <i>Casabella</i> , nos. 368-369, August-September 1972, 93-99
MENTIONED BY:	Davide Tagliabue, Amina Chouaïri

In the early 1970s Europe and Italy witnessed the emergence of a series of new architectural experiences, including that of Riccardo Dalisi in the Rione Traiano, a project on the border between radical thought and the “architecture of participation” theorized by Giancarlo De Carlo. Riccardo Dalisi’s personal cultural battle began in 1970 when he published with Argalia *Architettura dell’imprevedibilità* (Architecture of Unpredictability), a book in which he theorized the key points of his thoughts, which he put into practice in a series of workshops conducted between October 1971 and January

1974, following a new form of teaching that aimed to reorganize and re-appropriate public and community space through the construction of structures, models, objects, and furniture. The most significant of these didactic experiments in “poor technology and collective participation”—which stemmed from the idea of “participatory design”—is the project he conducted with the children of the Rione Traiano, a neighborhood in Naples built in the post-war period and that became entangled with organized crime due in the first place to the failure of its urban planning structure. For

this program the architect involved the students of his Architecture Technology course at the Federico II University of Naples and the children of the Neapolitan underclass. Using poor materials (pieces of wood, string, paper, spatial grids), together they made drawings, objects, models, without complying to a middle-class “culture” but only through free association, applying creativity and unleashing the design potential of their imagination. The best results were precisely those public spaces children could play in, unexpected collectors of energy, of individual and collective creativity.



Gianni Colombo with Emilio Tadini and Gianfranco Pardi, Borgotondo, Mirandola, Italy, 1979



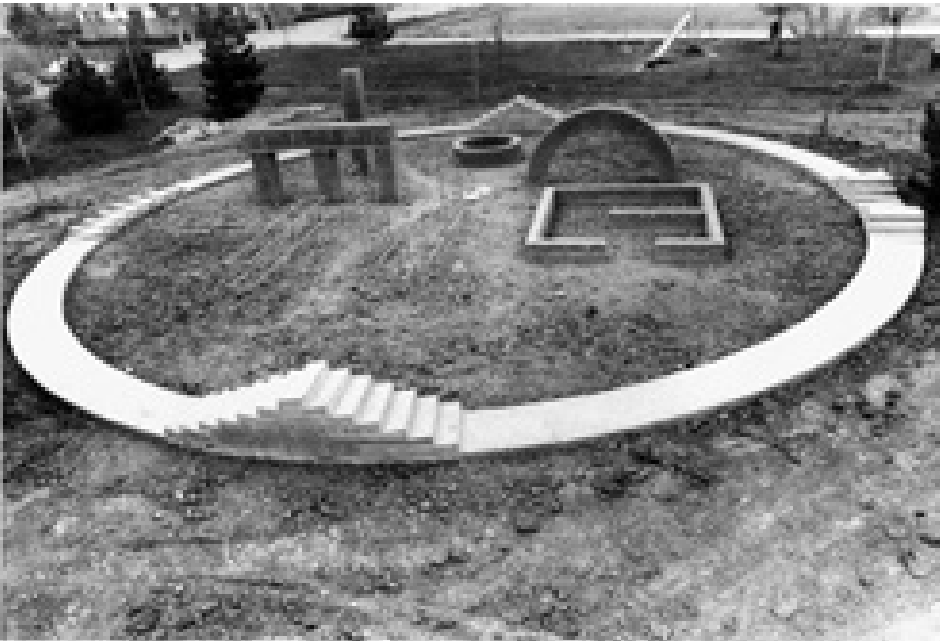
COORDINATES:	44°52'53.58"N 11°03'52.43"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	good
PROJECT:	permanent installation
IMAGE CREDITS:	photographs by Maria Mulas; courtesy of Archivio Gianni Colombo
MENTIONED BY:	Valter Scelsi

In 1979, the municipal administration of Mirandola, for the International Year of the Child, commissioned Gianni Colombo, Gianfranco Pardi, and Emilio Tadini to create a permanent installation representing a sort of ideal micro-city for children and teens. A veritable collaboration was established between artists, public institutions, and workers: the project was in fact realized by 46 volunteers (including four women), employed by the Cooperativa Muratori del Comprensorio and Fond-Ghisa, working on weekends between February and April 1979. Inaugurated in May 1979 with a performance by Patrizio Roveri and Giuliano Parenti, *Borgotondo* is

a free space set within a circular element that protects it from the outside world; inside are artefacts that recall architectural archetypes and stylized, out-of-scale household and everyday objects stimulating children's creativity and imagination. The work is a synthesis of three lines of research conducted by the three artists. Gianni Colombo's "Practicable Fields," is a spatial research that stimulates the child through the realization of a circular route of the ideal city and of four sets of stairs, intentionally irregular and built with steps at acute or obtuse angles, which alter balance (baresthesia), the perception of space (topoesthesia), and dynamic

behavior (posture reflex).¹ Gianfranco Pardi's masonry architectural archetypes offer the child the opportunity to play, observe, and touch primitive construction forms; the arch, the obelisk, the trilithon, the well, the house plan are symbols, bare elements devoid of any decoration, which invite the child to reinterpret the artefact in order to become aware of his or her technical skills. Emilio Tadini's skeletal structures have the same objective of stimulating manual dexterity through imagination and creativity; they are objects familiar to children (bed, table, chair, furniture) realized as structures on which they can climb, hang, and play.

1. *Borgotondo*. Colombo, Pardi, Tadini, Gianni Colombo, Gianfranco Pardi, Emilio Tadini (eds.), exhibition catalog (Cavezzo: Salvioli, 1979); *Sistina società per arte. Dalle grandi opere alla committenza pubblica*, Tommaso Trini (ed.), exhibition catalog (Bologna, Grafis Industrie Grafiche: 1979).



Once I was left behind in a motorway service station east of Rome. The Bla Bla Car driver I had made arrangements with left me stranded there, along that strip of asphalt connecting Calabria to Rome, which I was able to reach only later that evening. The hours I spent there – on the side of the motorway with the petrol pumps, the café, the shop and its fixed routes and limited view of the surrounding countryside with the first few houses growing in number in the distance – made me think about these marginal places, disconnected from the urban fabric, not part of the province and not really part of a city. A replicable and replicated model. Scattered islands in a bituminous sea interspersed with urban constellations.

Areas of transition, frenetic consumption plants, temples of strict necessity.

Even in motels you stay for one night at most, and perhaps that is why many of those architectures springing up like mushrooms along the motorway are not remembered, or considered important. Once they fulfil their practical function, they do not even have time to make an impression, as if by their very nature they were built to fall into oblivion. Very few architectures of this kind can withstand the speed and haste of travel.

But if we think about bridge motorway service stations, it’s a whole other story: they are unforgettable. Whether passing under them or stepping inside, they are motorway imagery landmarks.

But there are also other constructions capable of forcefully leaving a mark in our memory, piercing like a flash our recollections framed by the guardrail steel bands: last year, for example, on the way from the airport to the center of Tirana, I noticed a curious yellow and blue dome that struck me so much that I forced my friends to take me there one night we were partying. It was the Karburant Kupola, designed by 51N4E. I was to discover that later. But the obsession for what I can spot as I look out of the car stayed with me, and from then

on, I began to remember very many places that had deposited themselves in my memory and had been, I wonder why, lost.

One of them is the Como motorway service station designed by Ado Franchini, for example, which unfortunately no longer exists. Unbelievably minimal, it consisted of only two uprights, a cantilever roof, and a sign.

Or the petrol station designed by Carlo Agular in Corso Moncalieri in Turin, which echoes rather obviously the Asmara Fiat station, with its iconic concrete wings, reminiscent of a certain futurism.

It was undoubtedly the advent of cars and the presence of an important industry such as Fiat that multiplied the infrastructures and services linked to the road system, revolutionized the landscape, and brought about the smooth architectures that characterized recent modernity. Thus, a new type of landscape emerged: a tarmacked landscape, designed for cars and devoted to speed.

Ado Franchini’s son and namesake, told me that when the Autostrada del Sole motorway was built, Esso commissioned his father to build a service station that was then replicated identically several times along the route from Rome to Milan. Think also of the great Jean Prouvé, a master of standardization who was called upon in the early 1950s to design a petrol station, one of the first to be built in series. Those were the years in which Enrico Mattei bet on Agip and involved Mario Bacciocchi to develop several projects, including the one that became the oil company’s standardized canopy, the legendary “Bacciocca.” Only a few have survived around the country. Unfortunately, they have been modernized, but one can often still admire the characteristic canopy with its iconic profile. The claim of the time read “There is always an Agip petrol station just a few meters away,” and indeed, some of these stations have escaped the demolition fury of the post-Mattei era, who unlike his many successors was fond

of architecture. He even worked with Scarpa and Gellner, among others.

But the best story associated with Enrico Mattei and the construction of the petrol stations was that of Michele Mulieri, adventurer, and poet, who went so far as to challenge the industrialist-farmer to a duel, proclaiming his petrol station an “absolute and independent republic.” He would not allow any oil company in. He founded it to escape the traps that the Italian bureaucracy had set for him causing him much trouble. Quite simply he decided to pull himself out of it. At one point he refused to concede his land to Agip, which, in response, built a modern petrol station opposite his own. He was not wrong to think that such a corporation, who at that time was taking over the roads of Italy with its six-legged dog, could have shut him down. But things went differently and he managed to shut their station down, beating their cut-throat competition.

Globalization is the enemy of imagination. The most recently constructed service stations are pure capitalist function – fixed routes leading customers along the single aisle lined with goods which completely dominate the space becoming standardized typologies. And so it happened that those architectures that paired function and character, were first forgotten, and then destroyed.

Think of the American context, where roads and cars constitute a veritable cult made up of madonnas and saints, lights and motels, fast food restaurants and drive-in churches, designed especially for those who had absolutely no intention of getting out of their convertible, not even to attend Mass. A lineup of bright, dynamic, and highly visible signs. In Italy, on the other hand, although not as exaggerated, there were glaring cases such as the Pavesi hot-air balloon, which spectacularly suggested fast passers-by to stop for a break. In this type of architecture, advertising already had a fundamental role: a competition held by Agip at the end of the 1960s, expressly required that the service station functioned as a communicative element between the large oil company and its customers. Dardi and Zattera’s huge cube won.

ERG’s corporate image was designed by Sottsass, and was a good example of how communication was becoming increasingly important in these contexts. So important that nowadays the communication apparatus is more important than architectural quality, in many cases even replacing it, the form being simplified to plain backlit canopies serving also as signs.

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L. Greco. *Architetture autostradali in Italia*. Rome: Gangemi Editore 2010.

Unknown Architect, Agip Service Station, Verona, Italy, date of construction unknown



COORDINATES:	45°26'44.5"N 10°57'22.9"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	existing
PROJECT:	petrol station
IMAGE CREDITS:	Archivio Raffaello Bassotto
MENTIONED BY:	Debora Tintis

Petrol stations are part of that large system of structures and infrastructures built to serve the nascent automobile industry which, before standardization, served as ideal occasions for experimenting with the most diverse architectural languages. Thanks to innovations in the field of materials, cantilever roofs could become increasingly light and take on the most

distinctive and specific forms. In the case of the Agip petrol station in Corso Milano in Verona, the typical horizontal development of this typology is disrupted by a large glass concrete central pylon, lending this structure an American flavour and making it clearly visible to passing motorists. It is a purely functional piece of architecture that in its initial form is highly

expressive despite being essentially composed of a kiosk and the canopy above the petrol pump area. Looking at the renovated station today, one can see the strong authorial and compositional detachment that has made its way into the design of functional architecture, from the late 20th century to the present day.

Aldo Favini, Aquila Service Station, Sesto San Giovanni, Italy, 1949



“[...] I was standing at a construction site on top of a corrugated sheet metal placed over a hole larger than half a meter in an attic. *Via sciur ingegner ghè sota un bus* (Hoy, guv’nor, move from there, there’s a hole underneath), cried someone in my direction. Being a lover of structures that work by shape and not by size, I simply transformed the steel sheet into a 6-centimeter thick reinforced concrete structure [...],” Aldo Favini, 2004.

The Sesto San Giovanni service station was located at the beginning of the Serenissima motorway linking

Brescia and Padua. Designed by Aldo Favini and built in 1949, this architecture was characterized by a very thin undulating cantilevered vault in reinforced concrete supporting the Aquila company sign, atop the canopy. The structural elements were concentrated in a few very characterizing details: two perforated beams divided the roof span into two parts, one of which cantilevered 6.5 meters; these unloaded the weight of the roof outside the building onto two pillars. The forked pillar generated a rigid semi-frame with the transverse

and counteracted the wind, while the other pillar was linear and distributed the weight of the roof to the ground. At the rear under the roof, a window was an invitation to enter the petrol station kiosk.

In this project, engineering work and architectural composition established such a strong bond that it turned into a successful marketing operation. Favini himself confirmed this: “The work pleased the client because in his opinion it had a strong advertising impact [...].”



COORDINATES:	45°32'N 9°14'E
CURRENT CONDITION:	demolished
PROJECT:	petrol station
IMAGE CREDITS:	Archivio Politecnico di Milano - Fondazione Favini
MENTIONED BY:	Francesco Pascale



Jean Prouvé with Henri Prouvé, Mobiloil Petrol Station Socony-Vacuum, Haute-Loire, France, 1953



COORDINATES:	47°36'09.0"N 7°37'07.4"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	existent, transferred to the Vitra Campus in Weil am Rhein (2003)
PROJECT:	petrol station
IMAGE CREDITS:	Vitra
MENTIONED BY:	Debora Tintis

The petrol station designed by Jean Prouvé and his brother Henri for Mobiloil in 1953 is one of the first mass-produced petrol stations. Prouvé's (1901–1984) training began in the metal workshops where he made furniture and small-scale objects. Shortly afterwards, he began to collaborate with some of the protagonists of architecture of that period, including Le Corbusier. Thanks to these collaborations, he became familiar with the architectural scale, a field in which he was to become a pioneer for his skill in building prefabricated metal structures. Mass motorization was one of the most characteristic

phenomena of the 1950s, and petrol stations were considered a particularly representative architectural typology of that period: the urban and rural landscapes were profoundly reshaped by the motorized society. Between 1951 and 1954, Jean Prouvé worked on at least twenty different petrol station projects for the major French oil companies of the time; only a few were realized and the most successful was the project developed in 1951 for Mobiloil, of which six were built. Three still exist today, one of which is on display at the Vitra Museum in Weil am Rhein. In line with Jean Prouvé's theory that a building

must be composed of as few elements as possible, which must be easily assembled and disassembled, this service station is essentially composed of sheet metal for the infill and aluminum angles for the supporting structure, the repeatability of which makes the station expandable. The construction principle is the same as that used for his smaller-scale objects: the lines of his famous Standard Chair can be recognized in the uprights of the canopy, and the perforated sheet metal, used in the infills, remained a trademark throughout his design career.



Victor Lundy, Presbyterian Drive-In Church, Venice, Florida, 1955



COORDINATES:	27°05'59N 82°27'46W
CURRENT CONDITION:	demolished
PROJECT:	drive-in church
IMAGE CREDITS:	State Archives of Florida
MENTIONED BY:	Debora Tintis

Religion and the cult of the automobile find their highest expression in the drive-in church designed by Victor Lundy, a New York architect who moved to Sarasota County in the 1950s, where he built numerous buildings, thanks to which he had a remarkable, albeit late, career.

In the post-war period, the United States saw an astonishing demographic and economic growth; the number of cars per inhabitant also increased dramatically, as did the wide variety of related services, including

drive-in cinemas. In this new landscape, characterized by large spaces and high speeds, even prayer was a stop along the way; thus Victor Lundy was asked to design a drive-in church, which was to appear on the pages of *Life Magazine* in April 1955.

For the traveler, the territory became a space to be crossed, and the drive-in church seems to be part of this series of services designed to affirm the innovativeness and convenience of the road infrastructure, but perhaps also to take the American

sense of excess back to an established order of values. The iron and glass structure, built in a style reminiscent of Miesian aesthetics, contained a room for the organ and choir, and a raised pulpit to be clearly visible to the faithful following the mass from their cars. The tree-lined open space, in which Lundy took care not to have any trees cut down, was dotted with sound amplifiers positioned in each car park to solemnly broadcast the sermon.

Mario Bacciocchi, Agip Service Station, Moncalieri, Italy, ca. 1953–54



COORDINATES:	45°04'N 7°42'E
CURRENT CONDITION:	demolished
PROJECT:	motorway service station
IMAGE CREDITS:	Archivio ENI
MENTIONED BY:	Debora Tintis

More than 800 service stations were built by Agip from 1953 onwards, following the economic and advertising boom of the new post-war ENI companies.

Commissioned by Enrico Mattei from Mario Bacciocchi (the two had previously worked together on the visionary Metanopoli project), the so-called “Bacciocche,” modern, functional and welcoming stations, were developed in 13 variants of the same standardized model, to represent

the symbol of an Italian company (ENI's Agip) seeking to make inroads into a market by challenging the foreign multinationals Esso, Shell, and BP. A reinforced concrete cantilever roof, with a profile reminiscent of uniform load diagrams, soared above the small petrol station kiosk or above the large service station, like a white, subtle and refined sign under the Agip logo. Below, could be a set of variable building bodies, unified by the irregular concrete T-profile.

These structures were built at the rate of two hundred a year, including some that still have an exceptional charm, such as the one in Piazzale Accursio in Milan, which has a few additional elements compared to the initial design in correspondence with the surrounding urban landmarks, but above all the Agip petrol station in Moncalieri, which is one of the largest prototypes, equipped with an outdoor relaxation area and an upper floor.



Ado Franchini, Esso Petrol Station, Como, Italy, 1952; Esso Service Station, Autostrada del Sole, Italy, 1963; Feronia Chapel, Italy, 1965



COORDINATES:	42°08'11.9"N 12°36'13.8"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	the service stations have been demolished; the chapel has been extensively altered
PROJECT:	petrol stations and chapel
IMAGE CREDITS:	courtesy of Adolfo Franchini, son of Ado Franchini
MENTIONED BY:	Debora Tintis

In the 1960s, between Rome and Milan, Adolfo Franchini designed more than 20 petrol stations for Esso Standard, devising a range of different solutions clearly manifesting a marked structural research. The 1952 Como petrol station was built entirely out of prefabricated elements, surmounted by a transparent Perspex roof. The soffits of the main structure, covered with anodized light alloy sheets, followed inclinations equal to the minimum and maximum solar inclination. More than ten years later, an Esso station along the Autostrada del Sole, which at the time had been under construction for almost ten years, was built on much more basic lines.

Franchini also designed the Feronia motorway chapel dedicated to the Madonna della Strada, which was to be the first of a long series. Built by Esso Standard, the chapel is located in the Feronia Est service area, at km 18 on the Autostrada del Sole motorway heading toward Florence, and is enclosed in large glass walls that allow those inside to remain in contact with the surrounding natural and road environment. A large partition wall surmounted by a cross isolates the church from the rest of the service area. Franchini was a lesser-known architect on the road architecture scene, compared to the often-mentioned Bianchetti and Bacci-

occhi, who frequently collaborated with the oil companies. He was able to materialize a strong plastic value in his utilitarian architecture. It is said that Arne Jacobsen chanced to appreciate its forms: in those very years, he was passing through Como and, struck by the station, asked the attendant who designed it: discovering that the architect lived just down the road, he decided to meet him. Thus an exchange started between the well-known Danish architect and Ado Franchini, who later even went to his studio in Denmark, bringing home some three-legged Ant chairs.



Angelo Bianchetti, Pavese Service Stations in Fiorenzuola d’Arda, Novara, and Montepulciano, Italy, 1959, 1962, 1967



PROJECT:	service stations
IMAGE CREDITS:	Archivio Arch. Jan Jacopo Bianchetti
MENTIONED BY:	Andrea Mologni, Cartina Capelli, Gianmaria Santonicola

COORDINATES:	44°57'46.8"N 9°54'20.5"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	renovated in 2016
IMAGE CREDITS:	Archivio Arch. Jan Jacopo Bianchetti

COORDINATES:	45°28'09.8"N 8°39'27.1"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	renovated in 2016
IMAGE CREDITS:	Archivio Arch. Jan Jacopo Bianchetti

COORDINATES:	43°09'45.9"N 11°50'33.1"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	demolished
IMAGE CREDITS:	Archivio Arch. Jan Jacopo Bianchetti

During the economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s, the cult of the utility car spread in Italy, reflecting the idea of a country on the move and defining a new modern lifestyle inextricably linked to mobility. A true mass motorization took place, service stations multiplied, and cars became the symbol of this phenomenon.

The Fiorenzuola d’Arda Autogrill motorway service area was the first European bridged service station. Between 1959 and 1972 a dozen were built each with a specific identity: in the Novara station the structural elements took on a plastic quality, while in the Montepulciano one the door-

ways were made of Corten steel. Formal choices were dictated by the will to achieve spectacular results paired with function: the bridge-like structure created more space while allowing access from both carriageways. With this new service area typology, the use of prefabrication was key, since these structures were put in place when the motorways were already active therefore requiring very rapid building procedures. Angelo Bianchetti, who was entrusted with the design of these bold and iconic structures, boasted a long experience in the field of exhibition design and advertising architecture. These archi-

tectures have a powerful communicative impact, created through the intelligent use of graphic elements, strikingly expressed in the large signs that characterize the architectural solutions, in order to deliver the corporate visibility required by the client. Bianchetti was one of the architects who most contributed to the definition of Italy’s new motorway landscape, combining bold structuralism with formally and expressively free solutions, such as the Villoresi Ovest “space pyramid” Autogrill motorway service area, of which the central building was demolished and rebuilt, and the large triple arch structure restored in 2020.





PAVESE

AUTOGRIFF

PAVESE

RESTAURANT

BAR

PAVESE

Costantino Dardi and Ariella Zattera, Agip Service Station, Mestre-Bazzera, 1968–71



COORDINATES:	45°31'33.5"N 12°15'46.8"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	existing
PROJECT:	service station
IMAGE CREDITS:	Archivio IUAV
MENTIONED BY:	Martina Russo

The Agip service station in Mestre-Bazzera, known as “Kaaba,” was the selected project among those participating in the competition announced by Agip in 1968 and later developed by Costantino Dardi and a group of even younger architects of the time (Bruno Cassetti, Max Chelli, Marco De Michelis, Maurizio Di Puolo, Marco Fano and Giovanni Morabito). The design proposal, in the wake of Bacciocchi’s projects commissioned by Enrico Mattei,

was based on an iconic aesthetics able to support appealing and modern corporate communication, as well as on the interpretation of the primary solid in new architectural solutions and the use of contemporary technologies: a glowing 10-meter cube towers above the petrol station structure standing as a recognizable element above the roof, as a “box of images, signals, optical and sound messages.” The structure of the cube consists of a spatial reticu-

lar structure covered with glass-fiber reinforced acrylic resin, assuring luminous transparency. On street level, two canopies echo the net-like structure of the cube, while concrete baffles unload the weight on the ground and mark out the space of the petrol station and kiosk. The two roofs extend towards each other until they meet at the cube, the catalyst element of this architecture.



Mario Botta, Service Station, Piotta, Switzerland, 1998



COORDINATES:	46°30'56.1"N 8°40'03.4"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	existing, good conservation conditions
PROJECT:	service area
IMAGE CREDITS:	courtesy of Mario Botta; photographs by Enrico Cano
MENTIONED BY:	Riccardo Simioni

The large airplane-wing-shaped roof of the service area designed by Mario Botta marks a territorial junction between the motorway route leading to the Gotthard tunnel and the town of Piotta at the bottom of the valley. The steel load-bearing structure, with its approximately 10-meter pitch, supports the iconic 400-ton, thermo-lacquered trapezoidal sheet metal canopy, which took three months to assemble on site. Below the unifying geometric element of the canopy the partially lowered elevation bodies of the service station, the bar and restaurant and the space dedicated to the parked vehicles are united in a single compact geometric form that does not interfere with the surrounding natural landscape of the mountain slopes. The project, realized in 1998 following a competition the Ticino architect won in 1993, represents an exception in the language of Mario Botta, who is usually the spokesman and interpreter of traditional building techniques and local materials. This architecture in fact seems to echo Switzerland's infrastructure facilities, veritable landmarks that punctuate the road and rail landscape with authorial and contemporary semantic structures, recognizable even at road speed.



51N4E, Europetrol Station, Tirana, 2006

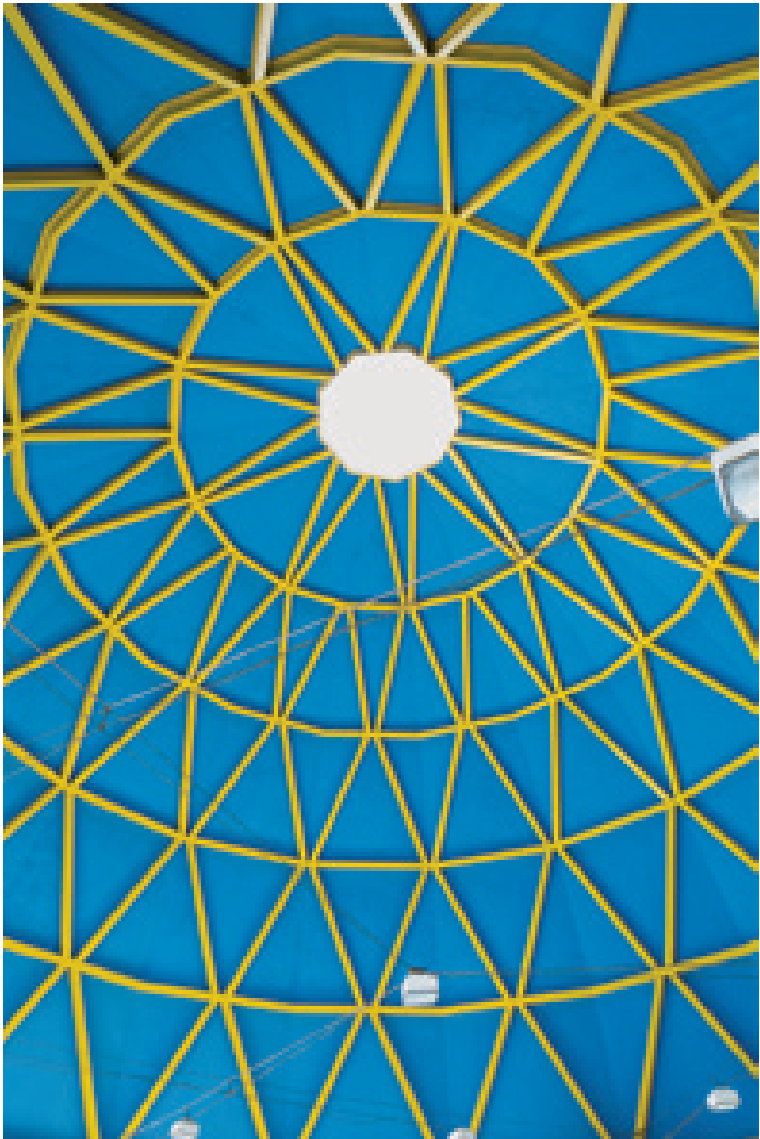


COORDINATES:	41°20'9"N 19°47'49"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	existing, in good conservation conditions
PROJECT:	petrol station
IMAGE CREDITS:	51N4E; photographs by Stefano Graziani
MENTIONED BY:	Carlotta Franco

On the road connecting Tirana airport to the city center, there is a series of curious buildings, including the bizarre petrol station designed by 51N4E. This eye-catching yellow and blue dome, displaying a structure reminiscent of Buckminster Fuller’s work, is an object generating a shady area, with almost religious ambitions, for the service space dedicated to the petrol pumps. The structure rests on three points: the corner of the steel and glass volume containing the shop and a small office; a narrow blue cylin-

der; and the pylon which also supports the Europetrol station sign. It is interesting to observe the authorial virtuosity of this petrol station, an architectural typology that today is mainly relegated to spare functionalism. This is certainly not the only case of an authorial take on functional architecture, but it is a good example because of its location in Albania, a country experiencing a period of profound renewal akin to the changes that occurred in western countries in the past.

Furthermore, this is not the only Tirana petrol station designed by the Belgian studio, which in fact in the same years also planned the Kastrati station characterized by its long projecting modernist canopy. 51N4E are also responsible for the renovation of Scanderbeg Square, the most important square in the city: a project that elegantly restructures the stratified and culturally lacerated space in the center of Tirana.



1. “All life on Earth consists of 82% plants, 13% bacteria, 5% animals (insects, fungi, fish and other species) and only 0.01% humans.” See Giacomo Talignani, “L'uomo rappresenta solo lo 0,01% di vita sulla Terra, ma ha già distrutto l'83% delle specie,” *la Repubblica* (May 22, 2018), www.repubblica.it/ambiente/2018/05/22/news/l_uomo_rappresenta_solo_lo_0_01_di_vita_sulla_terra_ma_ha_gia_distrutto_l_83_delle_specie-197067770/

2. See D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, *On Growth and Form – An Abridged Edition* by J.T. Bonner (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1961)

3. *Ibidem*, *passim*.

4. See Philip Steadman, *The Evolution of Designs: Biological Analogy in Architecture and the Applied Arts* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 1–22.

5. See Luigi Serafini, *Codex Seraphinianus* (Fontanellato: Franco Maria Ricci, 1981).

6. In fact, the *Codex Seraphinianus* is compared to the Voynich manuscript, a kind of illustrated encyclopedia dating to the 15th century that is still undeciphered today and described as the most mysterious book in the world. See Stephen Skinner, R.T. Prinke, R. Zandbergen, *The Voynich Manuscript: The World's Most Mysterious and Esoteric Codex* (ReadHowYouWant.com, Limited, 2017).

Animals are hunted, bred, revered, cared for, exterminated, protected, chosen as symbols of peace and treated like children in our homes; they are stylized in the form of company logos, and associated with stars to define the nature of those born at a certain time of year.

They are one of the main life forms on planet Earth, and their existence has developed through a close, multifaceted bond with humans (who are animals as well).

Human beings have always experienced this relationship by placing themselves in a position of power. In fact, the process of self-elevation as a dominant being has caused humans to alienate themselves from the great, profound, and complex ecosystem that is the Earth, recalibrating in their favor all forms of interaction with the remaining living beings which, numbers at hand, ultimately represent 99.9% of life on the planet.¹

In 2003, the Victoria & Albert Museum in London organized the exhibition *Zoomorphic: New Animal Architecture*, an international selection of architectures inspired by animal morphology and realized with new 3D modeling software.

According to curator Hugh Aldersey-Williams, at the root of the architecture-zoomorphism juxtaposition is the 1917 paper by the Scottish naturalist D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson entitled *On Growth and Form*,² considered one of the foundations of western naturalistic-scientific thought.

In the introduction³ the author writes that his intention was to closely relate mathematical definitions and physical laws to certain phenomena related to the organic growth, structure, and form of certain living beings, based on the assumption that an “organism as a whole” is a mechanical and natural complex.

On few occasions have projects merely offered a formal hint or a mimetic inspiration, with the risk of falling into a kind of poor animalistic postmodernism, but without any intention of recreating a living organism.

Architects are always on the verge of adopting a divinatory approach, forgetting

that it is the people, animals, and nature, often left on the sidelines, that make architecture come alive, and not the other way around. Indeed, by going so far beyond their models of inspiration architects risk delivering buildings that have nothing to do with their initial idea.

In 1979 Philip Steadman in fact affirmed that certainly an approach based on biological systems can help the study of architectural phenomena. Having said that, buildings in any case remain inactive physical objects and not organisms, and the relevance of biological studies on this subject can only be of an analogical or metaphorical nature, at the most.⁴

Between 1976 and 1978, the artist Luigi Serafini compiled an indecipherable artwork containing the biology, zoology, physics, technology and architecture studies mentioned by Philip Steadman. It is the *Codex Seraphinianus*.⁵ On the pages of what is the world’s most absurd encyclopedia,⁶ one encounters various illustrations of men from different tribes with their typical dwellings and dress. The first tribe depicted is truly peculiar (see page 117). A woman holds a child by the hand; they are both standing on the large flat leaves of a plant “similar to the Victoria amazónica waterlily” floating on some water. They are looking at a proto-stilt-house standing on trunks keeping it above water level; skins sewn together as walls and intertwined branches enclose the space. Nothing special, except that the woman and child are wearing the “classic costumes of the whale-tribe.”

Despite the entirely fantastic nature of Serafini’s artwork, it must be emphasized that unfortunately only a detachment from reality has allowed humans to be brought closer to animals, and not through architecture, but through the customs and clothing typical of these tribes. The whale people dress as marine animals, imitate their appearance with costumes made of natural materials, hunt with organic bait respectful of the ecosystem, and build their cities on the earth’s surface without causing any disturbance. Just as on the pages

of Serafini’s work, in the small municipality of Baratti in Tuscany there is a project that, without any ecological, sustainable, or innovative ambitions, manages to interact with nature in a sincere spirit.

We are talking about Casa Saldarini, a house designed in 1960 by the Tuscan architect Vittorio Giorgini and built in 1962, also known as the “dinosaur house” or “whale house” due to its imposing yet sinuous volumes. Vittorio Giorgini, who could be described as surrealist, is an architect whose work in Italy was and perhaps still is scarcely appreciated. A surrealist not only due to the formal characteristics of his works, but also because of his highly experimental technological approach, to the point of creating “quasi-architectures” rather than “works in progress,” instead of completed architectural works.

His “whale house,” only at a short distance from his equally fundamental project Casa Esagono (Hexagon House), is a combination of madness, inventiveness, imagination, biology, and respect. Because rather than calling it a zoomorphic work, which would be a somewhat obvious label, by Giorgini’s own definition, Casa Saldarini is a topological work,⁷ in the sense that it merges with the ground on which it stands in three points and is so thoroughly integrated with its surroundings that it can easily be mistaken for a rock in the middle of a clearing. The occasional tourists would certainly need a few moments to understand exactly what they are looking at.

On Tripadvisor, Francesca reviews this house as follows:

“A whale. During a relaxing and healthy walk in this wonderful gulf of Baratti, the scent of the wood populated by holm oaks and Mediterranean scrub . . .

until you come across a bizarre house . . . regenerating mind and spirit!!!”⁸

The outer cladding also evokes a cetacean due to the texture of the exposed concrete, recalling the encrustations that can be found on whales. In addition to its aesthetic quality, the surface is an essential aspect of the project as it was realized with a construction technique that was literally unknown in Italy at the time, with the cement being poured directly onto a pre-formed electro-welded mesh: a construction system Giorgini himself was not sure about. For this reason he proposed to his client that he would not be paid should the construction collapse. Saldarini replied that should things go wrong he would at most consider the fee as lost at the gaming table.⁹

Thanks to Saldarini’s intuition, Vittorio Giorgini was able to give vent to his creative flair, fashioning an architecture that even today “60 years after its realization” is hyper-contemporary and much needed as a symbol of the possibility of imagining new paths for architecture through a necessary reconnection with what we remove ourselves from: other animals and nature. It is obviously not the zoomorphic shape that gives the building its character. But neither does this become a pretext for making fake green architectures that “despite imitating nature in appearance and function” do nothing more than, paradoxically, deny its possibility of existence.

Anything created by humans can never be considered natural, in so far as this distinction may still make sense today; and what is even more certain is that zoomorphic architectures are in fact a new and more devious form of architecture in the image and likeness of human beings.

7. As mentioned by the current owner of the house Luca Sgorbini in an article with a video-documentary published in *la Repubblica* in 2019. See Valentina Ruggiu (ed.), “Edifici surreali in Italia, la ‘Casa Dinosaurio’ di Baratti: ‘Una grande opera di cultura,’” *la Repubblica* (December 2, 2019), video.repubblica.it/viaggi/edifici-surreali-in-italia-la-casa-dinosaurio-di-baratti-una-grande-opera-di-cultura/349252/3498333

8. www.tripadvisor.it/Attraction_Review-g1924980-d15151616-Reviews-Casa_Dinosaurio_Baratti-Baratti_Piombino_Province_of_Livorno_Tuscany.html

9. Episode mentioned by Francesca Oddo in *Abitare*, see Francesca Oddo, “L’Esperimento della balena,” *Abitare* (September 12, 2017), www.abitare.it/it/habitat/patrimonio-storico/2017/09/12/vittorio-giorgini-casa-toscana/ More about Vittorio Giorgini and Casa Balena in E. Piccardi, *La balena nel bosco. L’architettura di Vittorio Giorgini* (Busalla: Plug_in, 2017).

IMAGE CREDITS: Luigi Serafini; Franco Maria Ricci Editore

Unknown Architect, Bat House Built for an Anti-Anopheles-Mosquito Campaign, Arborea, Italy, 1935



COORDINATES:	39°46'21.94"N 18°34'52.64"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	demolished
PROJECT:	temporary structure
IMAGE CREDITS:	photograph by Mario Pes; Archivi di Architettura della Sardegna - Università di Cagliari
MENTIONED BY:	Paolo Sanjust

In the early 20th century in the United States, Texas physician Charles Campbell began experimenting new methods to eliminate mosquitoes, vectors of malaria, by using bats. The doctor personally invested in the construction of bat houses, studying a system that was named “Monument” and set up at the U.S. Experimental Farm near San Antonio. This first project proved unsuccessful. After years of research, he realized that bats prefer to roost near water, so in 1911 he built his second tower near Mitchell’s Lake, a low, swampy area where all the city’s sewage flowed to-

gether, creating a perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes. About a hundred bats flew in, but knowing that his tower could accommodate more, Campbell decided to set up an acoustic trap to attract further bats from abandoned ranches and hunting lodges. At the crack of dawn, when the bats were due to return to their nests Campbell stood nearby playing a recording of a loud cacophony of clarinets, piccolos, trombones, drums, and cymbals. The bats, with their sensitive hearing, flew away and found refuge and settled in the tower. In 1914, four years after the erection of the Mitchell

Lake construction, Campbell was unable to find a single case of malaria among the families living by the lake. News of his experiments spread quickly and every country, even Italy, began to call for the construction of the towers designed by Campbell. In Arborea, in the province of Oristano, one of these towers was built in 1935 as part of a large-scale land reclamation plan. From 1914 to 1929, 16 towers were erected around the world; to date, only two or three have survived and are located on private property.

Enzo Venturelli, Aquarium and Reptile Vivarium of Turin, Italy, 1957-60



COORDINATES:	45°03'58.2"N 7°42'21.3"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	existing, closed in 1987; in disrepair
PROJECT:	aquarium and reptile vivarium
IMAGE CREDITS:	Rettulario Torino; photographs by Angelo Morelli; courtesy of Ordine degli Architetti PPC di Torino
MENTIONED BY:	Davide Ganeo

Enzo Venturelli was born in Turin on September 14, 1910. When he was only 17 years old, he started to frequent engineer Arrigo Tedesco Rocca’s firm, and then worked with various Turin professionals, including architects Melis and Demunari. After graduating from Turin Polytechnic, Venturelli developed his own, highly personal architectural language, inspired not only by the modern architecture of Le Corbusier and Fuller’s utopias, but also by the avant-garde art that was developing in those years. These influences gave rise to what he called “nuclear age architecture” or even “atomic architecture,” later summarized in the *Manifesto dell’architettura nucle-*

are and in *Urbanistica spaziale*, presenting a utopian vision of urban planning. A utopian vision that he expressed in his early projects, including the Aquarium and Reptile Vivarium (1957–60) in the zoological garden on the right bank of the Po River, inside the Michelotti park. Venturelli translated this new idea of architecture into a building based on the concepts of volumetric dynamism, plastic interplay, and asymmetry. The building has a T-shaped floor plan and is structured on two floors: the aquarium floor is lowered by about two meters from the external ground level, while the reptile vivarium floor is raised by about two meters. Inside it

used to contain tropical tanks, exotic environments, and cases for reptiles of various species and sizes. The main façade of the building is 7 meters high and, with the upper edge of the cantilever roof sloping upwards, reaches a height of 9.5 meters. The façade is characterized by a continuous glazing, with anticorodal frames, bordered by rough gravel framing. Another fundamental element in the design of the exterior surfaces are the indentations with a sunshade function that seem to recall the shape of an animal tooth.

The aquarium and reptile vivarium was closed in 1987 and is now in a state of disrepair.



Giuseppe Pizzigoni, Dairy and Pigsties, Torre Pallavicina, Italy, 1960-64



COORDINATES:	45°26'29.8"N 9°52'38.3"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	good
PROJECT:	dairy with annexed pigsties
IMAGE CREDITS:	Attilio Pizzigoni; photograph by Roberto Conte
MENTIONED BY:	Roberto Conte

In the early 1960s, architect Giuseppe Pizzigoni was commissioned to design the dairy with adjoining pigsties for the Consorzio Cooperativa Produttori di Latte (Milk Producers Cooperative Consortium) in Torre Pallavicina. Pizzigoni skillfully combined his professional training with the demands of his agricultural clientele, far removed from any intellectual virtuosity. His structural proposition for the project,

which was accepted with confidence by the clients, was a thin, hyperbolic paraboloid vaulted roof. The two identical and symmetrical stables were realized by the architect in collaboration with engineer Venier, whose role was to support Pizzigoni during the construction works that were particularly challenging due to the complexity of the roofing solution. The architect actively participated in the definition of

the project, spending days on site observing and talking to the workers involved in the construction operations. Despite the complications that arose during the work, the building remains a notable example of avant-garde architecture, the result of Pizzigoni's combination of expertise and knowledge of the agricultural world, a world to which he had a very close connection since childhood.



Vittorio Giorgini, Casa Saldarini, Piombino, Italy, 1961-62



COORDINATES:	43°00'05.39"N 10°31'02"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	good state of preservation; the interiors have been altered by the new owners and no longer contain the original furnishings
PROJECT:	holiday home
IMAGE CREDITS:	Archivio Vittorio Giorgini, Camilla Messini, Giovanni Presutti
SEGNALATO DA	Piercarlo Quecchia, Davide Pretto, Sandro Saccuti, Emanuele Taviani

A student in Florence during the cultural ferment at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, Vittorio Giorgini was a leading figure on the city’s cultural scene after World War II. He was a notable personality who offered many stimulating teaching contributions to the students of the Faculty of Architecture in Florence in the 1960s, participating for a decade in teaching activities alongside Leonardo Savioli

and Giuseppe Gori. In 1960 he was commissioned by Salvatore Saldarini, a Como silk industrialist, to design his holiday home in Baratti, in the province of Livorno. Between 1962 and 1964, Giorgini realized a building for his open-minded client that the architect himself conceived as a “morpho-genetic living structure.” Casa Saldarini, which would later be renamed *La Balena* (The Whale) because of its

zoomorphic shape evocative of a cetacean, was also the result of years of study dedicated to new unconventional construction systems. The building is in fact one of the first examples of isoelastic membrane of mesh and cement, which Giorgini himself realized by actively working on the construction site.





Guy Rottier, Maison Évolutive Escargot, 1964-65; Maison en Terre Serpent, 1965-90



COORDINATES:	43°42′07″N 7°16′06″E
CURRENT CONDITION:	never built
PROJECT:	residential units
IMAGE CREDITS:	Archives Nice Côte d'Azur – Ville de Nice, fonds Guy Rottier.
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori

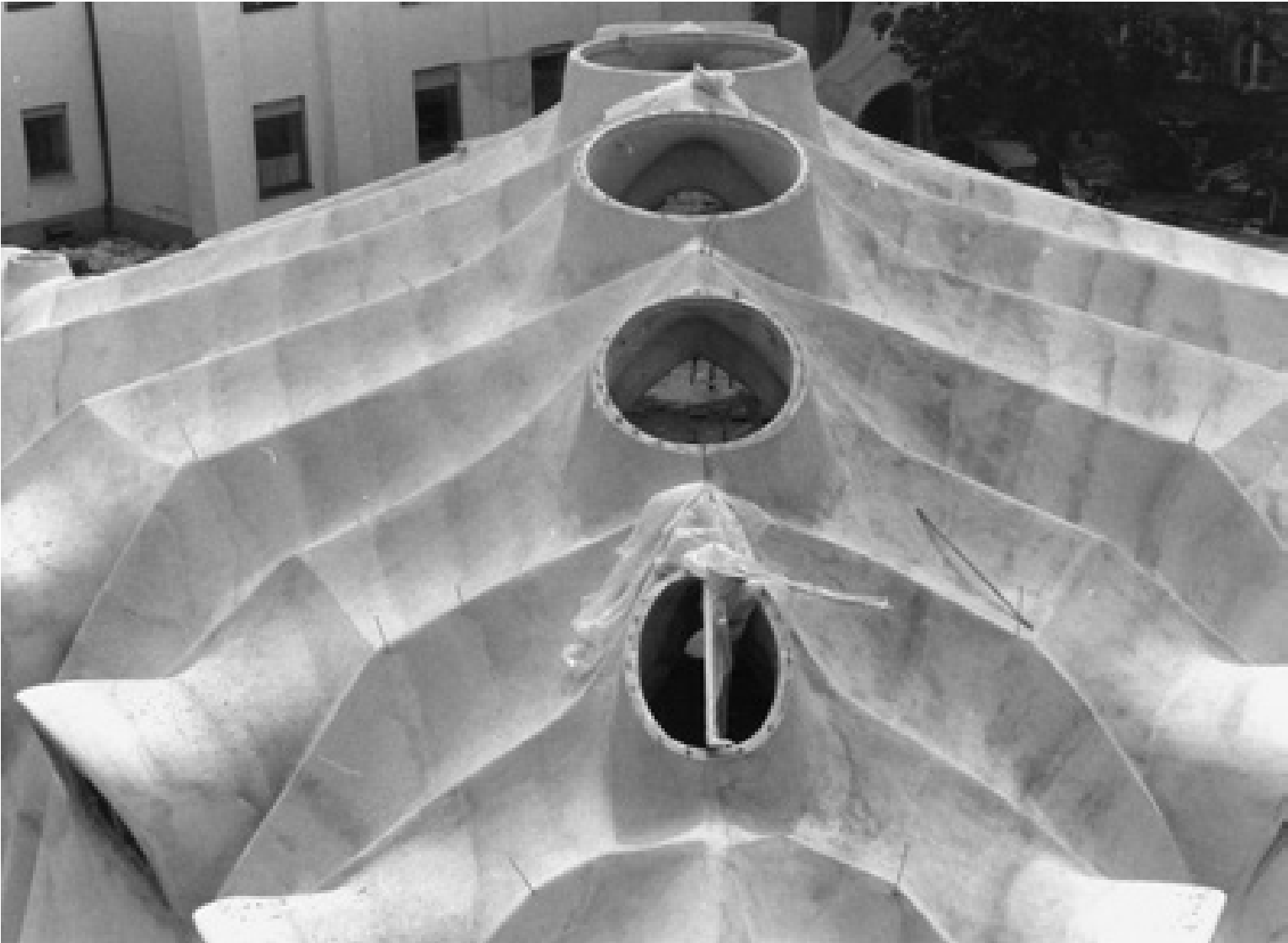
Between the 1960s and 1970s, Guy Rottier experimented with new architectural shapes for living spaces inspired by animals. The *Maison Évolutive Escargot* for instance was conceived as an ever-expanding house resembling a snail. Just as the snail grows inside its house (the shell), so too must humans experience domestic space with the same flexibility: when the family grows, so should the house. The *Maison Évolutive Escargot* featured a light and solid struc-

ture, two fundamental qualities, and its spiral shape allowed the building to open up onto the surrounding landscape. In this architecture inspired by nature, both archaic and modern, whose inhabitants' evolution participates in the shaping of the very living space, we find the intellectual and formal principles of Rottier's experimental and utopian architecture. The same principles he applied in *Maison en Terre Serpent*, a house in the shape of a coiled reptile and respond-

ing to every founding principle of modern architecture. Rottier's aim was to adapt domestic space to the real needs of its occupants, and each solution he designed was conceived as a flexible and constantly evolving home always drawing inspiration from natural and zoomorphic forms. Even in his snake-shaped house, the spiral structure could include further additional rooms as the family grew.



Günther Domenig with Volker Giencke, Multipurpose Building for a School, Graz, Austria, 1974-77

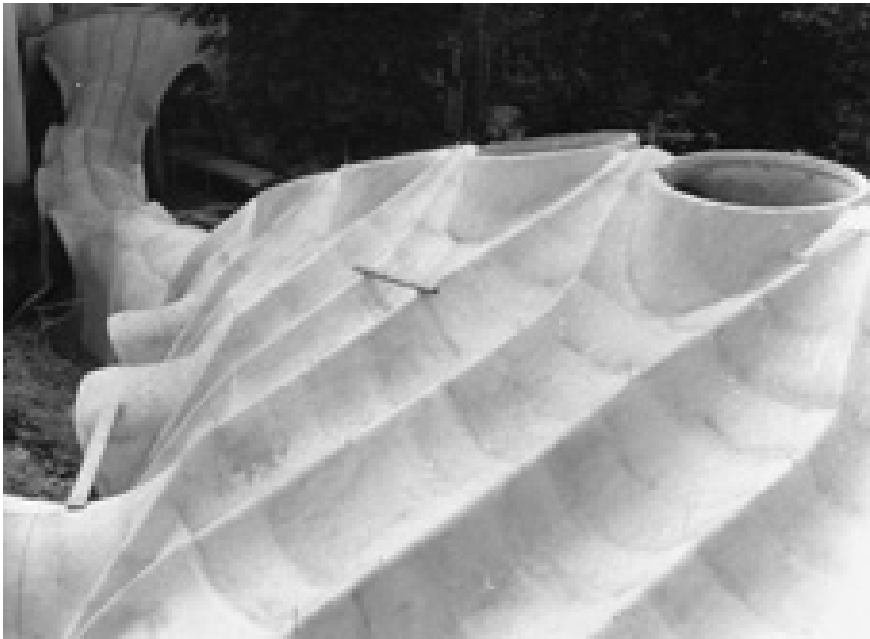


COORDINATES:	47°04'33.7"N 15°23'45.3"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	still in use and in good condition
PROJECT:	multipurpose building for a school
IMAGE CREDITS:	Atelier Giencke & Company

Günther Domenig’s entire production was characterized by a confident break with the traditional canons of modern architecture, moving towards a new interpretation of the discipline based not only on the study of a new style, often referred to as “organic mannerism,” but also on an introspective and psychological exploration of the personality and private sphere of the architect himself. A member of the then recently-founded Graz school in the 1960s, after an initial col-

laboration with Eilfried Huth, Domenig began working solo. He soon made a name for himself on the one hand for his systematic and obsessive search for anatomical and organic forms, and on the other, for designing architectures characterized by an unstable, precarious quality as if they were about to unexpectedly collapse. Between 1974 and 1977, with Volker Giencke and engineer Otto Thaller, Domenig designed a multipurpose building for a school run by nuns,

which housed a canteen, a lecture hall, and a theater. The team started from the idea of designing a far from anonymous shell: they realized a complex organism with a freely modeled surface whose making required the workers’ creative contribution from the very early stages of the project. The economical and lightweight structure of the multipurpose building was constructed with a wire mesh over which concrete was sprayed, without using formwork.



Ant Farm, Dolphin Embassy, Houston, Texas, 1974-78



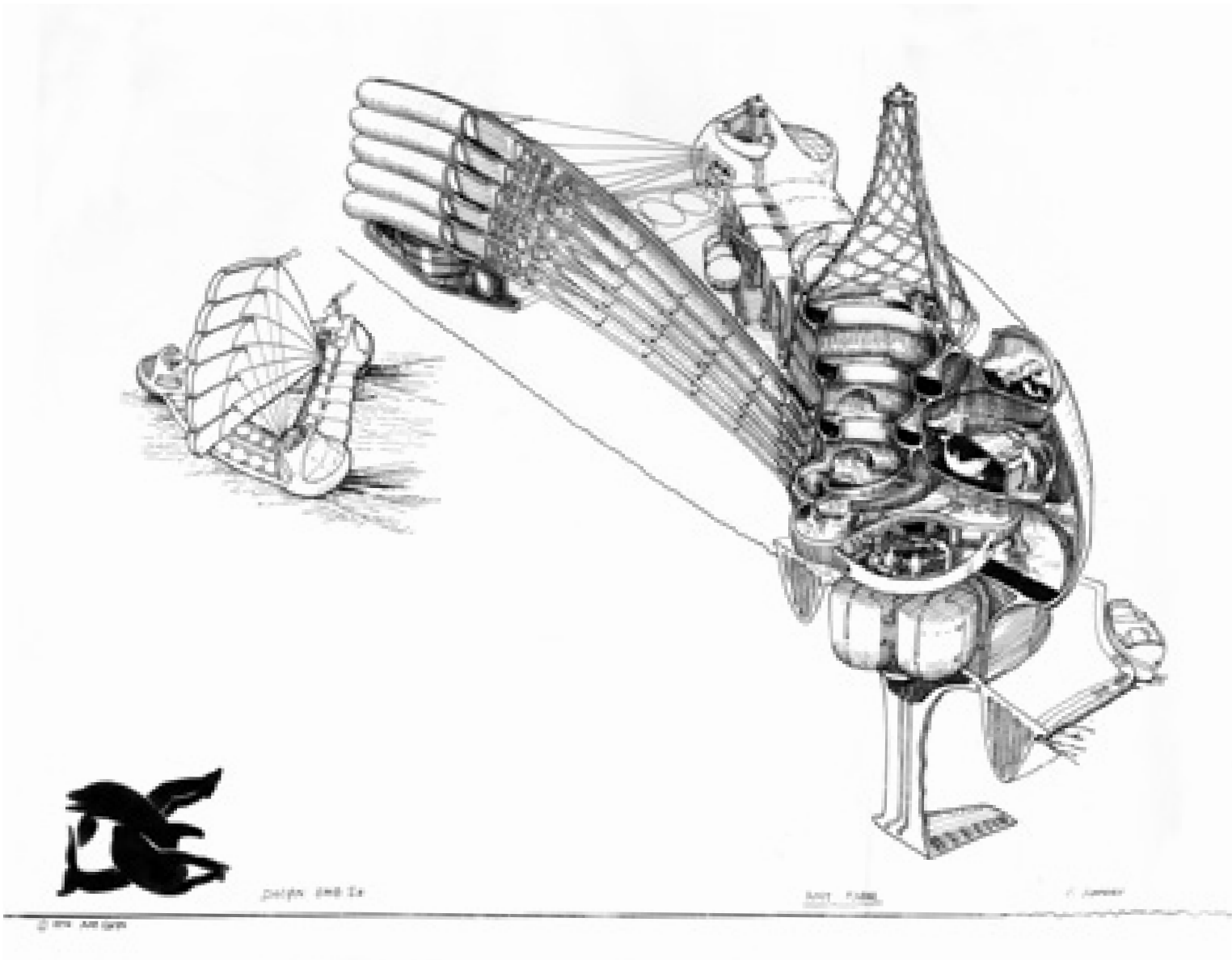
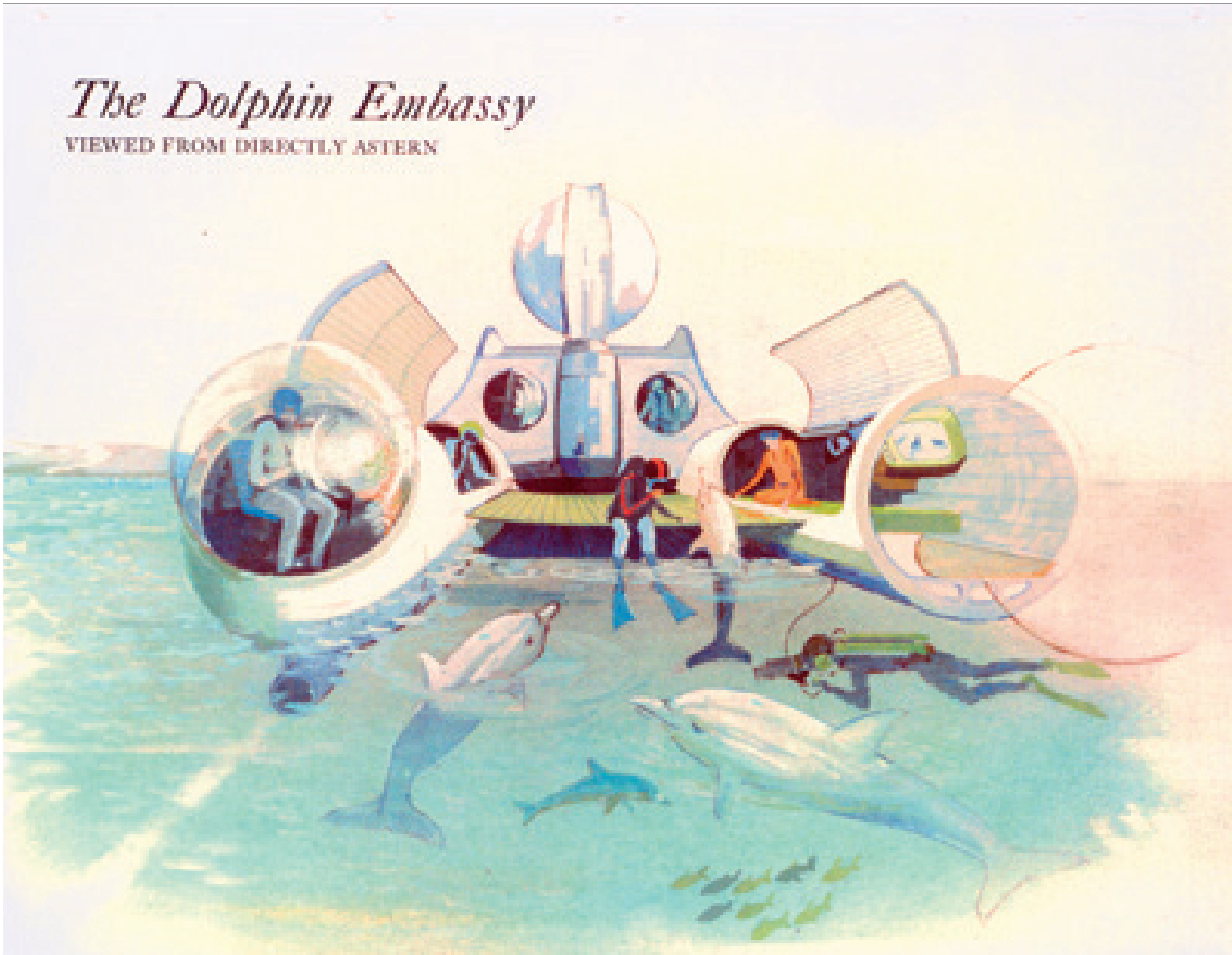
COORDINATES:	29°45'46"N 95°22'59"W
CURRENT CONDITION:	never built
PROJECT:	research center
IMAGE CREDITS:	Ant Farm Archive - Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA)
MENTIONED BY:	Emanuele Piccardo

Dolphin Embassy is a research center project designed by Ant Farm in which humans and dolphins could talk to each other. Designed by Curtis Schreier (a member of the group) but never built, the project was inspired by the theme of communication between animal and human species. This theme was central in those years, thanks in part to the television series *Flipper*. The structure was supposed to be in ferrocement and its construction system was inspired by ship-building; the structure was mobile and could be moved using sails and a

solar-powered motor. The drawings show the various configurations of the structure and its internal distribution system as conceived by Ant Farm. This floating maritime embassy was designed to encourage human-dolphin direct contact and dialogue, based on the idea of building the device integral to the dolphins' aquatic world. Equipped with underwater cameras, video recorders, monitors, and research and analysis set-ups, the Dolphin Embassy project was partly abandoned and then resumed in 1977 when Ant Farm re-

ceived new funding for dolphin communication research. That same year, Ant Farm had begun a tour of Australia called "Off-air Australia" that led to several appearances on talk shows, shows, and numerous television events about the Dolphin Embassy project. Doug Michels continued his research on communication with dolphins in Australia after the Ant Farm team broke up. The photo of Michels and the dolphin is part of a Dolphin Embassy advertising campaign and was taken in Australia in 1976.





Spatial Effects (Theo Botschuijver and Hannie van den Dop),
Postbank Lion, Various Locations, 2000



COORDINATES:	52°18'06.98"N 4°51'29"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	dismantled
PROJECT:	itinerant temporary pavilion
IMAGE CREDITS:	Theo Botschuijver, Spatial Effects
MENTIONED BY:	Debora Tintis

Spatial Effects is a studio that was founded in Amstelveen in the late 1990s by Theo Botschuijver and Hannie van den Dop. The duo stemmed from the previous experience of Theo Botschuijver and Jeffrey Shaw, who in 1967 had founded the Eventstructure Research Group, which pursued research on inflatable architecture and remained active until 1983. Specializing in inflatable architecture of all sizes and for all functions, over the years

the duo developed transdisciplinary projects combining design and architecture with performance art and technology. In their projects, the relationship with the viewers and the way they experienced these temporary structures was an integral part of the creative process. In fact, their practice was related to the world of entertainment and performance: from music concerts to festivals, from cultural events to temporary structures for

children. In 2000 they realized the Postbank Lion project, five blue inflatable architectural structures in the shape of a lion. These mobile structures, which were later moved to various locations in the Netherlands, served as exhibition and dance halls and were commissioned from Spatial Effects by the Dutch Postal Bank, in collaboration with BrandEvents.



1. See “Passi lunghi passi corti. Archigram: progetti 1973–1974,” *Casabella*, no. 398 (February 1975): 20–31.

2. Simon Sadler, *Archigram: Architecture without Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 126.

Forgotten Façade, Utopian Interiors
by Luca Marullo (Parasite 2.0)

As in any mystery story worthy of the name, it all began in a dark, cramped space with windows that had been closed for years and a stale-smelling interior. In a forgotten room of Catania’s Istituto Statale d’Arte, an art school in a baroque complex originally a monastery of the Benedictine order, I wandered around and moved desks and chairs to reach a half-open closet at the back of a classroom. I had never noticed this classroom walking along the building’s long, gray corridors. I felt like a child once again, exploring the abandoned ruins of my small peri-urban neighborhood. Among the many dusty, dampened volumes, what caught my attention was a thin magazine. It was an issue of *Casabella* from 1975, no. 398 to be exact, whose editor at the time was Alesandro Mendini.

On the cover, a piece of golden architecture, preserved under a shimmering glass case, rested on a monolithic stone pedestal with *vago ingombro* written on it. I decided to take it away with me, so I picked up the magazine and put it in my backpack. I still didn’t know what I was in for. That issue in fact featured the work of the British architectural group Archigram,¹ which was later to become one of my greatest points of reference.

Flashforward to the present, in the now legendary *Forgotten Architecture* Facebook group, I devoted myself to a column-like section entitled “Forgotten Façade.” The architectures under this heading are very different in terms of appearance, age, and scale, but all share one common characteristic: a fetishist and obsessive fascination with façade solutions. The selected photos of this section deliberately never included interiors, or whatever was behind those façades: only façades as an end in themselves, almost scenic elements dividing the backstage from the frontstage. Of the many architectural images I shared, one certainly stands out due to the high number of reactions and comments expressing the incredible distress and anger it elicited: the photo of a municipal gym designed by architect Massimiliano Fuksas and little-known

even among professionals. The project I believe is emblematic of the ideas and concepts underpinning #forgottenfaçade. Pictures of its interiors seem impossible to find. The visual impact of this façade is so strong that it obscures everything else. We know absolutely nothing about the building and paradoxically its interiors may not even exist. A second aspect of this project is that the building remained abandoned for years, was then squatted and eventually evacuated. Plans were also made to demolish and then to salvage it. It is such a forgotten architecture that we cannot work out what has become of it. Fuksas’ *Gymnasium* attracted plenty of often extremely superficial criticism and comments. Here a list of my favorites: “Oblivion,” “Pointless virtuosity,” “To commit a crime is not as hard as to hide its traces,” “Horrible!!!,” “Architecture to forget,” “The true Fuksas. Then he grew up and hired good collaborators,” “More for the Architerror page than for the *Forgotten Architecture* page,” “TNT, Eco-monster architecture . . . Indeed just *monster, forgotten monster* even better!,” and so on . . .

The day I found that issue of *Casabella*, my passion for façades was born. That issue contained pictures of the *Suburban Set* project designed by Ron and Andrew Erron in 1974, whose ironic pop energy was disruptive: boring Victorian-style houses, with the same façade repeated endlessly, created a continuous street-front setting. We can imagine the same stories inside, but façades are just a mask. The focus flips, the interiors correspond to our innermost desire that we carefully hide, that we may be ashamed of, our most profane perversion. As Simon Sadler states in *Archigram: Architecture without Architecture*, in describing the urban and social context in which the London group moved: “The Western middle class had consolidated itself, geographically and ideologically, within choice urban and suburban residences, close to centers of production and information.”² *Suburban Set* seems to want to show what lies behind the puritanical mask of the mid-

dle class and the façades of their iconic houses. Brightly colored interiors telling of transgressions, are enlivened by aircraft components, shiny plastics, reflective surfaces, futuristic capsules, more reminiscent of the discos of their radical Italian cousins than of interiors where afternoon tea is served at five o'clock. In Gregg Araki's *Doom Generation*—a cult movie for the generation that was young in the 1990s and that is part of the trilogy titled *Teenage Apocalypse*—we delve into the connections between human interiority/architectural and external image/façade. The various characters' personalities, their inner being, are hidden behind an image constructed for the outside, made up of clothing items and accessories. Behind façades that are not even shown to us, each character has built an image of his or her deepest desires within his or her bedroom. In the depths of the most private space, where we hide our secrets under a bed or in a chest of drawers, we visualize a reality in our likeness. Façades, like stage sets, hide forgotten interior architectures where we can build our own worlds. Façades like masks, protecting us from the outside and allowing us to be what we really want to be. Interiors in which to move à *rebours*, like Jean Floressas Des Esseintes,³ the sole heir of a wealthy family in late 19th-century Paris who, having fallen into a neurosis-like condition due to boredom with society life, decided to take refuge in a *Forgotten Architecture* family property behind the façade of his parents' old country villa. Inside that property, Des Esseintes severs his relationships with the outside world by creating a world of his own. A forgotten architecture becomes a desert to be filled with his imagination, in which he can satisfy all his desires and impulses. Huysmans, author of the novel about the young Parisian, amply describes every detail of the interior, every car, animal, and stylistic detail with which the protagonist brings his own micro-world to life. A forgotten architecture in which a dining room echoes the interiors of a ship with an immense aquari-

um inhabited by mechanical fish and diamond turtles matching the wallpaper and stucco colors. Des Esseintes gave birth to his *Renotopia*,⁴ the only possibility in a world where utopia has died, becoming smaller, residing within the only place where we still have the possibility to take action: our interiors, protected by façades that hide us, showing our clean face to the outside. In his essay *Renotopia*, Mckenzie Wark writes:

“Once upon a time, people aspired to build, if not brave new worlds, then at least pretty cock-sure ones. The scale at which things could be remade included whole societies, if not planets. But somewhere toward the end of the last century, such confidence was lost. Not even art has such ambitions. Design at least promises that private worlds can be brought up to speed, with some new appliances and finishes. Welcome to renotopia, where home renovation replaces the making of new worlds. [...] Utopia is alive and well; it's just gotten very small. The utopian art of our time is the kitchen or bathroom renovation—renotopia.”⁵

If we go back to Fuksas' Gymnasium, we easily notice that at the top of my list of favorite comments is perhaps one of the most common remarks encountered within the *Forgotten Architecture* community, the timeless “All the better if forgotten.” We could choose this reaction as the mantra of the group: all the better if forgotten; More forgotten spaces, banned from magazines, banned from maps and archives, off the radar. Radical islands and deserts where you can hide behind forgotten building façades. Façades as means of representation, as opposed to interiors in which to give life to one's utopia, a *Renotopia*. Looking at forgotten architectures as spaces for possible worlds, experiments in collective escapes, spaces where one day we will need to rethink ourselves. The forgotten and abandoned dimensions as ground zeros, a desert of new possibilities. More *Forgotten Architecture*, for our hidden dreams and less glossy-cover architecture, inaccessible to us mere mortals.

3. The reference is to *Against Nature (À Rebours)* by Joris-Karl Huysmans, published in 1884. See Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Against Nature (À Rebours)* (London: Penguin Books, 2009).

4. *Renotopia* is a term coined by Australian sociologist MacKenzie Wark, first used in 2015 during a talk at the Triennial Surround Audience at the New Museum in New York. Further on this subject at www.newmuseum.org/calendar/view/465/dis-whet-talks-mckenzie-wark-on-renotopia

5. MacKenzie Wark, *DIS Whet Talks: McKenzie Wark on “Renotopia,”* New Museum, New York, September 5, 2015.

Iginio Cappai and Pietro Mainardis, Casa Gialla, Mira, Italy, 1967-69



COORDINATES:	45°26'02.9"N 12°07'22.5"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	good
PROJECT:	multipurpose building
IMAGE CREDITS:	Paolo Mazzo
MENTIONED BY:	Paolo Mazzo, Nicola Zanardo

Architects Iginio Cappai and Pietro Mainardis are best known for designing the Olivetti Residential Center in Ivrea between 1967 and 1975. The Casa Gialla (Yellow House), their first work, can be read as a manifesto announcing the principles of their future productions; it is an all-yellow residential machine resembling a submarine, with a powerful presence in the urban fabric of the municipality of

Mira. The goal of the project was not only to propose a revolutionary architectural solution in terms of form and structure, but also to design a building that would define the urban destiny of the entire block (18 years later, in fact, Cappai and Mainardis were also commissioned Mira's post office). Paint covers all surfaces—concrete, wood, and iron areas—lending the multipurpose building a monolithic,

pop appearance. The commercial spaces on the ground floor (bar, stores, a supermarket) are brought into direct relationship with the exterior through ingenious architectural solutions such as the curved shutters and the arching of the public ground outside, or even the bow-window and porch on the main elevation facing the small square.



Superstudio, Osteria del Contadino, Montale–Agliaana, Italy, 1968



COORDINATES:	43°54'12.5"N 11°01'21.4"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	existing, partly modified
PROJECT:	renovation of a farmhouse
IMAGE CREDITS:	Luca Attilio Caizzi
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori

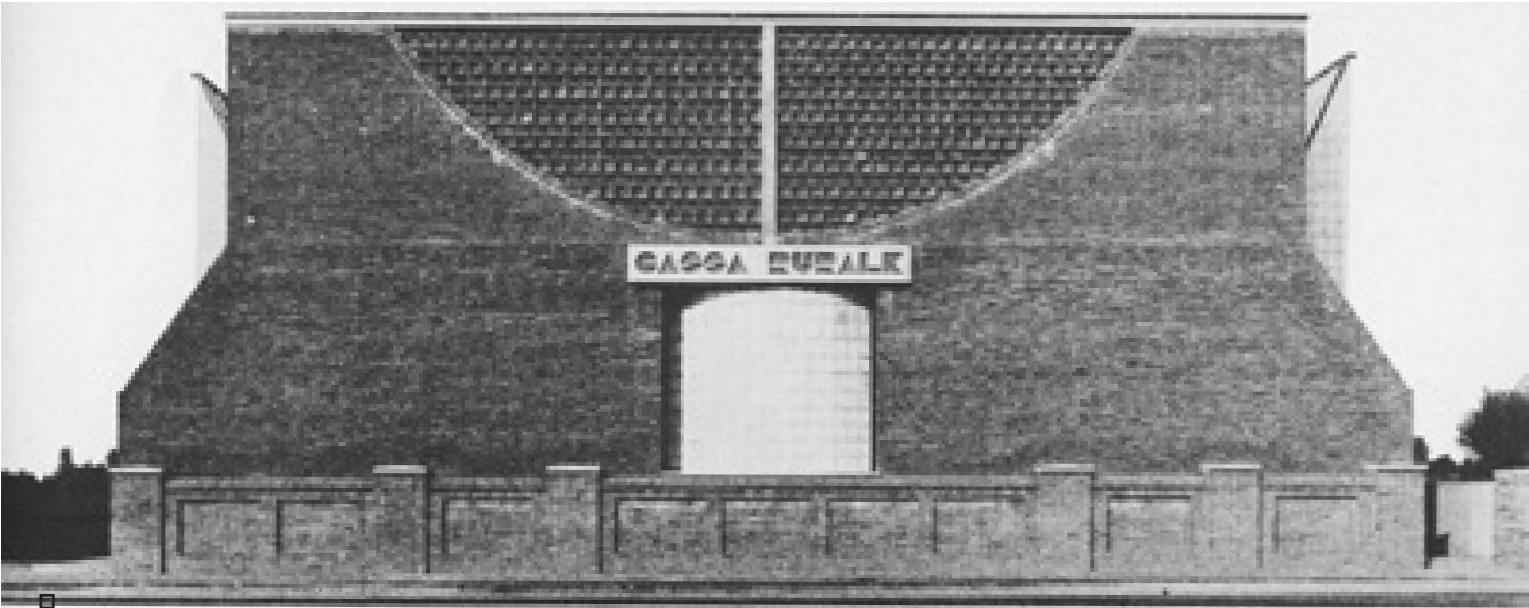
In 1968 the Superstudio group, formed two years earlier with the *Superarchitettura* exhibition at the Jolly 2 gallery in Pistoia (1966), was commissioned to repurpose a farmhouse in disrepair into a country tavern. The young architects opted for a color palette evoking the colors of grass,

clouds, and sky, covered the interior and exterior surfaces with blue and white ceramics, and painted the shutters green. The tavern also became the main go-to establishment for the employees of the Poltronova company just across the street. The façade became a “façade-sign,” a visual and

urban landmark with a large, distinctive font, which can be read as in relation to what was happening in those same years in America, where Robert Venturi was applying a pop art methodology to architecture, which later led him to write the book *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972).



Adriano Campioni, Leonardo Rampazzi, and Marcello Melani, Cassa Rurale, Monselice, 1972

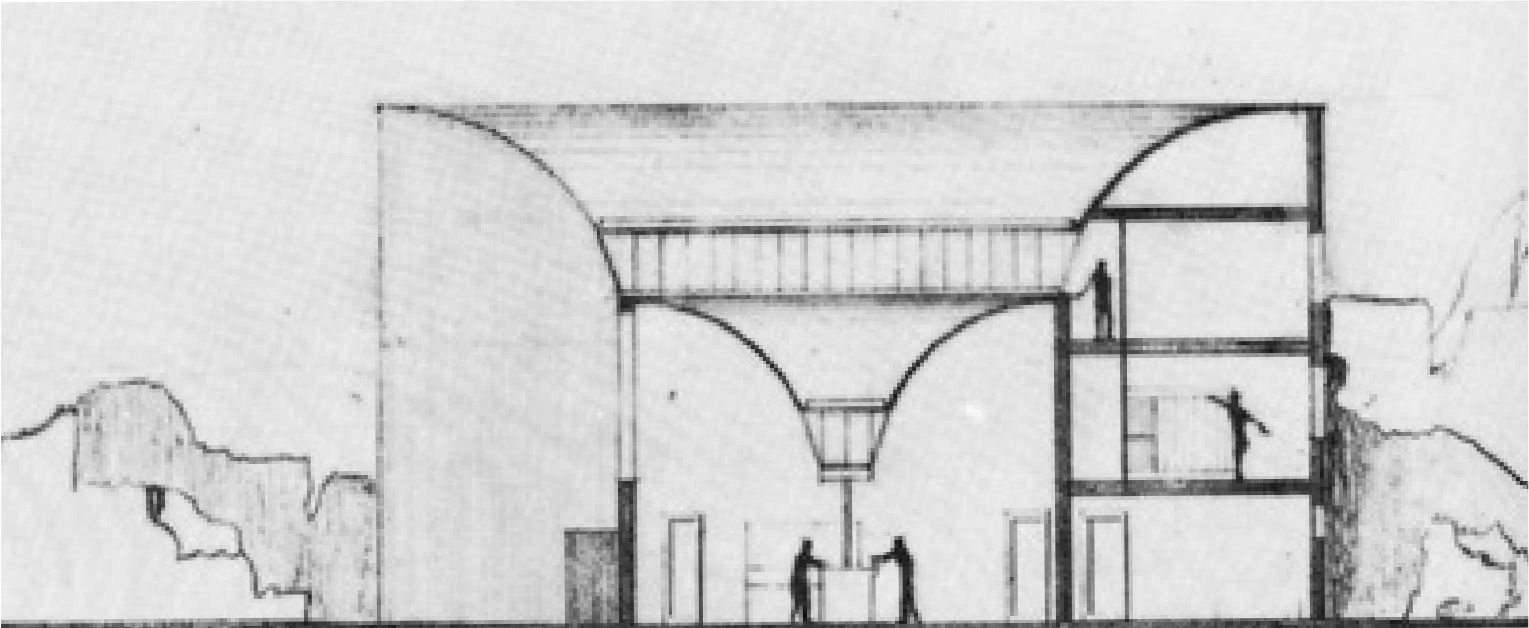


In the early 1970s, Campioni, Rampazzi, and Melani converted a former agricultural center into the headquarters of a banking institution located between the towns of Monselice and Este, with two houses on the upper floor. The three architects created a building characterized by a well thought-out façade combining various architectural styles in a coherent

yet contrasting design. A certain level of mannerism may be detected, with stylistic echoes of Adolf Loos, Robert Venturi, and James Stirling. The designers conscientiously referenced details and materials drawn from architectural history, reinterpreting them with an “anti-revival and basically ironic” slant.¹ A small brick enclosure wall used as the base of the building itself

is all that remains of the pre-existing structure; the other distinguishing elements are the entrance portals opening onto the street. The façade, in line with the street curtain, is the portion where we find the greatest points of contact with Venturi’s architectural philosophy, by which Campioni, Rampazzi and Melani were explicitly inspired.

1. “Emergenza stabile per un paesaggio in trasformazione. Sede di un istituto bancario tra Monselice e Este,” *Casabella*, no. 367 (July 1972): 9.



COORDINATES:	45°14'21.4"N 11°45'12.7"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	existing, with modified façade and expanded
PROJECT:	bank headquarters
IMAGE CREDITS:	photographs by Franco Raggi, published in “Emergenza stabile per un paesaggio in trasformazione. Sede di un istituto bancario tra Monselice e Este,” <i>Casabella</i> , no. 367 (July 1972): 9–15.
MENTIONED BY:	Annalisa Di Carlo, Nicolò Cucato

Taft Architects, Hendley Building, Galveston, Texas, 1977



COORDINATES:	29°18'28.1"N 94°47'27.7"W
CURRENT CONDITION:	good
PROJECT:	repurposing and renovation of a 19th-century building
IMAGE CREDITS:	Taft Architects
MENTIONED BY:	Luca Marullo

In 1972 John J. Casbarian, Danny Samuels and Robert H. Timme founded Taft Architects in Houston, Texas. As they wrote in September 1980 in an article published in issue no. 609 of *Domus*, these young architects rejected any form of visionary or utopian architecture, and moved towards aesthetics and design tied to the environment and economic principles. “Our approach to design,” affirmed the Taft architects, “is based on an examination of spatial needs and requirements, on careful observation of the surrounding environment considered in the reality of its merits and flaws; in a nutshell, our motto might

be: learn from the context!”¹ The key principles of their architecture were applied in the design of the Hendley Building, an 1860s structure salvage and reuse project; located in Galveston, Texas, the Hendley Building is one of the oldest commercial buildings on the Strand. The system of this Victorian building row consists of brick load-bearing walls and a heavy timber frame with granite columns and decorative quoins. Taft Architects converted the Hendley Building into offices, workrooms, storage and exhibition areas for the Galveston Historical Foundation, adding modern services, such as heating and

cooling ventilation systems, plumbing and electrical systems, and an additional fire exit staircase requested by the developer, without compromising the historic character of the property. The new building was constructed with a steel frame clad in cementitious plaster, with integrated vinyl glaze and clay tiles in a system that reflects the colors of the two adjacent buildings, the Hendley to the east and the Ice House to the north. The floors are checkerboard steel plate; the interior finishes of the existing building have been retained and restored to their original state.

1. “Sindrome texana,” *Domus*, no. 609 (September 1980), 12.



DMJM (Phillip Daniel, Arthur Mann, S. Kenneth Johnson, and Irvan Mendenhall) and Anthony J. Lumsden, Roybal Comprehensive Health Center, Los Angeles, California, 1979



COORDINATES:	34°02'02.5"N 118°09'40.9"W
CURRENT CONDITION:	good
PROJECT:	healthcare complex
IMAGE CREDITS:	Phil Donohue
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori

The Roybal Comprehensive Health Center opened in December 1979 to provide the East Los Angeles community with the primary care and assistance services needed to ensure a good quality of life. The project was designed by Phillip Daniel, Arthur Mann, S. Kenneth Johnson, and Irvan Mendenhall (DMJM), one of the first combined architectural and engineering firms of the Western United

States. Founded in 1946, DMJM was born at a time of prosperity for American architects; the firm grew rapidly to become one of the largest in Southern California in the 1960s, with 14 offices throughout the United States. Also in the 1960s, the DMJM group was joined by well-known architects César Pelli and Anthony Lumsden, taking the firm to the highest levels of experimentation. The

health complex was dedicated to Edward R. Roybal, a longtime public servant who represented the Ninth District on the Los Angeles City Council and was also a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. The Edward R. Roybal Comprehensive Health Center is also known as “La Clinica de Colores” for its beautiful exterior with brilliant rainbow colors.





Massimiliano Fuksas, Gymnasium, Paliano, Italy, 1979-85



COORDINATES:	41°48'36.9"N 13°02'55.2"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	mediocre-degraded
PROJECT:	municipal gym
IMAGE CREDITS:	Flavia Rossi
MENTIONED BY:	Luca Marullo

In 1979 in Paliano, in the province of Frosinone, Massimiliano Fuksas designed what is considered the first work with which the architect established himself on the national and international architectural scene. The Gymnasium, completed in 1985, still

dominates the Sacco Valley. The reinforced concrete building is characterized by the distinctive façade design, sloping and detached from the rest of the edifice; this second skin of the main elevation is meant to represent a precarious condition. Behind the sim-

ple design of a hovering façade lies a social message: the Gymnasium is in fact a tribute to the 1968 generation of which Fuksas himself was a member, a generation that was as much a victim of an unstable political and economic system as the façade itself.



Ico Parisi, Bobadilla Multipurpose Building, Dalmine, Italy, 1989-92



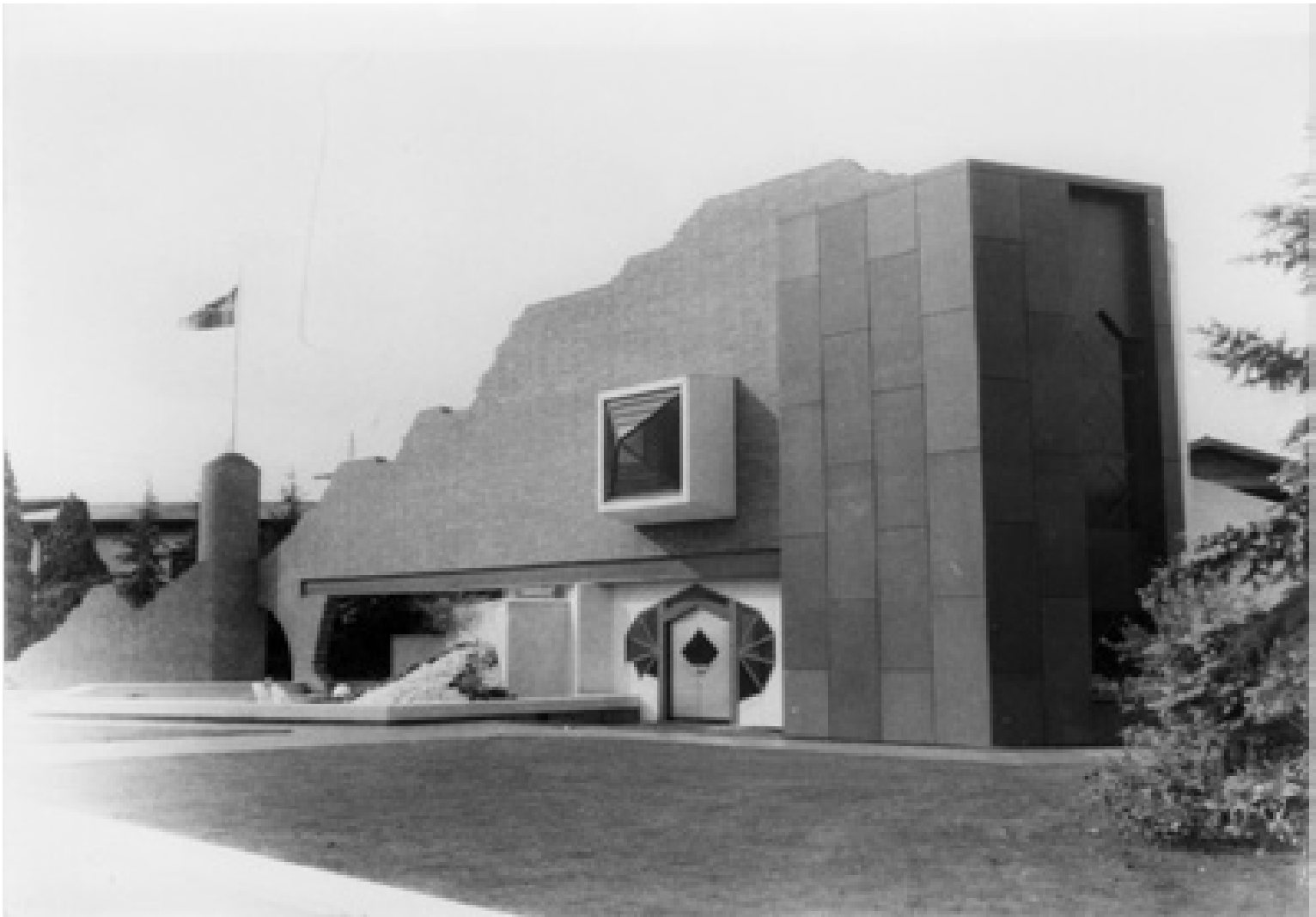
COORDINATES:	45°38'46.9"N 9°35'09.8"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	good
PROJECT:	multipurpose building
IMAGE CREDITS:	photographs by Ico Parisi; courtesy of Archivio Design Ico Parisi
MENTIONED BY:	Michele Taglialegne

Ico Parisi was born in Palermo on September 23, 1916. In 1925 he moved to Como with his family, where he graduated as a building expert in 1936. After finishing his studies, he worked as an apprentice in Terragni’s firm, which allowed him to become acquainted with the milieu of Italian architecture: Cattaneo, Lingeri, Radice, Rho, Bontempelli, Bardi, Persico, Ciliberti and Sartoris. In 1947 he married Luisa, and the

following year they opened La Ruota, an interdisciplinary studio that worked on interior design projects as much as museum installations, exhibitions, and art projects. Architect, designer but also art director, photographer, filmmaker, and painter, like many other prominent figures of the 20th century, his work was long forgotten. The Bobadilla multipurpose building in Dalmine, in the province of Bergamo, is one of Pa-

risi’s last works before his death in 1996. Designed in collaboration with Angelo Cassi and Giuseppe Cattaneo, as Roberta Lietti wrote in the catalog she edited, it is a “multipurpose building realized in architectural terms exploring the theme of the oxymoron, one dear to Parisi, and of ‘edifying collapse,’ that is, the birth of a new building from an architecture in a state of disrepair.”¹

1. Roberta Lietti (ed.), *Ico Parisi. Design. Catalogo ragionato 1936-1960* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2017).



1. Beatriz Colomina, “Learning from Global Tools,” in Valerio Borghonovo, Silvia Franceschini (eds.), *Global Tools 1973–1975: When Education Coincides With Life* (Rome: NERO, 2018), 4.

2. *Ibidem*.

3. Germano Celant, “Critica come evento,” *Casabella*, no. 330 (November 1968): 54.

4. *Ibidem*, 55.

5. “Everything is architecture.” More on this subject in Hans Hollein, “Alles ist Architektur,” *Bau. Schrift für Architektur und Städtebau*, nos. 1-2, 1968, *passim*.

Most people who follow the *Forgotten Architecture* group are interested in the houses designed between the 1960s and 1970s. In particular, they are fascinated by the ways of living pioneered in Europe and America by the protagonists of that new architecture later described as “visionary,” “fantastic,” and “radical.” We can ask ourselves—and it is legitimate to do so—why there is so much interest in this period today. As architectural critic and historian Beatriz Colomina stated,¹ there can be many explanations. One can interpret this return as a nostalgic revival of the “long-gone rebellious years”² or think of that period as a model to be emulated in the present, now that a reinterpretation of the architect’s role in society appears necessary. In this historical moment, characterized by deep-seated political, social, economic, and cultural fragilities, we like to reconsider the thinking that emerged in those years to identify its points of contact with our present, since today more than ever we are called upon to rethink the way of practicing architecture in all its forms. In this sense, it is essential to reconnect with the cognitive processes and symbolic values of that visionary architecture that denounced the invasion of consumer society, broke free from the traditional representations of the discipline (plan, section, axonometry), and placed at the center of the architectural discourse the exaltation of the fantastic and ideological aspects of a design practice.

Today’s cultural situation is not that different from the one described by critic Germano Celant in 1967 in *Casabella*: “[...] the artist, the critic and the architect are aware that they lack any agency on reality [...] Wielding our culture, we continue to bind our practice to the mere reading of various linguistic messages, never declaring a need to be part of reality; we wearily aspire to live reflexively and avoid facts, to extricate ourselves from any serious situation that may have a serious solution . . . Hence our sense of displacement and loneliness, the need for a commitment whose boundaries we cannot establish,

the closed circle of our never-contemporary gestures continually relegated to the slow sedimentation of reality.”³ The critic identifies “the desire to reclaim ‘ordinary everyday life’” as the generating element of the new trends that have emerged in the world of art and architecture. Just as architects and artists in the 1960s were engaged in reconstructing the relationship between art, architecture, and life, today we must adopt a critical attitude and believe in the “highest morality of one’s practice and actions.”⁴ In this sense, the reinstatement of the relationship between architecture and life is not only about a politicized view of the discipline, but rather a totalizing view of it (*Alles ist Architektur*,⁵ as Hans Hollein proclaimed in 1967).

The new architecture of the 1960s and 1970s also led to a radical revision of the living space. Indeed, the design approach of these architects was informed by a critique of the principles of modern domestic architecture, from which they attempted to move away by promoting new spatial concepts that transcended the functionalist limits of rationalism towards an architecture that placed the human being, understood as a combination of body and soul, at the center of its research. If the focus of the architectural discourse returns to life and everyday living, the feelings and emotions of those living in that space are key. So in those years, Europe and the United States witnessed a whole range of experiments in the field of domestic living that no longer responded to a traditional view of architecture, but instead began to think of domestic space as a space of life (be it a hut, an interior design project, a villa or an inflatable structure). Decades of design experimentation followed, not only in terms of form and construction but also of content. The intersections between architecture and other disciplines (art in particular, but also anthropology, sociology, philosophy), between utopian and dystopian visions of living and of reconciliation between design experience and living experience were highly appreciated. So, while in Italy Superstudio and Archizoom tran-

scended the building and city dimensions to imagine fantastic visions of landscape occupation (*Monumento Continuo*, 1969; *Fotomontaggi Urbani*, 1969), in the United States, Ant Farm inhabited inflatable nomadic structures, vans, ferrocement houses inspired by space missions (*Infla-tocookbook*, 1970; Media Van, 1971; House of the Century, 1971–73). While Guy Rottier in France designed holiday homes to be burned down after use (City of Leisure, 1968), in Sweden Andrejs Legzdīņš devised cheap, easy-to-transport housing solutions in which a young family could live and project themselves into the future (House of the Future, 1973). Giuseppe Perugini, Uga De Plaisant and Raynaldo Perugini in Fregene proposed a contemporary reinterpretation of the classic family housing typology (Casa Albero, 1968), and in Milan “a few years later” Salvati and Tresoldi designed houses as spaces of freedom, stages open to the spectacle of daily living (House in Lissone, 1981).

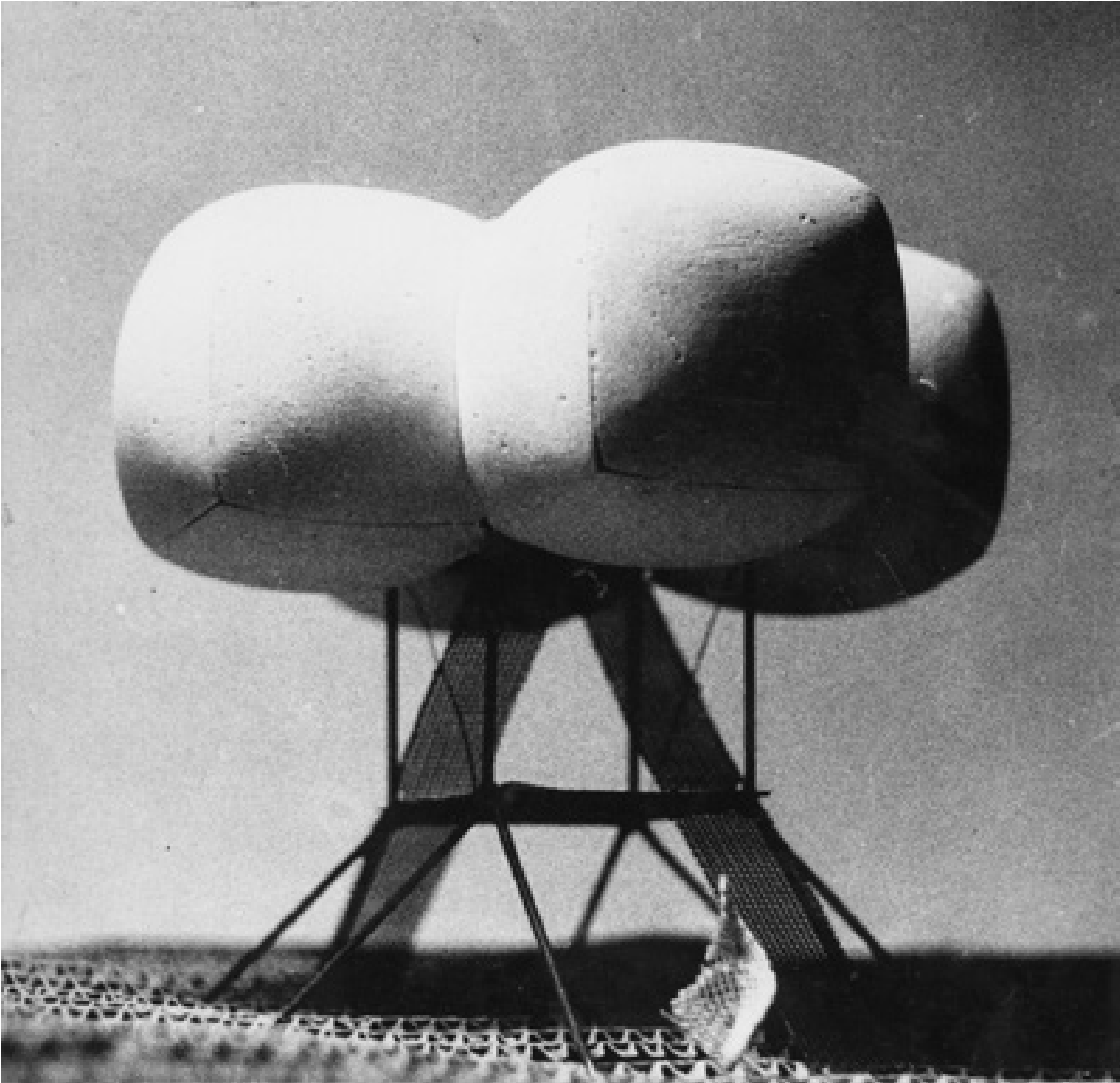
A manifesto text that best represents this new reconciliation of architecture and living was written by Ettore Sottsass Jr. in May 1965. Sottsass and 15 other Italian architects were asked to create furnishings representing “Italian living” for the exhibition *La Casa Abitata* at Palazzo Strozzi. While his colleagues made living areas, studios, and living rooms, Sottsass designed a bedroom and wrote the following text:

“Love, the idea of making love, this theme, should be the center of life, and life should be built around love, and the symbols that in contemporary society are organized around

power, force, conceit, rapacity, money, violence, should be organized, in my opinion, around true love. If only people were to think more about love, without vulgarity and obscenity, if people were to think about it more seriously, with happiness, certainly they would not have the time to do those crazy things that are being done in Vietnam or in Congo for example, or anywhere else; those macabre senseless actions that always have been and will be perpetrated in the prisons of America and those of Russia and in every prison or war or massacre or anywhere where there is violence . . . So I thought I would make a bedroom, and this thought for me is much less peregrine than it may seem: it is a much more serious and ‘social’ proposal as we say nowadays, than it may seem, directed as it is at trying to find salvation through love, inactivity, idleness, silence, and meditation rather than by the destructive and poisonous narrative of affluence. Of course, everyone will make fun of me and everyone will tell me that it is much more important to design a bathroom or a kitchen than a bedroom, and everyone will tell me that it is far more important to decide where to put the washing machine or the television and even more important to decide how many square meters or rather square centimeters it takes for the dishwashing machine to fit, an appliance that has not quite arrived in Italy, but soon will. Some will say, teasing me, that it is far more important to have money in the bank, a Jaguar, and a nice granite mausoleum at the cemetery. They will tell me these things that I hear every day, and when they tell me these things, I already know that another War is about to begin.”⁶

6. Ettore Sottsass Jr, “Una camera da letto,” *Domus*, no. 426 (May 1965): 54.

Gernot Nalbach, Low-cost House (Pneumatic House), Vienna, Austria, 1961-62

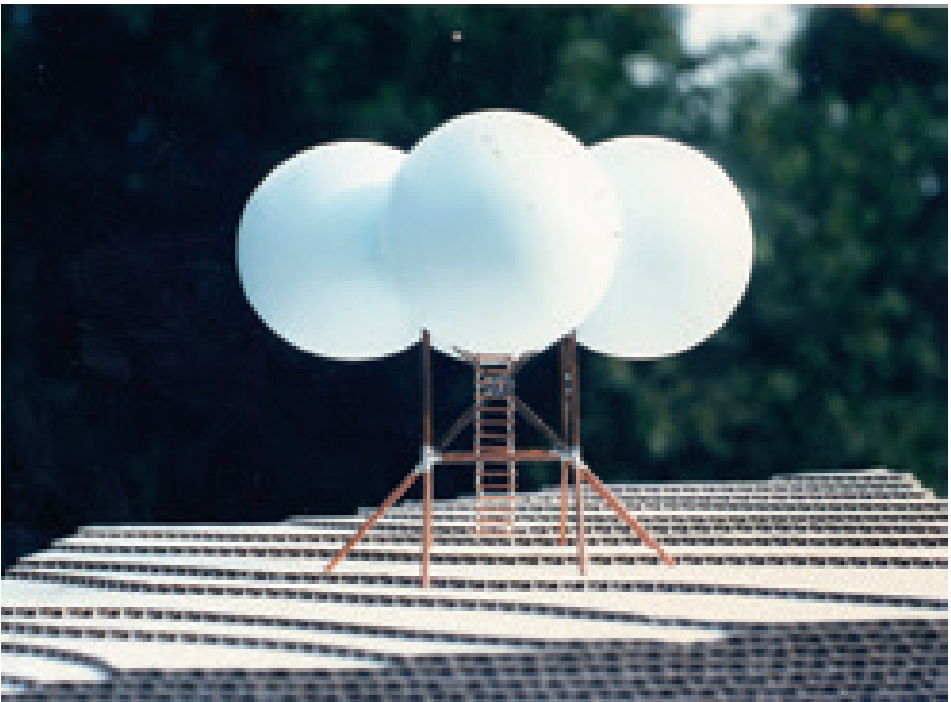


COORDINATES:	48°12'30"N 16°22'21"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	never built
PROJECT:	living unit
IMAGE CREDITS:	Archiv Gernot und Johanne Nalbach
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori

In 1963 Nalbach was among the first in Europe to experiment pneumatic-structure architecture, designing this inexpensive, quick-to-assemble house that could be set up any time. This new

way of understanding the living space sprang from a generational need to counter the spread of concrete buildings in the city and move towards a mobile and nomadic understanding of

modern living. This house with no foundations, is made of prefabricated and industrial elements such as scaffolding, construction-site toilets, roller blinds, and air mattresses.



Guy Rottier, Maison de Vacances Volante (Flying Holiday House), 1963-64

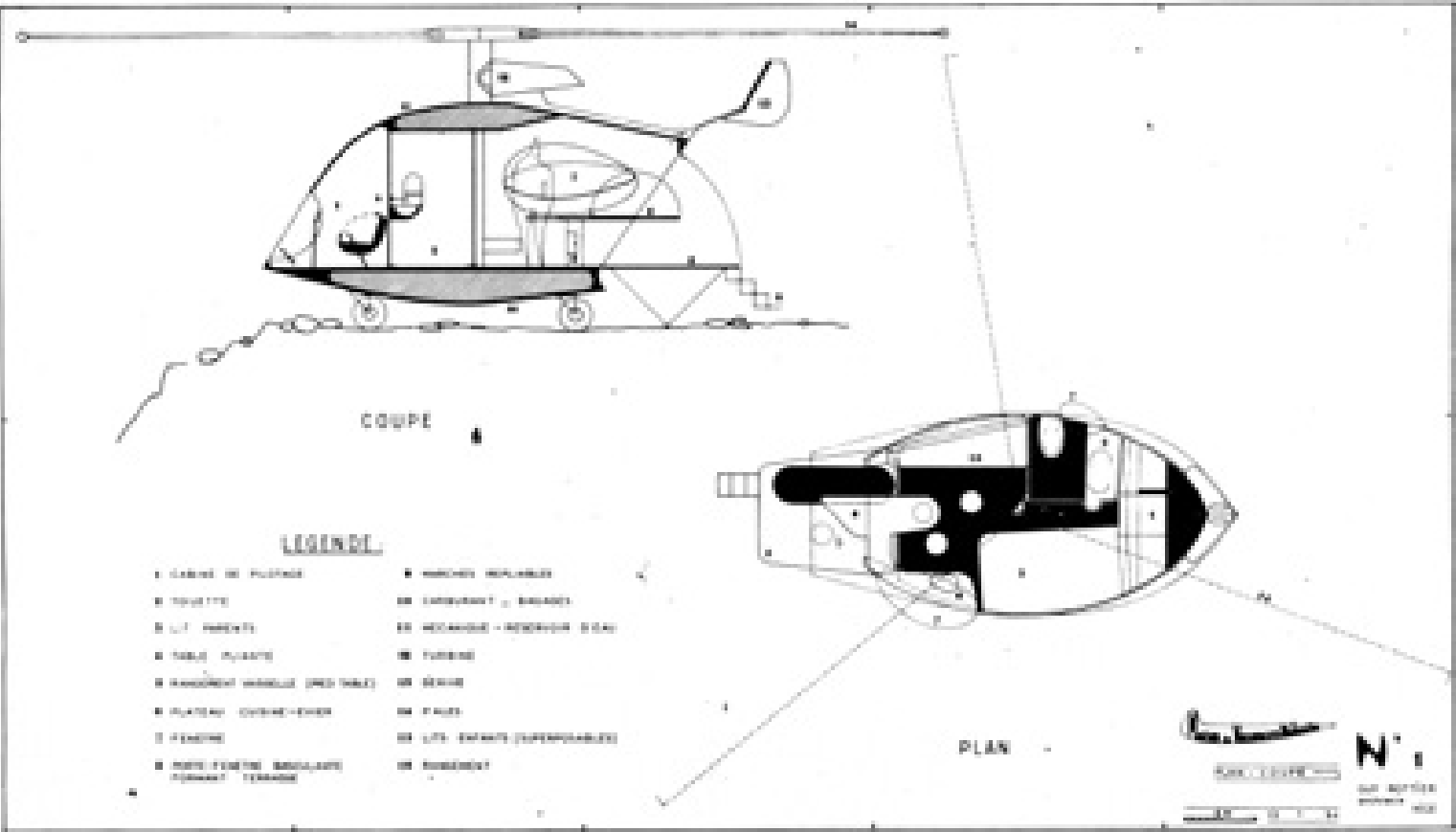


COORDINATES:	43°42'07"N 7°16'06"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	never built
PROJECT:	helicopter holiday accommodation
IMAGE CREDITS:	Archives Nice Côte d'Azur – Ville de Nice, fonds Guy Rottier
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori

During his intense activity and production, Guy Rottier devoted much of his career to the design of large holiday complexes that he called “cities;” these cities were constituted, in turn, by housing units of various kinds. In the first half of the 1960s, Rottier thought of a solution for stress-free holidays avoiding the

traffic along roads and motorways, reservations at campgrounds, hotels, and so on. So he designed a flying house that could be placed anywhere even at high altitudes. The house consisted of a helicopter with turbine propulsion and plastic casing, measuring 4.90 by 2.90 meters and, in addition to the cockpit, ac-

commodation for a family of four, two adults and two children. The fuel reserve allowed a range of 100 kilometers while landing and parking required only 10 square meters. Rottier’s goal, in fact, was to create mobile vacation cities suspended in the sky.



1-5m



Giuseppe Perugini with Uga De Plaisant and Raynaldo Perugini, Casa Albero, Fregene, 1968-1975



COORDINATES:	41°51'32.2"N 12°11'58.7"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	under restoration
PROJECT:	single-family house for vacation
IMAGE CREDITS:	Archivio Studio Perugini
MENTIONED BY:	Domenico Cutellé, Fabio Donia, Silvia Covarino

In the late 1960s, Giuseppe Perugini bought a piece of land near Pineta together with his wife Uga De Plaisant, who was also an architect, to build a holiday beach house. Once his son Raynaldo grew up and enrolled in architecture school, he too participated in the project. The trio was known as “The 3Ps” (the project was a rare case of family self-design). To read it merely as summer residence would be a serious mistake, since the house Perugini built was not just a domestic retreat, but one of the earliest experiments with a new architectural language, presenting a contemporary reinterpretation of the classic family

housing typology. Perugini, who had come from Argentina to become a sculptor and only later reverted to architecture, intended and realized the Casa Albero (Tree House) as a “continuum house,” a never-ending work in progress where one could experience the meaning of life through a direct relationship with the surrounding nature. This residential complex consists of three buildings of different types. The first, at the heart of the system, is the house itself, designed with an open, infinitely modular structure of bare concrete, glass, and red-stained steel. Next to it, Perugini made the “ball,” a 5-meter-diameter

sphere in contrast with the unfinished quality of the house. This sphere contains a room that his son Raynaldo “and his friends” would use as their music room to play the electric guitar during the family’s summer stays. A sphere—the ideal symbol of cosmic completeness and perfection—equipped as an independent, and this time unified house. The third building is the result of the union of three functional volumes called “cubes”: cubic space modules interspersed with semi-modules containing a bathroom, a bedroom, a living room and a kitchen in a space of less than 40 square meters.





Ettore Sottsass Jr., House for Arnaldo Pomodoro, Milan, Italy, 1966-68



In the second half of the 1960s, sculptor Arnaldo Pomodoro bought an attic on the top floor of a building in downtown Milan and had it elevated to create a space to welcome clients and friends and entertain. Pomodoro asked Sottsass to design a space reflecting the soul of a professional who was not looking for the idea of life, serenity and humor typical of the architect's work. With the help of young Neapolitan architect Bruno Scagliola and carpenter Giuseppe Baraldi, Sottsass transformed this attic into a unique space, even if devoid of intimacy and feeling. He designed a staircase with storage compartments under the steps which starting from the front door go all the way up to the bedroom, or rather, up to the "room for rest." Made of rosewood, the flight of stairs is introduced by a raised ar-

ea, also of the same wood, which contains drawers contributing to space organization. The staircase is a veritable piece of furniture that provides storage with shelves and cabinets. It contains a utility room and the counterweight of the marble dining table, cantilevered by two shelves. With the exception of the back wall in oland (white marble grit and plaster), the rest of the living room—the front door, the ceilings, and walls—are covered with a sophisticated white plastic laminate panel system, while the floor is in brown felt. The library, next to the entrance, is also made of the same type of panel, alternating with a chrome-plated perforated sheet, the same Sottsass used in the window openings to cover the radiators. In the library, the perforated sheet is used to hide the speakers of the magneto-

phon, the record player, and the cable player, devices set inside the cabinet along with records and a compartment with hangers. The solution Sottsass found for the windows is interesting: instead of the classic curtain, he preferred frosted glass sliding behind the plastic laminate wall covering. The furniture-sculpture-staircase leads up to the bedroom, with the old roof truss beams visible on the ceiling. In the room there is perhaps the architect's only concession to color, the gilded tile top designed for the display of objects, ornaments, and sculptures, then a small shelf for books and a closet full of drawers reminiscent of an old pharmacy. The bathroom, the only one in the house, is completely clad in finely-tiled white and gray granite.

COORDINATES:	45°28'01"N 9°11'24"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	excellent
PROJECT:	apartment interiors
IMAGE CREDITS:	Nicola Nunziata and Fabrizio Vatteri
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori





Andrejs Legzdiņš, House Project, Stockholm, Sweden, 1972



Andrejs Legzdiņš was born on January 11, 1936 in Riga, Latvia. Due to the second Soviet occupation of his country, when he was only eight years old, he was forced to emigrate to Gotland, Sweden, where he moved with his family after a troubled sea voyage on a fishing boat overloaded with refugees. At the age of 13, he began to develop an interest in architecture thanks to his father who was an architect. Once he finished school, he enrolled in the Art Crafts and Design course at Konstfack University in Stockholm, where he graduated as an interior architect and furniture designer. The design of domestic space is one of the main themes of Andrejs Legzdiņš' work. The year before his House of the Future (1972), the archi-

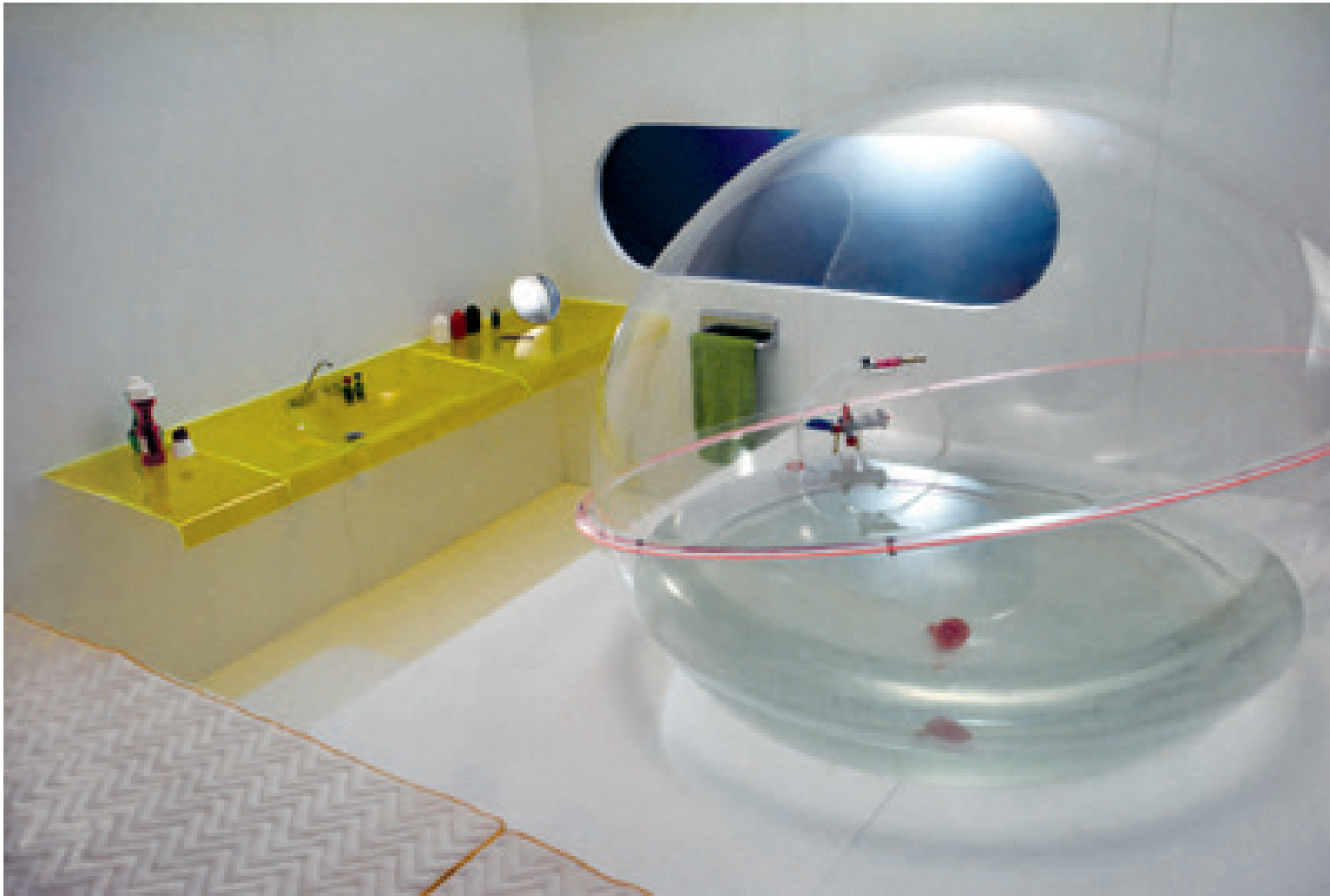
tect conceived a housing solution for himself and his young family in Stockholm, where they lived. An inexpensive, open-plan house whose interior divisions are flexible and changeable over time. The metal structure is a three-dimensional lattice made of steel tubes (2.10 × 2.10 meters) anchored to a concrete platform, which serves as a support, measuring 10.5 × 10.5 meters. The structure is infilled with a series of GRP panels that can be easily replaced and interchanged should the housing unit need to be enlarged. The interiors are lofted and divided into adult and children's areas; the children's space includes a bedroom and a mezzanine accessed with a ladder, and to this structure swings, slides, etc. can be attached;

parents, above their bedroom, have a mobile closet-wardrobe structure "designed by Legzdiņš" that can be conveniently opened from the lower space. In the central part of the house is the bathroom, consisting of a tub with a suspended spherical sauna accessible by ladder. The walls dividing the spaces are sliding and allow the house to be experienced without fossilizing its living functions. In the living area, the dining space is delimited only by the fireplace and the kitchen block. The house is designed by Legzdiņš to be easy to clean, indeed the architect claims that, thanks to the use of waterproof materials, both the interior and exterior may be washed with a water pump.

COORDINATES:	59°21'N 18°04'E
CURRENT CONDITION:	never built
PROJECT:	house unit
IMAGE CREDITS:	Andrejs Legzdiņš
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori



Andrejs Legzdiņš, House of the Future, Stockholm, Sweden, 1973



COORDINATES:	59°21'N 18°04'E
CURRENT CONDITION:	never built
PROJECT:	living unit
IMAGE CREDITS:	Andrejs Legzdiņš
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori

In 1972 Legzdiņš designed the House of the Future, in collaboration with photographer Hans Hammarskiöld. Their initial concept was a house inhabited by a young family, designed for life 25 years into the future. Computers were not around yet, and so the duo invented these playful devices arranged in a single 6 × 12-meter room: the night-dome, with thermal and light conditioning equipment, the 1.80-centimeter-diameter perspex transparent sphere-bath, a table-kitchen extending into the greenhouse where the family would grow its own vegetables, a cube-sink on wheels, a TV screen on the wall as

big as the 2 × 3-meter wall itself, and an electronic terminal to control all the devices in the house. They envisioned a new lifestyle and a new way of sleeping, cooking, bathing, relaxing like in a spa, and growing vegetables. Everything had to be sustainable, the water used in the bathroom was to be recycled in the greenhouse, and the night-dome sleeping space was to control the temperature of the whole house. The “home terminal” contained the control keyboard for the audio-visual system, air conditioning, automatic greenhouse watering, and so on. It also featured a video phone connected to libraries,

film libraries, museums, and information centers, so that an exhibition or any other content could be projected on the big screen. It was a mobile device, on wheels, with a blackout canopy, that allowed the user to isolate when receiving “long-distance calls” on the video phone. The bathroom, in particular, was not only a place to wash but also a spiritual place to relax. To design it, the architect once again drew inspiration from the theories of Fuller, who, in order to reduce water consumption in the Dymaxion Bathroom, had designed an atomizing shower.



Gian Piero Frassinelli, Casa Volpini, Urbino, Italy, 1975



In 1975, distinguished artist and professor Renato Volpini, owner of the Multirevol art print shop, decided to turn an old farmhouse in the Marche countryside into his new villa. To refurbish it, he called his friend Gian Piero Frassinelli, a member of Superstudio, a group for which Volpini had produced most of his limited-edition lithographs. “I give you *carte blanche*,” he told him, “I’ll be back when you’ve finished and you’ll give me the keys.” Frassinelli was not used to having this type of interaction with his clients. Like many architects, he preferred to have an ongoing exchange, a confrontation of ideas, but Volpini had no doubts, “I trust you completely,” he told him again, and let him get on with the work. Thus Frassinelli studied an elegant architectural solution and highlighted the new ele-

ments through the use of different materials, such as white ceramic tiles forming the squared surface—a leit-motif of Superstudio’s work. The method of composition was extraordinary: the original structure was split, in the center, by a cut dividing the house into two blocks. From the elevation “emerged” a volume, transverse to the main axis, enveloping the staircase connecting the two levels. The architect designed a glazed structure with metal framing as the roofing element for this envelope, which allowed more natural light to enter while differentiating from the existing terracotta tiles. On either side of the villa, two symmetrical blocks with a square pattern hide a small patio (a space dedicated to lounging) on one side, an outdoor kitchen oven and a room on the other. The solution de-

signed for the interior spaces was equally interesting. What had been the farmhouse stable was converted into a single living room and kitchen space. The only structural elements were the four central, brick columns that created a kind of alcove, a space for sitting and talking around the central fireplace. Another apartment, with a separate side entrance, was also part of the volume, enclosed between the two square blocks. The staircase led to the sleeping area, which included four bedrooms and a central hallway used as a living room. The attic spaces housed an additional room (the guest room), lofted, lit by the skylight and accessed by a spiral staircase enclosed in iron mesh painted green, which, along with blue, was the predominant color of the interiors.



COORDINATES:	43°43'30.86"N12°38'13.92"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	existing, but almost nothing of the original design remains
PROJECT:	farmhouse renovation project
IMAGE CREDITS:	Gian Piero Frassinelli
MENTIONED BY:	Francesca Tiberi

Alberto Salvati and Ambrogio Tresoldi



VILLA IN CIVENNA, 1968

IMAGE CREDITS: Laura Salvati
MENTIONED BY: Bianca Felicori

Between 1960 and 1980 Alberto Salvati and Ambrogio Tresoldi enlivened the Milanese cultural scene by placing the convergence of art and architecture at the center of their research. Salvati and Tresoldi’s design vision arose from their critique of the idea of the living cell in modern architecture. Graduating in 1960, the two had studied at the Milan Polytechnic with Carlo De Carli, promoter of the concept of primary space, the fundamental space for each person’s individual life. Their research stemmed from the rejection of the principles of the rationalist movement and, in particular, of Le Corbusier’s machine for living in. Salvati and Tresoldi began to outline a new conception of architecture, one beyond the functionalist limitations of rationalism and open to the inclusion of the immateriality of spiritual aspects. The interior spaces they designed were spaces of freedom, not refuges, not machines, not caverns, but stages for the spectacle of daily living. “Simplicity and freshness pervade all of Salvati and Tresoldi’s architectural manifestations,” wrote Alberto Sartoris, “The most intense moments are those in which color takes over surfaces, solids, and voids to transfigure the forms, to envelop them in an atmosphere of fullness in which the conducive sign of the composition vigorously evinces its humanism and truthfulness.”¹

VILLA IN CIVENNA, 1968

COORDINATES: 45°56'08"N 9°16'15"E
CURRENT CONDITION: excellent
PROJECT: detached villa

The villa is built on a steep sloping area overlooking Lake Como. Divided into three floors, the house consists of a street-level entrance area, a spacious living-dining room with large windows and a terrace overlooking the lake, a kitchen, and a guest area with a bedroom, dressing room, and bathroom. Upstairs in the attic are the parents’

and children’s bedrooms, and a study and play area overlooking the living room below from a balcony. The house also has a garage, heating and laundry facilities downstairs, and a play area. The furniture is basic and lacquered in different colors (white, light blue, red), matching the colored parts in the interior design, such as the balustrade and fireplace.

VILLA IN ARENZANO, 1968

COORDINATES: 44°24'12.7"N 8°40'57.76"E
CURRENT CONDITION: excellent
PROJECT: renovation of an existing house

In 1968 Salvati and Tresoldi renovated a beach house on two levels. On the lower floor, in addition to the bathrooms, they designed the living area that is completely windowed and overlooks the landscape which seems to become part of the house; on the upper floor they created a more intimate and private living room, closed off from the outside, plus the bedrooms. The second floor is characterized by the presence of plastic laminate green screens painted by Giuliano Barbanti, which by creating an illusory effect alter the perception of the real size of the spaces. The floor of the upper terrace features a plastic green carpet, while for the interiors the architects chose metallic ceramic tiles. The two floors are connected by a see-through polished steel staircase. Some of the furniture elements such as the crystal coffee table are by Salvati and Tresoldi, while the chairs on the lower floor are by Eames and the square table by Sottsass Jr.

HOUSE ON LAKE GARDA IN MONTE MADERNO, 1970

COORDINATES: 45°38'18.5"N 10°35'56.8"E
CURRENT CONDITION: excellent
PROJECT: prefabricated stackable living cell

Salvati and Tresoldi designed this prefabricated house with a symmetrical floor plan, two closed and two transparent sides, with sliding glass windows. The interior spaces, measuring 45 square meters, are distributed around the kitchen block, which they designed themselves, arranged in the center of the house; above the kitchen block they placed a hanging hood block with storage spaces; the kitchen is set against a wall dividing the living area from the sleeping area. The bathrooms are distributed along the two enclosed walls, while in the living area modular armchairs and sofas can be converted into beds. This living unit model was first built in Monte Maderno, on Lake Garda, but was designed as a prototype dwelling that could be produced in series.

HOUSE IN LISSONE, 1978

COORDINATES: 45°38'18.5"N 10°35'56.8"E
CURRENT CONDITION: excellent
PROJECT: prefabricated and stackable living cell

The semi-detached house in Lissone, which is perfectly preserved to this day, is a mature example of the application of the principles going beyond rationalist architecture explored by Salvati and Tresoldi. The villa was built in collaboration with architect Lino Arosio, who still lives there; the house contains artistic creations by Riccardo Perego, Armando Marrocco and Giuliano Barbanti. Salvati himself considers this house one of their most interesting works, thanks mainly to the use of color and shapes in the design at the entrance, breaking up the symmetry of the building.

Their research on a new conception of living space here also translates into an intense relationship between the interior and exterior of the house: the warmth of the domestic space is announced in the main elevation precisely by the bold use of

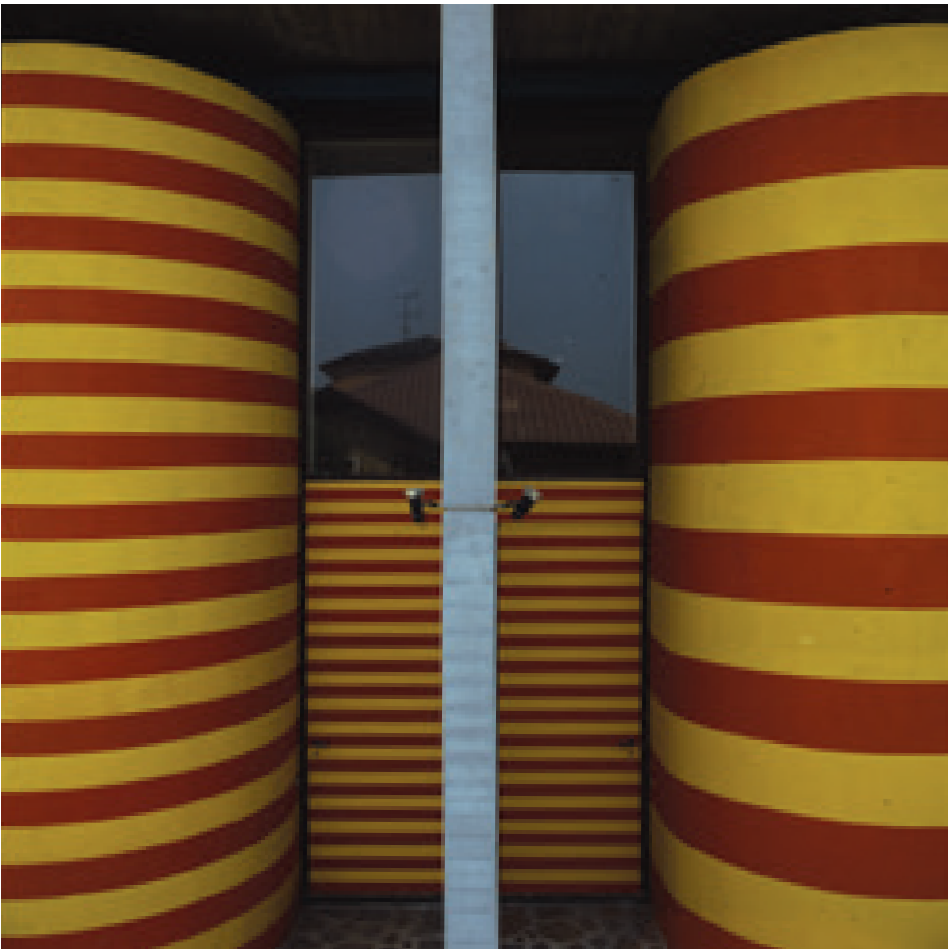
color and geometric shapes, both in terms of decorative motifs and volumes. “Color is the fundamental, determining, dominant material. With-

out discrimination of any kind between interior and exterior, it also constitutes a positive poetic message, a constructed whole in which

the supple and vibrant geometry of polychromy and the hard and sharp geometry of concrete can coexist.”²

1. Alberto Sartoris, “Forme immaginarie grafica creatrice nell’architettura di Salvati e Tresoldi,” in Alberto Salvati, Ambrogio Tresoldi, *Architettura e Design* (Milan: Electa, 1986), 7.

2. *Ibidem*, 11.



HOUSE IN LISSONE, 1978



HOUSE ON LAKE GARDA IN MONTE MADERNO, 1970



VILLA IN CIVENNA, 1968

Cesare Leonardi, Casa Mescoli-Goich, Modena, Italy, 1984-93



COORDINATES:	44°38'44.95"N10°55'42.59"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	excellent
PROJECT:	interior design; renovation of an existing house
IMAGE CREDITS:	Archivio Cesare Leonardi Progetti
MENTIONED BY:	Giulio Marchetti

Cesare Leonardi (Modena, 1935–2021) graduated in 1970 from the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Florence, where he was a student of Adalberto Libera, Ludovico Quaroni, Leonardo Benevolo, and his thesis advisor Leonardo Savioli. In 1963 he opened a studio in Modena with Franca Stagi (1937–2008). Active until 1983, the firm established itself in the creation of design fiberglass objects and architecture, parks and collective structures conceived in close relationship to trees and greenery. In 1983 Leonardi started to pursue independent research on craft design and green design, as well as continuing to devote himself to photography as a tool for documenting, investigating, and designing.

Leonardi was truly a multit talented genius: architect, designer, and urban planner as well as photographer, painter, and sculptor with a predilection for wood. His was a design method in which thought stemmed from and was nurtured by manual work, a practice which Leonardi, born into a family of artisans, had assimilated as a child. “The renovation of a typical Modenese *binata* house of the 1950s documents a ‘total’ approach to the theme of housing, from the reworking of the interior space to the design of the furniture with the modular ‘solids’ system and the planting of the garden. The most striking element is certainly the huge suspended, truncated, red-enamelled fireplace which, through the insertion of a truck fifth-wheel coupling in

the attic, can rotate outward, expanding the living room space beyond the large sliding glass window. Casa Mescoli-Goich was originally a professional assignment but eventually led to a lasting friendship between Leonardi and the owners. Over the years, in fact, the house became populated with new objects that now make up the personal collection of Leda Goich and Ivano Mescoli. Within the designed space, oil paintings and photographic compositions, fiberglass design from the 1970s and early prototypes of yellow wood seating, sculptures, and study models dialogue in an unprecedented way. They represent a concentrate of Cesare Leonardi’s thought and work method, set in a visionary and at the same time domestic dimension.”¹

1. Veronica Bastai, “Un’avventura straordinaria,” in Andrea Cavani, Giulio Orsini (eds.), *Cesare Leonardi. L’architettura della vita – Architecture of Life*, exhibition catalog (Milan: Lazy Dog, 2018), 233–240.

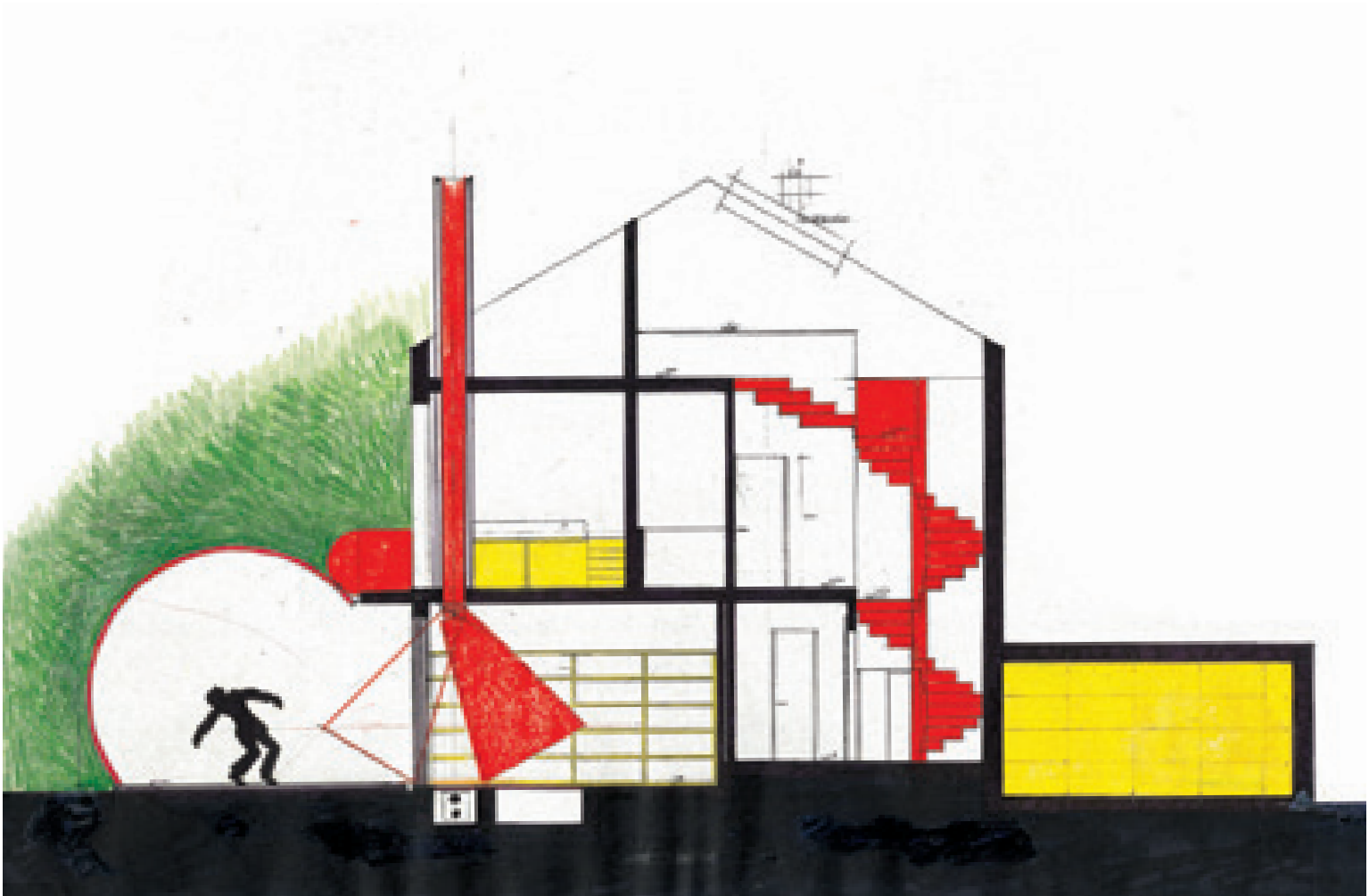




IMAGE CREDITS: Gianluca Gasperoni



1. Bianca Felicori, “L’architettura di Aldo Loris Rossi nei video di LIBERATO,” interview with Francesco Lettieri, *Artribune* (May 12, 2018): www.artribune.com/progettazione/architettura/2018/08/architettura-aldo-loris-rossi-videoclip-liberato/

2. Reference is to the Thamesmead Estate, Greenwich, London. Thamesmead is a group of buildings constructed in the late 1960s on the banks of the River Thames between the two more populated towns of Woolwich and Belvedere.

3. For further on this see Parasite 2.0, “Cosmology, Subcultures and Urban Wilderness,” *Architect* (May 12, 2017): architect.com/features/article/150007079/cosmology-subcultures-and-urban-wilderness

During my architecture student years, the episodes that distanced me from the boredom of the “Milanese school” were rare and fortuitous. One of these episodic occurrences happened while I was searching resignedly for Aldo Rossi in the library, and I came across Aldo Loris Rossi’s monograph. I enjoyed leafing through the pages taking pictures of those futuristic (and dystopian) architectures.

A few years later—mid-February 2017—my social media bubble was taken over by “NOVE MAGGIO,” LIBERATO’s debut single, whose video was set in a series of well-known locations in Naples. Except for one specific setting, which I could not associate with Neapolitan imagery although it did look familiar. Suddenly, I had a flashback: the little girl was dancing surrounded by cylindrical concrete buildings, and I recognized those volumes: it was Aldo Loris Rossi’s Piazza Grande housing project (1979–89).

While shooting those scenes, director Francesco Lettieri and cinematographer Gianluca Palma had no idea who had designed that architecture but they were genuinely attracted to it. Later Lettieri would say that the search for locations had been an intuitive, almost visceral process: they wanted to tell the story of Naples as “a metropolis combining postcard Mergellina views and decadent suburban architecture.”¹

Since their appearance, housing projects in urban suburbs have become an integral part of cinematic iconography, universal symbols of the social ghettoization caused by modernist totalitarianism. One example above all is the Thamesmead² social housing complex in the eastern suburbs of London: its sharp, raw volumes reflected in the River Thames can boast “cameos” in productions of all types and levels, from art-house cinema (in the 1970s Kubrick shot several key scenes of *A Clockwork Orange* here) to TV series (*Misfits*, 2009–2013), and a number of music videos including the now iconic—and rather disturbing—video shot by Chris Cunningham in 1997 for Aphex Twin’s “Come to Daddy.”

In recent years, this process of stigmatization has evolved rather controversially. Suburbs have become centers of a dynamic process of cultural and media revaluation. This trend finds much of its rationale in the mediatic rise of hip hop culture, which has offered new insights into interpreting the relationship between architecture and social identity.

Hip hop, in fact, was born in the ghetto: before being associated with the underground circles of black countercultures, the Bronx was an area of New York City characterized by blighted and partially abandoned housing projects inhabited by poor and marginalized communities. The choices made between the 1940s and 1950s by the controversial executive-urbanist Robert Moses literally cut off the Bronx from the major economic processes of the time, effectively condemning it to a condition of “urban waste.”³ In this context, the emergence of hip hop represented one of many grassroots reactions to a vertical process of spatial domination in which architecture played a dual role: on the one hand, it was an uncritical instrument of power; on the other, it offered itself as a space of possibility: fertile ruins on which to rethink new—and free—collective urban rituals.

Among the cornerstones of this emerging subculture was the people’s need to proudly claim their sense of belonging to an urban context. As a consequence, “block” architecture soon became a fundamental cliché in the genre.

In its European transposition, hip hop culture forged a partnership with a particular architectural language, that of the brutalist avant-garde that characterized much of the social housing complexes. The volumes of social housing that mark the landscape of European suburbs have become common rhetorical figures of an increasingly global musical—and cultural—style.

Exploring this phenomenon, artist Riccardo Benassi produced the work *European Gangsta Rap* in 2016: editing video clips

by artists from different countries, he created a kind of extended postcard of forgotten urban areas, creating an image of a collective European suburb.

From clothing to its big blocks of buildings, hip hop aesthetics has always been a language of disruption, immediately capturing the interest of the fashion world. Over time, an increasingly fruitful dialogue has grown, helping hip hop become a market category even before it ever became a music genre.

Hip hop and trap (its recent mainstream spinoff) are only the latest manifestations of a phenomenon cyclically repeating itself: the metabolization of antagonism—and its stylistic codes—by mass culture, what Jean Baudrillard called the “Beaubourg effect.”⁴ Just as in the Beaubourg protest art becomes food for the masses, so in hip hop, street language becomes a simulacra culture, emptied of its original class consciousness.

On the other hand, the “apartment block culture” that accompanies the upward parabola of hip hop has contributed, albeit unintentionally, to the rediscovery of signature architecture that was in danger of being forgotten precisely because it was located in urban peripheries. A case in point is related to the Milanese rapper Marracash, the self-proclaimed “prince of Barona,” the area of the city where he grew up and that is often mentioned in his lyrics. The artist’s fame brought the neighborhood into the limelight leading, over the years, to the rediscovery of the area and of its architecture such as the now famous civic center “mushroom” (also known as “UFO”) in Piazza Donne Partigiane, designed between the 1980s and 1990s by architect Pier Luigi Saccheri: a rather desolate space that has nonetheless been the setting for numerous film scenes.

In some cases, the authors of these buildings are very worthy architects ignored by history, but in more than a few, the designers are unexpectedly illustrious names. A case in point is the Torri Bianche at Gratosoglio by BBPR (designed between 1963 and 1971 for the Istituto Autonomo

Case Popolari in Milan) that serve as the backdrop for the video clip of Capo Plaza’s “Giovane Fuoriclasse,” shot by Martina Pastori and Edoardo Bolli, a video that currently boasts more than 78 million views.

What prompted young rappers and video makers to choose these architectures as the setting for their videos? While most architects were intent on undertaking an almost uncritical crusade against modernist architecture, an underground cultural substratum decided to actively interact with these locations by transforming them into a universal medium, a language.

For the purpose of explaining the sense of beauty in contemporary art, Arthur Danto argued that the concept of beauty co-evolves with collective sensibility.⁵ This notion helps in understanding many of the evolutions of common taste. Film and music culture, through the myth they are able to generate, have offered the general public the tools to metabolize avant-garde architectural languages. The reasons for the growing collective fascination with these architectures lies beyond the formal and compositional issues dear to architects. More likely, it is a consequence of an epic narrative of social redemption, laden with symbolism and rhetorical figures, of which architecture is only one, albeit fundamental, aspect.

As I write, the city of Milan is launching a motivational video to help citizens cope with the emotional difficulties of urban life in a pandemic context. The voice of Ghali, a young, successful rapper born in the suburbs to Tunisian parents, accompanies images of life slowly resuming in the no longer deserted city. In addition to the symbolic locations one would have expected a few years ago—the Duomo, the skyline of skyscrapers, the Milan Polytechnic and Central Station—the video also includes two iconic Milanese housing projects: the Barona “mushroom” and the Gratosoglio towers. In 2017, before he achieved mainstream fame, Ghali sang these rhymes, *Siamo casi popolari / Fuori da case popolari* (We’re social cases / Outside social housing).⁶

4. Expression taken from *Simulacra and Simulation*, Jean Baudrillard’s 1981 philosophical treatise. For further study: Matteo Giovanni Brega (ed.), *Jean Baudrillard. Simulacri e Impostura. Bestie, beaubourg, apparenze e altri oggetti* (Milan: PGreco, 2008).

5. Arthur Danto, “The Artworld,” *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 61, no. 19 (1964), American Philosophical Association Eastern Division Sixty-First Annual Meeting (Oct. 15, 1964), 571–584.

6. Lyrics taken from the single *Bimbi*, by Italian record producer Charlie Charles (released March 17, 2017), which featured vocals by rappers Izi, Rkomi, Sfera Ebbasta, Tedua, and Ghali.

Rkomi x TNS aka The Night Skinny, “Fuck Tomorrow,” 2016



COORDINATES:	45°38′21″N 13°49′29″E
REGIA:	Edoardo Bolli and Antonio Ragni
PROJECT:	Carlo Celli, Luciano Celli, Dario Tognon, housing complex ATER Rozzol Melara, Trieste, 1968–82
IMAGE CREDITS:	screenshots from the video of “Fuck Tomorrow,” 2016; photographs by Federico Torra
MENTIONED BY:	Gabriele Leo

The Rozzol Melara neighborhood, where the “Fuck Tomorrow” video was shot, is located a few kilometers from Trieste and was designed by a group of about 30 professionals coordinated by Carlo Celli, Luciano Celli, and Dario Tognon. The suggestion that they shoot the video in this location was made to producer The Night Skinny by Antonio Ragni, director of photography and urban planning graduate, with the support of director Edoardo Bolli. Built between 1968 and 1982, this housing project is conceived as an autonomous entity, a kind of micro-city in which numerous echoes of Le Corbusier’s *Unité d’Habitation* can be detected. The neighborhood is home to 2,500 residents and consists of two L-shaped blocks, 7 to 15 stories high; the architects designed a series of indoor covered pathways that form a large cross in the center, and a driveway that cuts through the neighborhood from north to south. Equipped with all essential services (from a post office to commercial spaces), Rozzol Melara also has a large outdoor arena that serves as a gathering place for its residents.





Emis Killa, “Cult,” 2016



COORDINATES:	41°53'52.8"N 12°35'04.5"E
REGIA:	Francesco Lettieri
PROJECT:	Alberto Gatti with Diambra De Sanctis, Tor Sapienza IACP housing complex, Rome, 1974-79
IMAGE CREDITS:	backstage photograph by Gianluca Palma; photograph of the housing complex by Roberto Conte
MENTIONED BY:	Gabriele Leo

The design of the Morandi housing project is, like the abovementioned case, another expression of 1970s urban planning based on the design of suburban areas on the lines of self-sufficient cities. Winner of a competition issued by the IACP, the Gatti and De Sanctis project follows the building ty-

pology of the early 20th-century “Höfe” found in Austria and Germany; the rectangular layout, somewhat out of context in the Tor Sapienza fabric, is organized in blocks of flats, with a central courtyard with gathering spaces and buildings for services and commercial activities. Surrounded by Viale

Giorgio Morandi, the housing project is quite permeable due to the presence of a ground-floor arcade that acts as a penetrable filter in relation to the street; however, this design solution did not prevent the ghettoization of the complex, whose critical conditions persist today.



LIBERATO, “NOVE MAGGIO,” 2017



COORDINATES:	40°52′20.28″N 14°16′01.31″E
REGIA:	Francesco Lettieri
PROJECT:	Aldo Loris Rossi, Piazza Grande Housing Complex, Naples, 1979-89
IMAGE CREDITS:	screenshot from the “NOVE MAGGIO” music video, 2017; photograph of the architectural complex by Valentina Solano
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori

In the 1960s the young Aldo Loris Rossi—one of the leading representatives of Italian organic architecture—in collaboration with Donatella Mazzeni, Annalisa Pignalosa, and Luigi Riviaccio, built this housing project for an entire autonomous community in the Arenacela area of Naples. It was a project of incredible complexity that became the setting for LIBERATO’s first video for his single “NOVE MAGGIO.” The project comprises 219

housing units, commercial services, schools, gyms, garages, and private parking lots. The circular central area of the complex contains the sports fields which are also featured in the music video. This large central square, named Piazza Grande, is surrounded by a building with a circular development that encloses the space in a kind of court. The internal distribution routes designed by Aldo Loris Rossi and his colleagues radiates from this

area, with a system of streets, ramps, and stairs, with separate vehicular and pedestrian areas. The complex also includes twelve conduit towers dedicated to the project’s vertical distributive elements (stairs, elevators, and freight elevators), six of which serve 36-meter-high residential towers, which have become true landmarks for the city of Naples—five with a circular plan and one with a rectangular plan.



LIBERATO, “TU T’E SCURDAT’ ‘E ME,” 2017



COORDINATES:	40°50'38.9"N 14°16'38.0"E
REGIA:	Francesco Lettieri
PROJECT:	Aldo Loris Rossi, Casa del Portuale (Dockworkers' Building), Naples, 1968–80
IMAGE CREDITS:	screenshot from the music video “TU T’E SCURDAT’ ‘E ME,” 2017; photographs of the architectural complex by Fabrizio Vtieri
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori

In 1968 the Compagnia Unica dei Lavoratori Portuali commissioned architect Aldo Loris Rossi to design the Casa del Portuale, a building to house offices and refreshment facilities for the dockworkers of the Port of Naples. The lot where the project is built is located in the area adjacent to the Fish Market (designed by Luigi Cosenza, 1929), on the eastern marina shore-

line. The building appears in the video “TU T’E SCURDAT’ ‘E ME,” also directed by Francesco Lettieri, who chose to maintain an architectural and iconographic thread in LIBERATO’s music videos by including another architecture by Rossi. As Paolo Giordano wrote in 1994, “Aldo Loris Rossi presents an architecture in which the formal component, through

an exaggerated multi-signal configuration, is pushed to the extreme limits of utopian orthodoxy.”¹The Dockworkers’ Building is composed of an elongated basement and a ten-story tower paired with 12 vertical cylinders that structure the building, to which additional transparent and opaque bodies of different forms and with various functions are attached.

1. Paolo Giordano (ed.), *Napoli. Guide di architettura moderna* (Rome: Officina Edizioni, 1994), 156.





Capo Plaza, “Giovane Fuoriclasse,” 2017



COORDINATES:	45°24'36.7"N 9°10'24.7"E
REGIA:	Edoardo Bolli and Martina Pastori
PROJECT:	BBPR, Gratosoglio Autonomous District, Milan, 1953–71
IMAGE CREDITS:	screenshot from the “Giovane Fuoriclasse” music video, 2017; archive picture from L. B. Belgiojoso, “BBPR Gratosoglio. L’esperienza di un quartiere,” <i>Casabella</i> , no. 363 (March 1972): 17–26; photograph of the complex by Giovanna Silva
MENTIONED BY:	Gabriele Leo

Gratosoglio is one of the most famous and controversial Italian housing projects, even though most of its inhabitants do not know its history or even who its designers were. Construction work on the Gratosoglio towers began in 1953 at the behest of the Istituto Autonomo delle Case Popolari, which purchased this area south of Milan at a low price. The client’s aim was to build a self-sufficient neighborhood, detached from the city, using heavy prefabrication in order to reduce construction costs. Aware of the flaws and critical aspects of this approach, the architects sought to design a working-class neighborhood in which an atmosphere of social segregation was less

evident. In particular, the BBPR group was concerned with integrating Gratosoglio with the rest of the city, addressing the urban planning issues involved in designing working-class neighborhoods. In fact, during the years of its construction, the neighborhood was integrated into Milan, thanks in part to its location on the urban expansion axis that leads to Rozzano, along which via dei Missaglia was then inserted. The inclusion of this road led to the idea of placing the center of the neighborhood alongside it, aligning it with this street. The end result, after an initial project that was never approved by the Istituto Autonomo, was the erection of eight 56-meter towers and a

line of fifty-two 30-meter-high buildings; “The distribution of the prefabricated buildings, limited in height and in typology, with a module composed of a staircase and two flats, was designed to offer a series of different views to those walking along the internal street” wrote Belgiojoso.¹ Because of such impositions, BBPR designed the low buildings arranged at 45 degrees to via dei Missaglia, with a simple layout and stairs serving two apartments per floor. The towers, on the other hand, consist of five residential units, of different sizes and shapes, and unfold from a central core containing stairwells and four elevators.

1. Lodovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso, “BBPR Gratosoglio. L’esperienza di un quartiere,” *Casabella*, no. 363 (March 1972), 17.





1. See Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: Gaudium et Spes* (December 7, 1965), no. 1 (EV 1, no. 1319).

2. See *Rito delle Esequie*, nos. 74-87.

3. Information regarding the celebration of Christian funeral services is drawn from the recent text by the Archbishops and Bishops of the Pastoral Region of Emilia Romagna and the Introduction to Ritual of Funeral Services by CEI (Italian Episcopal Conference). The bibliographical material was granted to the author by Father Mario Micucci. See Commissione Liturgica Regionale, *CRISTO NOSTRA SPERANZA. Orientamenti pastorali sulla celebrazione delle Esequie Cristiane* (Conferenza Episcopale Emilia Romagna, 2019).

4. B.M., “Architettura cimiteriale,” *Domus*, no. 179 (November 1942): 486–487.

In Italy, the most widespread religion is Christianity. The Church, embracing the joys and hopes, the sorrows and anxieties of all men and women of all times,¹ ritualizes death. The celebration of this passage follows a precise and traditional ritual, which starts by defining the space where it should take place: the funeral in a church and the burial rite in a cemetery. Funeral services include the “Liturgy of the Word,”² with or without Liturgy of the Eucharist celebration, and the rite known as “Committal and final commendation.” The funeral celebration is arranged, then speeches by civil authorities, relatives, or other public figures may follow as long as they are not part of the liturgical celebration—and should possibly be held in another place. Any words in remembrance of the deceased can follow the introductory “Committal and final commendation” part and must never be voiced from the ambo, the liturgical space reserved for the proclamation of God’s word in the cultural assembly. The funeral services include prayers to accompany in-ground and above-ground entombment and the deposition at the cemetery of the cinerary urn after cremation.³

Today, the Church must deal with the hyper-kinetic evolution of our social and cultural context. The burial ceremony of a funeral merges with elements that are not part of the celebration, such as the presence of objects of the deceased, the use of texts or images, the performance of music and songs that do not conform to the liturgy of the Church, and so forth. All this is accompanied by new forms of farewell to life, such as the scattering of the ashes after cremation, the preservation of the cinerary urn in private homes, and the spread of secular rituals. On top of all this, today physical burial is also accompanied by a virtual burial, celebrated with other users on line, or on platforms to which people can entrust the memory of a loved one. This is the case with Facebook. By googling “What happens to my Facebook account if I die?” all answers can be found in the “Help Center” section in “Profiles and Settings.” There are three options: the

first is the appointment of a “legacy contact” to manage a memorial account as if it were a virtual tombstone, the second is turning the account into a memorial account, and the third is permanent deletion. If one chooses the “legacy contact,” that person may take care of the profile of the person after their death; Facebook in fact strongly recommends this option to assure a second never-ending virtual life. The “legacy contact” will be in charge of accepting or turning down friend requests, posts, may change the profile and cover picture, and so on. If the choice falls on the memorial account, the profile will become an open space for the celebration of the deceased. The words “In memory of” will appear next to the name, and friends will be able to post messages on the wall, all the content that was previously shared will remain in place, as will other formal aspects. If the profile is permanently deleted, all messages, photos and posts will be removed forever. But there is more: Facebook in fact suggests that friends and family of members who decide to disappear from the platform, create a group dedicated to the person who passed away, in order to share content dedicated to them, just to make a little extra profit on grief.

The accelerated evolution of society calls for a reflection aimed at understanding what the fate of cemetery architecture will be with the passing of time. If a virtual headstone will be enough for loved ones to fill their hearts with memories, what will happen to cemetery architecture? What will be its destiny? Will it be forgotten? Will there still be human significance, religious or otherwise, in visiting a grave in a cemetery? If one gets into a conversation about cemetery architecture, “there is a chance that the interlocutor won’t react with much interest and give signs of being slightly bored because the topic itself is not a happy and inviting one,”⁴ and this is one of the main reasons why, despite being a pillar of architectural history, this subject is often banned from conversations.

The obtuse western tendency to reduce death to a taboo is a legacy of the past that

has gradually consolidated in our culture since the 19th century. Although “it is very difficult to study the totality of human activities without reference to death, its presence becomes a technical fact, which diminishes evocative power of its very name.”

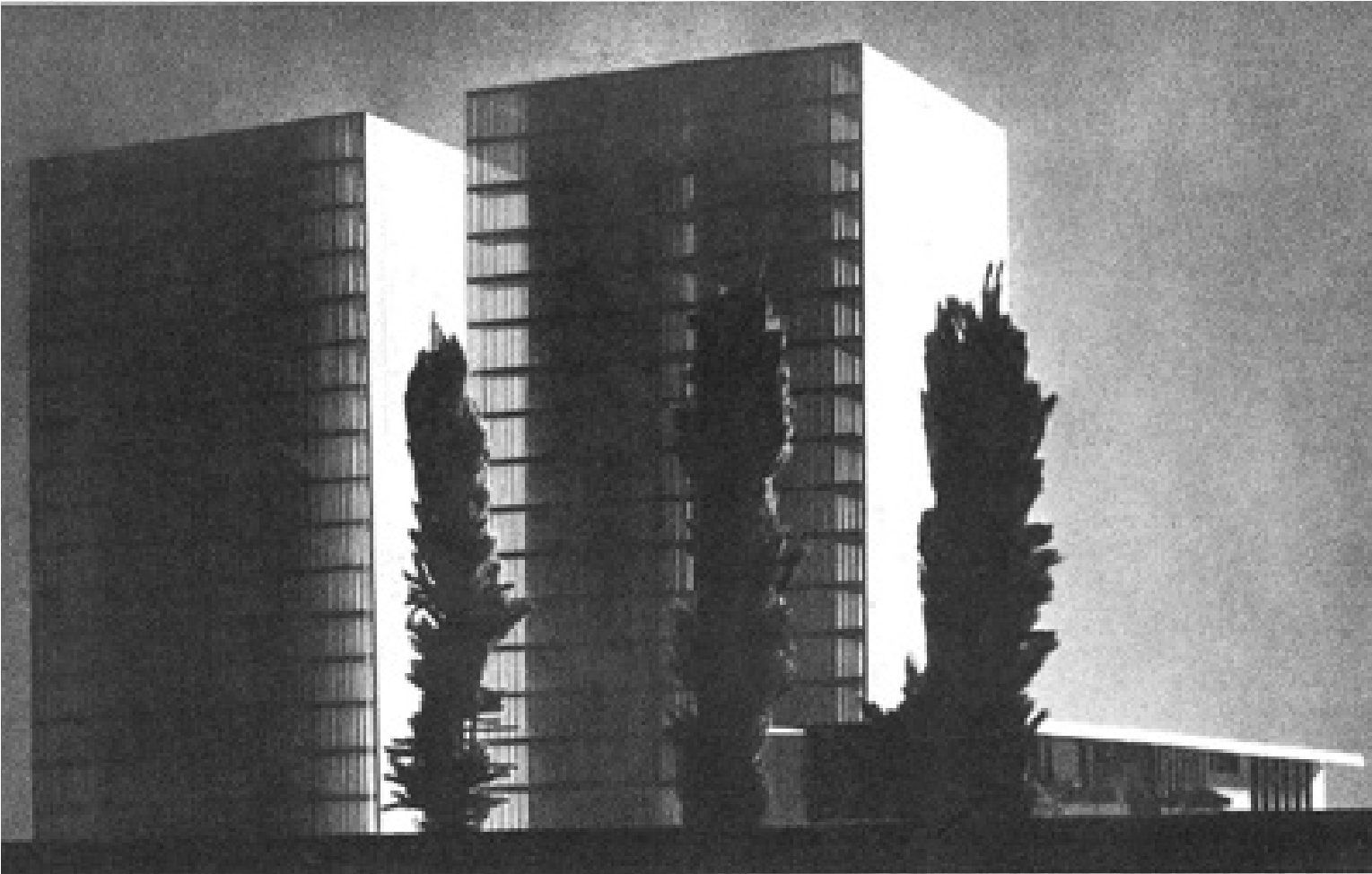
This has caused the widespread use of euphemisms, to “mask a reality that, if revealed in all its rawness, would be difficult to reconcile with the optimism of the times.”⁵ Added to this already tragic cultural condition is the fact that, after the great flowering of cemetery architecture in the 19th century, apart from a few important episodes, the 20th century is characterized by the design of “anonymous and banal architecture, as if the cemetery was no longer a central place in the city’s topography, but something to be hidden and forgotten.”⁶ Perhaps the mass society of the 20th century, pressed by other urgencies, failed to recognize the centrality of this architecture, leaving projects of poor quality to posterity. Although good architecture has begun to be made again in recent years, many unresolved issues remain: between the spread of crematory practices and the saturation of space for future cemetery expansions, what will be the future of cemetery architecture? Will people abandon the idea of returning to the earth? Most importantly: will we simply visualize the virtual headstone or will we still feel the need to walk among the graves to visit our deceased loved ones?

Clearly the problem does not lie in the motivations that have led the western world to forget cemetery architecture, which is considered “secondary.” Rather, it consists in the future that this architecture will have in this affluent society where it is filed in the virtual world, stuck and frozen in a reality in which we apparently never die, because the endless reproduction of images and the indigestible sharing of files, voice messages, texts, videos, and photos seem to make us eternal. If we forget for a moment that we are in the midst of a religious discourse, the issue raised by the Church regarding Christian funeral services is a common problem throughout the western world. If we also want to set aside for a moment the architectural discourse, and thus the reasons why certain cemetery architecture shared on the *Forgotten Architecture* Facebook group can be considered “forgotten,” the discourse turns to the uncertain future of this typology. In the not too distant future, we will forget what it means to cross the threshold of a cemetery, to let our hearts crumple as we gaze at the hundreds of headstones we are passing. We will forget what it means to lay a bouquet of flowers where our loved one lies, and all sorts of celebratory rituals; in essence, we will forget what it means to go to a cemetery, in favor of a virtual headstone, perhaps more powerful than a stony concretization of death.

5. Francisco Javier Rodríguez Barberán, “La memoria abitata. Gli spazi della morte nella cultura europea contemporanea,” in Mauro Felicori (ed.), *Gli spazi della memoria: Architettura dei cimiteri monumentali europei* (Rome: Luca Sossella Editore, 2004), 69.

6. Mauro Felicori, “Memoria e futuro nell’architettura dei cimiteri europei,” in Mauro Felicori (ed.), *Gli spazi della memoria: Architettura dei cimiteri monumentali europei* (Rome: Luca Sossella Editore, 2004), 10.

Nanda Vigo, Cemeterial Towers, Rozzano, Italy, 1959

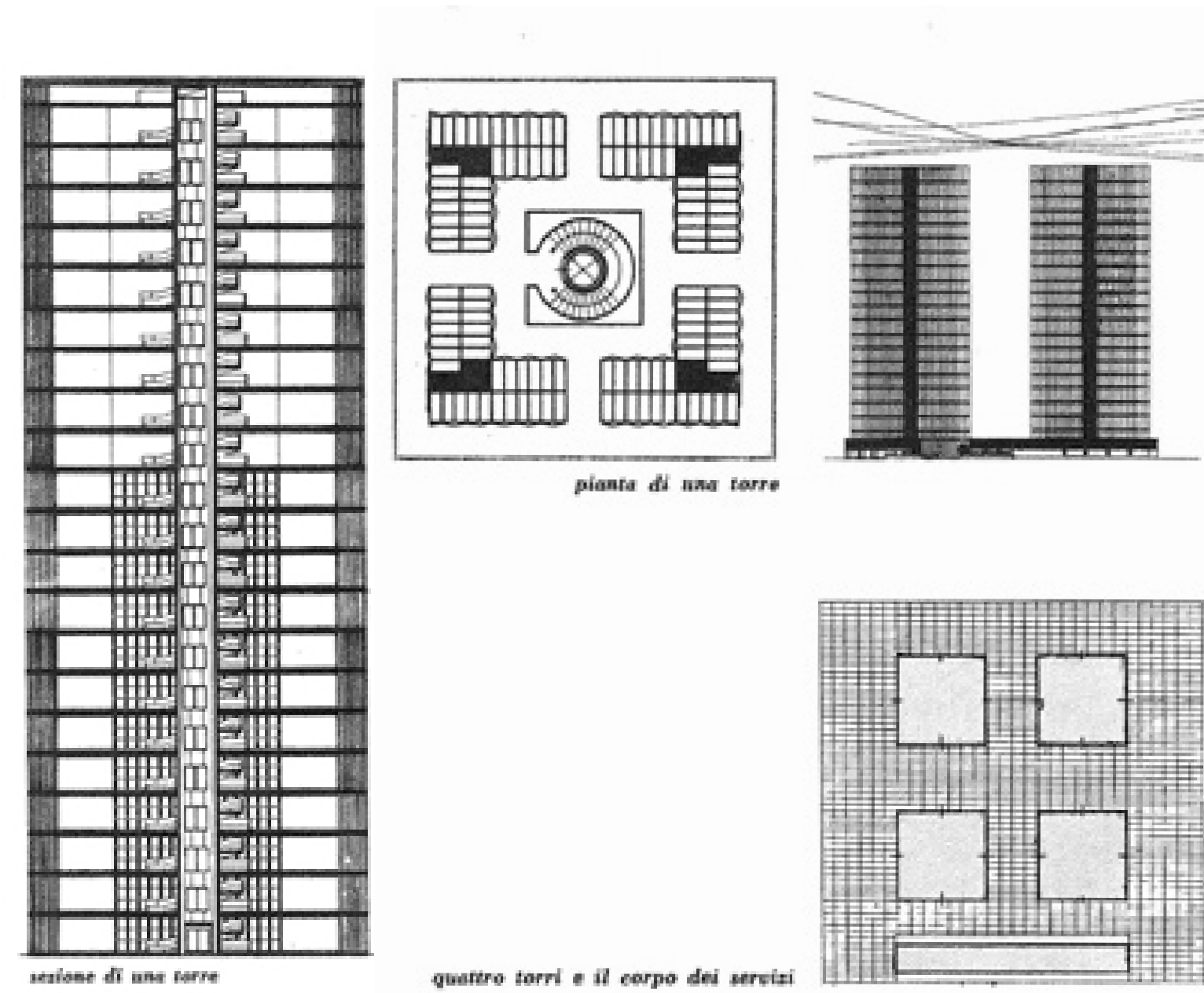


COORDINATES:	45°22'45.1"N 9°08'37.8"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	Of the entire project only the chapel, offices, niches, and florist stores have been built
PROJECT:	cemetery extension
IMAGE CREDITS:	Archivio Nanda Vigo
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori

In 1959 Nanda Vigo envisioned a vertical cemetery for the municipality of Rozzano (Milan) in collaboration with engineers Corraglio and Giavanardi and architect Cesare Tacchio. The tower cemetery idea is to be read as a solution to the future saturation issue of horizontally developed 19th-century European monumental cemeteries and urban sprawl. With the proliferation of cities, in fact, cemetery areas have become increasingly closer to

residential areas, preventing them from growing further. Nanda Vigo planned a bright building bearing no trace of the typically gloomy cemetery atmosphere and of burial classism since all burials in the tower are the same. The tower is quadrangular with a large centralized staircase and elevator, the internal routes are double-loop, and the niches are arranged in the space in between the outer and inner layer of the building. The project

allows the insertion of chapels for groups of six or more niches. The façade consists of a series of glass window frames that can also be replaced with prefabricated brise soleil elements. Of the entire project only the chapel, offices, niches, and florist stores have been built. At the entrance Nanda Vigo chose to place a large Lucio Fontana sphere.



4. The fourth part of the document discusses the implications of the findings. It suggests that the results of the study have significant implications for the field of research and may lead to further developments in the future.

5. The fifth part of the document concludes the study and provides a summary of the key findings. It also includes a list of references and a bibliography of the sources used in the research.



6. The sixth part of the document discusses the limitations of the study and the need for further research. It acknowledges that the current study has some limitations and that further work is needed to fully understand the phenomena being studied.

7. The seventh part of the document provides a detailed description of the experimental setup and the equipment used. It includes a list of the materials and reagents used in the study and a description of the procedures followed.

8. The eighth part of the document discusses the results of the study in more detail. It includes a series of tables and graphs that show the data collected during the experiment. The results indicate that the study was successful in achieving its objectives.

9. The ninth part of the document discusses the implications of the findings and the potential applications of the research. It suggests that the results of the study could be used to inform policy decisions and to guide future research in the field.

10. The tenth part of the document concludes the study and provides a final summary of the key findings. It also includes a list of references and a bibliography of the sources used in the research.

Alessandro Anselmi and Paola Chiatante, Municipal Cemetery of Parabita, Italy, 1967–82



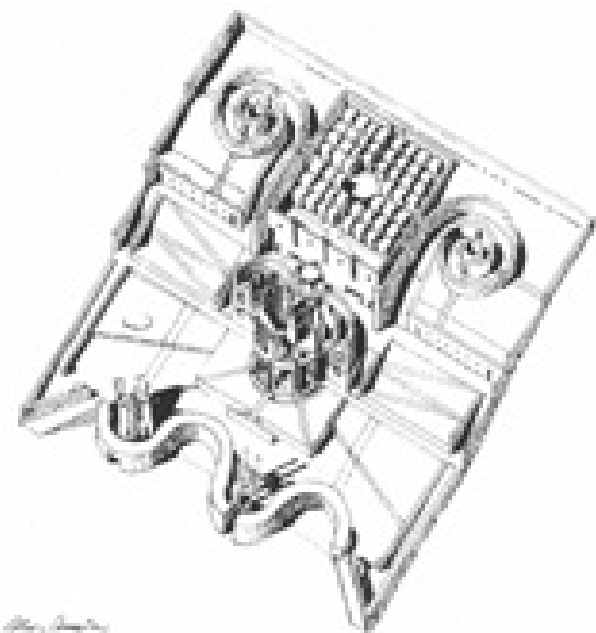
COORDINATES:	40°03'18.8"N 18°07'29.7"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	good
PROJECT:	cemetery extension
IMAGE CREDITS:	SAA&A, Studio Alessandro Anselmi e Associati
MENTIONED BY:	Anna della Tommasina, Ilaria CZ, Gian Marco De Vitis

Between 1967 and 1982 Alessandro Anselmi and Paola Chiatante designed the new municipal cemetery of Parabita, in the province of Lecce, of which we publish an axonometric drawing and original printed photos. This cemetery was conceived as a set of buildings as described in the axonometry, linked in a unified spatial design. “The design of the Parabita cemetery,” affirmed Anselmi, “was created in an atmosphere of dialogue and debate regarding the situation of Italian and European architecture in those years [...] We were obsessed with two categories that we considered constitutive of the conceptual dynamic of architec-

ture: geometry and history, the rigor and consistency of form, that is the image that form takes on at particularly significant moments of human evolution [...] We were very young back in 1967 and proud to be exploring a new path of architectural research; we needed strong images because of our naiveté as architects, and in order to clearly define the innovative concepts. So our memory—albeit intuitively—significantly opted for the iconic image of the Corinthian capital [...] We manipulated an archetype, we distorted this image with a simple formal act: the dimensional leap, the leap of scale. The capital thus became the base of the

plan of our entire project [...] Today I personally believe that this experience can be considered a thing of the past and I see as weak many of the categories that informed the design of the Parabita cemetery. However, the intelligence and daringness of that playful approach, the detachment permitted by irony, the wisdom of melancholy, as well as the definition of a methodology based on ambiguity that proves extremely effective in spaces of creativity, represent the legacy with which we are finally about to cross and visit a room that is now no longer forgotten.”¹

1. Claudia Conforti, Jacques Lucan, *Alessandro Anselmi architetto* (Milan: Electa, 1997).



Abraham Miletskyj with Ada Rybachuk and Vladimir Melnichenko, Crematorium of Kyiv, Ukraine, 1980-81



COORDINATES:	50°24'54.8"N 30°30'07.8"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	good
PROJECT:	crematorium
IMAGE CREDITS:	Gabriele Serrau
MENTIONED BY:	Gabriele Serrau

During the second half of the 1960s, architect Abraham Miletskyj was commissioned to design a project for the Kyiv crematorium, in collaboration with artists Ada Rybachuk and Vladimir Melnichenko. The development of the project was rather complex; at an early stage, the artists rejected the architect's initial design,

which they felt was too focused on the functional aspects of a crematorium and not on the psychological impact that such architecture could have on those attending a ceremony. So Rybachuk and Melnichenko worked on the design of a memory park, a memory wall (that was never built), and farewell halls, spaces character-

ized by a strong evocative and cathartic quality. The result was a complex spatial elaboration collaboratively created by the artists and the engineers, in which art becomes totalizing while harmoniously combining with the plastic and organic forms of architecture.



Luigi Ciapparella, Extension of the Cemetery of Busto Arsizio, Italy, ca. 1970



COORDINATES:	45°36'32.4"N 8°49'43.2"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	good
PROJECT:	cemetery extension
IMAGE CREDITS:	Stefano Perego
MENTIONED BY:	Salvatore Scandurra

Located at the beginning of Via Favanna, Busto Arsizio’s monumental cemetery is the result of a series of projects that were developed between the 19th and 20th centuries. The 19th-century cemetery (1894) was built by engineer Ercole Seves on the model of Carlo Maciachini’s cemetery in Milan. Thirty

years later, a new extension was designed by architect Franco Poggi, who doubled the area; the last project, which we publish here, was done by architect Luigi Ciapparella during the 1970s. This area of the cemetery is characterized by the presence of patios, supported by exposed reinforced concrete pillars,

giving the structure a mono-material appearance. The use of reinforced concrete also allowed Ciapparella to envision a cemetery architecture based on free forms, with large openings visually connecting the elevated parts to the surrounding landscape.





Mariano Pallottini, Extension of the Municipal Cemetery of Carassai, Italy, 1979-80



COORDINATES:	45°36'32.4"N 8°49'43.2"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	good
PROJECT:	cemetery extension
IMAGE CREDITS:	Francesca Girolami
MENTIONED BY:	Francesca Girolami

Mariano Pallottini was born in Carassai, in the province of Ascoli Piceno, on June 27, 1911. After graduating in Architecture from the University of Rome La Sapienza in 1937, Pallottini devoted himself to the collection of graphic and archival documentation on the historical phases of formation and transformation of urban layouts in the Marche Region, from the Neolithic age to the late Middle Ages. His work as an architect and urban planner focused on the design of private and public buildings: churches, schools, hospitals, residential and public use buildings. Among these was the expansion of the Carassai municipal cemetery, which he carried out in collaboration with architect Roberto Pallottini.



Guerino Galzerano, Tomb of Guerino Galzerano, Castelnuovo Cilento, Italy, 1979-82



COORDINATES:	40°12'52.7"N 15°10'51.1"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	good
PROJECT:	monumental tomb
IMAGE CREDITS:	Cristina Calicelli and Gabriele Mina (Costruttori di Babele)
MENTIONED BY:	Augusto Fabio Cerqua

Guerino Galzerano was born on May 2, 1922, in Castelnuovo Cilento, in the province of Salerno. His life was marked by a series of painful events, including being charged with the murder of his cousin Emanuele in 1949 for which he was arrested. After being acquitted, he married Teresa and emigrated to Germany; but in 1970, upon his return, following an argument with

his wife, who was accused of adultery, he killed one of her women friends whom he believed was responsible for the betrayal. Galzerano fled but after a few days on the run he turned himself in at the Vallo della Lucania prison. He was then sent to the criminal asylum in Aversa, where he remained until 1977. It was during his time in prison that Guerino started making his first

sea pebble sculptures. From 1977 onward, when he returned to Castelnuovo Cilento, he began to use pebbles to redesign the surfaces of this town, working on his house, which he made entirely with this technique, and his monumental tomb, which we publish in this chapter. Guerino Galzerano continued this practice until the day he died in July 2002.



Leonardo Ricci with Silvio Rossini and Franco Luminari,
Extension of the Cemetery of Jesi, Italy, 1984-2001



In 1984, the project by Leonardo Ricci, developed with architect Silvio Rossini and engineer and architect Franco Luminari, won the competition announced by the municipality of Jesi for the extension of the monumental cemetery. The extension, which was completed after Ricci's death in 1994, has a trapezoidal-shaped plan, which conforms to

the alignments of the pre-existing cemetery architecture. The complex is divided into several buildings enclosing a central courtyard; the most significant edifice designed by the group is the pyramid-shaped building on the north side at the highest point of the hill. This six-floor pyramid stands as a veritable landmark on the surrounding area and is visible from

afar. Ricci, Rossini (a young former student of Ricci's) and Luminari chose to build this extension in reinforced concrete; the choice allowed the group to think and design blocks characterized by plastic, protruding, and indented forms. The cemetery is a real city of the dead, made up of internal routes defined by walkways at various heights.



COORDINATES:	43°32'10.3"N 13°15'04.9"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	good
PROJECT:	cemetery extension
IMAGE CREDITS:	Flavia Rossi
MENTIONED BY:	Federica Gerini, Marco Theseider Duprè, Benedetta Badiali, Heimo Prünster

HOFLAB, Extension of the Cemetery of Pila, Italy, 2000



COORDINATES:	43°03'31.1"N 12°20'17.3"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	good
PROJECT:	cemetery extension
IMAGE CREDITS:	HOFLAB
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori

The Pila cemetery extension is nothing like typical cemeteries (mostly characterized by a grotesque competition for the most lavish grave) and embodies the choral symbolism of a parallel city: a large, eroded tombstone intrusively welcomes a collection of revisited historical relics (a cloister, a basilica, a hollow column, an enclosure, the central plan, etc.), designed to fulfill the various required functions (private aediculae, a public columbarium, a fountain, the Thebaid, a chapel, etc.). The silent character of the outer perimeter, defined by the iteration of the private aediculae and ordered by the regular rhythm of the travertine slabs, is contrasted by the lively surrounding agricultural landscape. This hermetically compacts the interior space, paved with a bare concrete cast and marked by a votive stele that scenically concludes the main pedestrian pathway. The masonry walls of the public columbaria and equipment, finished with skimming mortar and painted in an earthy color, define an articulated sequence of alleys and small squares that, as a whole, create a picturesque city of the dead. The project was selected for the 1988 Andrea Palladio International Prize for Architecture, and the work was awarded the City of Vicenza Prize at the 2001 Dedalo Minosse International Prize for Architecture Commissions.



1. Alain de Botton, *The Architecture of Happiness* (New York: Vintage International, 2007), 224.
2. *Ibidem*, 107.

“The desire to remember unites our reasons for building for the living and for the dead. As we put up tombs, markers, and mausoleums to memorialize lost loved ones, so do we construct and decorate buildings to help us recall the important but fugitive parts of ourselves [...] At its most genuine, the architectural impulse seems connected to a longing for communication and commemoration, a longing to declare ourselves to the world through a register other than words, through the language of objects, colors, and bricks: an ambition to let others know who we are—and, in the process, to remind ourselves.”¹

In his book *The Architecture of Happiness*, Alain de Botton dedicates a few pages to the subject of memory and, in particular, to the importance of the evocative power of architecture. The environment we build around us is as capable of unlocking manifest and hidden sides of our personality as it is of reminding us of who we are, who we want to be, and what we need. We call home not so much the four walls that provide us with shelter, but the place where we feel most comfortable because it is built and furnished in harmony with the part of us we hold most dear.

“It is the world’s great religions that have perhaps given most thought to the role played by the environment in determining identity and so—while seldom constructing places where we might fall asleep—have shown the greatest sympathy for our need for a home.”²

The ultimate purpose of religious architecture is to reaffirm the principles on which the cult to which it is dedicated are based. Through form, light and color, architecture can shape the path of our thoughts and our state of mind, to the point of convincing us that our inner aspirations coincide with what we see. This is the great evocative power of well-executed churches, in which the height of the

naves, the grandeur of the domes, the marbles, and the frescoes make plausible the idea that Jesus was the son of God. Faith is an inner experience, but upon entering a church it becomes evident how such an experience needs sensory references, from the scent of incense to the sound of the organ, to a specific combination of light and darkness. Wherever the faithful may place their attention, they must find a symbol reminding them who they are and why they are there.

Memory, not so much of the past as of what we are or should be, is a defining element of religious architecture and what binds it to the reality of time.

Throughout the 20th century, the Church repeatedly attempted to reflect on time and social change, stimulated by the upheavals of the two wars and then by the new forms of society and of cities.

In the 1920s, the first experiments on ritual and church building consistent with modernism in architecture appeared in Germany: places of worship were to combine a technological and functional dimension with a spiritual one.

In Italy, as the modernist period in architecture reached its highpoint, nothing changed in terms of religious rites; liturgical practice was characterized more by pedagogy than by authentic renewal. Yet some realities were more dynamic than others: the research carried out in contexts such as Milan, Bologna, Turin, and Florence stemmed from the Church’s attention to the phenomenon of new emerging suburbs.

New homes were to be built around an active church, since a Christian community was often the only form of community with which the new residents could identify.

The wish to engage in a cultural elaboration on the theme of sacred space and the importance of adopting a contemporary architectural language, in order to create new urban centralities, was a particularly open-minded intention and was later confirmed by the indications expressed by the Second Vatican Council, closed in 1965 by Paul VI.

The Church wanted to appear as a relatively democratic institution, but student movements were already active and society was experiencing a process of critical secularization. In addition, new ritual practices required innovative religious architecture, and when the Church declared itself open to undertaking a dialogue with architectural modernism, the latter was already on the way out, giving way to the avant-gardes.

A good part of the churches we consider forgotten—but in which we show a certain interest—date back to postwar-Italy and the economic boom that followed. Whether a construction of undeniable quality and beauty, an exceptional work by some major architect, or a building whose obvious bad taste arouses fetishistic inclinations more than anything else, the churches built around the time of the Second Vatican Council are *Forgotten Architecture*’s most popular constructions. This may be due to their occasional nature, in the sense that they are unlike anything that was being built in those years, when innovation was regarded with mistrust and churches had to be first and foremost practical, inexpensive, and easy to build.

A large number of parish complexes had to be erected in the shortest possible time, and the Church failed to seize this opportunity to manifest its cultural presence, limiting itself to an ecclesiastical one. Churches sprang up in all the new neighborhoods but, in most cases, they were unremarkable from a formal standpoint.

It must be said that the strength of a parish community does not depend on the architectural quality of the buildings it inhabits, it is sufficient (and necessary) that these be functional. In fact, we have seen a number of temporary prefabricated churches become permanent at the behest of their local communities, but also buildings by major architects leaving church-goers cold.

“Forgotten” churches are often located in suburban neighborhoods and because of this they are part of a context that hardly enhances their presence, and clearly does not serve their transcendent ambitions. Leonardo Servadio points out how:

“Urban sequences contain significant expressions. City avenues are lined by

rows of trees and are often interspersed with wider areas, squares, that provide rhythm to their progression, which is diluted in distant visions that give rise to new, similar, or different, sequences amidst the complex network of streets. An urban sequence that leads to a church cannot but have this quality; it must lead to a place defined by the church itself, which should in turn represent the culminating moment of the sequence, yet in a manner that must be specified and qualified.”³

Since the physical path leading to a church may reflect a spiritual path of preparation for prayer and liturgy, city churches have generally been built in particularly visible and central locations, in order to be seen by as many people as possible and to attract even the least attentive, as well as to offer an effective sign of their presence to regular church-goers. A church needs a square because the community needs a square, a place to stop, meet, and forge those relationships on which the very idea of community is founded. Squares can certainly do without churches, but perhaps the opposite is not true. So when a church is somewhat on the sidelines, when it is not at the center of the civic life of the neighborhood, it is more easily forgotten; when it stands alone among houses it merely becomes an outpost of the transcendent dimension, a place far less inclusive than a movie theater, a library, or a gym and—for this same reason—also far less attractive. It is hard today to appreciate the presence of a large, more or less decorated building created to function only a few hours a week and in which, basically, those who do not practice are not invited, since that construction only has a single purpose. Such “exclusive” spaces no longer work as they used to 60 years ago, at least not in the suburbs. The idea of providing new neighborhoods with churches was certainly admirable and forward-looking, precisely because the purpose was to include and bring together people who had religious beliefs in common. But times have changed, suburbs have transformed as have the problems, needs, and desires of those who inhabit them.

3. Leonardo Servadio, “La chiesa come trasfigurazione nella sequenza degli spazi,” *Architettura sacra* (July 14, 2017). architetturasacra.org/2017/07/14/la-chiesa-come-trasfigurazione-nella-sequenza-degli-spazi/

The churches that we consider forgotten are not always of poorer quality than those that fill architectural history books or appear in nostalgic magazine articles or blogs; rather, they are works in which all the theory about symbols, light, evocative purpose, and sober solemnity are brilliantly addressed and succeed in confirming that sense of respect and admiration that religious architecture must retain. It seems unlikely that these modern churches are forgotten because they are considered “ugly,” precisely because the memory of a place does not stop at its formal quality but is linked to the experience that place offers. This is perhaps why, for example, in Northern Europe many religious buildings include a civic center, and it is perhaps also why a couple of years ago in Moscow residents of some suburbs protested against the Orthodox Church’s plan to build sever-

al new churches, believing that priority should be given to residences for the homeless and public parks. A neighborhood needs to come together, and often churches are huge empty buildings that stand where there could be a perhaps less beautiful but more useful, attractive service, welcoming all people.

Lastly, it seems that spirituality today is no longer manifested by going to Mass on Sunday mornings, which is why churches no longer contribute to the quality of life of those living in the neighborhood. This is not to say that the parish communities of these churches do not exist, or are not rooted, but these circumstances signal that today communities do not forget about libraries or theaters unless they have been eliminated. But churches are forgotten, because they no longer serve a community’s daily life.

Ignazio Gardella, Church for the Former Vittorio Emanuele III Tuberculosis Sanatorium, Alessandria, Italy, 1929-30



COORDINATES:	44°56'23.3"N 8°36'59.6"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	good
IMAGE CREDITS:	Gianluca Giordano
MENTIONED BY:	Gianluca Giordano, Stefano Serusi

Ignazio Gardella was only 24 years old when in 1929 he designed the church for the former Vittorio Emanuele III Tuberculosis Sanatorium, the current Teresio Borsalino Multipurpose Rehabilitation Center in the city of Alessandria, Piedmont. The project was commissioned by Teresio Borsalino, a visionary entrepreneur who entrusted Arnaldo Gardella, Ignazio's father, and Luigi Martini with the design of the entire complex. The small church, set in

the park of the former sanatorium, was assigned to his son, who already showed in his early years a brilliant ability to interpret space. The church is an early example of rationalist architecture: Ignazio Gardella designed a building with a parabolic plan, flanked by a bell tower on the façade. The rigid symmetry of the interior spaces and the two different entrances meet the normative requirements of the time to keep male and female

worshippers separate. Light pours in through the openings in the perimeter walls and through the circular skylight placed above the altar. The building is devoid of any form of decoration and already anticipates the characteristics of Gardella's rationalist architecture: a flat roof without cornices, plastered elevations, and a reinforced concrete trellis structure.



Giuseppe Vaccaro, Basilica of Sant’Antonio Abate, Recoaro Terme, Italy, 1949-51



COORDINATES:	45°42'19.6"N 11°13'27.9"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	good
IMAGE CREDITS:	Roberto Conte
MENTIONED BY:	Stefano Moffa Passamonti

Giuseppe Vaccaro is still one of the least-explored authors of the first half of the 20th century architectural history. Born in Bologna in 1896, he graduated in engineering and then moved to Rome, where he frequented Piacentini’s firm and obtained, in 1934, a professorship in Technical Architecture. One of his most significant works is the Basilica of Sant’Antonio Abate, in Recoaro Terme, in the province of

Vicenza (1949–51). Vaccaro designed a church with an asymmetrical layout, reflecting the architect’s own experimental and avant-garde vision. With a series of references to tradition and innovation, Vaccaro references the architecture of Renaissance churches, medieval churches (particularly in structural choices and the use of exposed stone), as much as the principles of modern architecture, design-

ing a basilica in which the past dialogues with the present. The main façade is lined with slabs of light and dark Chiampo marble alternating with Veronese red. The nave is bare and solemn, surmounted by a sequence of reinforced-concrete elliptical arches; the load-bearing walls are made of stone and give a feeling of sobriety to the interior space.



Mario Bacciocchi, Church of Santa Barbara, San Donato Milanese, Italy, 1954-55



COORDINATES:	45°25'31.4"N 9°15'42.4"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	good
IMAGE CREDITS:	Stefano Perego
MENTIONED BY:	Kevin Prenna

Mario Bacciocchi, an architect and urban planner from Fiorenzuola d'Arda, graduated from the Faculty of Architecture at the Milan Polytechnic in 1925, when Piero Portaluppi was dean. In 1951 he was hired by Enrico Mattei to design a series of projects for ENI, including the famous Lecce motorway service area as seen in Ferzan Ozpetek's film *Allacciate le cinture*. In Milan, in a portion of the area between via Certosa and via Espinasse, the architect built a service station that is still a symbol of modern Milanese architecture. In addition to service sta-

tions, Bacciocchi also made a series of religious architectures including the church of Santa Barbara, in the heart of Metanopoli, the methane city built by the Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi (ENI) between 1951 and 1954. The church is dedicated to Saint Barbara, the patron saint of mining activities and the ideal protector of ENI's company hometown, where hydrocarbon exploration and production activities are carried out. The saint's story is told in the work on the central entrance door, created by artists Arnaldo and Giò Pomodoro. Bacciocchi, like many

designers of his time, reinterpreted traditional compositional patterns of religious architecture in a modern key. He focused on the design of a gabled façade in which citations of Tuscan cathedrals such as the basilicas of Santa Maria Novella, Santa Maria del Fiore, and Santa Croce in Florence are clear, with the outer walls covered with concrete panels on colored backgrounds, and the portico with concrete pillars in the basement, protecting the three entrance portals.



Sergio Pasqualotto, Church of the Psycho-Pedagogical Medical Center of Padua, Italy, 1956-58



Sergio Pasqualotto was born in Novecenta Padovana on March 31, 1913. As a professional architect he collaborated with engineer Gianni Bergamo, and held the institutional position of Head of the Technical Office of the Province of Padua. His work is mainly concentrated in the Padua area, where his major projects were the Psycho-Pedagogical Medical Center in Padua and the Padua Police Headquarters. The medical center, located at the corner of via delle Cave and via

dei Colli, was built between 1956 and 1958 and to this day still houses a health center. Pasqualotto created a complex of buildings and functional blocks set amidst greenery, featuring a small church for patients and visitors. Located in the southwestern area of the project, away from the other volumes, the chapel is positioned along the longitudinal axis parallel to via dei Colli. As Paolo Pavan wrote, “The church is treated as a rectangular volume, vertically closed by a hy-

perbolic curved roof: the reference is to hangar roofs, probably inspired by the proximity to the aerodrome on via dei Colli. A strictly utilitarian and industrial typology, almost a ready-made in fact, is associated with a space of holiness and worship, ennobled by the use of copper sheet metal and a carefully crafted brick face texture, which buffers the entrance façade and perimeter base.”¹

1. Paolo Pavan, “Sergio Pasqualotto. Un Architetto del Moderno in Padova,” *Padova e il suo territorio*, no. 166 (December 1973): 32.

COORDINATES:	45°23'56.1"N 11°50'30.4"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	good
IMAGE CREDITS:	Paolo Mazzo
MENTIONED BY:	Paolo Mazzo



Mariarosa Zibetti Ribaldone and Benvenuto Villa,
Church of San Paolo Apostolo, Gallarate, Italy, 1971-73



COORDINATES:	45°39'36.1"N 8°48'04.8"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	good
IMAGE CREDITS:	Sofia Quilici
MENTIONED BY:	Sofia Quilici, Gianluigi D'Angelo, Stefano Perego

The Church of San Paolo Apostolo was erected as an autonomous parish in the Sciarè district on August 5, 1965, by Cardinal Giovanni Colombo. In October of the same year, the first parish priest, Fr. Guglielmo Nocent, made his official entrance and, in agreement with the Diocesan Commission for Sacred Art, on March 21, 1968 approved the church project presented by architect Mariarosa Zibetti Ribaldone in collaboration with Benvenuto Villa. The

church, built by the Borio Mangiarotti firm, is the result of a skillful union between the avant-garde vision of the architect and the need to respond to the needs of the faithful, who wanted a sacred, enveloping space where the human being could approach the divine. On October 7, 1973, the church dedicated to the Apostle Paul in honor of Paul VI, was consecrated. The building comprises an elliptical main hall and a basement with sloping walls, a circu-

lar-plan baptistery which is also a self-supporting tower culminating in a point serving as bell tower, and the narthex providing an entrance to the church. The organic and plastic forms of the project are the result of a skillful use of bare reinforced concrete, whose flexibility allowed the designers to create an architecture with curvilinear forms, sloping pitched roofing, and seamless connections between horizontal and vertical elements.



Francesco Venezia, Hypogea of the Duomo of San Michele Arcangelo, Caserta, Italy, 2010-14



COORDINATES:	41°04'26.6"N 14°20'01.0"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	good
IMAGE CREDITS:	Mariano De Angelis
MENTIONED BY:	Francesco Cimmino

In 2010, Francesco Venezia was commissioned to design the crypts of Caserta's cathedral in Piazza Duomo. This commission was particularly dear to the architect, who had had a visceral passion for underground spaces for more than 30 years. The founding principle of the project is the organization of circulation in space: Venezia designed a path of ascent and descent in the various levels of the crypts, studying in depth the presence of light, shadow, and half-light. Venezia redefined the underground spaces of the cathedral, where other

previous recently carried out projects had proved inadequate, and also recovered neglected ancient works that were present in the space. As the architect himself wrote in *Domus*, the final outcome was a reconfiguration of the space with the restoration of the works present on site "linking and integrating them along the thread of a 'narrative' which began in and finally returned to the magnificent upper hall."¹ In fact, the underground space houses two broken column shafts and a sepulchral relief, which were collected and transported to this sacred

place. The eroded concrete of the walls and the concrete casting of the ground enhance the importance of such ancient finds. At the center of the space, the black steel ark resting on a shaft has two doors that open revealing its content: a clay tile engraved with a cross drawn by John Paul II. For the crypt of the second hypogaeum, Venezia resorted to an uneven rubble stone for the walls, while for the floor he chose *cocciopesto*; the crypt contains a stone and bronze work by Battista Marelli, artist and parish priest of San Leucio.

1. Francesco Venezia, "Gli ipogei della Cattedrale di Caserta," *Domus*, no. 982 (July 2014): 49.



Patrizia Leonelli and Ettore Spalletti, Chapel and Final Commendation Room in the Villa Serena Nursing Home, Città Sant’Angelo, Italy, 2016-17

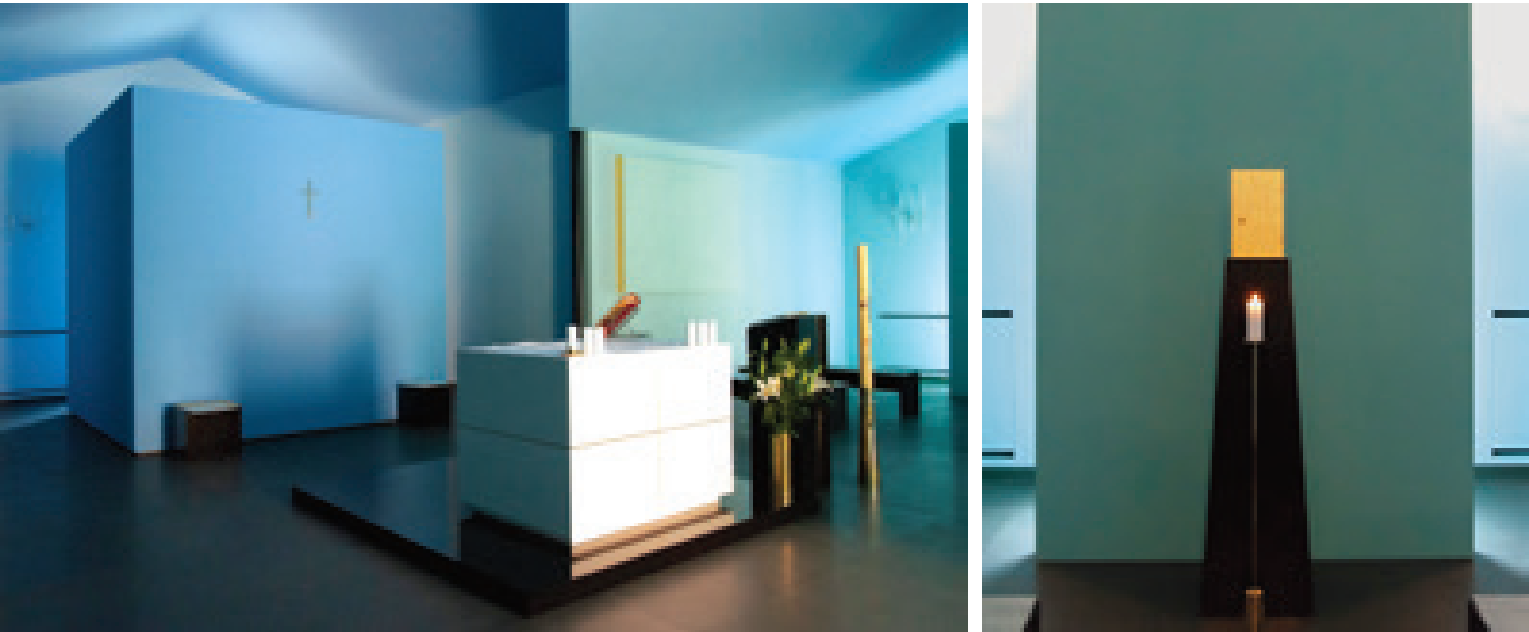


COORDINATES:	42°31'10.9"N 14°06'47.3"E
CURRENT CONDITION:	good
IMAGE CREDITS:	Marco Santomauro
MENTIONED BY:	Bianca Felicori

Patrizia Leonelli renovated the chapel and designed the final commendation room at Villa Serena nursing home in Città Sant’Angelo, just outside Pescara. The interiors of both architectures are marked by the rich interpenetration of art and architecture,

thanks to Spalletti’s vision that transformed the space into a total work of art. Every element of the chapel was conceived by the artist, from the white marble altar to the Immaculate Virgin coated in blue powder. Painting and sculpture, color and light interact har-

moniously with the space, making viewers forget any well-established separation between the two disciplines. An extreme synthesis that testifies to how Spalletti’s artistic practice has always been characterized by a physical relationship with space.



1. Walter Benjamin, “Excavation and memory” in Michael W. Jennings, Marcus Bullock, Gary Smyth, and Howard Eiland (eds.), *Walter Benjamin. Selected Writings*. Vol. 2, part. 2, 1931-1934 (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 576.

“He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging. [...] It is undoubtedly useful to plan excavations methodically. Yet no less indispensable is the cautious probing of the spade in the dark loam.”¹

The process of defining and reconstructing architectural history, but also history in general, is neither linear nor univocal, and of course hardly neutral. Even recent and current history escapes our grasp, sometimes without clarifying the reasons for the prominence or the oblivion of the facts and characters that constitute it. Digging through all the strata covering the given moment in time that we intend to examine, observe, and rearrange, is all we can do to bring even events that have so far remained undetected to the surface. Thus, capturing a moment in history and trying to reconstruct its causes and evolution, sometimes gives us the feeling of plunging our hands into an ocean ruled by unknown and unpredictable currents, rather than into the solid earth.

Dante Bini is one of those figures who, for various and not always easily identifiable reasons, have not been acknowledged in the landscape of 1960s- and 1970s-Italian architecture. In Italy, this omission applies not only to the history of architecture books that have been published to date, but also to architectural periodicals. There have indeed been few publications in Bini’s native country recounting his career as his works were completed and his first Binishell patent was being finalized. Only in more recent times has his name become known to most, mainly through La Cupola, a house he built on the north coast of Sardinia for Michelangelo Antonioni and Monica Vitti. La Cupola certainly played a role in the rediscovery of the Emilian architect due to its nostalgic pop, almost national-popular, style. It can also certainly be said that the aesthetics of his works with their futuristic appeal have further contributed to ingrain his name in the imagery of the architecture of those years.

There are several reasons for his exclusion from the pages of history of architecture of the time. With regard to La Cupola of Costa Paradiso—designed in 1969–70 and now in a terrible state of disrepair—this exclusion was due to the agreements Bini made with the director and actress. In fact, the very existence of the building could not be revealed to prevent the clients from being hounded by the press. By the late 1960s, in fact, Antonioni and Vitti were at the height of their fame following the awarding of the 1964 Golden Lion for *Il Deserto Rosso* (*Red Desert*) and other prizes.

Bini recounts that Antonioni introduced him to other clients on Costa Paradiso, where Alberto Ponis was also working at the time. Bini designed a house for painter Sergio Vacchi (also a small Binishell), and houses for Letizia Balboni (Antonioni’s ex-wife) and fashion designer Luisa Spagnoli. Not too far away, opposite Porto Cervo, Bini built a Binishell complex on the barren Cappuccini Island, a project he developed with Frei Otto. The latter in fact designed a new type of net tensile structure, for bougainvillea to grow on it and create the only shady area on the island. From here, in 1973, Dante Bini left Italy for Australia to work on a series of public facilities for the New South Wales Department of Public Works, before moving six years later to California, where he currently lives.

This was, for better or worse, all I knew about Dante Bini before undertaking the research for the book *Dante Bini. Mechatronics* (with Antonio Pennacchio, Postmedia Books, 2016). At the time, the bibliography from which I could draw information was rather sparse. The published books we could refer to were *A cavallo di un soffio d’aria. L’architettura autoformante* (Guerini e Associati, 2010) by Bini himself, and its English version, *Building with Air* (Bibliothèque McLean, 2014) edited by Will McLean and celebrated by McLean and Niklas Maak’s installation at Monditalia, at the 2014 Architecture Biennale. From there, we moved backwards, using Google maps to locate his works and their state of conservation, going on trips to visit them, and,

last but not least, listening to what the architect himself had to say. After La Cupola on Costa Paradiso, we immediately knew what was to be the next stop, providing the key to understanding Dante Bini’s approach: a plot of land in the Emilian countryside.

Dante Natale Bini was born in 1932 into a family of entrepreneurs from Castelfranco Emilia, founders of the Vedova Bini winery and wine company. He lived for a long time in Bologna where, at the (shall we say) suggestion of his uncle Mario, who at the time was in charge of the family business, he undertook (and then interrupted) his studies in chemistry.

In 1952, he finally enrolled in the Faculty of Architecture in Florence, where his fellow students were later to be known as the radicals. In the meantime, he was involved in the construction of the new premises for the Vedova Bini company, redesigning labels and product packaging with the firm Unipack, which he founded with his brothers Giorgio and Anselmo. “Working during the day and studying at night.”² Bini graduated on March 9, 1962. He was already beginning to take an interest in thin concrete shell structures, a subject he also worked on for his dissertation: the design for a winery in Marsala “which also included a square dome [a base dome, ed.] covering the bottling line.”³ This is how in the 1960s, Dante Bini tested the construction of those domes that would become the Binishell patent.

My destination, in the countryside surrounding Castelfranco Emilia, was La Fungaia, or Mushroom Field. The reason for the name is obvious as soon as one sets eyes on the site: a set of nine domes, all different in diameter and finish, plus various traces of attempts, with which Bini tested his intuition: building with air. Back then there were several patented construction methods that used pneumoforms to create monolithic concrete structures, but Bini’s solution was different because it saved time and money as never before. For example, the method patented by Wallace Neff in the 1940s in California involved spraying concrete on the already inflated shells in a static position, requiring the use of scaffolding. With the Binishell patent, on the other hand, the

pouring of concrete, mixed with a retarder takes place on the ground, when the circular foundation and the metal springs reinforcement are already in place. The materials are thus covered by a membrane to contain the casting and then simply lifted with air pressure, with a dynamic, almost performative process. The metal springs at this stage extend to the calculated maximum point, which determines the final shape of the dome. Bini’s system thus falls into the category of site automation and self-forming architecture, being the origin of construction mechatronics that was later further developed in Japan.

Bini claimed that much of the interest the patent garnered internationally was due to Mario Salvadori, professor of Civil Engineering and Architecture at Columbia University in New York. Salvadori himself had attempted similar structures with little success: it was upon reading an article about the Emilian architect’s first achievement, the Unipack offices in Crespellano (a structure that was demolished in 1980), that he decided to contact Bini to ask for a demonstration. Salvadori, after attending the lifting of a dome at La Fungaia, invited Dante Bini to Columbia University where in less than two hours, on May 16, 1967, 33 tons of reinforced concrete were successfully lifted. Dini made a name for himself in the press, and among the articles that were written, Franklin Whitehouse’s in *The New York Times* titled “Architectural Happening at Columbia University: To Blow a Bubble that Won’t Burst, Make It of Concrete.”⁴ Thanks to Salvadori, Bini’s technique was formalized to become a patent in the United States as well. Over the years, thousands of Binishells were built, at all latitudes and for a wide variety of functions: from residences to shopping malls, from military facilities to sports venues, from libraries in Australia to silos in Karachi.

Most of the patents that followed interpreted the same principle of building automation and the use of air as building matter applied to different shapes and materials. In addition to the Binisystems (the 127 patents Bini registered between 1960 and 1990) the architect also worked on traditional construction typologies and on visionary large-scale urban projects, such as Try 2004 (with

2. From a conversation with Dante Bini.

3. *Ibidem*.

4. Franklin Whitehouse, “Architectural Happening at Columbia University: To Blow a Bubble That Won’t Burst, Make It of Concrete,” *The New York Times* (May 17, 1967): 49; www.nytimes.com/1967/05/17/archives/architectural-happening-at-columbia-university-to-blow-a-bubble.html

5. Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility,” in Michael W. Jennings, Marcus Bullock, Gary Smyth, and Howard Eiland (eds.), *Walter Benjamin. Selected Writings*. Vol. 3, 1935-1938 (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 104.

Shimizu Corporation) an infrastructure pyramid for one million inhabitants in Tokyo.

Bini’s production spans a great variety of techniques and formal results. If we consider his building system patents, to some extent close to what we might call an industrial production of architecture, the words of Walter Benjamin may be of use:

“[...] what withers in the age of the technological reproducibility of the work of art is the latter's aura [...] It might be stated as a general formula that the technology of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the sphere of tradi-

tion. By replicating the work many times over, it substitutes a mass existence for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to reach the recipient in his or her own situation, it actualizes that which is reproduced.”⁵

So the Emilian architect’s work is not so much a strongly “author-centered” production, but certainly is a change of paradigm for architecture. Although the word “invention” can rarely be truly applied, it is more than apt when discussing Dante Bini’s technical and industrial innovations.

Vedova Bini Packaging, 1960



Young Dante Bini in 1952 enrolled in the Faculty of Architecture in Florence, but three exams away from graduation (in the late 1950s) he was forced to return to work for the Vedova Bini wine company due to health problems of his uncle, Mario Bini. So Dante began to take charge of the bottling chain and product packaging, and completely and innovatively redesigned the labels and packaging system. His idea stemmed from an in-depth critique of the solutions that had been adopted up to that time, which, according to Bini, were unsuit-

able. Starting from an analysis of the amount of corrugated cardboard, a material offering resistance only to tensile strength (not to bending, shear, and torsion), he designed a twelve-bottle packaging that required minimal quantities of cardboard, produced no residues and did not require any adhesives. The purpose was to hold the twelve bottles steady by securing them, for the first time, by the neck. This unprecedented packaging solution became Bini's first industrial design patent, which was later widely copied with the ad-

dition of a handle which made the packaging easy to carry and to hold with one hand. In 1962 Bini and his brothers founded Unipack SRL, a small branch of the firm for packaging production, headed by Dante himself. The twelve-bottle packaging design and patent won the first award from the Istituto Italiano Imballaggio, and it was the first of four consecutive Oscars for Packaging Design that the same institute awarded to Bini, who later also won the Eurostar for Packaging.

Drawings for Patent US3686818: Expandable Reinforcement Structure for Inflatable Domes, 1972

United States Patent

Bini

(11)

3,686,818

(42)

Aug. 29, 1972

[54]

EXPANDIBLE REINFORCEMENT
STRUCTURE FOR INFLATABLE
DOMES

[72]

Inventor: Dante Bini, Castelnuovo, Emilia,
Italy

[22]

Filed: Nov. 20, 1969

[21]

Appl. No.: 878,446

[30]

Foreign Application Priority Data
Nov. 21, 1968 Italy 1818 A/68

[52]

U.S. Cl. 52/646, 52/2, 52/80

[51]

Int. Cl. B64c 5/01, B04b 1/18, B04g 11/04

[58]

Field of Search 52/80, 81, 223, 373, 227, 646,
52/2, 111, 632, 121, 222, 23, 291

[36]

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Primary Examiner—Price C. Fox, Jr.

Attorney—Hubbell, Cohen & Stiefel

[37]

ABSTRACT

An expandable reinforcement for use in connection with a building method wherein a concrete structure is erected by inflation of an underlying air impervious membrane, the reinforcing structure being arranged in the form of a regular polygon and reinforcing elements radiate from each vertex of the polygon to each other vertex, there being a distribution of the end points of said reinforcing elements at any vertex. The reinforcing elements which elongate during inflation are constructed of two rods, one hooked at one end and the other at the other end, with the unhooked ends free, and the rods slidably disposed within a coil spring. A method of vibrating the inflated structure is also disclosed.

1 Claim, 11 Drawing Figures

IMAGE CREDITS: Dante Bini

260 FORGOTTEN ARCHITECTURE

Dante Bini is the inventor of the Binishell, a technique patented in the early 1960s that uses air pressure to make spherically shaped reinforced concrete constructions. The 1960s were years of great ferment in the Italian political, social, and cultural debate; the world of architecture was going through a phase of revision aimed at renewing traditional building systems, moving towards technological innovation. “In the field of construction, those years were like a second Renaissance, where new architectural expressions, different building systems, and revolutionary computerized calculation methods transformed Building Science forever,” Bini affirmed. “Brilliant talents—such as

Adalberto Libera and Pierluigi Nervi, in Italy; Félix Candela and Eduardo Torroja, in Spain; Heinz Isler in Switzerland; Frei Otto in Germany; and Mario Salvadori, Buckminster Fuller, and Wallace Neff in the United States—proposed new paths to follow in the future. Each of them was an inspiration to me and they prompted me to develop my various building systems (about ten in all). Thin vaults, ribbed structures, geodesic structures, tensile structures, low-cost housing solutions, and particularly the systems to build them became my ultimate professional obsession.”¹ “The simple physics formula $P=F/S$ immediately came to mind. With minimal pressure, I thought, tons of weight

distributed onto a large membrane could be lifted if properly anchored to a base foundation. So why not try lifting the still fluid concrete of an entire ‘floor’ from the ground and make a dome with it? It could work, but a complete process of self-construction required the invention of a two-dimensional metal reinforcement that could automatically reach the spatial position defined by static calculation,” Bini explains. On June 5, 1964 the architect tested this risky and unprecedented construction process. “Against all negative predictions, the experiment was an instant success,” and within one hour a ground-level concrete casting had turned into a hemispherical dome.

1. From the conference “L’architetto e il regista” held by Dante Bini on July 22, 2019, during “ArchiTexture.” See Dante Bini, *ArchiTexture. Rassegna a cura della Commissione Cultura dell’Ordine degli Architetti di Bologna*, July 22, 2019.

261 Dante Bini A FAMOUS FORGOTTEN

First Dome Built with the Binishell System, Crespellano, Italy, 1964 (Converted into Unipack Offices and Demolished in 1980)



IMAGE CREDITS: Dante Bini

After the intuition he had during a tennis match, Dante Bini decided to empirically build the first dome on July 4, 1964, on a plot of land in Crespellano, near Bologna. The structure was made of concentric iron rods arranged on the deflated membrane on ground level. The rods were connected to arches of chains, which did not offer resistance in their distribution at ground level. During lifting, these chains, from the base curb, interlocked with large curves in two opposite directions toward the pole, precisely following the geometries of the ribs of the sports hall. During the erection, to retain the wet concrete, the combination of concentric irons and bidirectional cross chains was covered by a common cut-to-size fence net. This strange combi-

nation of rebar, chains, and wire mesh was tested several times with no concrete to verify its ability to shift from a flat, two-dimensional position to a double-curved "spatial" shape. Bini's goal was to confirm that the material of a monolithic concrete dome could be lifted and automatically positioned using only very low-pressure compressed air, and that the resulting shape could be stabilized before the concrete began to set. The first prototype was made with this process, and to restore the necessary compactness to the concrete, which as soon as it was lifted appeared grainy, Bini smoothed the extrados by hand using a trowel and without applying any vibration. Ten days after construction, a young journalist named Ferruccio Ve-

ronesi, assigned to report on a beauty contest in the area, happened to pass by the dome. He approached the curious building and touched the surface only to realize that the concrete was still warm and steaming. He knocked on the window of a farmer's house asking for information about the building. "L'è gno cà un architact ed Bulagna, la fat sta boda e l'è andà a cà!" (An architect from Bologna came here, made this ball, then went home!). Veronesi got in touch with Bini, who meanwhile was trying to file the patent. The architect promised the journalist he would have the exclusive on condition that the news had to be released only after the idea was officially patented.



Fourth Dome Built with the Binishell System, Pergola, Italy, 1965-66 (First One to Be Tested by Professor Alessi)



IMAGE CREDITS: Dante Bini

For a long time, Bini tried to obtain from the University of Bologna the testing that was necessary to market his new building system. Piero Pozzati, professor of Construction Science at the Faculty of Engineering, assisted by Professor Alessi, considered Bini's system total nonsense and even refused to see him. Meanwhile, Veronesi's article appeared in a monthly agriculture magazine of the Modena Chamber of Commerce (a circumstance that Bini discovered only after it was published). On the cover, an illustration with antique balsamic vine-

gar bottles celebrated the recognition of balsamic vinegar as a DOC (Controlled Designation of Origin) product. That magazine traveled overseas and ended up in the hands of Mario Salvadori, a well-known mathematician and collaborator of Enrico Fermi on the Manhattan Project, professor emeritus of Civil Engineering and Architecture at the prestigious Columbia University in New York (as well as a great balsamic vinegar enthusiast, Bini says). Casually leafing through the magazine at the Italian Consulate in New York, Mario Salvadori came

across the article "A concrete house made with air" and decided to track down Bini. Salvadori was skeptical, and told Bini that he planned to come to Italy to see for himself how such a system could work, asking if he could even see the actual making of a dome. Bini accepted the challenge. The news of Salvadori's visit took everybody by surprise at the Bologna Faculty of Engineering, instantly accelerating the official testing of the fourth dome that had just been built in Pergola, near Bologna.



Binishells SpA Presentation Leaflet, May 1967

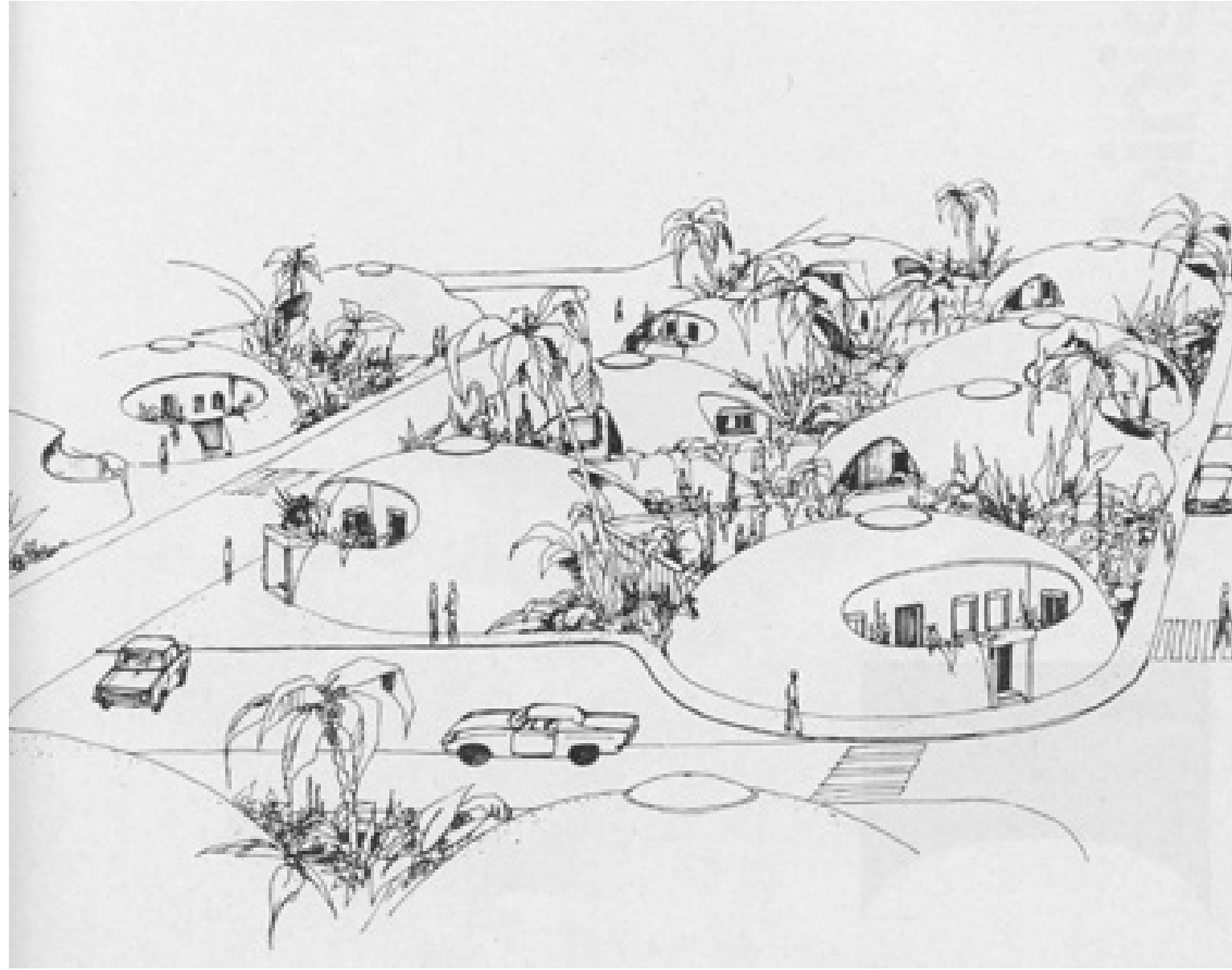
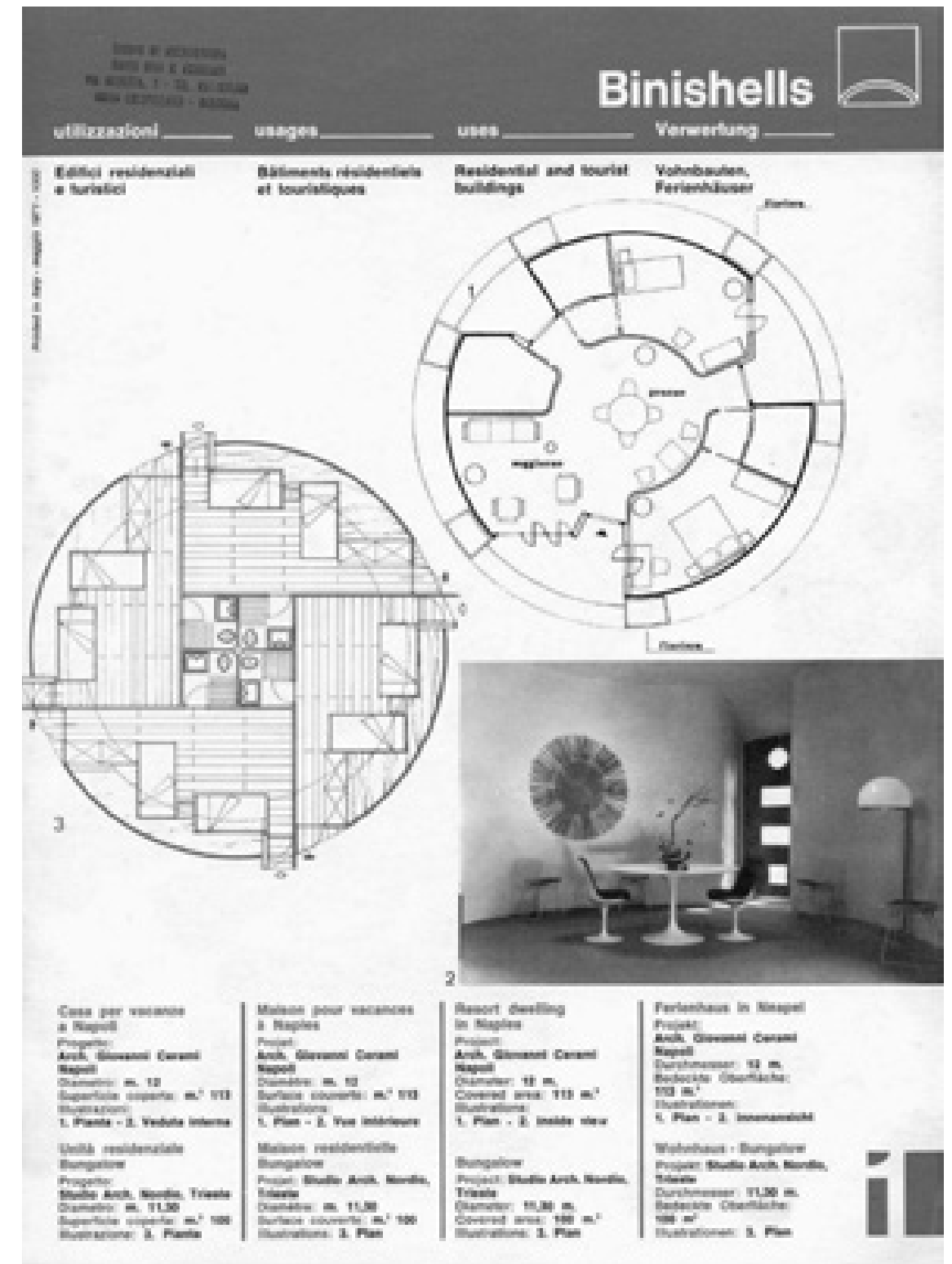


IMAGE CREDITS: Dante Bini

After this episode, Bini founded the company named Binishells SpA, with offices in viale Masini, 20 in Bologna. The plot of land between Castelfranco and San Cesario, already used by the Vedova Bini company as a space to unload the pomace and store dis-used equipment, became the experimental San Gallo construction site,

which soon became a mushroom field with many domes, guarded by a farmer-caretaker and built by Bini with site manager and surveyor Ponziani. This is where the 30-meter-diameter and 7-meter-high dome was built under the incredulous eyes of Professor Salvadori, who was visiting Modena to verify Bini's system. After

their first meeting in New York, in fact, the renowned mathematician had travelled to the mushroom field to see a demonstration of Bini's construction system. Once verified, Bini was officially invited by Columbia University to repeat the experiment.



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Dante Bini

Dante Bini and Mario Salvadori, Test for the Demonstration of the Building System at Columbia University Carried Out in Reston, Virginia, 1967



IMAGE CREDITS: Dante Bini

Robert E. Simon Jr., a builder and friend of Salvadori's, gave Bini access to a building site he owned in Reston where he could carry out all the tests he needed, on the condition that, once completed, the structure would become his property. In Reston, a new circular sandwich composed of pneumoform, springs, iron, and concrete with additives was set up, covered with an aquamarine PVC membrane, which was then attached to the circular foundations once the casting was completed. As the dome was being

lifted, however, a V-shaped gash opened in the green membrane, from which the all-grained surface of the underlying concrete dome could be seen, which had to be recompacted and smoothed to make the structure self-supporting. Salvadori told Bini to just carry on with the process ignoring the problem. The architect followed his advice, while the suppliers of the new membrane selected by engineer Pescarolo tried to identify the problem. The severe thermal variations experienced by the Italian membrane

during the airplane flight probably caused it to break: specifically, the adhesive crystallized, losing elasticity and strength. The Reston dome was then completed by hand as suggested by Salvadori. Despite concerns about the membrane, on May 16, 1967 at 5:15 PM (not without a few difficulties given by the criticality of an American membrane, which passed mostly unnoticed), the dome was completed leaving the audience astonished and deeply impressed.

Dante Bini, Villa Antonioni Vitti, Costa Paradiso, 1968



- 1. From the conference “L’architetto e il regista” held by Dante Bini on July 22, 2019 during “Archi-Texture.” See Dante Bini, *ArchiTexture. Rassegna a cura della Commissione Cultura dell’Ordine degli Architetti di Bologna*, July 22, 2019.
- 2. From a conversation between Bianca Felicori and Dante Bini, May 27, 2021.
- 3. *Ibidem*.
- 4. *Ibidem*.

IMAGE CREDITS: Giulia Ricci

In the same years that Bini invented his new construction process, Italian cinema and theater were witnessing interesting cultural developments thanks to masters such as Franco Zeffirelli, Federico Fellini, Luchino Visconti, Pier Paolo Pasolini and Michelangelo Antonioni.

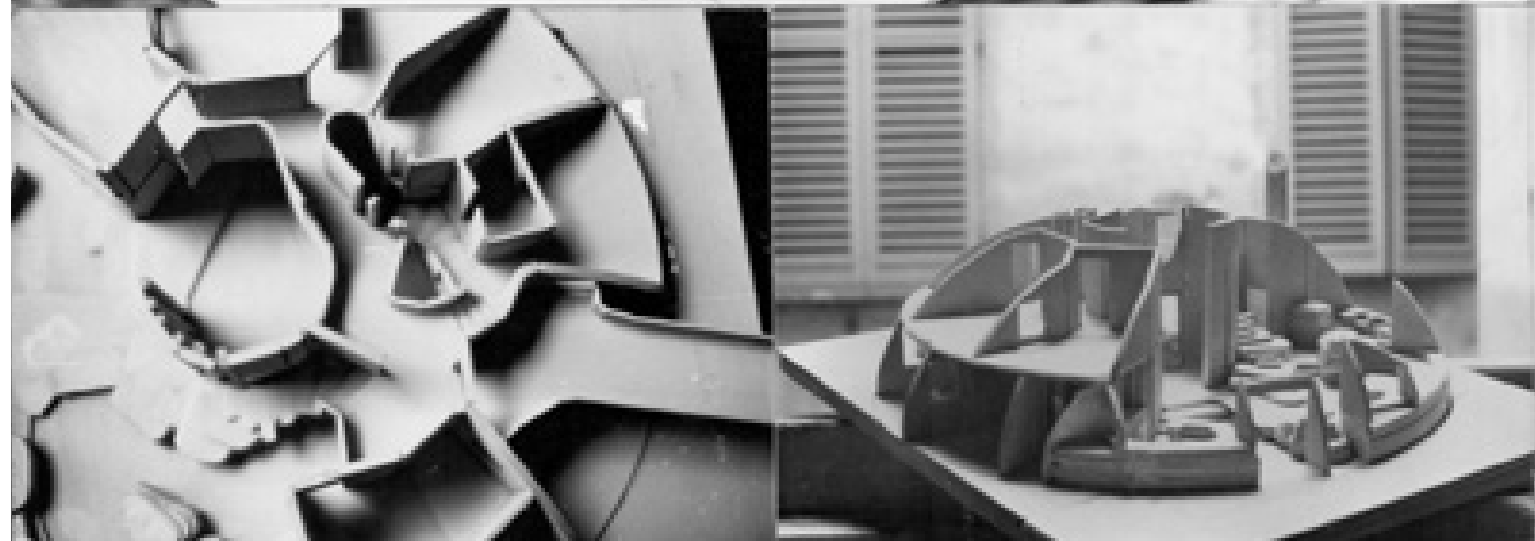
In January 1968, Bini was at Piè Tofana, where he first met actress Monica Vitti, who was introduced to the architect by a mutual friend. Bini told Vitti about his new almost instantaneous building system, which he had presented in 1967 at Columbia University in New York. Bini had no photos to show and Vitti was skeptical, but their mutual friend provided confirmation; so the actress said that she was interested in this new system, and that it would certainly have interested Antonioni, her partner at the time.

In that period the film director and the actress were working on *Il Deserto Rosso* (*Red Desert*), a film shot in the Maddalena archipelago, where they met entrepreneur and landowner Giorgio Tizzoni who became their friend. Tizzoni decided to invest in buying a piece of land on the Costa Paradiso, which at the time was an untouched stretch of coast, and gift the couple with a portion of it. The couple in fact wanted a holiday home especially designed for them, a kind of retreat immersed in the nature of the Gallura region, the northernmost part of the island of Sardinia. A few weeks later Monica Vitti called Bini and invited him for lunch at her (their) home in via Vincenzo Tiberio 18 in Rome, to discuss the project. “The lunch, prepared personally by Vitti (who cooked an extraordinary Ciocciaria meal) was truly delicious, but my first meeting with the famous director, was terrible. After we had our coffee, without really being invited to do so, I began a technical monologue, under the skeptical, inquisitorial, and incredulous gaze of the famous director, who remained completely silent.

I found his silence intimidating. I eventually realized it was time for me to leave and I walked towards the door. I politely thanked them for lunch, which, I must say, was truly delicious.”¹ Bini left believing he had not made a good impression. A few days later however he received a phone call from Antonioni himself, who invited him to fly with him from Rome to Sardinia. During the flight, Antonioni presented him with a list of conditions to which the architect was to submit in order to design a villa for the film director in the Costa Paradiso area. He set five conditions: absolute secrecy regarding their possible professional partnership; limiting his proposal to a single hand drawn sketch of the house; limiting his professional fee to documented expenses (but with the promise of other similar assignments given to him by prominent friends, only if Antonioni was satisfied with his work); commitment not to disclose information about the project, primarily for privacy and secondarily because of the director’s intention to shoot a film in the dome; should he be hired, Bini would have to absolutely avoid bringing journalists, cameras or film cameras to the construction site. Upon arriving in Sardinia, Antonioni suggested that Bini spend entire days, from sunrise to sunset, on the coast to enjoy its essence. “For some reason, he briefly mentioned Curzio Malaparte’s house in Capri, but during those hours he wanted me to concentrate on examining the direction of the prevailing winds, listening to the crashing of the waves on the rocks, appreciating the scent of the salty air, listening to the cawing of the seagulls, identifying the different aromas of the Sardinian herbs and flowers, and above all, he told me to focus on the scent of juniper.”² Antonioni then added: “When I walk into the house I do not want to lose these feelings. When I open the front door of my house, I want to see the sea,

enjoy its scent, its sound, hear the wind, smell the fragrance of this Sardinian land, and yes, even feel the sensual pleasure of the warm summer raindrops on my hands . . . inside the house! And when I walk in, I also want to perceive the scent of space and time.” Bini was puzzled. He could not understand what scent Antonioni was talking about. So Antonioni took him to an old quarry and asked a worker to break off a piece of flesh-colored granite rock. Once broken, Antonioni pushed Bini’s head close to the crack and made him smell its intense scent: “this is the smell of granite Bini! Here you can sense the essence of time, space, and the Universe: This is what I want to smell when I step into my house. I want to smell granite.”³

Antonioni didn’t want a villa, he wanted a sculpture, of which he wished to perceive the spatial dimension. This was the very reason why during the first design review, which took place on site, the director made a scene when he saw the architect’s drawings. “This is no good!—he told him—these drawings say nothing to me, I can’t read them! Come back here with a scale model; only then will I be able to understand what you intend to do.” After weeks of work and absolute silence on Antonioni’s part, the two met again in Costa Paradiso where Bini presented his model. “Let’s call each other by our first name,” Antonioni whispered, “I’ll change only one thing that really sucks: this chimney coming out vertically from the dome! Dante, how could you think of such a thing? Don’t you remember I told you to study the direction of the prevailing winds? They blow from the sea and rise to this relief, so the heating and kitchen pipes must start vertical, but as they come out of the dome they must curve gently against the direction of the wind. This will create a vacuum that will extract the fumes!”⁴



Dante Bini, House for Painter Sergio Vacchi and House for Fashion Designer Luisa Spagnoli, Costa Paradiso, Italy, 1971-72



IMAGE CREDITS: Dante Bini



Dante Bini and Frei Otto, Tourist Resort,
Cappuccini Island, Italy, 1972



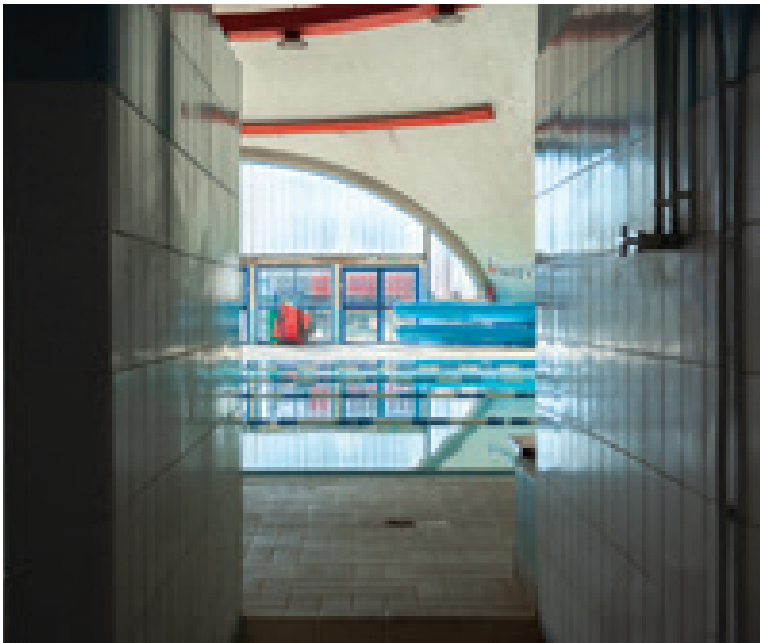
IMAGE CREDITS: Dante Bini



Marco Meozzi, Municipal Swimming Pool, Iolo, Italy, 1976
(Binishell System Application Example)



IMAGE CREDITS: Luca Attilio Caizzi



ESSAYS

Ghost Stories by Nina Bassoli

“Insofar as we can say I, we are our memory.”

UMBERTO ECO

There are many things that make *Forgotten Architecture* a wonderful mirror of our times. I did not use the word mirror by chance. It is a psychoanalytic allusion. An allusion to Lacan, perhaps, or to the blue curtain walls of standardized architecture and to the sense of helplessness they instill. The first time Bianca Felicori asked me what I thought about this project, I remember saying, “Great! It’s a kind of group therapy, the unconscious on the loose.” Let me explain: if during the Lacanian mirror phase a child identifies with his own image for the first time when he sees it reflected next to that of his mother, which he recognizes, then here in this project I think we begin to recognize our own memory, the architecture we have not forgotten, the moment we see our own memories next to those of others. Without the reference of someone choosing for us, new paths open up in our minds, along which architectures, with their oddities, absurdities, or trivialities, are placed more randomly and naturally, like stones alongside a river. Forgotten architectures, but also liberated ones. Architectures expelled by the idealistic chains that inextricably bound them, or, if they were to be truly forgotten, that refused to contemplate them. Architectures set free, that set us free.

Activating a space in which people can talk about serious things in an informal way is in itself exceptional. I have always suffered the lack of meeting places that could accommodate these two levels of truth. Why is it that if we create a dilemma about the meaning of postmodernism today at a dinner party with friends we risk mob-justice, and if we dare to chuckle in the sacred space of an exhibition we risk even worse? Why is it that in a book about architecture an analysis of the period is drowned in a sea of quotations, adverbs, and strings of adjectives to enliven feeble nouns, while the few times we get to have a sincere one-on-one chat everything seems to light

up? In short, why are we unable to talk about serious and difficult things openly and honestly? Stiffly posing as intellectuals at vernissages or slouched in flip-flops at the beach, we are different people.

However: “Insofar as we can say I, we are our memory.”

And our “I” is made up of this and that. And so, as we listlessly scroll Facebook in our flip-flops on the beach, stumbling on a discussion of Lesile Martin’s Rossi-like quality, or Luigi Caccia Dominioni’s Borromean Catholicism, a comment escapes us. A spontaneous reaction to a short-circuit between our two conflicting personalities, a comment that, for once, comes from the heart. This is why I think *Forgotten Architecture* is similar to group therapy, and why I think it has great value in drawing the attention of collective memory to a series of forgotten architectures in this light-hearted way. In doing so, the images reach us through a more emotional than rational channel, a more direct and understandable way, one that will probably make these architectures linger in our memory a little longer, or at least settle in a more appropriate place.

I ask especially the pre-millennials like me: didn’t you wish, back in the day, while reading, say, Tafuri’s little silvery *Storia dell’Architettura Italiana* 1944–1985, there had been a Google images there at your fingertips? That would have made all the difference, wouldn’t it?

Now *FA* provides the other side of the story, and also, in a sense, the other side of the coin.

A new history made of images without theory: stories, insights, evaluations, sources, references, and thoughts are found in the comments, where necessary. *FA* presents itself as a new atlas. “An avant-garde object that deconstructs the historicist album-souvenir of influences from antiquity to replace it with an erratic memory atlas, adjusted to the unconscious, saturated with heterogeneous images, invaded by anachronistic and immemorial elements” (si parva licet): this is how Didi-Huberman describes Aby Warburg’s last epic unfinished work in relation to atlases of our memory.

It is also useful to notice that although the site rules do not prescribe that the photographs must be original, upon closer inspection many of the posted photos appear to be original. So the page does not contain auteur photos, architectural photos, but, again genuine, documentary photos, telling of what interested the visitor-architect in that particular building: for this very reason, in my opinion, the photos are brilliant. Clearly, there is a good deal of narcissism underpinning all this, as in everything posted on social media, but the truth is that there is a significant value in this act of photographing and sharing, not only a documentary value, as we said, but also a cultural value. It is a way of reclaiming buildings and bringing them back into the real world, of taking them out of the abstract narrative of books and bringing them back to us. A way also to look at architecture beyond theories and recognize its value in our lives, even personal lives: such an achievement! It’s true that *FA* posts rarely mention context. Buildings are usually presented as objects, almost like laboratory items. I was a little suspicious of this at first: it took us decades to get architecture out of its object dimension and back into the urban landscape, and to relinquish this achievement to make architecture fit comfortably in the Instagram

square seemed a shame to me. But then I realized that the context was indeed there, right there, in the photos themselves, in the comments, in the discussions, in the likes: an unseen whirlwind of experiences and stratifications, of unconsciousness and projections, of personal, plural, contradictory and terse, but nonetheless real, stories. A new and uneven environment of memory and oblivion, made up more of uncertain bits and pieces than conclusive narratives.

Umberto Eco was fond of lists because “a list is a way of collecting everything one knows about something without having to organize it, a function opposed to or that replaces a definition. If I know what something is I give a definition of it: a dog is a quadruped, and so on and so forth. If, on the other hand, I cannot define it I make a list of its properties. Then we go and take something from the storage room where the already known is and put it all together and then see if a new shape appears.”

It is hard to define, in the contemporary, which architectures are worth remembering. It is really disconcerting to imagine a single direction for architecture. But then where to begin to look for a way? Let’s start by rummaging in the storage room and see what shapes will appear.

Forgotten Architecture: When Architecture Becomes a Community

by Azzurra Muzzonigro

What connects a gas station on the Autostrada del Sole with modernist houses in the California desert, an Autogrill service area on the Milan-Bergamo motorway with a cemetery in Busto Arsizio, a kindergarten in the INA Casa housing project of Piacenza with the inflatables of the radical experiments of the 1960s and 1970s? The list is endless.

These are, in fact, all minor, marginal architectures, left on the sidelines of the official History of Architecture narrative, the history with a capital H, the one that determines what gets taught in schools and what not, what is destined to leave a mark and what will not. Yet, it seems that these forgotten architectures do have something to say.

On May 28, 2019 the *Forgotten Architecture* group appeared on Facebook, with the simple mission of sharing forgotten or little considered architecture. Not abandoned or little-used architecture, but architecture left in the shadows, untold. Starting almost by chance, this project began to generate small discussion groups, that started to grow larger and larger, quickly going viral: 3,000 members in one month, 11,000 in six months. In a spontaneous and self-determined manner—and thanks to the determination of Bianca Felicori who, besides having founded it, manages the page on a daily basis—*Forgotten Architecture* began to create a space for horizontal discussion, in which a starchitect and a first-year Architecture student can discuss the importance of this or that construction without mediation, with a freedom and immediacy that is rare to find elsewhere.

Forgotten Architecture is the first to apply the rules of social networks to architectural culture, turning it into a big collective game: anyone can discover and propose a forgotten gem, unearth it from the shadows of oblivion and bring it to collective attention, so that it may be talked about, opening up new spaces for discussion and inspiring new ideas.

But participants are unconsciously encouraged to come up with quality architec-

ture that will keep the level of the debate high, so that these buildings might not be forgotten once again by the very people who were trying to revive their memory.

It is by this simple mechanism that the high and the low meet in a space that is stimulating, because it is free. This is a grassroots activation process that works because, and as long as, it keeps aiming higher and higher. Whether the participants are professors or students, architects or ordinary citizens, the community will always respond to the stimulus of amazing architecture, by bringing insights, elevating the conversation, and discussing.

Forgotten Architecture is a generative, ongoing process: what is of interest is not so much whether an architecture is beautiful or ugly, but the debate it starts, the space it opens for new, unprecedented connections.

Forgotten Architecture seeks new ways, leads to new experiences, creates theoretical and physical space to imagine other spaces, other ideas, other narratives.

What is new about *Forgotten Architecture* is not so much that it seeks new architecture, but that it proposes a new way of looking at architecture. It makes us look at the world with different eyes: when faced with bizarre constructions, often impossible to understand using classic categories of architectural history or criticism, we find ourselves wondering who built them, when, and under what circumstances.

And we start looking for information, sources, clues and then we share them with the group, we ask about what we do not know and that's when the collective intelligence kicks in to find the missing pieces, reconstruct the story, restore dignity.

Translating a phenomenon that has a liquid and evolving nature into a finite and tangible object such as a book presents inevitable challenges: how not to distort its collective and evolving vocation by printing its content? How to prevent something that began as an open and fluid process from crystallizing into an inevitably closed

and finite object? This is a book that is closer to a manual than to a monument, more of a toolbox for reading and transforming reality than a celebration of oblivion, animated and guided in its editorial decisions by social media and collective mechanisms. An object that offers stimuli that the social platform cannot give, creates added value while remaining consistent with its collective vocation.

Forgotten Architecture has dived into the pond of architecture criticism like a

bolt from the blue, making waves, creating debate, firing spirits, without claiming to replace criticism, but to flank it, stimulate it, sometimes provoke it, give it new life, making it vital and topical.

Forgotten Architecture has the feeling of a path generated by the steps of those walking along it rather than that of the paved main road of History. All that remains is to discover what and how many adventures such a path will hold for those with the desire and enthusiasm to walk along it.

Set Menu by Niccolò Ornaghi

Forgotten Architecture is a surefire product because, nowadays, almost everything is *forgotten*. In a cultural context where memory plays a minor role, the idea of distilling content from the vast historical catalog available—a potentially endless operation—is certainly effective. It is effective from a historical point of view, because since not many people take the time to study, posting a few old pages from important periodicals is more than enough to open endless debates about the worth of this or that architecture by Gregotti, the beauty of this or that chair by Mendini. Then there is the emotional part: some complain of historical abominations, memory violations, deficiencies of all kinds with respect to an unspecified universal architectural history that would deliberately omit someone in favor of someone else. This has obviously occurred, since history is made by people, and people make choices based on their social, economic, and cultural context. Choices deliberately deciding that Mies is better than Rudolf Steiner and that therefore more space must be given in architectural history books to Farnsworth House than to the Goetheanum. The problem, of course, is when the opposite happens . . .

It would then be necessary to discuss what *architecture* is, given the bizarre items found in the Facebook group that is the subject of the book you are holding, but that is a broad aspect we will leave others to explore. Indeed, I do believe that the infinite variety of possibilities makes the product enjoyable and generalist enough to meet all tastes. To make a culinary comparison, *Forgotten Architecture* is the opposite of a set menu in a restaurant, where every day the cook decides what customers will eat. *Forgotten Architecture* is rather a mid-level *all you can eat*, where everyone satiates to his or her heart’s content and stomach, according to their conscience. There are those who stuff their faces and those who are more moderate. Everyone, however, will find something to his or her liking on the menu.

For example, some discover correspondences with certain architectures

they’ve been seeing for years (these are cases of anonymous rather than forgotten architecture), which are revealed in their history and their authors. This I think is the most interesting aspect about the group. Others might find memories associated with certain experiences, mainly related to their own education, and this is usually where long debates about the supposed supremacy of some currents over others begin, which is the least fun part. Others rediscover lost thoughts, childhood memories. On a few occasions I too rediscovered buildings that I had long wondered to whom they could be attributed. I must say that in my eyes they were not forgotten at all: I appreciated them when they were anonymous and continued to appreciate them even after they were attributed to someone. These aspects have much more to do with the beholder than with the quality of the architecture.

In this regard I will embark on a digression that I hope will be forgiven. In 1907 Benedetto Croce published a book with the evocative title *Ciò che è vivo e ciò che è morto della filosofia di Hegel (What is alive and what is dead in Hegel’s philosophy)*, where he first commends Hegel’s “definitive philosophical discovery”¹ that is, the discovery of logical theory, of reorganization of reality which for Croce, as for many other Hegelians, cannot be improved. In the second part Croce reviews “the mistakes into which Hegel fell.”² Croce imputes to Hegel certain shortcomings that were not internal, that is, due to gaps in his thinking, but rather external, related to his time, “which he failed to overcome, and which he accepted.”³ Antonio Gramsci, in his tenth prison notebook, in a text that would later be published by Einaudi in 1948 under the title *Il Materialismo storico e la filosofia di Benedetto Croce*, polemizes with Croce precisely on this point: “In reality, if it is true that progress is a dialectic based on preservation and innovation, and innovation preserves the past by surpassing it, it is also true that the past is a complex thing, a composition of living and dead, in which the choice cannot be

4. Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Edizione critica dell'Istituto Gramsci, ed. Valentino Gerratana, Quaderno 10 (Turin: Einaudi, 1975), 1327. Our translation.

1. In 1906 Benedetto Croce presented his book in a short article in the fourth issue of the journal he edited, *La Critica. Rivista di Letteratura, Storia e Filosofia*. The first part of the article contains Croce's harsh j'accuse against Hegel's contemporary detractors, whom he believed had never seriously read the works of the German philosopher. Therefore, since there were no opponents, there was no need for a defense so much as a detailed analysis, the structure of which Croce describes in the second part of the article. See *La Critica. Rivista di Letteratura, Storia e Filosofia*, no. 4, 1906.

2. *Ibidem*.

3. *Ibidem*.

made arbitrarily, a priori, by an individual or a political current. If the choice was made in such a way (on paper), this would not be a case of historicism but an arbitrary act of will, the manifestation of a practical-political, one-sided tendency, which cannot give foundation to a science, but only to an immediate political ideology. What of the past will be preserved in the dialectical process cannot be determined a priori, but will stem from the process itself, will have a character of

historical necessity, and not of arbitrary choice on the part of so-called scientists and philosophers.”⁴
In a nutshell: everything is history and, eventually, we are the ones who should verify what remains *in us*, of Hegel, of Gianbattista Vico, of Giordano Bruno or of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.
The same can be said of these forgotten architectures. One question remains, however: By whom are they forgotten? And with respect to what?

PREMISE

Is there an anti-historical, anti-academic history of contemporary architecture?

Since the theoretical and practical affirmation of modernism as a solution to the technical and linguistic functional progress of architecture during the last century, written histories and official curriculums have often systematically neglected works, designers, and movements that could not be used to confirm or refute the theses of rationalist architecture. Hidden in the folds of the great modernist narrative, however, there existed and survived the fragmentary history of a parallel architecture made up of isolated, punctiform, tangible, problematic, sometimes heretical examples, more often unaligned or not easily classified, but vital and capable of bearing witness to surprising expressive, technical, and spatial possibilities.

A history of the practice rather than of architecture, made up of examples that are deliberately silent or disdainfully aphasic with respect to the elevated architectural debate. Works and shapes that recount personal, often solitary research in opposition to the educated and progressive academy, research and experiments that are courageous and sometimes quarrel with a concept of landscape bon ton that in fact envisions and supports mimesis, renunciation, and copying over the production of a problematic diversity.

Many are and were aware that this widespread and alternative reality existed in the folds of an often-insignificant urban landscape. Yet nobody knew how to bring it to the forefront and start documenting it.

Forgotten Architecture started as an interesting open and anarchic catalog based on the free activity of networked documentation, soliciting attention and memory of what we might call the unexpected, the removed, or the forgotten.

Only the connectivity of the network and the immediacy of documentation allow this antitheoretical and catalog-oriented approach, the result of which is the progressive reforming of a both virtual and real landscape. A landscape that is not clas-

sified and surveyed only for its physical and material character, but also for the evocative capacities that architecture has as an emotional catalyst, capable of bringing to the surface memories, times, spatial and human relations—an open catalog for an imaginary landscape where cinema, literature, photography and design can also find their place.

Forgotten Architecture is essentially a non-hierarchical and non-ideological project, open to the unexpected, the unnoticed, and even the unintentionally forgotten.

1965, A PERSONAL MEMORY

During a trip to Apulia in 1965 an unexpected detour took us to Manacore beach on the Gargano coast. While walking through the Mediterranean scrub looking for the sea in the twilight, an imposing and at the same time discreet architecture appeared.

A large convex arch facing the sea with vertical concrete blades punctuating its curve and shading the loggias: it was Marcello D’Olivo’s Gusmay Resort (as I later learned).

In my recollection, this vision—I was then a second-year student at the Polytechnic—seemed to reveal the possibility of inserting into an archaic and gentle Mediterranean bay a strong, contemporary, and harmonious formal gesture. No one had ever told me about Marcello D’Olivo at the Faculty of Architecture. Nor did they tell me about him later. Perhaps he was too undisciplined and visionary.

Yet, a school, I thought years later, should teach you how to look at and think architecture with a keen eye for the sometimes-mysterious relationship between invention and constructed solution, intention and result, *genius loci* and interpretive forms, oppositional vision and plain reality, as well as excess and paradox, waste and visionary arbitrariness.

I later discovered that school had taught me (had tried to teach me) to work on what could be justified, on the predictable, on the exactness of numbers, measurements and standards as safeguards to keep error at bay, but then I found out that error may

lie in the cold exactness of quantities devoid of thought, history, and memory, which was what in architecture was then called “international style.”

A culture, as a place of the expected, of the primacy of a social dimension, of the rigor and order of method, can lead to lack of judgment and critical blindness in the face of the unexpected and lead to the betrayal of the expectation of modernity.

If modernity is the revision of the relationship between means and ends, the exaltation of contradictions and conventions, and the consequent resetting and revision of languages as social conventions incapable of communicating the meaning of the times, then the heretics and the nonaligned, the visionaries and the creators of imbalance, should be the object of systematic and therapeutic attention, since they are the bearers of original, acidic, and sometimes stinging gazes, as well as of doubts about the militant certainties of the magnificent and progressive destinies of architectural culture.

The possible quality of *Forgotten Architecture* lies then in soliciting an open and unprejudiced observation of the built landscape in the century of modernity that has just passed; an eccentric perhaps off-kilter gaze that enables the rediscovery and consideration of minor and major heretics distractedly confined to the generic categories of the bizarre or the irrational and experimental that defies standardization.

A list of names comes to mind, some of whom have been reevaluated today but who in fact are kept in a marginal and critically minor position: Mollino, D’Olivo, Sacripanti, Cappai & Mainardis, Gambirasio, Savioli, Soleri, Buzzi, Davanzo, De Feo, A.L. Rossi, Campioni & Rampazzi. Architects whose work is still visible and surprisingly relevant today. I drafted this partial list by simply leafing through issues of *Casabella*, the magazine where I worked as editor from 1971 to 1976.

Casabella was a non-aligned and academically marginalized periodical that in those years was capable of collecting and documenting research and design practices in which the sense of architecture as

a free and unconventional space of experimentation unfolded from the visionary and prophetic territories of radical architecture and from those of the neo-expressionist brutalism of occasional Cedric Price-like technologisms or from D’Olivo-like Mediterranean organicism.

But still, I like to think that *Forgotten Architecture* can be spontaneously constructed as a Wikipedia of the gaze. An eclectic collector of visions where oblivion, distraction, and forgetfulness are exorcised by a spontaneous and network-organized capillary action that leads to the resurfacing of signs and images, delivered to the collective vision devoid of critical ideology for a heterodox and catalog-oriented counter-history of architecture and built landscape. In this accumulation of shapes, what becomes interesting in my opinion is also the proposition of the anonymous shapes of “found” architectures, by unknown or unascertained authors, but capable of evoking formative and unexpected and iconic processes of generating meaning.

In fact, also during those years of “inappropriate” cultural and editorial wanderings, I collected a personal diary in pictures of what attracted my gaze on the urban and suburban route from the center of Milan to Segrate where *Casabella*’s editorial offices used to be.

During an impromptu “Segrate tour,” I photographed a variety of episodes, of constructed details, examples of incongruous street furniture, façades with a little something, authentic architectural inventions, materials and surfaces capable of suggesting a different iconic use of poor and predictable materials. I list them in closing these notes: a temporary and cheap church with a graphic cross and a plaster Madonna. A large house to make lightning, blind and monolithic like an immense monumental sarcophagus made of corrugated sheet metal . . .

I propose to open a section of *Forgotten Architecture* dedicated to the search for qualities hidden in anonymous works and unintentional landscapes. The name of this section could be “Unveiled Architecture.”

Let the search begin.



Forgotten Architectures (To Be Viewed Only in the Company of an Adult Architect) by Cino Zucchi

Each shared code circumscribes a limited portion of language where communication may take place within conventions easily understood by all members of a social or cultural community. This choice has both advantages and disadvantages. Within this communication, small formal variations can lead to large differences in content, and expressiveness can be channeled through lexical and compositional choices. The limits of this communication may lie in mannerism, academicism or even hypocrisy, just as on the other hand the limit of expressionism is hermeticism, the difficulty of communicating through language invented from time to time according to the content to be expressed.

Conventions are reassuring: while conventions are often formed by successive accumulations—through that “epidemiology of representations” evoked by Dan Sperber—once consolidated and shared, they are easily transmitted through treatises, manuals, and repertoires.

Although born at a specific point in time and space, a convention often aspires to becoming universal. Of this we have at least two clear examples: the “code of elegance” of men’s dress in its form codified by English culture—and later established as an international paradigm—and the system of classical orders described by Marcus Vitruvius Pollonius and later codified and disseminated by his 16th-century and neoclassical hagiographers.

Wherever there is a code or rule, deviation from it can alternately be considered an error or a transgression. In the current understanding, the distinction between the two lies perhaps only in the intention or in the lack of it which prompt these deviations and their outcomes. The dialectal contaminations and lexical inventions in the writing of Carlo Emilio Gadda or Maurizio Maggiani produce a linguistic eros explicating the distance between ordinary language and literature, just as Raymond Queneau’s *Exercises in Style*—where the same short story is told in 99 different ways—represents a

“literary Kamasutra” that resets once and for all the pretended neutrality of language in the description of a real or imaginary fact.

Morality and Architecture is the title of a book by David Watkin of which the *Architecture and Morality* LP by the Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark is a specular reflection. The profound ambiguity of the relationship between architectural form, technical dimension, and what Christian Norberg-Schulz called the “building task” has led to a need for “theory” and conceptual tools capable of translating ethical and social values into inhabited structures, often creating overly direct transpositions between the plane of the program and that of the space housing it.

From a clearly classicist point of view, Watkin argues that the “moralism” animating the white walls and square forms of last century’s functionalist architecture have been unable to reform the foundations of the ever-changing discipline of architecture.

Karl Kraus affirmed, “If language is only a garment, it will become worn and old-fashioned. Up to that point it can still be donned. A tuxedo will not make one immortal, but will make the wearer pleasing. But what are young people wearing these days? A language that consists only of epithets! A dress without fabric, all made of buttons!”¹

While much of what we now call “mannerism” is based on the relationship between a rule and its deliberate and cultured alteration—such as the lowered triglyphs in the frieze of Palazzo Te in Mantua or their omission in the courtyard of Palazzo Massimo in Rome—these transgressions appear erotic accents which are inevitably part of a public game, and which therefore need this public game and to whose shared knowledge they refer.

But only a couple of centuries later, Teofilo Gallaccini’s *Trattato sopra gli errori degli architetti* (Treatise on the Errors of Architects, Venice, 1767) considers the cartouches and broken gables of the baroque and rococo not mere gallant licenses within an amiable game, but authentic architectural “sins,”

1. Karl Kraus, *Sprüche und Widersprüche*, 1909, Italian translation *Detti e contraddetti* (Milan: Bompiani, 1989), 282. Our translation.

2. On the *Oikéma* see Paulette Singley, “The Anamorphic Phallus within Ledoux’s Dismembered Plan of Chaux,” *Journal of Architectural Education* (1984), Vol. 46, no. 3 (February 1993): 176–188.

temptations that cause architects to deviate from the straight and narrow path indicated by classical lexicon and syntax.

In the 18th century, with the linguistic reset introduced by the *Architecture Parlante* of what Kaufmann called the “three revolutionary architects”—Étienne-Louis Boullée, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux and Jean-Jacques Lequeu—what were still internal debaucheries of the discipline were replaced by erotic and pornographic figures deliberately inserted in architectures with strong didactic intent. This is the case with the famous phallus-shaped plan of the so-called *Oikéma* designed by Ledoux—a place where young men would come to chaste behavior through unrestrained practice of various forms of lust²—or the detail of the allusively draped curtain in the shape of a penis in the *Petite synagogue* drawing by Lequeu, the author, moreover, of highly lascivious drawings on the anatomy of the female genital organ.

Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Pense, the Old French motto engraved on the garter of the order of the same name, accompanies our ability to grasp erotic echoes in often famous works of architecture, from the Gherkin tower in London designed by Norman Foster (whose phallic profile has been the subject of a famous satirical cartoon by Léon Krier) to the Qatar stadium designed by Zaha Hadid.

But the category of “porno-graphic” (from the ancient Greek word for “prostitute”) architecture I have been looking for to present on the pages of *Forgotten Architecture* is not one endowed with varying degrees of explicit formal references to sex; rather, it is one that constructs objects and images that *deviate* from a language once codified by treatises, and today by the statistical repetition of forms and modes.

Whether this is done intentionally or unintentionally often depends on the shifting relationship between emission and reception: what we call the “common sense of decency” or “public decency” varies over time and space. Common to what we now call paraphilias (Wikipedia lists 115 different types) is perhaps their obsessive and particularizing character. These sexual interests would thus distance sexual fantasies from the field of the broader affective

and relational sphere and isolate them as practices in their own right, marked by a high degree of *formalization* and autonomy. Similarly, we could call “architectonic pornography” any operation that emphasizes a formal configuration or technological detail with the aim of arousing the viewer’s senses, attributing to them an independent value not specifically related to the original purposes of the program.

A large portion of contemporary architecture thus displays exquisitely pornographic traits, yet traits of a soft pornography, similar to what we find on prime-time television programs. Speaking of his former friend Richard Wagner, Friedrich Nietzsche affirmed, “In his art there is mixed, in the most seductive manner, the things at present most necessary for everybody—the three great stimulants of the exhausted, brutality, artifice, and innocence (idiocy),” a concept that Joni Mitchell’s song about the “three great stimulants / of the exhausted ones” attributes today to television and the media.

Just as the sexual liberation advocated by the hippie movement of the 1960s has now become one of the main advertising and entertainment tools, so the “autonomous” architectural icons enabled by parametric modeling are now the standard bearers and towers of the “big game” of real estate development: a kind of “building pornography” where metal *rotules* supporting continuous glazing appear as veritable “garters of architecture,” and the sinuous forms of double-curved panels become silicone prostheses capable of creating erotic protuberances on structures that are indifferent to them.

Just as the faded photos of a vintage eroticism appear almost sweet and naive in comparison with the virtual reality of contemporary porn, so the forgotten architectures collected here tell us of experimental impulses that seek to break through the rationalist orthodoxy that has spanned the last century. Hollow forms bordering on sculpture, decidedly innovative technological solutions, and spatial experiments worthy of the best baroque, form an LG-BTQ galaxy capable of expanding the vocabulary and monotonous syntax of a “procreative” functionalism that may be correct but is also slightly boring.

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