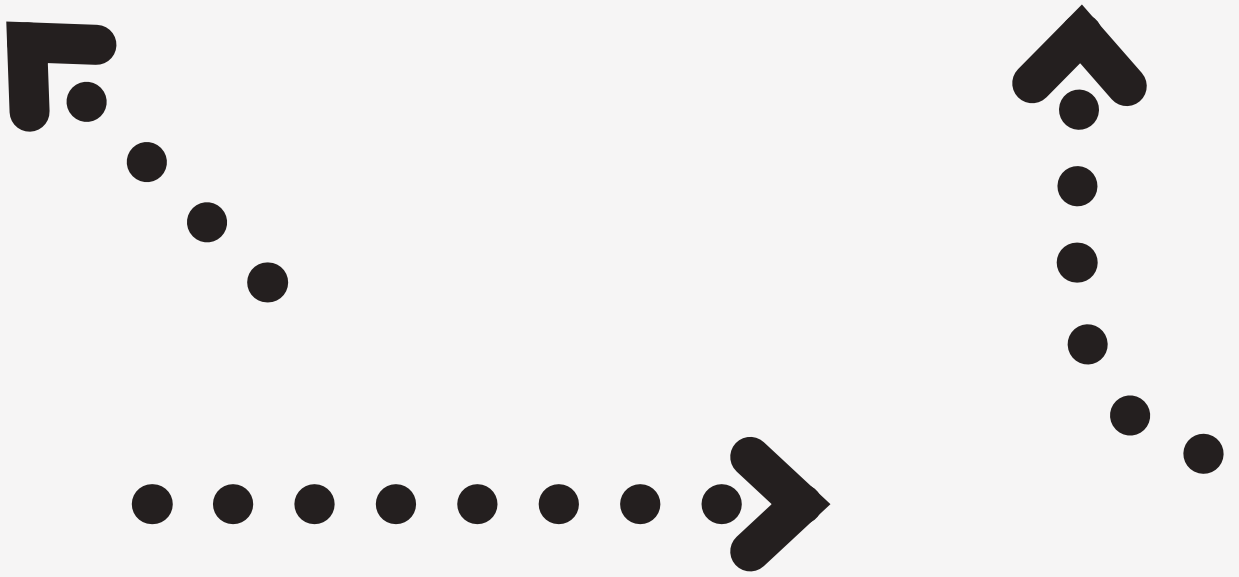
Updating the Grand Tour.
Memory and Invention of the
European Built Environment

Workbook of Affinities



The *Workbook of Affinities* comprises 7 sections that synthesise the results of the exercises undertaken by the UpGranT Consortium in the conception of a learning by travelling pedagogical model, re-empowering the Grand Tour's long-standing practice.

Section 1 **UpGranT Consortium**
Section 2 **Politecnico di Milano · POLIMI**
Section 3 **Faculty of Architecture – University of Porto · FAUP**
Section 4 **Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna · UNIBO**
Section 5 **Art Academy of Latvia · LMA**
Section 6 **Aristotle University of Thessaloniki · AUTh**
Section 7 **Estonian Art Academy · EKA**

Workbook of Affinities

Updating the Grand Tour.
Memory and Invention of the
European Built Environment

The *Workbook of Affinities* comprises 7 sections that synthesise the results of the exercises undertaken by the UpGranT Consortium in the conception of a learning by travelling pedagogical model, re-empowering the Grand Tour's long-standing practice.

Section 1	**UpGranT Consortium**
Section 2	**Politecnico di Milano · POLIMI**
Section 3	**Faculty of Architecture – University of Porto · FAUP**
Section 4	**Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna · UNIBO**
Section 5	**Art Academy of Latvia · LMA**
Section 6	**Aristotle University of Thessaloniki · AUTh**
Section 7	**Estonian Art Academy · EKA**

– *Helder Casal Ribeiro, Silvia Ramos* **Foreword**

1 Introduction P3

– *Cristina Pallini* **Architects on the move: bridging the Grand Tour into the future**

2 UpGranT *in situ* P7

– *Helder Casal Ribeiro, Silvia Ramos* **Wall atlas**

3 Toward an UpGranT method P13

– *Helder Casal Ribeiro, Silvia Ramos* **International Programme for Learners**

4 UpGranT perspectives P19

– *Aleksa Korolija, Cristina Pallini* **Heuristic practices. Snaphots from Polytechnic Travels**

– *Helder Casal Ribeiro* **Beyond a form of listening and looking**

– *Lamberto Amistadi* **On the use of travel for architecture**

– *Liene Jākobsone* **A complete picture**

– *Gregor Taul* **Updating the Grand Tour: Travel, Teaching, and the European Built Environment**

– *Apostolos Kalfopoulos* **The Architect's Backpack**

List of contributors

Edited by
Cristina Pallini
Helder Casal Ribeiro
Lamberto Amistadi
Liene Jākobsone
Apostolos Kalfopoulos
Gregor Taul

The UpGranT "Workbook of Affinities" is published under the Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnerships in Higher Education programme, funded by the European Union. Reference: 2023-1-IT02-KA220-HED-000158377.

The views expressed are those of the author(s) alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the Erasmus+ - INDIRE National Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting administration can be held responsible for them.

Contents

Foreword

– Helder Casal Ribeiro, Silvia Ramos

Almost three years after the beginning of the UpGranT project, the "Workbook of Affinities" synthesises the results of the consortium's architectural exercises in conceiving an *in situ* pedagogical model, or, in other words, a learning by travelling methodology hinged on the (re)interpretation of real buildings, re-empowering the Grand Tour's long-standing practice.

The present publication guarantees equal voice to all partners, individually and collectively, in terms of their affinities (close relationships, shared qualities) and their differences (otherness, distinct character), particularly in relation to townscape, architecture, and design practice.

To establish a common ground, highlighting affinities and differences, the "Workbook of Affinities" is written in a single language and organised into seven sections: one for each partner institution, portraying cultural identity, and a common section in which the entire consortium participates.

This common section – Section 1 – includes not only an overview of the project's objectives, goals, and dynamics, along with the main shared events and productions toward an UpGranT method, but also a set of essays that present each partner's final perspective or last contribution to the project theme.

The individual sections – Sections 2 to 7 –, although dedicated to the work of each partner institution – Politecnico di Milano, Faculty of Architecture – University of Porto, Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna, Art Academy of Latvia, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Estonian Art Academy –, share a common structure, enabling comparative readings. These sections feature a precise selection of the fundamental, representative exercises developed by each team – Grand Tourists, Grand Tour, Souvenirs on Exemplary Buildings, Learning by travel with... –, in a layout that values interpretative essays through the concept of drawing with text and writing with drawing, presented in the form of original short texts and visual essays (Wall Atlas) that pair images from the authors with archival documentation, along with an interview with a living architect in practice. These exercises were based on the same premises, criteria, and analytical models. All deviations represent the corresponding partner's personal and cultural approach or perspective. The contents in each section are the entire responsibility of the partner organisation and their authors.

The "Workbook of Affinities" is available in digital, open-access, and print formats. The book's design interprets both its character as an exercise notebook, in A4 format, with a soft cover and standard paper, and its organisation into independent yet interconnected sections, printed in seven detachable fascicles, published simultaneously and bound together by a paper strap.

The workbook's structure encompasses the meaningful ethos of learning by travelling by bringing together different matters/interpretative accounts on a selection of architects, travels and buildings, demonstrating the trans-temporal and trans-geographic generative role of travel, capable of sparking the interest of new paths not only in students, researchers and professors, from different scholarly levels and areas of interest, but also professionals of architecture, culture, travel, tourism and the public interested in the themes of arts, architecture and creative process.

The goal of this book is to celebrate architecture as a social and cultural imperative through travel and creative awareness.

The "Workbook of Affinities" is an occasion to express UpGranT's complete gratitude to the many Institutional Partners, listed at the end of the book's first section, for their effective and always assiduous support. A special thanks also goes to all the Grand Tourist Architects for their significant contributions.

1 Introduction

Architects on the move: bridging the Grand Tour into the future

– *Cristina Pallini*

Traditionally, the Grand Tour was a trip through Italy that young aristocrats and gentry took to complete their education by experiencing cities, monuments, and artworks firsthand. As such, the Tour served as a catalyst in shaping a European cultural horizon long before Europe was established as a political entity. However, as its destinations became more institutionalised, its scope became narrower. Following this tradition, contemporary student exchange programmes are thriving – sometimes blurring the lines of context, social readiness, and interaction – at a time when travel is becoming more accessible, and the relentless pursuit of authenticity mirrors the increasing estrangement of many places.

UpGranT aims to re-centre the role of travel within design education, which, as generations of architects have demonstrated, requires a strong experiential knowledge. When aspiring and skilled architects visited buildings in person to grasp their contextual significance, they often engaged with the artefact, using multiple observation methods and diverse ways to preserve memories through sketches, surveys, photographs, and descriptions. This process is transgenerational, designed to imprint experiences in memory as a personal reference collection, which have been and continue to be resources for new spatial and formal ideas.

From this perspective, UpGranT aims to unpack the idea of “learning by travelling”, which partly involves promoting informal, student-centred approaches and self-motivation, while also exposing architects-in-the-making to diversity and otherness.

The project examines the diversity of built environments across five European countries, including Italy and Greece, both traditional Grand Tour destinations renowned for their rich antiquities; Portugal, situated on Europe’s western border; and Latvia and Estonia, representing the even more challenging Baltic frontier.

The collective memory of Europe lies, among other things, in the materiality of its built environment, embedding a diversity of histories and traditions while bearing concrete evidence of the co-identities shaped over centuries of the circulation and exchange of people and ideas. Cities of the partner countries – Milan and Bologna, Thessaloniki, Porto, Riga and Tallinn – are framed as dialectically experienced by prominent figures from 1900 to the present day, living and practising architects, and off-radar personalities – who filtered their travel experience into their built work.

UpGranT was organised into six Work Packages, with the first (WP1) focusing on project management and the last (WP6) on dissemination. The research was carried out within the scope of WP2 (*Grand Tourists*), WP3 (*Souvenirs*), and WP4 (*Itineraries*).

Within WP2, the Partner Organisation (PO) identified 10 architects active in the countries concerned, who undertook the Grand Tour as part of their training, clarifying the selection criteria for travel itineraries, outputs, and research-relevant aspects. These travel experiences contributed to the architects’ way of thinking, highlighting, whenever possible, the influence of travel memories on their work. All this implied consulting available literature, public and private archives, interviewing practising architects, and collecting and cross-referencing visual and written documents. Eventually, each PO identified three exemplary buildings to be visited (WP4) and explored through interpretive elaborations.

Souvenirs, the title of WP3, is a term used since the late 18th century to refer to a memory or keepsake. For architects on the move, souvenirs were tangible objects to bring home: surveys conducted on site with makeshift

measuring tools, three-dimensional reproductions, drawings, or views created by others, such as Piranesi's plates showcasing classical ruins.

Rekindling memories of visited places, souvenirs prompted processes of reinterpretation and invention. Along this line, WP3 explored the links between experiential knowledge and re-framing methods, mapping various interpretive tools, both analytical and artistic, common among architects. In this phase, POs explained and shared their approaches to analysing a building and illustrating the core principles behind its spatial syntax and formal design. The three exemplary buildings identified in WP2 served as a testing ground, enabling visual interpretations across language barriers, not just among experts.

WP4, consisting of four updated versions of the Grand Tour, was fed by materials collected and processed in WP2 and WP3, and stood at the core of the UpGranT project. While having independent documentary value, in WP4, all previously collected and elaborated materials were tested against reality by members from all POs.

The first trip (GT#1), organised by the Milan and Bologna teams, took place from 12 to 15 January 2024; it began with an itinerary from Cesena to Urbino, alternating modern architecture and visits to historic centres, concluding with a day-long cross-section of Milan alternating between works by the ten selected Grand Tourists and other notable buildings.

The second trip (GT#2), organised by the Riga and Tallinn teams, took place from 8 to 12 June 2024. It began with a walking tour in Riga and continued by bus to Tallinn, making a series of intermediate stops – Saulkrasti, Pärnu, Rapla, Maidia – to visit buildings constructed during the interwar period and the post-independence era.

The journey to Porto (GT#3) and northern Portugal took place from 5 to 14 June 2025. It lasted longer than the others and involved students from all POs, who took part in an Intensive Programme for Learners (IPL) at the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Porto, an exemplary building complex (though out of the three selected by the FAUP team) designed by Pritzker Prize winner Álvaro Siza.

All the work completed so far has highlighted some areas for reflection.

Some key differences concern in travel access across countries and political contexts. While tourism became more widespread in Western Europe, only a small elite travelled freely beyond the Iron Curtain (Jākobsone 2024; Taul 2024). The Soviet occupation represented a turning point in the Baltic republics, where architects' creative freedom was restricted in both their education and professional growth. Confronted with a lack of current sources, they devised autonomous training methods, such as systematically recreating images from Western magazines, which they preserved for professional use.

Another issue concerns identifying the typologies of modern Grand Tours: institutionalised, undertaken by individuals or groups of architects, or, as claimed by Helder Casal Ribeiro and Silvia Ramos (2024), concentrated on a single building. According to Lamberto Amistadi and Ildebrando Clemente (2024), the journey can also be an imaginary one.

Bibliography

AMISTADI L., and CLEMENTE I. (2024) - "In Random Order. Hejduk, Albers, Rossi". In: C. Pallini, L. Amistadi (eds), *Architec-Tour. Memory and Invention of the European Built Environment*, FAMagazine: Research and Projects on Architecture and the City, 69-70, pp. 32-41.

CASAL RIBEIRO H., and RAMOS S. (2024) - "Porto's Faculty of Architecture: Points Toward a Grand Tour". In: C. Pallini, L. Amistadi (eds), *Architec-Tour. Memory and Invention of the European Built Environment*, FAMagazine: Research and Projects on Architecture and the City, 69-70, pp. 159-169.

JĀKOBSONE L. (2024) - "Restricted Grand Tours. Architects' Experiences in the Soviet Periphery". In: C. Pallini, L. Amistadi (eds), *Architec-Tour. Memory and Invention of the European Built Environment*, FAMagazine: Research and Projects on Architecture and the City, 69-70, pp. 104-115.

TAUL G. (2024) - "Soviet Estonian Architects' Travels During the USSR. The Case of Mart Port". In: C. Pallini, L. Amistadi (eds), *Architec-Tour. Memory and Invention of the European Built Environment, FAMagazine*, pp. 116-137.

2 UpGranT in situ


1


2


3


4


5


6


7


8


9


10


11


12


13


14


15


16


17


18


19


20


21


22


23


24


25


26


27


28


29


30


31


32

Wall Atlas

In the “Workbook of Affinities”, the Wall Atlas corresponds to a visual essay where a specific UpGranT topic is debated through a collection of selected images.

The “*in situ* Wall Atlas” adresses the core of the project that lies in placing into practice four geographically distinct updated Grand Tours. These Grand Tours are hosted jointly, or individually, by the UpGranT partners: #1 Milan and Bologna (January 2024); #2 Riga and Tallinn (June 2024); #3 Porto (June 2025); #4 Thessaloniki (June 2026).

Each Grand Tour, with specific graphic material, includes curated itineraries, team meetings, training sessions and an open seminar, in which at least two members of each partner institution participated. The Porto Grand Tour also includes an Intensive Programme for Learners.

Images

1-8 Grand Tour #1: Milan and Bologna (Cesena), 12-15 January 2024.

9-16 Grand Tour #2: Riga and Tallinn, 08-12 June 2024.

17-24 Grand Tour #3: Porto, 05-14 June 2025.

25-32 Intensive Programme for Learners within GT#3: Porto, 09-14 June 2025.

Credits

3, 20, 28 POLIMI Team, UpGranT Archive.

1, 6, 12, 22, 23, 32 FAUP Team, UpGranT Archive.

7, 8, 13, 16 UNIBO Team, UpGranT Archive.

4, 5 LMA Team, UpGranT Archive.

2, 9, 18, 27, 29, 30, 31 AUTh Team, UpGranT Archive.

10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21, 24, 25, 26 EKA Team, UpGranT Archive.

The Intensive Programme for Learners

– Helder Casal Ribeiro, Silvia Ramos

In 2025, from June 9 to June 14, as part of the UpGranT Grand Tour to Porto, the UpGranT Intensive Programme for Learners (IPL) took place at the Faculty of Architecture – University of Porto (FAUP).

The IPL was a six-day international workshop specifically focused on the Architectural Design Process, organised between the UpGranT Consortium, with the participation of 36 students and 12 professors.

The IPL’s main objective was to experiment and test an *in situ* pedagogical model of learning by travelling through real spaces/buildings. IPL aimed to engage open, sensorial, and comprehensive *in loco* readings to go beyond available published information or digital dissemination and to identify the sense of the whole, the composition, the scale, the space, and the context, among other aspects. This re-reading of the building served as material for the elaboration of souvenirs, understood as physical objects that could be taken home as a remembrance of the design solutions experienced.

The proposed methodology

IPL is based on a fieldwork learning methodology, grounded in case study(s) and supported by a brief booklet and a selection of recommended readings. In the pursuit of the most immersive experience for students, a single case study with full open access was considered, with the IPL venue serving as the case study.

The FAUP ensemble, designed by Álvaro Siza (1979-1996), was understood as a paradigmatic case study with a specific poetics that can be (re)visited through a heightened sensorial and *in situ* comprehension of fundamental design themes and details that are difficult to perceive or even understand through published literature or media dissemination.

FAUP is thematically dense, able to be broken down into diverse, universal, and, at the same time, authorial themes at different design levels. FAUP addresses: (1) a broad context comprehension and insertion; (2) a vast number and variety of design problems versus design solutions; (3) the author’s extensive body of work and architectural references that it calls upon.

Complementary, FAUP´s design process comprises an extensive archive of sketches, rigorous drawings and photographs that disclose the design’s inception and reveal different options for the same problems, extending from the urban reading and siting of the ensemble to the sequences of significant spaces and the meaning of the architectural elements, which can inform and enhance new readings when mirrored with the *in situ* experience. This extensive rendering can be considered as an empowering collection of problems, themes and spaces.

To enable a more fruitful exchange and transfer of knowledge and practices, the students were grouped into six-member teams, each comprising one student from each of the six participating educational institutions, challenging distinct cultures and practices.

Each group was assigned to one of the significant spaces in the FAUP collection that could be depicted through its design process: the courtyard, cafeteria, main lobby, museum, library lobby, or technical area. In each group interpretation, these significant spaces can be expanded beyond their limits and even overlap with one another. The key aim of IPL was to explore and convey a fresh and personal reading of these significant spaces through *in situ* contact, going beyond published references and Siza´s archive renderings.

The IPL appropriated FAUP's central museum, transforming it into a laboratory space open to the school, featuring thematic work sessions, presentations, guest talks on "Travel with Grand Tourists", a conference on "Architecture Travels" and parallel itineraries. The students were also encouraged to take self-discovery routes using the provided maps.

The IPL work sessions were structured into three moments – "recognise", "propose" and "build" – according to the main intermediate actions to be addressed.

The first moment – "recognise" – lasted 2 days with a collective guided visit to the case study and autonomous group visits to the selected significant spaces. The second moment – "proposed" – lasted 1 day, with the conception and proposal set on personal *in situ* readings and intense group debate. The third moment – "build" – lasted 3 days, during which souvenir construction took place, culminating in a final presentation.

The IPL's main outcome was presented as a "souvenir box" inspired by André Malraux's "Le musée imaginaire" (1952) and Mansilla + Tuñón Architects' "Playgrounds" (2008/2014).

Each group organised a pre-purchased cardboard box that can easily travel, containing an ensemble of authorial Grand Tour gifts, memories, and didactic lessons expressed through a postcard series, a kinetic narrative, and a totem, employing digital and analogical tools, in accordance with FAUP's drawing practices. Within the UpGranT didactic framework, these souvenirs correspond to the creation of visual reinterpretations, architectural narratives and a model. The conception and elaboration of each of these components were monitored by a team of two professors from different academic institutions, thereby enhancing transversal contact and fostering mutual didactic and cultural exchange between professors and student groups.

A final presentation of all six souvenir boxes, showcasing the various materials, closed the didactic exchange, with each student receiving a certificate for their participation in the IPL.

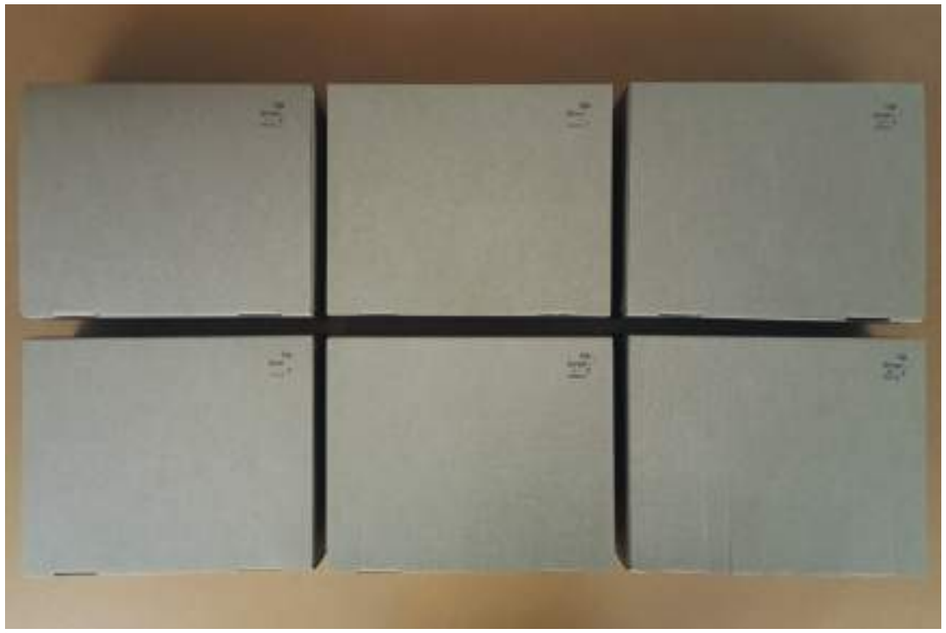
On the achieved results

The approach pursued over six days was based on a didactic framework, with a specific case study and a matrix of problems and themes, from which students, prompted by informed *in situ* readings, were challenged to develop an authorial interpretation, thereby enhancing their autonomy and potential replicability. A framework set on a series of exercises designed to structure thought, question the design options or architectural narratives and allow for multiple responses within open cultural exchange.

Upon an overall glance at IPL, the expected outputs correspond to the achieved results – an improvement in the participants' perception of architectural travel and the hypothesis of learning through travel from real spaces/buildings.

During the workshop, participants enthusiastically applied the proposed methodology, participated in all activities, and completed the IPL main outcomes within the dedicated time frame. Through the informed *in situ* readings and cross-functional contacts and collaborations, the majority of these outcomes successfully showcased original and authorial/personal ideas on the case study, thereby validating the proposed methodology.

The IPL pilot programme was reloaded by the Consortium partners in different occasions.



1



2

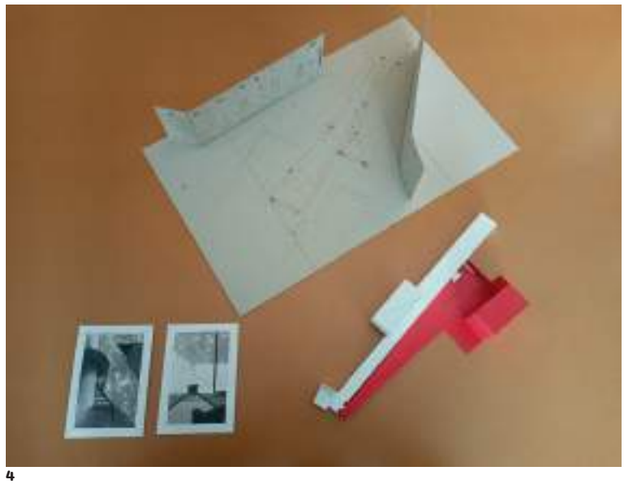
Bibliography

CASAL RIBEIRO H., RAMOS S. (2024) - "Porto's Faculty of Architecture: five points toward a Grand Tour". FAMagazine: Research and Projects on Architecture and the City, 69-70, pp. 159-169.

PALLINI C. (2024) - "In Itinere". FAMagazine: Research and Projects on Architecture and the City, 69-70, pp. 15-31.



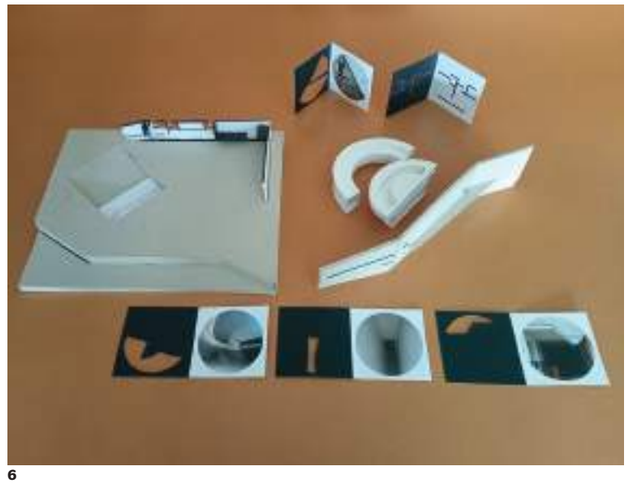
3



4



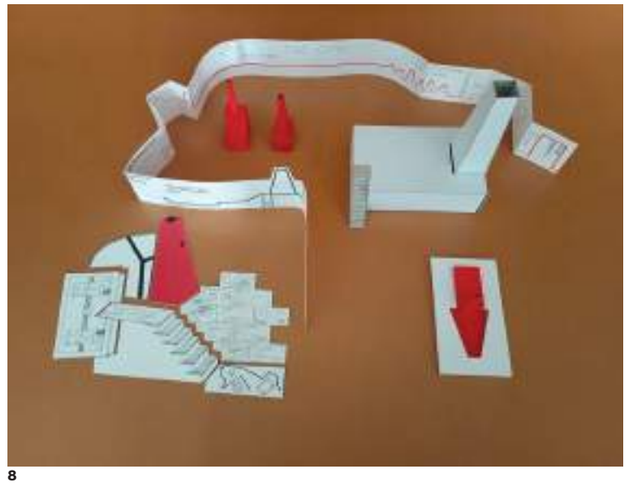
5



6



7



8

Images

IPL results

1-2 Souvenir boxes.

3 Courtyard souvenir box, by Davide Santoro, Tomás Martins, Davide Renzulli, Areti Dafnia, Ulvi Tiit.

4 Cafetaria souvenir box, by Erdal Giacomo, Parisa Etemadi, Gina Celestini Radaelli, Kristīne Zane Čible, Christina Maria Konstantinidou, Rebeka Kollo.

5 Main lobby souvenir box, by Francesco Ramella, Maria Gião, Giuseppe Buttazzo, Emīlija Anete Ozoliņa, Despoina Athanasiou, Liina Pärn.

6 Museum souvenir box, by Giulio Crispino, Joana Gastalho, Luciana Aloisio, Irini Antonakaki, Loukia Kotsifou, Markus Sig.

7 Library lobby souvenir box, by William Roat, Hugo Pereira, Mattia Criscione, Eleni Madourou, Jaan Repnikov.

8 Technical area souvenir box, by Quentin Pechinot, Anna Lopes, Sofia Tagliatesta, Ioannis Soufleris, Kristiina Theresa Kuusik, Gert Christjanson.

Partner Institutions monitored: postcard series (visual reinterpretation) - LMA and EKA; kinetic narratives (architectural narrative) - FAUP and AUTh; totem (model) - POLIMI and UNIBO.

Credits

Porto Team, Archive UpGranT.

Heuristic practices. Snapshots from Polytechnic Travels

– *Aleksa Korolija, Cristina Pallini*

Quite often, the classical Grand Tour complemented formal academic training. Italy, a key destination, was perceived as an open-air museum of architecture and the most varied political forms, and a paradise for the senses (Brilli 2014, p. 19). Encountering difference and estrangement was woven into the educational value of travel. What remains of that idea at a time of easy, low-cost travel associated with cultural globalisation has hastened and flattened any recognition process? In architectural education, though, a crucial question persists: at what point does travel turn the traveller into a proactive, critical thinker?

Pedagogist Paulo Freire (1974, p. 39) linked "critical consciousness" to learning rooted in experience, a process in which reflection and dialogue project a cultural reality onto the tangible world. Travel may thus be understood not as an accumulation of impressions but as a generator of situated knowledge, particularly in a design-led perspective. This contribution raises further questions. Can travel be framed in "polytechnic terms"? May we contend that architects educated in a polytechnic tradition had a distinctive approach to travel and, more generally, to architectural learning? What follows is a tentative attempt to trace a thread, drawing on three examples from the past alongside our own Grand Tour in Latvia (2024).

Situating Pedagogy

The question of "learning by travel" regained momentum in 19th-century Italy, where *Il Politecnico*, founded in 1829 by Carlo Cattaneo (with most contributors being engineers), heralded the rise of science-driven culture.[1] Over time, the gap with the prevailing positivist mindset among travellers from beyond the Alps gradually narrowed. In 1863, Milan's Royal Higher Technical Institute (later Politecnico) was founded, and the School of Architecture was established in 1865 to complement engineering training by grounding future professionals in architectural history.[2] The launch of a programme that brought architects closer to engineers after Italy's unification significantly raised expectations for the future elite. Thus, collective educational journeys were institutionalised: ranging from short scientific excursions to graduation trips, they became a core part of learning.

It cannot go unnoticed that institutionalised travel developed in parallel with the country's own transformation. At the turn of the twentieth century, Italy was no longer the romanticised setting of the classical Grand Tour; rather, it was a large construction site "caught in action" (Selvafolta 2008b): tunnels, railway lines, ports, and industrial facilities offered engineers unprecedented opportunities to observe the transformation unfold. As monuments of the past became part of the built environment in the making, architects continued to study them within their specific contexts. When caught in transition, architecture evoked a sense of suspended certainty, prompting students to acknowledge that each building is part of a broader physical and cultural stratification. Ultimately, their understanding of how architecture functions across diverse natural and built environments fostered a responsible design ethos (Selvafolta 2008a, p. 57; 2008b).

The mutual influence between the polytechnic mindset and the problems at hand – such as grounding the search for a national style in specific historical periods – entailed a redefinition of history itself, thereby venturing into interpretation, and pinpointing identity features for new public buildings. Moving beyond contemplation and repertoires of forms, architects approached heritage as an operational force that design could engage with critically and creatively: both in debates about conservation and restoration and in questioning history to decode the secrets of practice. Examining ongoing projects offered greater insight into the fundamental design principles, revealing a clear epistemological perspective: architecture as a dynamic process

1 Carlo Cattaneo (1801-1869), an Italian philosopher, political scientist, linguist, and writer educated in Enlightenment and positivist traditions, aimed at disseminating ongoing analysis of literature and technology, and emphasising the link between scientific and civil progress.

2 This process involved close collaboration with the Brera Academy of Fine Arts.

4 UpGranT perspectives

that develops over time, influenced by technical limitations, economic factors, and organisational choices. History was regarded as a guide, also in inspiring new forms of expression and fostering a growing awareness of environmental conditions (Selvafolta 2008b). This learning pathway revealed design as a negotiated practice rather than a closed system.[3]

3 This approach aligns with Dewey's (1983) view of experience as a learning source, disrupting routines to generate reflection and evolution of knowledge

Conjunctural Travel

Educational journeys also addressed "the modes and times of change", thereby enhancing the pedagogical value of travel by allowing students to verify concepts in action in a specific place and time (Selvafolta 2008a, p. 123). Milan and the Lombardy region, where industrial development and major infrastructure projects were underway, offered a wide range of examples for architects and engineers alike. Over time, however, architects' travels expanded to destinations where historical layering and change could be clearly understood. In this shift, travel became an instrument for interpreting the relationship between past and present, thereby enabling "critical consciousness".

Gaetano Moretti[4], one of the earliest architectural lecturers at the Higher Technical Institute, saw travel as a catalyst for critical reassessment. Before taking up his post as a professor in 1904, he travelled to Greece and Egypt. As Head of the Office for the Conservation of Monuments in Lombardy, he was sponsored by the Italian Ministry of Education and tasked with examining restoration methods and institutions at major archaeological sites and modern museums.

4 Gaetano Moretti (1860–1938) taught at the Brera Academy of Fine Arts, later earning his diploma as a civil architect. In 1934, he became the first dean of the newly formed Faculty of Architecture. He embodied the most advanced line of Italian research in conservation and architectural design, a coexistence hardly imaginable today.

Though its scope and destinations differed greatly, Moretti's journey occurred only a few years before young Le Corbusier's. At the time, Egypt's swift modernisation and westernisation, primarily led by European professionals, closely resembled Italy's remaking. Moretti's personal account (n.d.) and his article about modern architecture in Egypt (1903) clearly reveal his "polytechnic mindset". The rural Delta reminded him of the Lombardy plain. Significant hydraulic infrastructure, largely built through Italian effort and initiative, was also visible. Upon concluding the cruise in Aswan, the dam at the first cataract, which would submerge many "fantastic aggregations of artistic buildings", was almost reaching completion. Egypt, much like Italy, appeared to be in transition. Architects faced a challenge in balancing historical depth with modern construction, needing to avoid superficial imitations of the past and instead develop modern structures with cultural depth.

Similar epiphanies occurred again later. Moretti participated in a collective educational journey to Naples and Pompeii in July 1926. The other teachers were much younger than him, while the students were from the early twentieth-century generation. Among them were Piero Bottoni, Luigi Figini and Gino Pollini, who would later herald the so-called Milan School. Ferro and Iarossi (2024) credited this trip as a key moment in the emergence of modern architecture at the Royal Higher Technical Institute. What sparked the youngsters' awareness of an archetypal "Mediterranean spirit" as an alternative to nineteenth-century Eclecticism was the newly published *Vers une architecture*, which Pollini had with him. Archaeological excavations developed over time, and the emerging remains sparked their imaginations. Their incompleteness suggested a possible formal order, a rationality of planes and columns that could be reproduced with reinforced concrete (Ferro and Iarossi 2024, p. 75). Individual buildings could be seen as parts of a legible whole, displaying the urban dimension of architecture. Browsing *Vers une architecture* at Pompeii served as a cognitive device that anticipated the essence of modern architecture, underscoring the argument that travel can catalyse new architectural ideas. The 1926 journey transformed the established polytechnic tradition, and the trip proved a vital moment for redefining the rationale for architecture's urban dimension.

Several decades later, another collective educational journey preceded a major institutional change at Politecnico di Milano. In 1997, a second Faculty of Architecture was established in Milan's suburbs at Bovisa, prompting a curriculum reform that concentrated all teaching on architectural design, rather than leaving students to integrate the various disciplines involved in the design process.

A delegation from the Department of Architectural Design travelled to Russia in 1995 to present their university projects for Milan, which were to be exhibited and discussed in Moscow, Samara, Kazan, Nizhny Novgorod, and St. Petersburg. The journey-cum-exhibition provided an innovative platform to question the role of architecture in urban change at a crucial time. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the cities of Samara, Kazan, and Nizhny Novgorod, which had been formerly inaccessible, were opening to foreign observers and were on the verge of a radical transformation (Meriggi 1998). As the economy transitioned from planned to market-based, they served as testing grounds for change along the historic cultural and identity boundary marked by the Volga River.

The reciprocal exchange of viewpoints was a vital aspect of this trip. While Italians loved Soviet avant-garde architecture (often only seen in books), Russian scholars and practitioners were confronting its revaluation or outright rejection amid market-driven reconstruction. The period of transition amplified the epistemic role of travel, actively shaping the "conceptualisation, representation, production, and consumption of architectural and urban space" (Traganou and Mitrasinovic 2009, p. 2). From this perspective, the journey into Russia reinvigorated the polytechnic tradition, valuing urban change as a generative condition for architectural thought rather than isolating exemplary buildings. Maurizio Meriggi, who played a key role in organising that journey, still recalls the theatrical setting of Nizhny Novgorod as seen from the Volga River: a mesmerising interplay of geography and architecture, with buildings of different ages acting as *topographic narrators*. Only direct experience enabled this act of conceptualisation.

Speculative Juxtapositions: Tentative Intakes from GT#2

We asked ourselves whether our intakes from GT#2 through the Baltics could be associated with this pedagogical imprint. The conjunctural moment was characterised by a geopolitical crisis due to the war in Ukraine; our trip was organised by colleagues, and less mediated by established narratives.

5 It was rebuilt exactly as it had been before being bombed during the Second World War.

In Riga's core, the contradictions inherent in any concept of European architectural identity were immediately evident. As you move from Town Hall Square to Latvian Riflemen Square, the surrounding buildings tell diverse histories and reflect different value systems. The seemingly medieval House of the Blackheads, rebuilt in the 1990s,[5] stands in stark contrast to an enigmatic black parallelepiped from the Soviet era, now the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia. This volume appears less of an outsider seen from the head of the Stone Bridge, where the austere monument to the Latvian Riflemen counterpoints the Memorial to the Victims of Soviet Occupation.

Similar negotiations with history are also evident in individual structures, such as the concert hall carved out of the Neo-Gothic Great Guildhall (Modris Ģelzis, 1965). Here, the dichotomy between the old and the new enlivens design. A concrete entrance canopy marks the transition from a small square hidden in the city's depths to the path leading visitors underground. A horizontal window closes the vertical surfaces of the canopy; a narrow slit between the roof and the ground cutline frames the Eclectic elevation above. Upon entry, the space gradually unfolds around the building's Neo-Gothic foundations, then shifts to the verticality of a triple-flight cantilevered

staircase set on a central beam. The staircase is a spatial hinge, connecting the various levels of the existing Guildhall and heaving the underground foyer towards the concert hall. This chthonic underground space reminded us of Albini's Treasury Museum in Genoa's Cathedral: both interventions evoke the archetype of a cave-like crypt, invisible from the outside, with its relationship to the city mediated by a pre-existing building. Rather than adopting a more research-heavy approach, we engaged in speculative juxtaposition: deliberately connecting apparently unrelated architectures.

Following this non-figurative analogy, these serendipitous associations emerged elsewhere. We compared the Dailes Theatre in Riga with the Triennale in Milan. Both buildings are hinged onto arterial roads. The Dailes Theatre faces Brīvības iela, the former Magistrale Road that once connected Riga to Soviet Russia.[6] Similarly, the Triennale building defines the edge of Parco Sempione, stretching between the Sforza Castle and Corso Sempione, the territorial infrastructure leading to France. In both buildings, the façade is a kind of urban device. The offset colonnade at Dailes recalls the logic of ancient porticoed roads, offering an elevated vantage point over the arterial infrastructure shaping the socialist townscape. At the Triennale, the colonnade facing the park serves as a porous filter, mediating between architecture and the collective urban space. In both cases, self-standing buildings with highly introverted functions reveal their urban role precisely through their spatial relationship with territorial axes, thereby structuring how the city is perceived and experienced.

6 Brīvības iela, stretching 12 km within Riga, follows the former trade route linking Vidzeme region to the city of Pskov.

Concluding remarks

Rather than concluding a historical trajectory, these experiences suggest that travel – when approached as a situated and speculative practice – might continue to operate as an open pedagogical field. Paradoxically, periods of accelerated transformation make the built environment more legible by disrupting established assumptions. In such conjunctures, history can no longer be approached as a stable taxonomic framework organised by styles or periods, but re-emerges as a field of tensions in which deeper spatial and urban structures come to the surface. We may conclude that a polytechnic mindset allows them to spot faster and that architectural learning transitions from categorisation to interpretation and from historical acknowledgement to critical application.

Note
The authors are listed in alphabetical order; A. Korolija and C. Pallini share joint first authorship.

Bibliographic references

BRILLI A. (2014) - *Il grande racconto del viaggio in Italia*. Il Mulino, Bologna.

DEWEY J. (1983) - *Experience and Education*. Macmillan, New York.

FREIRE P. (1974), *Education for Critical Consciousness*. Continuum, New York.

FERRO L., IAROSSI M.P. (2024) - "Politecnici meridiani. Il viaggio verso Pompei". In: *FAMagazine. Ricerche e progetti sull'architettura e la città*, n. 69-70, pp. 62-81.

MERIGGI M. (1998), "Viaggio in Russia". In: *QA21 Viaggio in Russia, Quaderni del Dipartimento di Progettazione dell'Architettura del Politecnico di Milano*. Laterza, Bari.

MORETTI G. (no date) - *Fra i monumenti d'Egitto, ricordi di un viaggio*, Tipografia V. Allegretti, Milan.

MORETTI G. (1903) - "Due parole sull'architettura moderna in Egitto. La Villa Zogheb al Cairo". *Edilizia Moderna*, y. XII, 1, January, pp. 1-3.

SELVAFOLTA O. (2008a) - "Una scuola per il progetto. La formazione tecnico-scientifica al Politecnico di Milano". In: E. Canadelli, P. Zocchi, *Milano scientifica 1875-1924*. Sironi, Milano, vol. 1.

SELVAFOLTA O. (2008b) - "Paesaggi della tecnica e paesaggi dell'arte. I viaggi di istruzione al Politecnico di Milano tra Otto e Novecento". In: *Annali di Storia delle Università Italiane*, n. 12, pp. 119-145.

TRAGANOU J., MITRASINOVIC M. (eds.) (2009), *Travel, Space, Architecture*. Ashgate, Farnham.

Beyond a form of listening and looking

– Helder Casal Ribeiro

> In the space of an authentic journey, the eyes, and by means of them, the mind, gain unexpected capacities. We perceive in a non-mediated way. That which we learned reappears dissolved amongst the lines which we later draw (Siza 1988, p. 15).

In the present research and thinking within the limits of the discipline of Architecture, updating the Grand Tour practice is not solely about replacing destinations or cultural focus. It also implies recognising the set of time-transcending characteristics, the *constants* in architectural design, that define the cultural tour, intended for educational and training enrichment.

What may the Porto Grand Tourists Alfredo Viana de Lima, Fernando Távora, Álvaro Siza, Eduardo Souto de Moura, João Álvaro Rocha, João Pedro Serôdio, Isabel Furtado, Cristina Guedes, Francisco Vieira de Campos, Nuno Brandão Costa, and Nuno Melo Sousa have in common? What lessons can we draw from them?

The 10 Grand Tourists' work and travels reveal, regardless of their architectural language, travel duration, and destinations, an association with a specific predisposition and openness to observe, appropriate, and transform, *ad personam* and within the sense of the present, the cultural built environment. This ability to observe, perceive, and (re)build may be learned and practised and may constitute the basis for an updated learning by travelling methodology for visual education, framed by the Grand Tour concept and tested during the UpGranT Grand Tours.

This methodology, linked to today´s circumstances, goes beyond the desire to read history through an archaeological lens, to value time through its ruins and remaining built fragments, and to depict time directly through romantic readings. Today, the objectives of the Grand Tour are clearly different. What really stands out is the practice set in the condition of displacement, tutored by an elder or key figure.

But what are the features of this common practice that is shared by architects from so many different generations and contexts, with so different interests, in so different phases of life, and that could also be exercised by students? How can students, from high school to PhD level, practice this approach to travel within their permanent cultural unrest? How could it continue to be relevant in a time where travelling is far from being an indispensable condition to learn, and you have the availability of travel almost anytime and everywhere?

In attempting to decode this practice, we highlight the following specific aspects that we may recognise associated with these displacements/travels.

Present as object and objective

> The modernity of an event is measured by the relationship it maintains with the conditions under which it takes place. In Architecture and Urban Planning, modernity means the perfect integration of all elements that can influence the realisation of any work, using all means that best lead to the achievement of a given goal (Távora 1952, pp. 9-10).

One specific aspect of these displacements is its focus on acknowledging the present and deepening the notion of modernity. The acknowledgement of the present is the gateway, a threshold, and the objective of all the

displacements. We move to better understand our reality and to (re)build it, mentally and physically, by learning from others, from different times and geographies, more or less distant.

This means that history and its built fragments, understood as a consonance of traditions in its various forms and significance, tangible and intangible, are not seen as a sealed archive to be contemplated from a distance, in a nostalgic or melancholic way, but as a past that does not end, and that refuses to remain in silence. It is perceived as a living organism that we may continue to use to reflect and build in the present.

In this perception, far from a simple visit to the built artefacts, the demand, in all these displacements, is to understand how the architects/builders of each time, corresponding to their era's ideologies and using the materials and means available, dealt with the posed problems through architectural concepts, giving them form and substance, or in other words, turning the architectural concepts into architectonic matter that could inform, in the present, the (re)thinking of the built natural landscape and its spatial organisation. Távora, in his *lesson on the constants*, emphasised that architectural problems have always been the same, and that history provides us with an infinite repository of construction methods, plastic strategies, and a variety of programmes for solving them, each with a different result. We just have to be able to identify and interpret its latent order, sense of composition, and socio-cultural framework, within the notion of modernity.

Model of thought

> The influences are many, I am absolutely certain, and I may not be aware of all of them. But what remains, in the end, is a very subtle and complex fabric, not a single limiting obsession (Siza 2018, p. 37).

The second specific aspect to underline from these displacements demands a nuance of modesty and concerns the connections between pre-existing architectural material and the individual invention, through legacy references, or in other words, the architect's body of knowledge and information, from which he works and which summarises all his architectonic experiences – a subtle, complex fabric of structures that cause unforeseen results from previously known components. Architecture has always been rendered with the contribution of references that circulate and sometimes arrive from afar. So, once in a designated travel, the existing architecture may never be seen as an exotic formal repertoire or a simple symbolic system to be directly reproduced, but as an authentic model of thought, based on previous problems, notions and design themes, free from formal restraints, able to be reinterpreted, transformed or recomposed. This model of thought is nothing more than a *longue durée* view of the problems, programmes, forms, materials, and sensations, etc., and tends to recompose mind and matter, subject and object, contents and container within a specific contemporary circumstance.

Therefore, each work of architecture is a memory machine that evokes other architectures and refers to other cultures, places and situations.

Everywhere, anywhere

> I have heard it said that an architect "cannot be a prisoner of tradition in a time of change". It seems to me that he cannot be a prisoner of any kind. And at no time can he be prisoner of change (Eyck 1967, p. 475).

Another specific aspect that we may recognise in these displacements is their personal meaning. It is neither that of a fracture, a break, nor that of undisturbed continuity, but may be a "revolution" within one´s perception or understanding.

On the one hand, the displacements we are interested in are not necessarily biographical episodes, paradigmatic moments of change or revelation; they may not solve identity crises, existential insecurities, or the lack of solid aesthetic references.

On the other hand, they could be introspective moments of clarification, confirmation and reinvention, within a settled architectural perspective, through *in situ* observation. We record in our memory, and it becomes available material for the complex creation process. Without memory, there would be a deficit of ideas; invention is always an exploration of memory. The memory that allows us to conceive is inextricably linked to history, and, consequently, it is never fixed once and for all. Memory is by its very nature mobile, unstable, and constantly changing; it manifests itself as an active form of knowledge. Memory is not something finished, but a living matter, subject to a constant process of metamorphosis and reinterpretation.

The openness to cultural confrontation as an assimilation process may trigger a sense of "revolution", of personal repositioning or even artistic reinvention.

In this perspective, the selection criteria for the travel destination(s) and/or theme(s) is a very personal choice, based on the travellers' preferences and practice demands. Today, imposing a closed-set tour without an informed, structured cultural context often leads to a touristic approach devoid of personal involvement or concern. Most of the time, it implies selecting a destination that might not satisfy everyone or respond to the most fashionable examples, but that appeals only to the specific traveller, due to elective affinities or immediate attraction.

This was revealed, namely, in the Grand Tours undertaken within the UpGranT framework. The conception of each itinerary, through the selected architects, buildings and promenades, underlined architectural thematics with a precise relation to the travel curator's circumstance: from heightening the city's urban pattern through architecture and presenting architectural typologies and political architecture as triggers, to emphasising a School's practice as an approach and line of thought, with repercussions in all the dimensions of the architectonic practice, from teaching to building, etc.

Listening and looking

> An artist has to look at everything as though he were seeing it for the first time: He has to look at life as he did when he was a child; and the loss of that faculty prevents him from expressing himself in an original, that is, a personal way (Matisse 1972, p. 329).

One last aspect we may consider specific to those displacements concerns the character of the outcomes and the reading process, strategies, or lenses to be employed. The outcomes are directly related to a personal investment in implementing a perception strategy that promotes active travel readings grounded in attentive observation and critical thinking, through personal creative assessments and (re)applications. It implies an attitude of constant awareness and openness to the new, the unexpected, and the already known, revealed *in situ*, allowing oneself to be surprised in an active, permanent process of self-development or self-discovery.

For a clear and unprejudiced appropriation of the real, the perception strategy may consider: awakening all the senses and engaging human thought and intelligence; maintaining an integrative distance from the object observed; and guaranteeing a permanent dialogue between it and the natural phenomena, whether geological, meteorological, mineralogical, or botanical (materials, landscape, form and space, texture, colour and light as perceive by the senses).

To observe, rather than just look at (in the sense of appropriation), may involve a mediating tool, such as drawing, photography, or writing, as a way of looking with greater attention.

To observe with an informed gaze rather than just looking, mobilising the mind, analytical intelligence, the ordering sense, and also the sensitivity, we may invoke one of the previous tools. That's why the Grand Tourists drew, photographed and/or wrote while travelling. Sketches, photos or texts don't replace reality, but they explain it better than a simple direct experience. These tools introduce a lens between reality and its representation that helps to decipher all its enigmas and reveals its sensitive whole.

Drawing, like writing or photographing, is not understood here as a talent that some are born with, and others are not; everyone can learn to draw, photograph or write, and all can benefit from its usefulness, regardless of artistic merit.

Another reading lens is to know how to listen, rather than hear, which involves silence as an essential condition. Without silence, when confronted with a different reality, we tend to just hear ourselves, our perspectives, and rely on rational thinking, instead of being open to listening to what the other is really sharing. This process is a repetition that embodies academic, conservative, and reactionary tendencies and excludes the pursuit of originality. It is a thick wall against active listening and the possibility of original thought – reinvention. Discarding prior reasoning is the only way to avoid hearing the same discourse repeatedly and to recognise intelligence and knowledge in other geographies and cultures openly.

●

This way of regarding travel, transversal to different generations of architects with various political, economic and social contexts, and appealing to travellers inside or outside the field of Architecture, with different ages and education levels, is, in reality, a way of life, in which Man and Architecture coexist in symbiosis.

Attention to differences and diversity, paired with attention to long-lasting traditions, aspects and forms of cultural intersection, underlines the complexity and richness of the architectural phenomena in Europe. Considering European architecture, namely experimented during the organised Grand Tours, we were able to value moments of cultural encounter but also to clarify the specificities of Portuguese architecture and the identity of the Porto School practice (with regard to siting, ways of inhabiting and organising built space, to current construction and singular buildings, to materiality, ornamentation and architectural language, etc.).

The Grand Tour today pursues a wide range of lessons, namely magisterial lessons, which can be guided and discovered through different matters, individual interests and sensibilities.

> I myself like to sacrifice many things, to see only that which attracts me immediately, to pass by chance without a map and within an absurd sensation of discovery (Siza 1988, p. 15).

Bibliography

(1991) - *The Eye of the Architect. Lotus 68*. Rizzoli Intl Pubns, Milan.

ASSIS P. (coord.) (2015) - *Luigi Nono. Escritos e Entrevistas*. Casa da Música - Centro de Estudos de Sociologia e Estética Musical, Porto.

MATISSE H. (1972) - *Escritos e reflexões sobre Arte [Écrits et Propos sur l'Art]*. Editora Ulisseia, Lisboa.

GOETHE J. (2016) - *Viagem a Itália 1786-1788*. Bertrand Editora, Lisboa.

SIZA A. (2018) - *Imaginar a evidência*. Edições 70, Lisbon.

SIZA A. (1988) - *Álvaro Siza: Esquissos de Viagem / Travel Sketches*. Documentos de Arquitetura, Porto.

TÁVORA F. (1993) - *Teoria Geral da Organização do Espaço. Arquitetura e Urbanismo. A lição das constantes*. FAUP Publicações, Porto.

EYCK A. (1967) - "The interior of time". In: *Aldo van Eyck Writings. Collected articles and other writings 1947-1998*. SUN Publishers, Amsterdam.

On the use of travel for architecture

– *Lamberto Amistadi*

> Travel is a good thing; it stimulates the imagination. Everything else is a snare and a delusion. Our own journey is entirely imaginative. Therein lies its strength.
> It leads from life to death. Men, beasts, cities, everything in it is imaginary. It's a novel, only a made-up story. The dictionary says so and it's never wrong.
> Besides, everyone can go and do likewise. Shut your eyes, that's all that is necessary.
> There you have life seen from the other side.
>
> (Louis-Ferdinand Céline, *Journey to the End of the Night*, 1932)
>
> This contact with the overpowering is her first encounter with travel's disconcerting ability to strip the hard shell of habit from the heart, leaving only the bare, fertile kernel.
>
> (Stefan Zweig, *The Post-Office Girl*, 1930-38, published posthumously in 1982)

As Céline reminds us, travel is certainly useful in life, but it is equally useful for architecture students, since architecture, like some other arts, has a privileged relationship with the imagination. This privilege concerns the fact that imagination is part of the creative process which generates the work within the circle formed by the triad of imagination (conception)-representation--realization. This triad plays a part in both the production of the work itself and as an extremely useful and effective method of teaching/learning architectural design; in both cases, it concerns the problem of the beginning, i.e. where the construction of the work actually starts.

The relationship between architecture and image is much more complex than, for example, in painting. The complexity in which architecture is expressed can be achieved starting from either a single image or a group of images that represent a fragment of the final work, intercepted at any point in the production cycle we have mentioned: the work can start indifferently from the sketch of a detail on a sheet of paper, from a photograph of another work or a landscape or from seeing them in a film frame, a typological plan, or an idea for a façade. But since humans are a "symbolic animal" – *animal symbolicum* (Cassirer 1944) – they have learned, since the days of the Altamira caves, to build a stable relationship between words and images, which has allowed them to expand their imagination in a mutual exchange with both the written and spoken languages: architecture has benefited from the tales of Ibn Battuta, the Berber traveller who, in the 14th century, spent over 30 years travelling through Africa, the Middle East and Asia, recounting his experiences in a chronicle dictated on his return – *Al-Rihla* (*The Travels*) – with an image of the mosques of Delhi and Damascus and the temples of Hangzhou, but also of the inventions of Pliny the Younger ("If we think of Schinkel's reconstruction projects for Pliny the Younger's villas, where the descriptive and evocative trace of the letter indicates a step-by--step itinerary, a list of relationships that make the forms appropriate [...]", Semerani 1991, p. 46):

> You are surprised that my Laurentine, or, if you prefer it, my Laurens country-house, is so particularly agreeable to me. You will cease to be surprised when you are made acquainted with the charms of the villa, the advantages of the situation, and the stretch of sea-coast.

And so the description begins:

> As you enter, there is a vestibule, plain but not mean; next a hall with columns, rounded in the form of the letter D, enclosing a small but pleasant space, an excellent retreat against stormy weather, being protected by glazed windows and still more by overhanging eaves. Facing the middle of it is a courtyard of cheerful aspect; next, a rather handsome dining-room which projects on to the shore, so that whenever the sea is raised by the south-west wind, it is just wetted by the last spray of the broken waves. (Lewis 1879, pp. 60-61)

Based on this meticulous description, in 1833, Schinkel drew up plans for a villa, whose appearance was the result of a fusion between the literary influence of Pliny's account and his own trip to Italy in 1804. It was thanks to the Grand Tour, which took him to the ruins of the temples of Syracuse and Capri and whose sketches were collected in his architecture manual *Das*

Architektonisches Lehrbuch, that Schinkel (1979) was able to experience the essence of the classical world, which he transferred into an original architectural language.

"Architecture is the transposition of other works of architecture [...]" – wrote Francesco Collotti (2017, p. 57) in a beautiful essay on Schinkel's travels.

> And what about travel? Travel measures the Mediterranean. Diocletian's Palace redesigned by the Adam brothers, transposed to England in the Adelphi Terraces neighbourhood. Istrian stones brought to Venice by Sanmicheli and Sansovino. Those from Provence arrive in Algiers with Fernand Pouillon. The house of the ancients lives on in fragments in Palladio's work, itself a sort of International Style ante litteram, re-emerging like an underground river in the English countryside.
>
> People travel; places remain.
>
> Architecture made with other architecture, measured, dismantled, reassembled, transfigured; and since we are architects who have declared a certain genealogy, we will never say deformed.

The dazzling power of the landscapes of southern Italy would claim many victims, especially among British and German travellers. Following in the footsteps of Goethe (1816), whose travel memoirs from Italy in 1786-87 were published under the title *Italienische Reise*, Paul Klee visited Rome in 1901.

> ("Impatience drove me at once to the famous sights, first to Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel and to Raphael's '*Stanze*'.") and Naples in 1902:
>
> Arrival, Sunday, March 23d, in the morning. That evening, San Carlo: *Mefistofele*. Monday, the harbour; in the afternoon, Posillipo.
>
> Tuesday, San Martino-Corso Vittorio Emanuele. German Consulate, Aquarium.
> In those three days I saw so much that my account cannot even remotely keep up with it.
> (Klee 1964, p. 97)

In June 1902, upon returning from his trip and after also visiting Florence ("We consoled ourselves with wine, too much wine, and ended up in the demimondaine café on the Piazza Signoria. Soon the company we had been wishing for was sitting at our table. A pleasant, dark creature and a real whore, painted and prettied up and yet unattractive") the assessment is contradictory:

> 6.3.1902. My Italian trip now lies a month behind me. A strict review of my situation as a creative artist doesn't yield very encouraging results; I don't know why, but I continue nonetheless to be hopeful.
>
> Perhaps from the realization that at the root of my devastating self-criticism there is, after all, some spiritual development.
>
> Actually, the main thing now is not to paint precociously but to be or, at least, to become an individual. The art of mastering life is the prerequisite for all further forms of expression, whether they are paintings, sculptures, tragedies, or musical compositions.
> (Klee 1964, p. 119)

Returning to the usefulness of travel for architecture and for life, one could say that travel acts in two ways. One concerns forcing the formation of the individual through experience; in this case, it is the great tradition of the *Bildungsroman*, according to which young people acquire awareness of themselves and the world through the vicissitudes of life, and this applies in general, "whether they are paintings, sculptures, tragedies, or musical compositions". It concerns the role that Emanuele Severino attributed to school, namely that of being a place of vigilance, where one learns to be alert, preparing the individual to overcome the alienation inherent in contemporary society (Severino 2005); which is Zweig's exhortation in the epigraph "to strip the hard shell of habit from the heart, leaving only the bare, fertile kernel". At the beginning of the millennium, Edgar Morin (2000, pp. 45, 50), reflecting on a possible reform of education, placed among the fundamental points that domain of life mentioned by Klee, namely, education as "apprenticeship to life". Quoting Durkheim, he wrote: "As Durkheim so aptly put it, the purpose of education is not to give students an ever-increasing amount of knowledge, but to 'create within them a profound inner state, a sort of polarity of the soul that guides them in a definite direction, not only during childhood, but throughout their lives'". Education should introduce learners to that lucidity, Morin continued, which "is in itself inseparable from an initiation into the omnipresence of the problem of error".

The second type of usefulness of travel for architecture and life concerns, in a more specific sense, the teaching/learning of architectural design from a technical point of view. As we said, travel is a great way to accumulate a personal repertoire of images from which to create one's own architectural language or world (if it is true, as Wittgenstein said (1964, §5.6), that "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world"). Technically, this material can be brought back to the surface and used in different ways and at different levels. These different ways refer, fundamentally, to what Goethe (1983) defined as the "associative faculty of the mind", which, precisely due to this mixture of objective images and intuitive associations, he called "objective imagination":

> Certain grand motifs, legends, millenary traditions impressed themselves so deeply on my senses, that I kept them alive and operative in me for forty or fifty years; seeing these beautiful images over and over again in my imagination seemed to me the most desirable of treasures, because they continually changed appearance without changing substance, and matured into increasingly pure forms, into increasingly clear representations.

This sentence highlights what was mentioned earlier, namely, that images accumulate in different ways, in space and time, and that travelling afar in geographical space has something in common with travelling far away in one's own individual time, flowing along the entire arc of our existence to the original regions of childhood. In *The System of Objects*, Baudrillard (1996) recorded as "Reverse Projection" everything that projects us outside ourselves, far away in time and space, and brings together, for example, toys, antique objects and exotic objects: for modern man, being "abroad" involves a plunge into the past, in which the anteriority of forms and construction systems refers to the world of childhood and toys and introduces the unpredictability of an event into the homogeneity of categories (Amistadi 2017, p. 47). Then, as we were saying, these materials, these fragments of thought gathered on our travels, must be retrieved from memory, composed, transformed and transfigured "Into something rich and strange" (Shakespeare 1998, p. 27) or at least new:

> *Full fathom five thy father lies;*
> *Of his bones are coral made;*
> *Those are pearls that were his eyes;*
> *Nothing of him that doth fade*
> *But doth suffer a sea-change*
> *Into something rich and strange.*

If it is true that – as Ernesto Nathan Rogers wrote (1997, p. 171) – composition means "putting together various different things to make one", then this composition takes place by grouping elements at different levels (Chomsky 1965; Amistadi 2022, p. 127[1]). We can imagine the space containing these levels as a formal space (Carnap 2019) which unfolds along a vertical axis that Algirdas Greimas (1982, pp. 327-328) called the "syntagmatic axis". The term 'syntagmatic' refers to the way in which elements are grouped into words and sentences according to a linearity, which "is only one mode of manifestation, either temporal or spatial, of the logico-relational structure – and is, therefore, atemporal and aspatial – that is syntagmatic". This means that the arrangement of syntactic relationships along an axis takes on a gnoseological and therefore didactic value in and of itself. The elements of architecture can be recomposed along the syntagmatic axis in analogy with written language, where, after the union of letters has generated words, the words come together to form higher-order units, called syntagms ("make"

1 "The cultural model is once again the linguistic one. Gottlieb Frege takes up the analogy between architecture and language with the metaphor of the *core* and the *shell*, where the core represents the structural invariant (which does not change in the translation from one language to another), while the shell represents the superficial, iridescent element. The idea of a deep structure and a surface structure is a conquest of modern linguistics, but what Noam Chomsky clarified is that this structure is composed of layers which divide it into different levels, i.e. it occupies a stratified 'formal space' which provides different levels of depth."

and “love” become “make-love”, the meaning transcends the meaning of the individual words that make up the syntagm). Similarly, the architectural words “column” and “lintel” are combined in the trilithic system, which, by replicating itself through addition, gives rise to more complex discursive units such as the portico. These discursive units can in turn be combined in more or less rigid and contiguous relational chains. If the assemblage aggregates heterogeneous parts paratactically and the compositional density makes use of spatial pauses that erode the continuity between the parts themselves, the montage establishes contiguous connections where the parts are juxtaposed without interruption, in contact with each other (Amistadi 2025).

In conclusion, we could say that travel appears to us in its essence as a disturbing event (Vidler 2006; Amistadi 2015), defined by Freud (*Unheimlich*) as something familiar that becomes “foreign” and generates the anxiety necessary “to strip the hard shell of habit”. But then, we cannot but agree with Francesco Collotti, who sets as limits on architecture “made from other works of architecture, dismantled, reassembled, transfigured” that of deformation, while originality itself should be referred much more to the originality of the position along the syntagmatic axis than to the object itself: It is my belief that it is more important today to teach/learn how to establish new relationships between existing things than to produce new ones.

Bibliography

AMISTADI L. (2015) - “Convention and Symbols of the New England Masque”. In: L. Amistadi and I. Clemente (eds.), *John Hejduk*, Soundings 0/I. Aión, Florence.

AMISTADI L. (2017) - “Que viva Mexico!”. In: L. Amistadi and I. Clemente (eds.), *Aldo Rossi*, Soundings 1/II. Aión, Florence.

AMISTADI L. (2022) - “Ornament and Play”. In: L. Amistadi and I. Clemente (eds.), *Adolf Loos*, Soundings 2/III. Aión, Florence.

AMISTADI L. (2025) - “Contiguità dello spazio urbano”. In: C. Gandolfi (ed.), *La questione architettonica del suolo nel tempo dello spazio relativo*. Mimesis, Milan.

BAUDRILLARD J. (2009) - *Il sistema degli oggetti*. Bompiani, Milan.

CARNAP R. (2019) - “Space: A Contribution to the Theory of Science”. In: *The Collected Works of Rudolf Carnap, Vol. 1: Early Writings*. Oxford University Press.

CASSIRER E. (1944) - *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture*. Yale University Press, New Haven.

CHOMSKY N. (1965) - *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.

COLLOTTI F. (2017) - *Idea civile di architettura. Scritti scelti 1990-2017*. LetteraVentidue, Syracuse.

GOETHE J. W. (1983) - “Sollecitazione significativa per una sola parola intelligente”. In: *La metamorfosi delle piante e altri scritti*. Guanda, Parma. (Orig. Title: “*Beteutende Fördernis durch ein einziges geistreiches Wort*”, 1823).

GOETHE J. W. (1816) - *Italienische Reise*. Frankfurt am Main.

GREIMAS A. J., COURTÉS J. (1982) - “Syntagmatic”. In: *Semiotics and Language: An Analytical Dictionary*, trans. by L. Crist and D. Patte, and others. Indiana University Press, Bloomington.

KLEE F. (by) (1964) - *The Diaries of Paul Klee, 1898-1918*. University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London.

LEWIS J. D. (by) (1879) - *The Letters of the Younger Pliny*. Trübner & Co., London.

MORIN E. (2000) - *La testa ben fatta. Riforma dell’insegnamento e riforma del pensiero*. Raffaello Cortina Editore, Milan.

ROGERS E. N. (1997) - “Struttura della composizione architettonica”. In: *Esperienza dell’architettura*, Skira, Milan.

SCHINKEL K. F. (1979) - *Das Architektonische Lehrbuch*. Deutscher Kunstverlag, Munich.

SEMERANI L. (1991) - *Passaggio a nord-est. Itinerari intorno ai progetti di Luciano Semerani e Gigetta Tamaro*. Electa, Milan.

SEVERINO E. (2005) - *Scuola e Tecnica*. Monte Università Parma Editore, Parma.

SHAKESPEARE W. (1998) - *The Tempest*. Coles Publishing Company, Toronto.

VIDLER A. (2006) - *Il perturbante dell’architettura, Saggi sul disagio dell’età contemporanea*. Einaudi, Milan.

WITTGENSTEIN L. (1961) - *Tractatus-Logico--Philosophicus*, trans. by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness. Routledge, London-New York.

A Complete Picture

– Liene Jākobsone

Architecture can be approached through many media and in many ways. There are the traditional technical drawings – plans, sections, elevations, details – which architects are trained to read and which contain a great deal of precise information. Through them, we can mentally reconstruct a building and form an image of its spatial structure, even before seeing or visiting it. Yet this mental image always remains different from lived experience, just as analysing a program never equals inhabiting the spaces it describes.

Today, however, photography has become the dominant medium through which architecture circulates. The endless stream of images across platforms and publications creates the illusion that we know buildings from all over the world, past and present. Photography offers a seductive sense of realism, yet it is often misleading: we see the same canonical viewpoints repeated, the context remains cropped out, details are selectively framed, and the flat image becomes an icon rather than a true representation of a spatial condition.

A building or a space is only fully grasped when it is experienced in person. This bodily encounter with architecture is what ultimately brings together all the other kinds of information we have about it. Seeing a space with one’s own eyes, moving through it, sensing its scale, light, and atmosphere produces a richness of impressions that cannot be transmitted through images alone. As Juhani Pallasmaa argues in *The Eyes of the Skin* (1996), spatial perception is not limited to vision: smell, touch, sound and bodily movement all play an essential role.

At the same time, physical presence is not enough on its own. For architects, understanding a building requires examination of drawings, data, and other representations. Architecture is therefore always read through a combination of embodied experience and other sources of information, neither of which can fully replace the other.

●

Being on site – present, immersed in a place – adds another crucial dimension to architectural understanding: context. Donna Haraway’s notion of situatedness can be taken quite literally here. Architecture cannot be separated from the local and embodied perspective from which it emerges: from the geographical, social, cultural, and political conditions that shape it. To grasp the logic behind architectural decisions, we must consider factors such as climate, history, power relations, embedded ideologies, everyday habits, and other intangible forces that frame a building.

This requires a certain mental displacement from our own position—an effort to imagine ourselves in the place of both the users and the architects. Who designed this? For whom? With what intentions? Under what constraints and circumstances? What challenges were faced, and how were they addressed? How is the building inhabited and experienced? How does it develop and transform along with time? These questions never have universal answers. What is appropriate, meaningful, or even necessary in one place may be irrelevant – or entirely wrong – in another.

Travelling allows us to encounter these situated realities firsthand. Yet this demands more than detached observation. It requires allowing oneself to be shaped by the place: tasting local food, speaking with people, listening to stories, paying attention to language, customs, and histories, without imposing premature judgement. Only then can architecture begin to reveal its deeper, contextual meanings.

●

Travelling in search of architecture offers yet another extraordinary opportunity: meeting the architects themselves. Whenever possible, it is worth reaching out – visiting a studio, sharing a brief conversation, or, ideally, walking through a building together while listening to the architect's own account of its making. Such encounters offer an intimate and layered understanding of both process and outcome.

No publication, image, drawing, or technical description can rival the depth and intensity of these firsthand narratives. Through them, architecture becomes not just legible but alive. They allow us not only to understand a building, but, at times, to fall in love with it.

Updating the Grand Tour: Travel, Teaching, and the European Built Environment

– Gregor Taul

1 I would like to begin my review of the UpGranT project with my most recent travel experience with students. As this text was written while I was on the road, several methodological questions arose during the trip, which I will address here. In the second part of the essay, I will turn to the broader topics of the UpGranT project.

At the beginning of 2026, we participated with our students in Ghent at the invitation of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of Ghent (KASK) in the international workshop *Imagining Tomorrow International*, attended by over a hundred students from Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Poland, Finland, Estonia, and India. Over ten days, students of interior architecture and other disciplines explored questions related to the everyday needs of real clients. Some students were assigned to a group tasked with improving the lives of prisoners – for many, their first visit to a prison was a shock – while others tackled less serious challenges, such as marketing French fries (which, as it turns out, should actually be called Belgian fries).

2 For many Indian students, this was their first trip to Europe, while some of my own students canceled at the last minute, citing the need for rest. Having grown up in Estonia, which was not yet part of the European Union, and for whom any kind of travel in youth had been a rare luxury that could not be skipped, I found such behavior hard to understand. While it was taken for granted that French and Dutch students would travel to Ghent by train, students from Eastern and Northern Europe – and, of course, India – had to fly, increasing their ecological footprint. One Finnish student chose to travel by ship and train, adding three extra days of travel in each direction. During the free weekend, students from more distant countries visited nearby cities such as Amsterdam, Paris, and London, while others enjoyed the privilege of "taking time off" and explored Ghent itself.

3 During those two weeks, I observed what traveling and studying in a new environment meant for myself, my colleagues, and the participating BA-level students. First, thinking about our hosts – organizing an Erasmus+ BIP workshop with over a hundred participants is no small feat. Even when arranging international cooperation projects is part of a lecturer's formal duties and may be accompanied by salary or praise, coordinating a workshop on this scale, in my view, requires a very high level of intrinsic motivation. This is especially true when practical obstacles arise, such as finding enough workspaces for all students without unduly disrupting local students or colleagues. Projects like these are undertaken out of a genuine sense of mission.

4 In pan-European projects, it is common to find slogans like "strengthening European identity and active citizenship" or "embedded common European values" in the applications. On paper, these phrases may seem hollow, but having participated in numerous EU-funded partnerships, I have never doubted their real significance. In fact, working within this Euro-positive "bubble", I often find myself puzzled: where do all the Euro-skeptics come from, and is it perhaps that our academic and professional environment is so privileged and somewhat detached from reality that such reactionary views never reach us?

5 What are the common European values that students are meant to experience and internalize when they travel? I am fascinated by the dialectic of the European experience: in a new place, you can, on the one hand, endlessly "zoom in" to the local situation, and on the other, "zoom out" and imagine how far the boundaries of that context – or of Europe itself – extend.

During my undergraduate studies, I spent a year in London (then still part of the EU) and realised how the entire world seemed to converge there. Considering London's egalitarian public transport system, one could even argue that it is more "European" than many other European capitals. Later, as a master's student in St. Petersburg, I experienced how strongly my own country's culture and society – and Europe as a whole – are intertwined with Russia, and how risky it can be if our communication remains superficial and is not supported by institutional networks. During my doctoral studies in Portugal, I became aware that the Iberian Peninsula is inseparable from South America. In other words, while the European Union has clear geographic borders, its values reach far beyond them.

I do not wish to overstate the European experience, but I believe that for students studying and traveling in this context, this kind of multidirectional spatial awareness – my street, my neighborhood, my city, my county, my country, my Europe, my Earth – is a natural and common framework for understanding and making sense of the world.

6 Although my own university participates in the Erasmus Mundus global mobility scheme and long-term student trips to other continents are increasingly common, I see that there is still considerable room for growth in terms of global research projects and faculty mobility. While the global circulation of goods and data in the capitalist world seems all-encompassing, the movement of ideas and knowledge is much more constrained, which contributes to uneven institutional and infrastructural development. At the same time, ubiquitous social media has created an unexpected effect: students in Tallinn, Ghent, and Mumbai often inhabit a startlingly homogeneous information environment, quickly picking up references to global memes and trends. In this context, the heartfelt speeches of faculty members about the need for friendship between nations may seem almost quaint – or even absurd – to today's twenty-somethings: "What are you talking about? That's obvious!"

7 At the same time, I harbor no illusions that humanity as a whole is particularly capable of progress, or that international solidarity will steadily advance. With this in mind, I have set myself a modest – but perhaps unrealistically ambitious – goal as a teacher: that no bad person should emerge from my students. How does one measure the success of such an ambition? There is no other option than to live to a good old age, maintaining both mental and physical fitness, so that one day I can look back on my work and evaluate it. Along this journey, I have many role models, drawing on various forms of knowledge – both intuitive and learned from academic literature. One principle, supported by my own experience, the experiences of colleagues, student feedback, and research, is that travel carries both personal and creative benefits. The only "but" is that mapping these results is, as is often the case in the humanities, methodologically challenging. It was precisely this challenge that became the focus of the present research project.

8 I would like to draw some main conclusions: even in the second half of the 20th century and into the early 21st century, the classic destinations of the Grand Tour – the ancient heritage of Greece and Italy – have retained their significance in architectural education. Furthermore, through several interviews and conversations, a pattern emerged: when architects look back on their studies, they often feel that their education was incomplete or that they did not discover what they were truly seeking. Only after leaving school and traveling independently did they fully grasp their profession. This insight was confirmed to me in Ghent by one of Belgium's leading architects, Paul Robbrecht, whose office we visited with the students to study his work. At the same time, this cliché reflects a centuries-old European tradition: the *Wanderjahre* remain an essential part of the Freudian "academic patricide", as well as a practical necessity – an opportunity to encounter new and unfamiliar situations that the safe walls of the school cannot provide.

9 With this in mind, it was gratifying for us, while conducting this study – *Updating the Grand Tour: Memory and Invention of the European Built Environment* – to observe that curious architecture students and young architects from Estonia have consistently found ways to discover the world, regardless of socio-economic circumstances. This was true both under an authoritarian police state like the Soviet Union, where very few people could travel at all, and in the early 1990s post-socialist Republic of Estonia, when a single plane ticket abroad could cost more than a student's parents' entire annual income. Against this backdrop, the current situation – where three-quarters of students at the Faculty of Architecture of the Estonian Academy of Arts spend at least one semester at a foreign university – feels almost like another planet.

10 In the case of Estonian architectural history, it becomes clear that the role models shaping architecture in different decades are fairly distinct – Germany in the interwar period, Finland and the Nordic countries in the sixties and seventies, and Denmark and the Netherlands in the nineties and 2000s. Yet drawing concrete lines between the houses built in Estonia and the models that inspired them – including the cities and buildings encountered on trips – remains largely vague and hypothetical. The architects we interviewed for this research project generously shared experiences and encounters that influenced them, but they rarely "reveal" exact references. And this is understandable – after all, even the architect herself often does not know where her ideas originate. It can be said that architects are deeply imbued with the exemplary buildings and travel experiences they encounter. At the same time, one recurring insight from these conversations is that the greatest enrichment – both human and artistic – comes from exposure to differences, contrasts, and even conflicts. It is perhaps no surprise, then, that many theories of creativity emphasize that the spark of new ideas lies in the collision of different sign systems.

11 Regarding the UpGrant project's goal of developing a methodology for travel-related teaching and learning, this three-year study has provided numerous opportunities for reflection and experimentation. For decades, learning outside the classroom has been a cornerstone of the curriculum at the Department of Interior Architecture of the Estonian Academy of Arts. Throughout the department's hundred-year history, annual summer internships in measuring, painting, and construction have traditionally taken students away from city life for several weeks or months. These camps – often held on isolated islands – have offered students not only practical skills but also the chance to forge strong bonds with each other, laying the foundation for countless fond memories and legends. At the same time, such immersive experiences challenge students to assimilate into a new community and confront questions of identity: Who am I? Why am I here? What am I doing? What can I give back to the locals? These are questions that cannot be addressed through short-term, fast-paced, or mass-tourism-like excursions. We urgently need ways to support students' long-term studies and internships abroad. In other words, it is not enough to simply visit architectural masterpieces; one must also confront oneself – as a work of art, or as a crisis – in the making.

12 When traveling with students, I always ask them to prepare tours of the places we visit. I usually assign most of the topics myself but leave a few open so that there is room for surprise. For example, during our recent visit to the Venice Architecture Biennale, I asked students to prepare tours on the history of Venice, the history of biennales, post-war Italian design and architecture, and Carlo Scarpa's work. One student, who chose a free topic, gave a presentation on Venice in computer games, revealing the city from an unexpected perspective through a digital twin. Another student guided us through the "most beautiful supermarket in the world" (Teatro Italia Despar), delivering an impressive talk among pastries and wine bottles. Personally, I also greatly enjoyed how the Polimi students introduced us to Milan during the UpGrant tour – it was clear they did so with both respect and responsibility.

13 On the other hand, it seems to me – a point confirmed by experience on UpGrant trips – that student-led guided tours should always be complemented by presentations from teachers, professional architects, and other local experts, offering a convivial master's perspective. Exemplary presentations of history and architecture are a vital part of architectural culture, establishing the discursive quality that shapes subsequent discussions. The speaking – and writing – architect is a long-standing European tradition, and history shows that without active architectural criticism and theory, architecture itself risks stagnation. Noticing how students often struggle with writing assignments, I have consistently required them to keep a diary alongside sketching and note-taking, especially when traveling abroad. More often than not, it is these travel notebooks that unlock their textual and visual potential, turning them into active writers and sketchers.

14 Lastly, I would like to highlight a distinction specific to our department in this project. Unlike architects, interior architects often work from the inside out, responding to existing spaces. Frequently, the starting point is the moral or functional inadequacy of the architectural shell – its rigidity, inflexibility, or simply unreasonable form. It may sound anecdotal, but many of our study assignments are born from problems created by architects (or even the missteps of other interior architects). For a traveling interior architect, the first question is whether a space enables meaningful encounters for its users. Beyond that, they notice and ask which forms and transitional zones between public and private space exist in one country but not in their own – and which of these might be worth testing. Short-term spatial interventions are one of the interior architect's key tools in this exploration.

Of course, I am exaggerating the apparent tension between architects and interior architects, which in many contexts is not so fundamental. Yet, within the framework of the UpGrant project, it has been fascinating to observe how our students sometimes remain indifferent to urban planning or typo-morphological issues, while their attention is drawn to construction and finishing materials – or the (sometimes terrible) acoustics of a room. This, I believe, is one of the most rewarding aspects of the research project: learning across disciplines and architectural cultures, and gaining the opportunity to reconsider the architecture of our own country through the spatial lens of other European experiences.

The Architect's Backpack

– Apostolos Kalfopoulos

On the luggage tag: "An uplifted soul"

It is well known among architecture and art circles that, between the 16th and 19th centuries, the Grand Tour became a primary model for studying architecture. It was established as the paradigm of an experiential self-education that was taking place *in-situ*, during prolonged periods of stay in significant locations joined together in a linear trajectory. This tradition has somehow endured and, since the early 20th century, *learning-by-travelling*, whenever possible, has become a complementary "must do" of formal academic architectural training.

The pedagogical aim of learning-by-travelling, for the aspiring architects that undertake it, beyond, of course, the general *broadening of horizons*, through direct contact with the cultures of foreign places, has not been so much to copy their selected exemplary buildings visited along the way as to use them as sources and references to be creatively interpreted during future design processes.

In this sense, learning-by-travelling is not merely a journey to visit exemplary buildings, spaces and locations *breathe their air*; rather, it is about a careful and thorough on-site examination and documentation on site, and the subsequent process of architectural "metabolization" of this newly gained design knowledge.

For the journey to acquire true necessity and meaning, it is crucial that it goes beyond solely *exploring* and *collecting* architectural knowledge to be brought back home for later application and dissemination. It is critical that it is about *refining* one's *architectural sensibility* as a result of physically encountering exemplary architecture and the contemplative work that this reflective encounter initiates.

When learning-by-travelling is fruitful, it becomes a trajectory towards new ways of architectural thinking, apprehending and feeling, leading to a deeper sense of space and its tectonic and atmospheric qualities. Journeys as such become pivotal in informing one's personal *take*, even method, on how to look and experience architecture. They are key experiences in the long personal quest of forming one's own architectural language.

Hence, when learning-by-travelling, (self-)discovery, development and transformation, as well as a high degree of creativity and architectural joy, are prioritized over the kind of leisure that is broadly connected with travel. In learning-by-travelling, *travel* recalls something of its routes – etymological that is – in the French *travail*, but what a creative-cum-joyous pursuit it is!

Feel free to overlook the Tourist Guidebooks

Compared to times not so long ago, learning-by-travelling now faces a contemporary challenge that qualitatively differentiates it from previous similar undertakings; a challenge that stems from the overarching sense that all *architectural hideaways* have already been photographed and are endlessly circulating in digital architectural platforms and fora.

This gives rise to a somehow underwhelming even frustrating feeling: that it is almost impossible for an architect to ever experience a raw, original and unedited, first encounter with an exemplary building; a certainty that one has already "visited" it through some other medium: a professional or amateur website, a social media account, a blog, or, less often nowadays, a journal, or a book. The challenge derives from the fact that, in contrast with times past, images and texts of a building proceed any actual visit, as in a tourist guide, rather than resulting from it.

– Damien Mac Uladh,
copy editor - proof reader

"Not exactly new territory", one might argue; exemplary buildings have long been praised by authoritative sources such as history and theory courses during one's studies and the specialized architectural press found in university libraries, resulting in the creation of preconceptions about what to think, what to notice and how excited one must feel if one has the chance to visit them. While this is somehow true, there is an immense difference in both degree and kind regarding their presence and their impact on the education of an architect.

The unprecedented challenge, under discussion here, arises as a result of the phenomenal *proliferation* of circulated architectural imagery – mostly photographs, and rendered representations – and the impact this has on aspiring architects, who, as a result, are drawn into the warped impression that they see – and understand – enough of the buildings themselves just from the act of looking at their "poses".

This unparalleled circulation of images has intensified the friction between the importance, on the one hand, of the *empirical knowledge of experiencing a building* and, on the other, of the *knowledge gained by studying its imagery*. Learning-by-travelling offers a way out of this tension: a mode where architectural reflection can be born again by producing creative sparks between the *immediate physical experience* of space and its *intellectual contemplation mediated* through its *representations*.

When it comes to Prep, don't overdo it!
Experience shows that learning-by-travelling performs at its best when it is not over-designed. Preparation could extend only as far as selecting different locations to be visited and possible days of stay in each location; beyond that, the itinerary, the schedule and travel dates could remain reasonably open and flexible.

The composition of one's own *map* and, most important, one's own *guidebook*, containing all the desired spots and relevant information such as locations, general and historical information, contact persons, opening hours, ways of getting there, costs, and other tangentially related stuff, when acting more as a topographical *bussola* than a fixed itinerary, serve their purpose at its best.

Activating existing networks of personal contacts, friends and acquaintances, in order to enrich and expand creative relationships along the way, as well as contacting in advance important figures (architects, artists, designers, philosophers, etc) one wants to meet, asking them if they would be open to a meeting in their space of practice, is the third constituent part of this open-ended preparatory stage.

The above warming-up process is important for developing a milieu of adequate problematizations to rise beforehand and an appropriate level of receptivity, and so that, when the time comes, the traveller has reached the right state of mind, allowing one to draw the optimal experiences, thoughts and emotions from the upcoming journey.

Do not miss going to almost Everything
When learning-by-travelling concentrates only on exemplary architecture, it fails to become something more than a one-dimensional excursion. To achieve its desired four-dimensionality it is important to include in the journey the exploration of new local currents of practice and thought in the arts, in literature, fashion, music, and street cultures and subcultures flourishing in the visited location.

It is about going to museums, galleries, project-spaces, small bookshops, artist-run-spaces and studios, independent cinemas, designers' ateliers and outlets, music venues, various pop-ups, street markets, meeting spots, etc – the favored attitude being that of an amateur urban anthropologist of the metropolitan condition – as the most effective, indirect and non-intrusive way to warm-up one's eyesight to encounter the synchrony and diachrony of the architecture and the city.

These boots are made for W...
Learning-by-travelling flourishes when motorized urban transport is avoided in favour of *wandering*; when the shortest, straight route from building to building is eagerly replaced by an indirect, polygonal, serpentine, circuitous and labyrinthine movement on foot.

When surroundings are recognized as important, walking itself becomes part of the experience understood not as simple movement but as investigation. During learning-by-travelling, moving at one's own pace, taking one's time, and walking with a distinct slowness, are key; strolling thus becomes not a way of getting somewhere, but a way of being there, in a learning experience that unfolds gradually across space and time.

It is this palpable, kinaesthetic and physical empiricism of wandering that combines a *playful-exploratory disposition* towards existing material and atmospheric architectural qualities and *an analytical attitude* towards the conditions of their manifestation.

Body and mind perform in synch, in a joint peripatetic mode, wandering from observations, to reflections, associations and retrospections, in various, structured and unstructured streams of thought that resist fast and easy representations.

Learning-by-wandering does not limit itself to the centres of the metropolises and their exemplary buildings but also shows an interest in the minor streets, seemingly insignificant neighbourhoods, outskirts, generic parts and even the marginal and abandoned zones, in search of *off- and hidden* architectures, anonymous or forgotten works that somehow fall through the *cracks* of architectural fashions.

In the same way, the inherent displacement of wandering, its intrinsic disorientation, its innate lack of a fixed destination, allows the experience of learning-by-travelling to remain constantly open, receptive and creative towards the unpredictable, the prolific randomness of the city, which, with an apt state of mind, can induce diagonal connections and leaping associations that elevate the generic to the poetic.

that fertile objectivity that comes with "Strangehood"
Learning-by-travelling involves a particular attitude towards one's *here-and--now*, so that the traveller can acquire a kind of objectivity that is not subject, to presumptions, preconceptions and predispositions, to stereotypes, platitudes and clichés.

This objectivity is derived from a state of *Fremdheit,* which can be best described as an alternating state between *presence* and *detachment*, *proximity* and *distance*, *immersion* and *supervision*, *identification* and *otherness,* that allows one to maintain an advantageous mix of *openness* and *engagement* to what one experiences.

In a mode analogous to the creative perspective of the artist, the reporter--photographer, the cinematographer, and even the anthropologist and the archaeologist – who are perfectly capable of combining *total immersion*

and, at the same time, *critical distance* when observing, recording and reflecting upon their impressions – it produces an alternative, even upgraded, mode of participation and production of meaning.

It is a "strangehood" that results from the continuous interchanging between (i) an ad-lib, extemporaneous emotional reaction when one experiences an exemplary building and (ii) a condition of being observant to the spatial qualities one experiences in an active, analytical and reflective way.

This is a combination of *closeness* and *distance* which is, at the same time, both *physical* and *intellectual*. The senses and the intellect are combined in a comprehensive total experience in exploring with one's eyes, touch and mind the tactile and ineffable qualities of space, materiality, light, humidity, sound, and landscape.

Send Postcards!

In learning-by-travelling it is fundamental that exploration is combined with recording; recording as another means of distancing and reflection on the individual's experience. In this way, the *art of diversion*, when learning-by--travelling, is complemented by the *art of notation*. It is crucia,l though, that these two forms operate simultaneously and not sequentially.

The results of such a process of recording compose the traveller's *collection* of architectural impressions that are brought back home. The ways that impressions are recorded and collected are crucial, since it is through them that the encounter with an exemplary building is imbued with cognitive function and meaning.

While *observing, recording and reflecting*, it is of primal importance for the learner-traveller to use all the cognitive tools and means at one's disposal – such as sketches, drawings, diagrams, thoughts and narratives in a notebook--cum-journal, etc – to record one's experience as well as the position one acquires in relation to them.

Photos and videos are also essential means but their employment can also be tricky. If used hastily, they can work against to the sought-for empiricism of encountering a building. Instead of leading to a thorough reflection that allows one to rigorously understand something of the building's "optical unconscious", photos and videos can operate in the end as *souvenirs*, becoming, that is, substitutes for the experience itself. Traces of an actual inability to engage with what is there. Hence, in the case of photographic images, a special time and care is needed to avoid the false impression that one can almost automatically encapsulate the essential features of a building just by taking a series of photos of it, when in fact, all reflective processes are imperceptibly suspended to an ever-postponed future.

Only when the above-mentioned cognitive tools (sketches, diagrams, photographic images, etc) are used to their full potential, do they result in the desired fruitful outcome of the reflective "metabolism" through which the collected architectural impressions acquire meaning as they become an intrinsic part of one's repertoire of design operations.

Reminders from the Future

This full potential is reached when architectural impressions of an exemplary building acquire a higher degree of *topicality* – that is, when reflections--cum-notations lift what *has-been* from its historical context and bring it in contact with one's *Jetztseins* (now-being) – through which it acquires a new *synchronicity* with one's present.

The process is as follows: from the multitude of possible points of interest that may arise upon coming in contact with an exemplary building, the traveller-collector takes notice of a specific element that stimulates his/her interest, bringing it to the fore, to his/her *here-and-now*. Through sketching, drawing, noting, etc, the traveller-collector immobilizes this element and/or quality in order to familiarize oneself with its newly acquired recognizability by taking a closer look at it, by highlighting it and by decoding its features.

It is a thorough process that gives priority to interpretation rather than the thing itself; a process by which the specific element is simultaneously *maintained*, and *transcended* in a dialectical manner. This *lifting-out* from the once *has-been* and the bringing it in contact with the *here-and-now* of the traveller-collector is critical to liberating the whole process from forces that remain bound to the *once-upon-a-time* of historicism, towards a design consciousness that rejuvenates the present of the traveller-collector.

In that sense, the whole process is not *hermeneutic* – that is, not informed by the discourses of history and theory – but *physiognomic*, in that it allows one to read, through the *expressiveness* of the collected elements, how the *intellectual forces* of their designers are intertwined with the *sensorial*.

Because of this physiognomic process, the notebook-cum-journal of the traveller-collector is filled with entries – notations of architectural impressions – which are not readily explicable. Some of them may seem to be somewhat strange, peculiar or even bizarre to an outsider, with meanings associated with them and affinities among them that are not necessarily subject to easy interpretations.

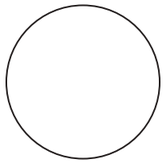
Within this notebook-cum-journal, that is brought back home, the sum of recorded notations has become much more than just a collection of impressions of the exemplary buildings visited, working as a memoir of the route taken. The collection operates for the traveller-collector both as a *document* of a past experience and a *projection* of an upcoming future; an *archive* of spatial thoughts and a *mood-map* for architectural tomorrows; a *reminder* of what *was* and an *expectation* of what *will* possibly *be*.

+1 Retour

Well, you know what they say: the main object of travel is not so much to experience a foreign place. Setting foot on "distant" land is an important trigger for what follows immediately upon returning. It is about how you encounter your familiarities anew as if you were visiting them for the first time; as if they were the contours of a foreign landscape. Learning-by-travelling brings you back to yourself; to feelings and meanings that are important to you and can only be approached by becoming a *stranger to one's place*.

And on that note, do not forget to *keep* your passport *fresh* at all times!

List of contributors
UpGranT Consortium



Politecnico di Milano

Cristina Pallini is an architect and Associate Professor at Politecnico di Milano (DABC). Her research in architectural composition has led major projects including UpGranT, PUMAH and MODSCAPES.

Francesca Bonfante is Full Professor of Architectural and Urban Design at Politecnico di Milano (DABC), where she teaches at the AUIC School and conducts research on architecture and the city.

Tommaso Brighenti is an architect and researcher at Politecnico di Milano (DABC). He teaches architectural design and is Editor-in-Chief of FAMagazine - Research and Projects on Architecture and the City.

Domenico Chizzoniti is an architect and Full Professor of Architectural Composition at Politecnico di Milano. He coordinates the TECA book series and has published more than 150 scientific paper on architectural design.

Luisa Ferro is an Associate Professor at Politecnico di Milano (DABC). She holds a PhD in Architectural Design and combines research with teaching in architectural and urban composition.

Maria Pompeiana Iarossi is an architect and Associate Professor at Politecnico di Milano (DABC). Her research focuses on architectural and urban representation.

Aleksa Korolija is an architect and Fixed-Term researcher at Politecnico di Milano (DABC). His work focuses on architectural design and research, alongside teaching activities in Italy and abroad.

Emanuela Margione is an architect and postdoctoral researcher at Politecnico di Milano (UpGranT - DABC). She teaches architectural design at undergraduate level within the AUIC School.

Elvio Manganaro is an architect and Associate Professor in architectural and urban design. His research on architectural composition investigates both theoretical and procedural aspects, as well as teaching traditions.

Faculty of Architecture - University of Porto

Helder Casal Ribeiro is a Portuguese architect (PhD), Associated Professor and Integrated Researcher at University of Porto - Faculty of Architecture and in its Research Centre.

José Miguel Rodrigues is a Portuguese architect (PhD), Full Professor at University of Porto - Faculty of Architecture and Director of its Research Centre.

Sílvia Ramos is a Portuguese architect (PhD), Invited Auxiliar Professor and Integrated Researcher at University of Porto - Faculty of Architecture and in its Research Centre.

Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna

Lamberto Amistadi is Associate Professor of Architectural and Urban Design at the Department of Architecture of the University of Bologna - Cesena Campus.

Ildebrando Clemente is Associate Professor of Architectural and Urban Design at the Department of Architecture of the University of Bologna - Cesena Campus.

Cesare Dallatomasina is Research Fellow of Architectural and Urban Design at the Department of Architecture of the University of Bologna - Cesena Campus.

Luciana Cecilia Aloisio Delgado is Teaching Tutor at the Department of Architecture of the University of Bologna and PhD student in “Project Cultures” at IUAV University of Venice.

Mattia Maffi is Teaching Tutor at the Department of Architecture of the University of Bologna and PhD student in “Architecture and City Construction” (DRACo) at Sapienza University of Rome.

Art Academy of Latvia

Liene Jākobsone, PhD, is an architect, critical designer, senior researcher and director of the institute of Contemporary Art, Design and Architecture at the Art Academy of Latvia.

Manten Devriendt is an architect, spatial planner and researcher at the Art Academy of Latvia.

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Apostolos Kalfopoulos, (AUTh Scientific Coordinator), PhD, is an Associate Professor at the School of Architecture, teaching Architectural Design and Visual Arts.
Contribution: Project Management | Identifying Grand Tourists | Data Collection & Processing | GT1, GT2, GT3 & Intensive Program for Learners, GT4 | Teaching Module & Visual Reinterpretations | Architectural Narratives | Publication | Teaching Module | Exhibition.

Alexandra Vougia, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the School of Architecture, teaching History and Theory of Architecture and Architectural Design.
Contribution: Identifying Grand Tourists | Data Collection & Processing | GT2, GT4 | Teaching Module & Visual Reinterpretations | Architectural Narratives | Publication | Exhibition.

Themis Chatzigiannopoulos, PhD, is an Associate Professor at the School of Architecture, teaching Architectural Design.
Contribution: Identifying Grand Tourists | Data Collection & Processing | GT3 & Intensive Program for Learners, GT4 | Teaching Module & Visual Reinterpretations | Exhibition.

Alkmini Paka, is a Professor at the School of Architecture, teaching Architectural Design and Urban Design.
Contribution: Identifying Grand Tourists | Data Collection & Processing | GT2.

Dimitris Frangos, is a Professor at the School of Architecture, teaching Visual Arts and Design.
Contribution: Identifying Grand Tourists | Teaching Module & Visual Reinterpretations.

Despoina Zavraka, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the School of Architecture, teaching Architectural Design and Design of Publics Spaces.
Contribution: Data Collection & Processing | Teaching Module & Visual Reinterpretations.

Anastasios Tellios, PhD, is a Professor at the School of Architecture, teaching Architectural Design & Theory of Architecture. He is the Head of School.
Contribution: Identifying Grand Tourists | GT1.

Estonian Art Academy

Gregor Taul is an author and educator based in Tallinn, currently working as an assistant professor in the Department of Interior Architecture at the Estonian Academy of Arts.

Merilin Tee is an interior architect based in Tallinn. She has worked as a project coordinator and lecturer in the Department of Interior Architecture at the Estonian Academy of Arts.

Book

Title
UpGranT Workbook of Affinities

Coordinators
Helder Casal Ribeiro
Sílvia Ramos

Editors
Cristina Pallini
Helder Casal Ribeiro
Lamberto Amistadi
Liene Jākobsone
Apostolos Kalfopoulos
Gregor Taul

Graphic designer
Marta Ramos

Publisher
U. Porto Press - University of Porto
Porto, Portugal

ISBN
978-989-746-465-2
1st edition April 2026

Copyright
© book, University of Porto
© texts and imagens, authors

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission of the publisher and authors.

This book is published under the Erasmus+ Cooperation partnerships in higher education programme, funded by the European Union. Reference: 2023-1-IT02-KA220-HED-000158377.

The views expressed are those of the author(s) alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the Erasmus+ - INDIRE National Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting administration can be held responsible for them.

The Open Access version of this book is available at up.pt/press/

Project

Title
UpGranT - Updating the Grand Tour. Memory and Invention of the European Built Environment

Site | Digital Tool
upgrandtour.eu

Partner organisations
- Politecnico di Milano (applicant org.)
- Faculdade de Arquitetura - Universidade do Porto
- Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna
- Art Academy of Latvia
- Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
- Estonian Art Academy

Institutional Partners
- Cittadella degli Archivi
- Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione (CSAC) - University of Parma
- Fondo per l'Ambiente Italiano (FAI)
- Archivio Piero Bottoni
- Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art
- Casa do Cinema Manoel de Oliveira
- Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva
- Casa da Arquitectura - Portuguese Center for Architecture
- APJAR - Associação Pró-Arquitectura João Álvaro Rocha
- Alberto Carneiro Art Center, Santo Tirso
- International Museum of Contemporary Sculpture, Santo Tirso
- Art Library - Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
- Fundação Livraria Lello
- Latvian Museum of Architecture
- AVF Architecture Foundation
- Latvian Association of Architects
- Constantinos and Emma Doxiadis Foundation, Benaki Museum
- MIET/ELIA - Greek Literary and Historical Archive (ELIA) - National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation (MIET)
- Archive of the General Directorate of Technical Services and Computerization, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
- Modern Greek Architecture Archives (M.G.A.A.), Benaki Museum
- Estonian Academy of Arts Library
- Estonian Association of Architects
- Estonian Museum of Architecture
- Kalamaja Museum
- National Archives of Estonia
- Pärnu City Government

A PDF version of this book is available for free in Open Access at up.pt/press/

ISBN 978-989-746-465-2

Publisher
U.PORTO PRESS

Up Grant

European Commission

POLITECNICO

U.PORTO FACULDADE DE ARQUITETURA UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO

ALMA MATER STUDIORUM UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA DIPARTIMENTO DI ARCHITETTURA

Art Academy of Latvia

ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI

EKA

Workbook of Affinities

Updating the Grand Tour.
Memory and Invention of the
European Built Environment

The *Workbook of Affinities* comprises 7 sections that synthesise the results of the exercises undertaken by the UpGranT Consortium in the conception of a learning by travelling pedagogical model, re-empowering the Grand Tour's long-standing practice.

Section 1	**UpGranT Consortium**
Section 2	**Politecnico di Milano · POLIMI**
Section 3	**Faculty of Architecture – University of Porto · FAUP**
Section 4	**Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna · UNIBO**
Section 5	**Art Academy of Latvia · LMA**
Section 6	**Aristotle University of Thessaloniki · AUTh**
Section 7	**Estonian Art Academy · EKA**

– *Francesca Bonfante,Tommaso Brighenti* 1 Grand Tourists P3

Mapping Grand Tourists' works in Milan

Wall atlas

– *Cristina Pallini, Luisa Ferro* 2 Grand Tour P11

Milan in a day-long cross-section

Wall atlas

– *Emanuela Margione* 3 Souvenirs on Exemplary Buildings P19

"Until you can tell me something that you cannot see". Architectural tales of three Milanese buildings

New eyes for a familiar space: the Palazzo dell'Arte by Giovanni Muzio

Sculpted by light and shadow: the Pavilion for Contemporary Art by Ignazio Gardella

Journey through the ruins of contemporary: the Tilane Library by Gae Aulenti

– *Domenico Chizzoniti* 4 Learning by travel with... P37

An imaginary dialogue: Luigi Moretti, Giò Ponti and Ernesto N. Rogers

The UpGranT "Workbook of Affinities" is published under the Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnerships in Higher Education programme, funded by the European Union. Reference: 2023-1-IT02-KA220-HED-000158377.

The views expressed are those of the author(s) alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the Erasmus+ - INDIRE National Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting administration can be held responsible for them.

The contents in this section are the entire responsibility of the partner organisation and their authors.

Mapping Grand Tourists' works in Milan

– *Francesca Bonfante, Tommaso Brighenti*

1 Grand Tour(s)

This contribution presents buildings designed by ten Grand Tourists in Milan, spanning three generations. Gio Ponti (1891-1979) and Giovanni Muzio (1893-1982) were already active in the interwar period. After the Second World War, in Italy, particularly in Milan, the city's concrete historical dimension became dramatically evident in its continuous transition from past to future. With this awareness, many Italians distanced themselves from the canons of the Modern Movement, among whom were Piero Bottoni (1903-1973), Ignazio Gardella (1905-1999), Franca Helg (1920-1989), Franco Marescotti (1908-1991), and Ernesto Nathan Rogers (1909-1969). Vittoriano Viganò (1919-1996) anticipated the third generation, including Gae Aulenti (1927-2012) and Guido Canella (1931-2009). A possible itinerary emerges, expanding the scope of the "urban section" covered in GT#1.

I North-East

"Art comes from afar and goes afar. This is the fascination of art and the reason why people crowd around it and look at it as they look at a traveller returning from very remote lands, from whom marvellous tales are expected". Thus, Alberto Savinio (1944, p. 172) reflects on architecture as an art in his autobiographical portrait of Milan, written before the 1943 bombings. Walking through the city, Savinio finds himself at the corner of Corso Principe Umberto (today via Turati) and via Moscova, facing two façades: the *grim, surly, unlovable* one of Giovanni Muzio's Ca' Brutta (1919-22) and the *arctic* one of Gio Ponti's Montecatini building (1936-38).

In Veneto during the First World War, Muzio and Ponti encountered Andrea Palladio's works, reigniting interest in Neoclassicism, a style they gradually merged with other architectural languages. In the Ca' Brutta, realised at the outset of his professional career, Muzio brought classical language back into a functional, constructive attitude, foreshadowing the new bourgeois city. In his later works, he engaged in a constructive figurative exploration, blending the Lombard–Venetian horizon with the expressionist elements of Northern European architecture, which he studied during his travels. An exemplary building in this respect is the Palazzo del Popolo d'Italia (1938--42) in Cavour Square, for which Muzio visited the headquarters of major newspapers in Germany and Great Britain to familiarise himself with the most modern layouts.

Equally undeniable is Ponti's commitment, for his part, to an all--encompassing internationalism through the direction of *Domus* (1928-41, 1948-79) and *Stile* (1941-47), in which he brings together the activities of the Italian and European protagonists of modern architecture. In 1925, the meeting in Paris with Tony Bouilhet, owner of the Christofle manufactory and a client of the villa *l'Ange Volant* in Garches, would open the way for him to many projects abroad.

Following the period of designing typical houses for the Milanese bourgeoisie from 1931 to 1936, Ponti made a clear shift towards modern architecture. His Montecatini building is an exemplary *palace of labour*, created for work and measured by it, an expression of a progressive bourgeoisie open to European debate. The external façades and the internal layout of the Montecatini building anticipate what Ponti would later write: "Let's make Architecture! Let's make all the things that can only be made with Architecture! architectures, organisms rigorous and compact outside, playful and surprising inside: outside a crystal; but, inside, a life!" (Ponti 1957, p. 204).

Starting from via Turati and heading towards via Palestro, near Villa Reale, Ignazio Gardella, who was a few years younger, designed the Contemporary Art Pavilion PAC. (1947-54). Here, Gardella achieved a modernity

capable of engaging with tradition without resorting to mimesis, and a sensitivity to the themes of the built environment that surpassed any prior ideology statement. The diaphragm effect of the metal meshes that diffuse and break down the internal light, as well as the roofing system that regulates and filters the luminosity of the exhibition space, showing his ability to master the use of light, an almost Scandinavian sensitivity that reveals certain Nordic influences.

For Gardella, travel takes on a form that is less explicitly theoretical than that of some of his contemporaries, yet no less meaningful. Experiences of study and observation, mainly in Europe, helped him build a design knowledge rooted in measurement, judgement, and a deep understanding of the city. Travel does not produce direct quotations or formal transpositions; rather, it operates as a process of sedimentation, influencing proportional control, the choice of materials, and the relationship between building and city.

The architectures mentioned so far are mainly located around Cavour Square.

One must move outward along Ampere Street to visit the Faculty of Architecture of the Politecnico di Milano, designed by Vittoriano Viganò (1974-85). This work proves that the relationship between travel and design may also be conflictual. Viganò ventures into an orthogonally woven configuration that alters the conventional spacing of levels, thereby emphasising inhabitable voids. Floors, diaphragms, joints, and accessories extend from the main volumes of the construction's primary elements. The resulting typological narrative – reflecting a school, factory, or collective dwelling – goes beyond mere construction to embody a space that acts as a museum of itself (Canella 1992, p. 20). The confrontation with international post-war architecture, namely Brutalism, is evident; Viganò makes a personal selection of the masters' poetics based on a view of architecture as an ethical and social practice. Viganò's approach to structure and spatiality offers a profound critique of traditional pedagogical models, reflecting the influence of Anglo-Saxon architecture, which typified English experimentation after the war, exemplified by Denys Lasdun and Cedric Price.

II North-West

Moving to the beginning of Corso Sempione. Here, Giò Ponti's RAI headquarters (1939) face the INA building by Piero Bottoni (1953-58): a long, high-rise residential block perpendicular to the main road, almost an erratic fragment of the unrealised "Milano Verde" plan (1938). The building is also an homage to Le Corbusier, whom Bottoni admired while at university and whom he met at the CIAMs in Frankfurt, Brussels, Athens, and Paris. A central figure of Italian Rationalism, Bottoni conceived modern architecture "not as a stylistic repertoire but as an intellectual discipline, a 'tendency' that imposes precise norms of behaviour on its adherents, a way of life even before an architectural style" (Portoghesi 1973, pp. 6-7). Following Corbusian principles, Bottoni arranged the INA building's ground floor as a porticoed street, serving as a "great distribution gallery." His original design included a roof terrace for recreation, while the tenth floor was to accommodate a roof garden intended for communal use. In the completed building, only the extensive, uninterrupted horizontal fracture persists on the façades.

The Triumphal Arch at the end of Corso Sempione marks the entrance to the park north of Sforza Castle. On its western side, heading towards the city centre, runs the railway line, which reaches Cadorna Station. The station's current layout was designed by Gae Aulenti (1997-2000), an architect who inherited and critically reworked the lessons of Milanese Modernism.

Travel, as a critical tool for knowledge, was central to her approach. Aulenti viewed European cities as stratified palimpsests, in which modernity did not erase memory but rather overlaid it through successive additions. This attitude is expressed in the project for Piazzale Cadorna, which Aulenti interpreted as an urban and infrastructural node, a place of arrival and departure where travel becomes an urban experience, a threshold between the centre and the hinterland. Like Ponti's "palaces of labour" and Bottoni's residential unit, Piazzale Cadorna interacts with the city's complexity, while architecture interprets the symbolic and perceptual aspects of public space. Aulenti constructs a poetics founded on historical continuity, on the interpretation of contextual characteristics, and on an idea of design as an act of cultural translation, also matured through an intense experience of travel. Aulenti's travels and professional work abroad, from France and Germany to the United States, Russia, and China, do not translate into adherence to international models; rather, they nourished her ability to recognise the symbolic and urban value of places.

III South-West: from the historic periphery to the Milanese hinterland

We are now on Milan's western edge, near Naviglio Grande canal, where the cooperative social centre "Grandi e Bertacchi", designed by Franco Marescotti (1951-53), is located. From the beginning of his career, Marescotti focused on social housing. In 1948, he published *Il problema sociale, costruttivo ed economico dell'abitazione* (The social, constructive and economic problem of housing) with Irenio Diotallevi. This was an inventory of construction methods and practices, with around one hundred plates of the typological solutions adopted in Europe between the two World Wars. Marescotti moved a lot across Italy, from Pesaro to Rome, Milan, Florence, and Catania. A turning point, however, was his 1932 meeting with Irenio Diotallevi, who, having recently graduated, travelled to Germany, bringing back several architectural journals and key texts on architectural and urban debate. During Reconstruction, Marescotti designed several housing complexes for the Social Housing Authority (IACP) in the Province of Milan. He nonetheless argued that "the solutions adopted, even if they contributed to revitalising the public housing sector [...] were neither capable of solving nor even clearly defining the housing issues for the less affluent classes" (Marescotti 1980, p. 15).

In 1948, Marescotti travelled to Warsaw, which had been devastated by the war and was at the centre of an intense international debate about city reconstruction (Cantone 1979, p. 68). At the cooperative social centre "Grandi e Bertacchi", he sought to provide a centralised headquarters for the cooperative organisations widespread across Milan's periphery. Social housing was to be integrated with welfare, recreational, and cultural activities, and housed in a partially independent, ad hoc building that would also be open to the neighbourhood's citizens.

Moving outward within the same quadrant of the city, we find works by Guido Canella, a central figure in Italian architecture in the second half of the twentieth century. While, for Marescotti, the integration of dwelling and collective services presents itself as an eminently social and moral problem, Canella instead approached the periphery, starting from the *invariants* of Milanese architecture. According to him, these encompassed *polycentrism, discontinuity, introversion, promiscuity, and contamination*, up to *anachronism*. Although morphologically incoherent, Canella considered all these aspects "structurally organic" because they reflect the frequency, intensity, and polarity of exchanges, which bear witness to a frontier culture and an archipelagic settlement configuration sedimented over a long period of time (Canella 1989, p. 59).

According to Canella, town halls and schools were embryos of civic life. From the 1960s onwards, he realised a series of public buildings in the municipalities of the Milanese hinterland, including the INCIS village (1968-1982) and the town hall of Pieve Emanuele (1971-78), as well as numerous school complexes, conceived as strong urban landmarks in peripheral contexts often lacking a consolidated symbolic structure. In these projects, architecture serves to integrate communal spaces and activities that foster associative life, thereby establishing the settlement core. Much like Marescotti's cooperative social centres, Canella's works bring to the fore the civic dimension of architecture, tasked with collective representation. For Canella, travel held a primarily political and structural significance, focusing on European cities and socialist countries to highlight architecture as a collective and infrastructural element.

IV From the sky to the depths of the city

Returning to the city centre, we encounter a monument, a symbol, almost a "manifesto" of a rich cultural season, "a high point that is at once a point of arrival and of turning" (Bordogna 2017, p. 6) for Milan: the Torre Velasca, designed by Ernesto N. Rogers and his firm BBPR (1950-57). The tower rises towards the sky, conveying a new idea of modernity, founded not on rupture but on continuity, in the dialectical relationship between past and present, between historical memory and the tension towards the future.

This building reflects on the historic city, the meaning of the monument, and the civic role of architecture in the context of post-war reconstruction.

For Rogers, travel was a fundamental component of architectural reflection and intellectual formation. His movements across Europe and the United States, as well as his direct engagement with international experiences developed within the CIAM, define the profile of a cosmopolitan architect who takes a critical stance toward functionalist orthodoxy and its ideological simplifications.

Travel thus becomes an instrument for testing theoretical categories and an opportunity to recognise the value of history as a living material for the project, not as a formal repertoire but as a repository of meanings to be critically reinterpreted. This awareness translated into his ability to decode the urban context as an active interlocutor, avoiding both mimetic imitation and abstraction. This approach is clearly expressed in the Torre Velasca, which reworks medieval, typological, and constructive suggestions into a contemporary synthesis, as well as in the direction of *Casabella-Continuità*, a laboratory in which international experience was filtered by a vision rooted in the historical and cultural specificity of Italy.

A few steps from the Torre Velasca in Duomo Square, we descend into the depths of the city, entering one of the stations of Metro Line 1 (1964), designed by Franco Albini and Franca Helg, with the collaboration of Bob Noorda for the graphics. Albini and Helg operate on an already completed structure and, despite the limited possibilities for action on the distributive level, conceive a unitary intervention extended to the entire city, based on the standardisation of materials (exposed concrete, linoleum, steel, prefabricated panels) and consistent with the concepts of seriality and replicability. In the stations – large collective spaces that are theatres of everyday life – the architects facilitate passenger orientation through repeated elements, such as curved metal handrails, modular, demountable wall cladding panels, and marble seating.

Franca Helg, "the grand dame of Italian architecture" (cf. Piva, Prina 2006), shared much of her professional activity with Albini from 1952 onwards, intelligently securing a fundamental role within the studio. In 1965, to cultivate her interest in developments in other European cities, she took part in a journey organised by Volkswagen to Wolfsburg to visit the factories and the city, an experimental construction site focused on the themes of post-war Reconstruction (AA.VV. 1965, pp. 107-108). Helg worked in many Italian and international contexts, always with a sensitivity to context matured through her teaching and professional activity.

Bibliographic references

AA.VV. (1965) - "Un viaggio. Architetti italiani a Wolfsburg". Edilizia Moderna, 86, pp. 107-110.

BORDOGNA E. (2017) - *La Torre Velasca dei BBPR a Milano, simbolo e monumento dell'architettura italiana del dopoguerra*. Clean, Naples.

CANELLA G. (1989) - "Comporre secondo alcune costanti". In: G. Ciucci (edited by), *L'architettura italiana oggi. Racconto di una generazione*. Editori Laterza, Bari, pp. 39-68.

CANELLA G. (1992) - "Il nero e il rosso". In: V. Viganò, *A come architettura*. Electa, Milan.

CANTONE U. (1979) - "Didattica e metodologia in Franco Marescotti". Quaderno dell'Istituto dipartimentale di architettura ed urbanistica Università di Catania, 9, Vito Cavallotto Editore, Catania, pp. 67-97.

MARESCOTTI F. (1980) - "Politica della città e tipologia architettonica". Hinterland, 13-14, January-June, pp. 10-19.

PIVA A. and PRINA V. (edited by) (2006) - *Franca Helg "la gran dama dell'architettura italiana"*. Franco Angeli, Milan.

PONTI G. (1957) - *Amate l'architettura - "l'architettura è un cristallo"*. Società Editrice Vitali e Ghianda, Genoa.

PORTOGHESI P. (1973) - "Ricordo di Piero Bottoni". Controspazio, 4, anno V, October, pp. 6-7.

SAVINIO A. [1944] (1984) - *Ascolto il tuo cuore, città*. Adelphi, Milan.


1


2


3


4


5


6


7


8


9


10


11


12


13


14

Wall Atlas

Images and credits

1 Giovanni Muzio, Ca' Brutta, 1919-22 (right), and Gio Ponti, Palazzo Montecatini, Milan, 1936-38 (left), seen from Via Moscova.

2 Ignazio Gardella, Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea (PAC), Milan, 1947-54, interior view.

3 Vittoriano Viganò, Faculty of Architecture, Politecnico di Milano, 1974-85, view of the entrance from the Via Ampère.

4 Piero Bottoni, INA Building in Corso Sempione, Milan, 1953-58, view of the north-west façade. Piero Bottoni Archive.

5 Gae Aulenti, Cadorna Square, 1997-2000. View of the covered space at the entrance to the metro. Photo by Guia Sambonet.

6 Franco Marescotti, Centro Cooperativo "Grandi e Bertacchi", 1951-53, view from the Naviglio Grande Canal.

7 Guido Canella, civic centre with town hall, middle school, and sports field, Pieve Emanuele, 1971-1990. Guido Canella Archive.

8 BBPR (Belgiojoso, Peressutti, Rogers), Torre Velasca, Milan, 1950-1957.

9 Franco Albini and Franca Helg, Line 1 metro station, Milan, 1962-1964.

10 A group of participants at the 4th CIAM aboard the Patris II en route to Athens. From left to right: Pier Maria Bardi, José Luis Sert, Siegfried Giedion, Piero Bottoni, Cornelis van Eesteren, and Gino Pollini.

11 Gio Ponti and his son Giulio at the New York Alitalia offices with the Superleggera chairs, 1957.

12 Ignazio Gardella and Franco Albini visiting Murano with Marcel Breuer in 1952. CSAC, Gardella Archive.

13 Gae Aulenti, Journey to China, 1974. Gae Aulenti Archive.

14 Vittoriano Viganò during a scuba dive.

Milan in a day-long cross-section

– Cristina Pallini, Luisa Ferro

If we agree with Antonio Acuto[1] (1984, pp. 1-2) that cities are not organisms that grow and decay according to internal logic, then their identity is understood through the dialectical relationship between structural factors shaping society and the settlement's organisation within a territory, expressed in productive activities, infrastructure, and the built environment. Guido Canella suggested that Milan, with its system of artificial waterways and Gothic cathedral, has historically been a city of innovation and resilience, and it might regain that role once more. For architects from central Italy, however, such as Filarete, Bramante and Leonardo, it was a kind of "anomaly." The city acquired a modern, rather homogeneous townscape during the Neoclassical period, which later inspired the federalist visions of Carlo Cattaneo and Camillo Boito.

Within the scope of the UpGranT project, we could not help but follow Canella's focus on 20th-century architects, who remain decisive "for those who must engage with design in a school of architecture" (2010, pp. 16-17). Along this line, our one-day walking tour in Milan covered three main areas: Piazza del Duomo and nearby squares; the Sforza Castle and the Park; Corso Sempione, stemming from the Triumphal Arch and heading northwest towards France.

The tour concluded at the newly developed City Life district, alternating between works by our ten Grand Tourists and other notable buildings that reflect Milanese formal rigour rooted in Lombard tradition. In many instances, the architectural quality also highlights the importance of the urban projects they represent. Thus, these three areas can help us understand the city's possible changes over time. It is no coincidence that they have been the subject of in-depth studies within the Milan School. It is precisely this repository of projects that enables architects to engage with the city's time, revealing the *raison d'être* of some of its unfinished or unresolved parts.

1 Antonio Acuto (1940-2004) taught at the Politecnico di Milano's Faculty of Architecture starting in 1970, working with Guido Canella and Lucio Stellario d'Angiolini. He served as the Director of the Department of Architectural Design (1997-2000) and was the first Dean of the Faculty of Civil Architecture (1997-2000).

2 The scheme dates to the late 1920s and was embedded in the 1934 plan. It involved significant demolition of the old urban fabric to improve car traffic across the historic centre (De Finetti 1969, pp. 221-247).

3 The Roman matrix, a hidden chthonic structure only partly uncovered, has hovered as a mythical precedent, shaping layouts and meanings over time (Torricelli 1997, 2007).

4 Gian Luigi Banfi, Ludovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti, Ernesto Nathan Rogers.

8:30 am: Missori Square

We met on a winter Sunday morning outside Metro line 3 in Piazza Missori. On our back, we had the National Social Insurance Fund Building by Marcello Piacentini and Ernesto Rapisardi (1929-1931), modern yet rich in stylistic attributes, aligned with a sober 17th-century brick elevation. In front of us, the curve of Hotel Cavalieri by Enrico Lancia and Giò Ponti (1949) exemplified the Milanese Novecento style. Nearby, the remains of an early Christian church marked where the Grand Loop scheme (*Racchetta*)[2] came to a halt. It clashed with another project aimed at restoring the ancient urban form in its monumental spaces.

In Milan, the relationship with antiquity cannot be entrusted solely to the (scarce) vestiges; it must be mediated by a plausible interpretation of the subsequent footprints that have overlaid one another, whose concrete evidence survives in artefacts and traces still in dialogue with one another from afar. At different moments in history, *Mediolanum* suggested a "latent order" to which architectural and urban projects could refer.[3] Carved out of the old urban core, the unfinished Grand Loop acquired its distinguishing townscape after the Second World War. The widespread devastation cleared the way for several residential and office buildings, including the three by Mario Asnago and Claudio Vender (1947 to 1959) and another by Giovanni Muzio (1948-1952). Paraphrasing Umberto Boccioni, "the city rising" around Piazza Missori included two outstanding tall structures, which complement each other in expressing the dialectic with the city: the Velasca Tower by BBPR[4] (with Arturo Danusso, 1950-1958), and the complex for housing, offices, shops, and garage by Luigi Moretti (1951-1956). While the latter features a dense urban fragment whose volumes acquire figurative autonomy against the block's boundaries, the Velasca Tower embodies a new idea of modernity, fed by historical memory and a sense of place.

Duomo Square: an open building site

Duomo Square took on its current proportions and grandiose display, with Parisian pretension by the Savoyards, in the early years of Italy's unification, under Giuseppe Mengoni's scheme (1861-1864). This reform anticipated the overhaul of the urban area, with the monocentric plan by Cesare Beruto (1884-1889) contradicting Milan's stratified history, which became increasingly difficult to decode when archaeological research began.

Despite everything, Duomo Square embodies the dichotomy between past and future, which becomes palpable when exploring the city's vertical section. Underground, many people switch daily between Metro Lines 1[5] and 3; quite as many wander around the commercial and cultural spaces in the Galleria's basement. Only a few visit the archaeological area in search of Paleo-Christian roots. Going up onto rooftops, instead, is becoming increasingly fashionable. The options range from panoramic lounge bars and restaurants to the Duomo's walkable roof, where Luchino Visconti filmed the famous scene from *Rocco and His Brothers* (1960) with Alain Delon and Annie Girardot staging an intense, dramatic confrontation in a forest of spires: an iconic moment for both Milan and Italian cinema.

In 1984, the construction of Metro line 3 uncovered Roman and medieval artefacts. Enzo Mari presented his projects for the area between Scala Theatre and Duomo Square (1984). In response, Lucio Stellario d'Angiolini[6] shared thoughtful insights into the square's importance and ways to bridge its long history into the future. Like all Milanese, he often found himself there, emerging from underground to catch a tram among the passers-by who, on weekends, flocked from all suburban areas. To him, this catchment area demonstrated the square's vitality and role, very different from those of others in Italy.

> And indeed, between Gallerie and Portici (and even more so between Cordusio and Foro Bonaparte), there is something – and it is obvious – of that splendour entrusted to plasterwork, to a certain intrusive design. But today, I have doubts about completing the square on that basis. Preserving its architecture and its role as a historical testimony is one thing; replicating its entire unsustainable structure is another.
>
> [...] What would be the version given today to mark the layout and alignment of roads dating back to before the 4th century, revealed (and detectable) between Via Mengoni and Piazza Mercanti up to the intersection of Via Torino and Via Orefici?
>
> The alignments – on which very poor ruins seem to stand – could be made evocative with certain trees, such as pines and cypresses. Some artefacts excavated in the city could be placed here. Water features and small architectural elements could be added to rediscover the magic of 16th-century gardens.
>
> The medieval alignments would be restored with Lombardy poplars and turkey oaks. Mercanti Square would regain its original height. Finally, the underground link between the northern and southern porticoes (between the Metro 1 mezzanine and the Metro 3 entrance atrium) could overlook the excavation site, which might contain part of the proposed Museum of Milan, showcasing its history from Celtic origins to Maximian and Constantine.
>
> [...] Too much space for the Museum of Milan, more than is given to the Museum in London? There are different ways of setting up a museum: if it had (rather than exhibits) records of testimonies that can be found elsewhere (in their historical sites, museums, archives and libraries), it would be a museum of identity and its rediscovery (d'Angiolini 1984, pp. 7-12 auth. trans.).

5 The stations of Metro Line 1 were designed by Franco Albini, Franca Helg, Bob Noorda and Antonio Piva, 1962-1969.

6 Lucio Stellario d'Angiolini (1918-1995), an urban planner, was an atypical figure largely overlooked. He was a staunch supporter of the mutual exchange between architecture and urban planning; he taught at the Faculty of Architecture in Milan, collaborating with Guido Canella from the 1960s.

7 Leonardo's sketch (1497?) outlines a plan for Milan featuring a new circular wall. Wealthy families were to settle between the old municipal walls and the new, thereby thinning out the old nucleus and decentralising productive activities (Acuto 1984, pp. 32-33).

8 Giovanni Antonio Antolini proposed reshaping the Sforza Castle with an imposing Doric colonnade, at the heart of a vast circular esplanade (570 m) defined by a navigable canal lined with a portico connecting a series of public buildings. This was to provide an inland port to the productive Po Valley.

Sforza Castle, real and imagined

At various points in history, Sforza Castle has been regarded as a potential second outbound centre. In his famous perspective view, Leonardo da Vinci represented Milan with two concentric circles, with the castle enclosure stemming from the inner circle, juxtaposed with the innermost urban core.[7] In 1801, after three centuries, Milan was the capital of Napoleon's Kingdom of Italy, and the castle was reinterpreted as the core of Foro Bonaparte, a hub for long-distance water and land routes reaching the Adriatic and France (via the Simplon and Moncenisio), equipped with the Customs House, Stock Exchange, Public Baths, a Theatre, and a National Museum.[8]
The Sforza Castle was integrated figuratively and functionally into the urban fabric at the turn of the 20th century (Grandi, Pracchi 1980, pp. 66-79).

Luca Beltrami and Gaetano Moretti (1893-1906) almost rebuilt it, adding a new iconic tower that marked the origin of the northwestern axis. In Giuseppe De Finetti's vision, this territorial infrastructure, hinged onto the old urban core, could strengthen the links with the broader region.

In the 1930s, the park catalysed some important projects, such as the Palace of the Arts (Giovanni Muzio, 1931-1933), the Littoria Tower (Cesare Chiodi, Gio Ponti, Ettore Ferrari, 1932-1933), and Giuseppe De Finetti's Foro Mussolini hinged on the Neoclassical Arena, which was to morph into a modern stadium (1933-1934).

The park's potential to foster new collective behavioural patterns resurfaced after the Second World War, when existing buildings and public spaces became part of a new urban narrative. Once again, the Sforza Castle was reinvented by the BBPR (1948-1963) to host the Civic Collections, made accessible to a wider audience. Reconstruction challenged architects to create new structures while preserving the existing architectural and environmental qualities, as Rogers argued at the 8th CIAM. He advocated the need to preserve and reinvent the heart of a city: "the composition of a complete work, though logical and elegant, cannot fulfil the set aims if it does not also achieve a rich, varied and surprising orchestration" (Rogers 1958).

The north-west spine

In 1938, the north-western axis from the Napoleonic era prompted Giuseppe Pagano, Franco Albini, Ignazio Gardella and Giulio Minoletti to design a modern district incorporating the fairground, with an orderly grid of vehicular and pedestrian routes within a park-like setting: *Milano Verde*, almost a manifesto of "rationalist" town planning.

After the Second World War, Milan resembled a living body wounded to its very heart for Giuseppe De Finetti. From 1946 to 1951, as the Provincial Delegation's representative on the management committee of the Trade Fair, he worked on a plan for the surrounding area and on projects for the old core and the new centre. Milan's history suggested prioritising a physiological dualism between city and region, a key that no data-gathering or standard application could address.

De Finetti envisaged the north-western axis as the new Decumanus – an ideal extension of *Mediolanum*'s Decumanus. The northwestern urban sector was based on a V-shaped system of roads diverging from the old centre, parallel to the Olona and Lambro rivers, where textile, steel, and engineering industries had been concentrated in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Subsequent stages of expansion would also require connections to the highway and rail networks, or to a heliport, including services and innovative facilities. With its great pavilions for temporary and permanent activities

(exhibitions, shows, cultural and sports events), the Fair district could serve as Milan's "Acropolis." In this sense, Casa Rustici by Pietro Lingeri and Giuseppe Terragni (1933-1935), along with the tall INA building by Piero Bottoni (1953-58), rather than isolated episodes, may be seen as a tangible legacy of *Milano Verde*, clearly opposing the stereotype of the monocentric city, appropriating a hidden historical depth.

City Life

Rising from the ashes of the old fairground, City Life boosts the famous three office towers: the Straight by Arata Isozaki, the Curved by Daniel Libeskind, and the Crooked by Zaha Hadid. The public space between them was designed by the Milanese firm One Works (2017), while the nearby luxury residences were designed by Zaha Hadid and Daniel Libeskind (2004-2014). The complex also includes a Public Park (by Gustafson Porter, Melk, One Works, and Ove Arup) and a large, new, horizontal commercial structure called City Wave.

Presenting Milan in a day-long cross-section, we had to include the latest developments, such as City Life, a project that sparked heated debate among architects and planners alike, partly due to its lack of urban relationships and the self-referential nature of the individual skyscrapers.

The words of De Finetti come to mind and are more relevant than ever.

> [...] Architecture evolves slowly; it is not an art based on improvisation and sudden, magical changes.
>
> As proof, we will see that even in the field of urban architecture, which studies and creates the forms of cities, the organisation of buildings and public services is almost always achieved by analogy with what is already known, adopting concepts and inventions already tested elsewhere, more often imitating than inventing.
>
> Restless spirits who tend towards novelty for its own sake, towards the strange and the amazing, are of no use to this craft, which is entirely real and concrete, when by chance they devote themselves to it.
>
> And no small harm is also done by copycat minds, those who, lacking inventive power and critical spirit, cling to fashion and follow it alone, accepting it as it is, even if it is alien and completely foreign to their theme, their climate, their economic and technical means (De Finetti 1969, p. 322).

The Straight, the Curved, and the Crooked, however, reignited a debate over high-rise buildings in Milan, as testified by the exhibition Grattanuvole. Un secolo di grattacieli a Milano at Politecnico di Milano from 6 November to 6 December 2014 (Coppa and Tenconi 2015). Looking at the form and spatial design of the new towers, one notices an undeniable break with Milanese tradition, epitomised by BBPR and the complex designed by Luigi Moretti along Corso Italia. The fundamental difference lies between a self-standing stereometric volume and a building with a figurative identity, which finds its roots in a broader context and becomes part of the city. From this perspective, it may suffice to look at a picture of the Velasca Tower seen from the rooftop of the Cathedral, framed by the forest of spires.

Bibliographic references

ACUTO A. (1984) - "Forma Urbis Mediolani" (unpublished typescript), pp. 1-2.

BAHNAM R. (1959) - "Neoliberty: The Italian Retreat from Modern Architecture". Architectural Review, 747, pp. 231-235.

COPPA A., and TENCONI L. (eds) (2015) - *Grattanuvole. Un secolo di grattacieli a Milano*. Maggioli, Santarcangelo di Romagna.

D'ANGIOLINI L.S. (1984) - *Ci vediamo in Piazza*. BE-MA, Milan, pp. 7-12.

DE FINETTI G. (1969) - *Milano costruzione di una città*. Etas Kompass, Milan.

CANELLA G. (2010) (ed. by I. Boniello and G. Canella) - *A proposito della Scuola di Milano*. Hoepli, Milan.

GRANDI M., PRACCHI A. (1980) - *Milano. Guida all'architettura moderna*. Zanichelli, Bologna.

MARI E. (1984) - *Tre piazze del Duomo. Progetti per il recupero e valorizzazione dell'area Duomo-Scala*. Arcadia, Milan.

ROGERS E.N. (1958) - "Il Cuore: problema umano della città," reprinted in E.N. Rogers, *Esperienza dell'architettura*, Skira, Milan 1997, pp. 257-260.

ROGERS E.N. (1959) - "L'evoluzione dell'architettura. Risposta al custode dei frigidaires". Casabella-Continuità, 228, pp. 2-4.

TORRICELLI A. (1997) - "Memoria e immanenza dell'antico nel progetto urbano," in A. Torricelli, *Il momento presente del passato. Scritti e progetti di architettura*, Franco Angeli, Milan 2022, pp. 53-64.

TORRICELLI A. (2007) - "Invenzioni dell'antico. Studi e progetti per Milano archeologica," in A. Torricelli, *Il momento presente del passato. Scritti e progetti di architettura*, Franco Angeli, Milan 2022, pp. 65-69.


1


2


3


4


5


6


7


8


9


10


11

Wall Atlas

Images and credits

All photos were taken by Stefano Topuntoli in 2012 for Angelo Torricelli, who used them in his lecture "Caratteri di Milano e architettura d'oggi" on 3 April 2017 (Italia Nostra, Milan section).

1 View of Piazza Missori with Hotel Cavalieri (bottom left). The Velasca Tower by BBPR and the complex of housing, offices, shops, and garages by Luigi Moretti are also visible, as is the large system of courtyards identifying the Ca' Granda Hospital by Filarete (15th century).

2 Torre Velasca as seen from The Duomo rooftop.

3, 4 The complex of housing, offices, shops, and garages by Luigi Moretti along Corso Italia as seen from Bertarelli Square.

5 The Castle with Filarete's tower seen from via Dante.

6 The urban sequence formed by Cordusio Square, Via Dante, Foro Bonaparte, the Sforza Castle and the park behind it (the former drill ground). Tangent to Milano Cadorna railway station (on the left), the latter includes the Triennale and the Arena Civica (on the right).

7 The part with the Triennale.

8 View of Corso Sempione, with the INA building by Piero Bottoni at the centre.

9 View of the Trade Fair area after the demolition of the pavilions and before the construction of the City Life district.

10, 11 Panoramic view from the Cathedral's rooftop.

"Until you can tell me something that you cannot see". Architectural Tales of Three Milanese Buildings

– *Emanuela Margione*

3 Souvenirs on Exemplary Buildings

Introduction

Every building tells at least two stories. One is traced in monographs, original drawings, and the architects' own statements. The other arises from a direct encounter with space itself, unfolding the articulation of volumes, surfaces shaped by light, and the way built elements orient movement and gaze. The distance between these two narratives provides the basis for an inquiry into three exemplary buildings: the Palazzo dell'Arte (Triennale) by Giovanni Muzio (1931-1933), the Pavilion for Contemporary Art by Ignazio Gardella (1947-1954), and the Tilane Library by Gae Aulenti (2009).

Describing a building often involves a moment of critical observation that leads to a gradual unpacking of space, moving beyond purely functional aspects and bringing into focus the spatial qualities that make architectural works endure over time.

The question of how architecture may be observed thus precedes any attempt at narration, a point that Colin Rowe grasped with clarity. During a study tour across Europe with Peter Eisenman in 1959, Rowe raised the question of observation, prompting his young collaborator to deepen his engagement with architecture. As Eisenman himself recalled, it was on that journey, standing before one of Palladio's villas, that Rowe taught him *how to see as an architect*:

> My most important lesson in architecture was the first time I saw a Palladian villa. [...] Colin said, 'Sit in front of that façade until you can tell me something that you can't see. [...] I want you to tell me something that is implied in the façade' [...] (Eisenman 2008, p. 133).

A year after travelling with Rowe, Eisenman began his teaching activity, carrying that experience with him. Out of those days gradually emerged what he later called "close reading" (Eisenman 2025, VIII): a way of looking at buildings that attends to the forces and tensions shaping space, not immediately revealed by architecture yet generative of it (Eisenman 2008, 133).

How, then, might we observe these three buildings to grasp this latent dimension of their space?

A possible answer emerges from the words of travelling architects in which observation becomes both a critical and a narrative practice. Giò Ponti, in his text *Favola Americana* (1952), describes architecture "at first sight", binding his narrative to sensations of infatuation. Through these fable-like descriptions, the effects of light on the glazed surfaces bring to the fore a deeper and more meaningful dimension of the architectural use of glass. Gae Aulenti writes upon returning from her travels, producing very brief texts that freeze the memory of the observed spatial dimension. In *Chinese Interior* (2023), for instance, it is as if she were leading the reader by the hand on a clockwise tour of a small apartment in Shanghai's Kun Jian district. Finally, Aldo Rossi, in his text on La Tourette (1960), embraces a distinctly personal mode of architectural observation; this direct engagement enabled him to grasp Le Corbusier's "continual challenge to common sense through a remarkable inventive power" [tda] (Rossi 1960, p. 4).

Movement – both physical and mental – and a near-emotional perception thus appear as necessary conditions for observing architecture: taking the time to see, to question, and, at times, even to challenge a sedimented interpretation, thereby allowing a return to the building with renewed eyes. The importance of seeing architecture *as if for the first time* is also articulated by Luis Kahn in his 1957 essay, *Architecture is the Thoughtful Making of Space*. In this text, Kahn momentarily sets aside the poetic flow of his writing to recount, almost as a marginal note, an episode from his journey to Pisa.

He recalls deliberately delaying his entry into both the main square and the cathedral, aware of the value of the initial encounter with architecture:

> When I first came to Pisa, I went straight in the direction of the Piazza. Nearing it and seeing a distant glimpse of the Tower filled me so that I stopped [...]. Not daring to enter the Piazza, I diverted to other streets toward it, but never allowing myself to arrive. The next day, I went straight for the Tower, touched its marble and that of the Duomo and the Baptistery. The next day, I boldly entered the buildings (Kahn 1957, p. 3).

Grounded in this critical reflection on how architecture may be narrated, the three following narratives take the form of short tales. Each is shaped by a deliberately assumed challenge: attending to what is implicit, to what remains hidden in plain sight. What emerges are three openly personal observations[1]. They do not seek to offer a definitive description of space, but rather to convey the dimension of a critical dialogue that can take shape between an observing architect and the building being observed.

New Eyes for a Familiar Space: The Palazzo dell'Arte by Giovanni Muzio

The *Palazzo dell'Arte* in Milan stands as one of the most widely recognised works by Giovanni Muzio and, for this very reason, one of the hardest to disentangle from an interpretation that has long been established. For those who have lived with the building over time, looking at it anew can be particularly demanding.

A layered memory, shaped by habitual routes and familiar images and informed by project drawings alongside written sources, recomposes figures that remain legible yet subtly discordant. However, it is perhaps within this uneasy condition that the point of departure for this narrative may be found: a deliberate return to what the eye has already encountered many times, in ever-changing configurations, in order to question the moments of rupture and of coherence between direct experience and design intention.

Access to the building is gained through a porticoed pronaos of monumental order, leading into an entrance of domestic scale. Here, the lateral walls appear to incline gently towards one another, forming a faint optical cone that draws the gaze towards the monumentality of the Triennale space. This slight convergence accelerates the eye's movement and carries it towards the far end of the building, enabling it to measure its full depth in a single glance. The effect is reinforced by a carefully coordinated sequence of spatial and material devices – the final steps, the polished white marble floor, and the visual dialogue with the roof structure – which together stabilise the vanishing point. Only at one moment does this visual acceleration come to an almost abrupt halt. While the roof advances swiftly overhead, the flooring undergoes a marked material shift, pulling the visitor's gaze downward with an almost disconcerting force.

The only possible response is then to cross the first bay and move towards this point of gravitational attraction. Here, the space is laterally framed by two square wings. One accommodates the monumental staircase while the other contains the *impluvium*, now occupied by the bookshop. The atmosphere of this space is defined by a diffuse and calculated material density: green marble cladding on portals, pilaster strips, and columns; surfaces alternating between plaster and exposed brick; and mosaic inserts that interrupt the continuity of the white marble. Turning on the spot, almost as if reorienting oneself within this material collage, one gains the impression of standing within a basilica-like space. The nave appears to extend freely and uninterrupted from the entrance to the end wall; at its centre, the two wings suggest the dimension of a transept; towards the far end of the nave, the apse rises slightly at the point where the building opens visually towards the park. At this moment, however, a sense of disorientation emerges, as if one's internal compass required recalibration. The spatial experience sedimented in memory and the project as represented in its plan drawings seem to slide past one another, never fully coinciding. Fig. 3

Each element appears both in the right place and subtly misplaced. The clear, ordered image of the *basilica* scheme fails to align with the planimetric and volumetric organisation evident in the project drawings and, in strict terms, seems even to dissolve. What the eye perceives as a nave is, in fact, closer to a transept: a linear connector crossing the basilica and linking three autonomous components – a compact entrance block, a longitudinal volume, and a body assigned to representative functions, positioned as a compositional counterweight to the foyer – which, in their combined configuration, give rise to a form directly informed by the geometry of Parco Sempione. Figs. 4-7

A further visual dissonance becomes apparent in the shift from spatial perception to the original drawing, as the transept loses substance and reveals itself as a residual void produced by the articulation of the surrounding volumes of the galleries, the monumental staircase, and the *impluvium*. It is almost as if, from the outset, the sudden pauses, enforced changes of viewpoint, and material articulations generated by an observation aligned with orthogonal visual axes were already pointing towards the necessity of an oblique, almost foreshortened gaze.

Once this perspective is adopted, the building appears as if seen for the first time, and previously dissonant elements begin to fall into place. Returning to the beginning of the route, a diagonal reading immediately clarifies the galleries' transverse orientation and the insertion of the curved wall that sets the central body in motion. Dynamism and theatricality come to the fore, articulated through the tensions between volumes, the fluid continuity of space, and a diagonal line that emerges as an ordering principle in the building's third dimension. Fig. 2

It is perhaps in this gap – between the complexity of lived experience and the simplification inherent in the project – that the Triennale reveals its most distinctive quality, showing how new ways of seeing can still emerge even within spaces deeply embedded in memory.

Sculpted by Light and Shadow: The Pavilion for Contemporary Art by Ignazio Gardella

Two aspects immediately strike the visitor approaching this building. The first is the Pavilion's near invisibility: walking along Via Palestro from Piazza della Scala, the access gate is easily overlooked, as attention is naturally drawn to the more monumental entrance of the adjacent Villa Reale. Even once in the Villa forecourt, one must pass through its eastern wing before finally encountering the Pavilion. Here emerges the second aspect: once finally identified, the entrance conveys little sense of leading into a space intended for the exhibition of contemporary art. Both aspects stem from a single condition: the PAC takes shape within what remained of the former Villa stables after the Second World War bombings.

It is now time to enter. Once inside, the new exhibition space does not immediately offer itself to the gaze. The entrance volume, embedded within the pre-existing elongated structure, is bounded by a large white wall that opens at the point where a few steps rise. Immediately beyond, a further white wall interrupts the view of the subsequent spaces, as if the architect were suggesting that a form of *estrangement* from history is necessary to reinvent the present.

1 The UpGranT project proposed producing incisive descriptions of Exemplary Buildings, including an anthology of project-relevant texts supplemented by critical texts by team members. This activity also involved internship students.

The spatial narrative is thus suspended, deferred. Only after ascending those few steps and reaching a level slightly above the surrounding ground does the new exhibition space begin to reveal itself.

Entering the new spaces makes the compositional weight of light tangible, almost as if moving through a space of drapery. The rhythmic sequence of shadow and light reveals the rationale behind the slight variations in level and the minimal rotation of the walls. Far from being an accessory element or a secondary effect of a priori spatial modelling, it becomes, through its transparency and surprising material weight, the generative force that carves and shapes architectural volumes.

Light enters the building through a long glass wall that extends along its entire length and, as it penetrates the space, excavates the slightly elevated main exhibition volume, drawing it back towards ground level. The glazed wall renders the boundary between interior and exterior virtually immaterial, guiding the eye towards the Villa Reale Park, where the only façade designed by Gardella comes into view. Here, the reference to garden structures suddenly appears through the plum-coloured glazed ceramic cladding, the projecting metal eaves, and the vertical sliding panels that recall wooden trellises.

Going back inside to the main volume. Here again, the space appears to be shaped primarily by light rather than by geometry alone: the roof design, dominated by Seager's sail-like elements, creates an interplay of light, shadow, and white partitions, allowing the space to be perceived almost as an inhabitable drapery of a geometric nature. Fig. 10

The white partitions give rise to five tall lateral wings that extend towards the wall along Via Palestro, serving as ordering devices within a pre-existing layout misaligned with the new intervention. As they reach the main nave, they come to an abrupt end. Light entering through the main glazed wall traces the partition edges, thickening their profiles and moulding each into paired lateral wings that redistribute brightness and shadow along the length of the Pavilion's nave.

Overlooking this space is a further room at a higher level. This space, a small gallery for printed artwork, appears to be the most singular because it is the only one to withdraw from immediate view, hiding itself in an introverted manner. In fact, in Gardella's Pavilion, almost everything remains visible, according to a logic of pervasive, reciprocal visibility. Scholarly accounts of this project often refer to three levels that interpenetrate; yet the longer one remains within this space, the clearer it becomes that the exhibition level is, in reality, a single one, and that the artworks are perceived from three different points of view, as though Gardella were deliberately staging a cubist exercise.

Going back to the gallery upstairs, becomes clearer how light seems to prevail over the designer's will to separate, reclaiming a portion of the hidden space and generating a balcony overlooking the main nave.

More than anything else, the staircase seems to confirm this reading of light as a sculptor: it rebels against structural orthogonality, bending and thrusting towards the main exhibition space, as if the light from the glass wall were acting upon it like a magnetic force. The staircase appears to serve light more than visitors, allowing illumination to reach the upper level and to steal back a fragment of space otherwise fully absorbed by the enclosed gallery. Figs. 11-14

Journey through the ruins of the contemporary: the Tilane Library by Gae Aulenti

Much is known about Gae Aulenti, and yet her architectural work remains only partially explored. However, it may be precisely this partial obscurity that allows for a first, unmediated observation in approaching the Tilane Library.

Access to the library is mediated by the square in front of it, framed by a long portico that gives form and measure to its perimeter. The portico embraces the library, establishing an architectural and urban relationship that deliberately blurs the boundary between the building and the city. Once past the portico, one has the impression of entering a theatre in which Aulenti stages her own vision of the relationship between city and history. It feels as though the walls of an ancient citadel have been crossed, giving access to a modern stronghold.

The actual entrance to the library building is reached under the portico, through a central volume. Here, the small hall, free of vertical partitions, allows a glimpse of the main reading room just ahead. To reach it, a long transversal corridor must be crossed. Before doing so, it feels almost instinctive to glance to the right and to the left, as one does when crossing a street. This is, in fact, the sensation that gradually asserts itself: not that of being inside a building, but of moving within a fragment of an old citadel.

It doesn't take long to understand that the corridor reads as the building's true heart. It is, in fact, only through this promenade, marked by a double-height space that draws the gaze upwards towards the transparent roof and then to the sky, that one can reach all the spaces: the reading rooms, the study areas, the children's play area, and the civic space. Fig. 16

As one moves along the corridor, a subtle contradiction begins to take shape. The space is clearly articulated, yet it unfolds without interruption. What alters its character is a single wall that accompanies the entire length of the route. This wall, clean and orderly, punctuated only by a series of circular openings, feels out of place. Its thickness exceeds what one would expect inside a building, recalling the defensive mass of historic city walls and producing the sensation of being neither fully inside nor outside. It is only by approaching it closely, by reading its depth with the eye, that its role becomes apparent: the wall has been thickened to become inhabitable, quietly absorbing all the services within its mass.

The observation continues by returning to the promenade. At one end of the building, the street widens, recalibrating its double height and directing the gaze towards the upper level. Here, the compact wall breaks off. It continues vertically only through a sequence of pillars, as if the portico defining the geometry of the square were finding its natural continuation here. Moreover, the presence of these pillars allows those moving at the upper level to maintain a continuous visual relationship with the corridor below, as if the street itself were magnetically drawing all movement within the building towards it.

Returning towards the entrance hall and retracing the street in the opposite direction, with the nose lifted upwards – a gesture typical of the travelling architect, inclined to observe with curiosity the built environment that surrounds them – another surprising aspect comes into view. In this building, the walls seem never to touch the roof, and the points where the sheds rest remain constantly concealed, producing a perceptible discrepancy from the expected structural order. It is as though, in an attempt to preserve the memory of the pre-existing industrial building – which it had not been possible to retain – the architect were deliberately engaging in a play of immaterial memory. The walls neither retrace the footprint of the former industrial structure nor

reproduce its spatial layout; instead, they operate as a constructed fiction, evoking the sensation of moving among remnants. Detached from the roof, they function as a simulated ruin, while the roof appears to be the only explicitly new architectural intervention, seemingly placed to protect a historical legacy. Fig. 17

The dimension of play gently comes to the fore more clearly, articulated through the composition of individual architectural elements, each reduced to a distinct pure geometry. This playful attitude also reappears outside in the dialogue between the wall and the roof shed. The roof takes the form of a stylised house resting above the only wall in direct relationship with the city. This wall is then characterised by elongated crenelations, once again evoking the character of a fortification. It is as though the imagery of play and of a lightly enchanted world were offered as an invitation to the citizens, encouraging them to reclaim a part of their own city. Fig. 18-21

Bibliographical references

ARGAN G.C. (1959) - "Introductory essay". In: Santini, P.C. (ed.) *Ignazio Gardella*. Edizioni di Comunità, Milan.

ARTIOLI N. and CALAMANDREI, S. (2023) - *Gae Aulenti. China 1974*. Humboldt, Milan.

CANELLA G. (1992) - "Gardella in controluce". In: Buzzi Ceriani, F. (ed.) *Ignazio Gardella: progetti e architetture 1933-1990*. Marsilio, Venice.

EISENMAN P. (2025) - *Rewriting Alberti*. MA: MIT Press, Cambridge.

EISENMAN P. and ROWE C. (2008) - "Interview with Peter Eisenman: The last grand tourist. Travels with Colin Rowe". Perspecta, pp. 130-139.

GARDELLA I. (1997) - "Interview". Interview by A. Monestiroli. In: Monestiroli, A. (ed.) *L'architettura secondo Gardella*. Laterza, Milan.

KAHN L. (1957) - "Architecture is the thoughtful making of space". Perspecta, pp. 2-3.

MOLA P. (2001) - *Constantin Brancusi: Aphorisms*. Abscondita, Milan.

MUZIO G. (1982) - "Interview with Giovanni Muzio on the Palazzo dell'Arte". Interview by L. Fiori. In: Fiori, L. and Belski, M.P. (eds.) - *Giovanni Muzio: Palazzo dell'Arte*. Abitare Segesta, Milan, pp. 19-24.

PONTI G. (1952) - "Favola Americana". Domus, 272, pp. 6-15.

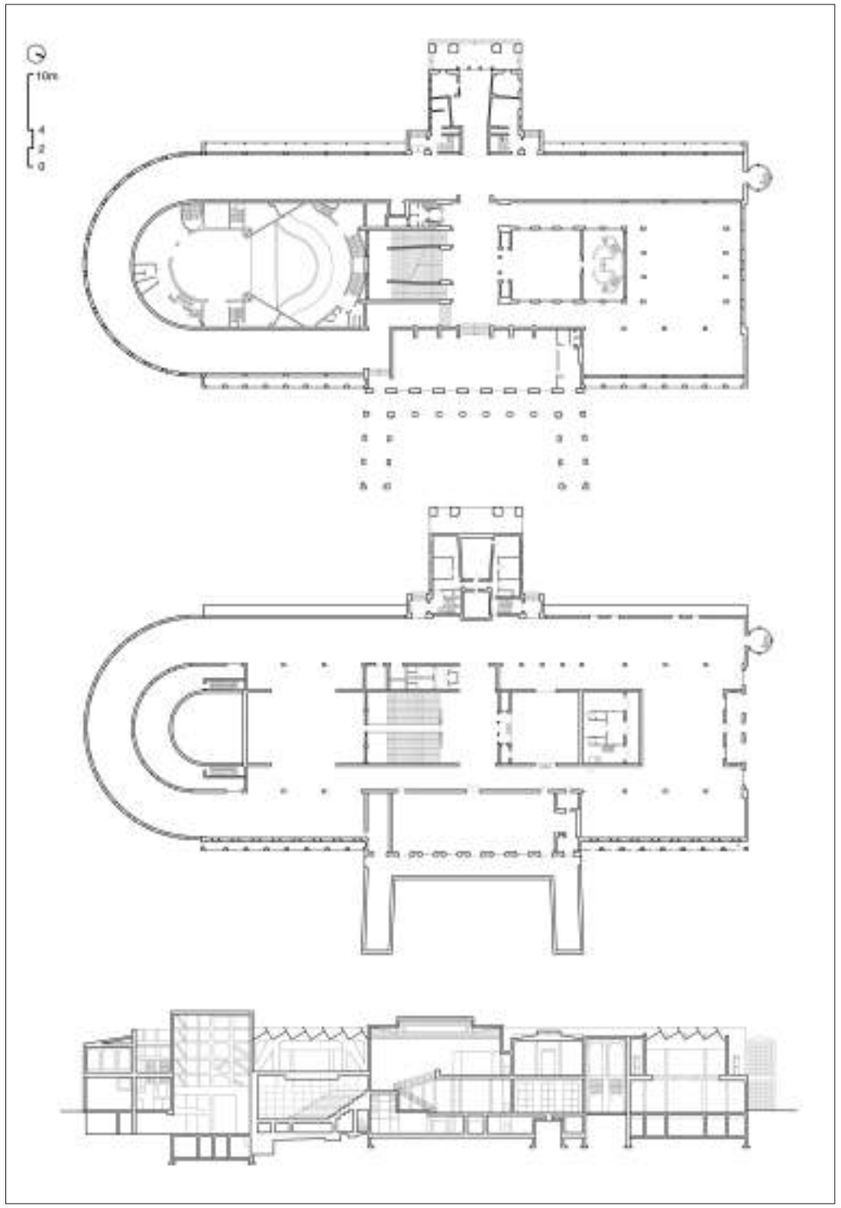
ROSSI A. (1960) - "Il Convento de la Tourette di Le Corbusier". Casabella, 246, pp. 4-19.

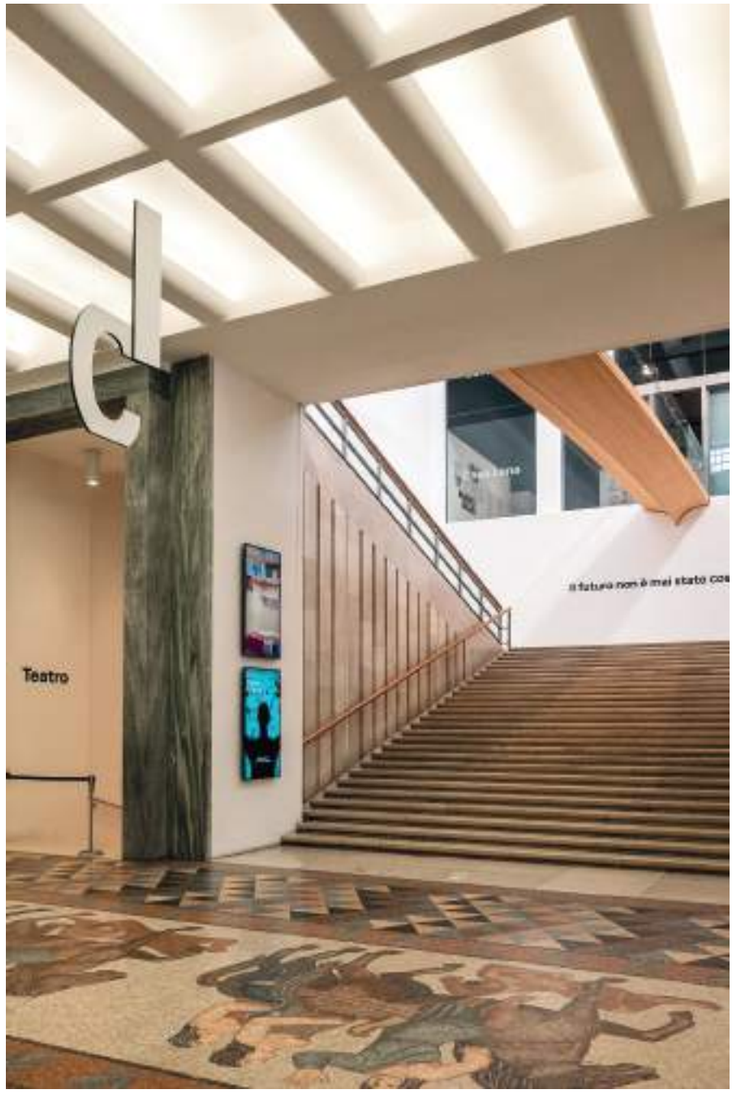
Palazzo dell'Arte, Giovanni Muzio (1931-1933)

Redrawings

1 Giovanni Muzio, *Palazzo dell'Arte* (Triennale Milano), Milan. Top to bottom: ground floor plan; first-floor plan; longitudinal section.

Credits: Polimi_UpGranT Internship 2025 (Teaching Module). Redrawing by Hasib Jabril Rajput.





Palazzo dell'Arte, Giovanni Muzio (1931-1933)

Visual interpretations

2 Giovanni Muzio, Palazzo dell'Arte. View of the monumental staircase, with details highlighting the diagonal.

The distribution of space across multiple levels constitutes a key innovative feature of the building, as Muzio himself noted: "Before starting the design I visited almost all the Palais des Beaux Arts in Europe but I was not really satisfied with what I saw: they were usually on a single floor with an enormous contrast between the external and internal structures".

Muzio G. (1982) - "Interview with Giovanni Muzio on the Palazzo dell'Arte". Interview by L. Fiori. In: Fiori, L. and Belski, M.P. (eds.) - *Giovanni Muzio: Palazzo dell'Arte*. Abitare Segesta, Milan, pp. 19-24.

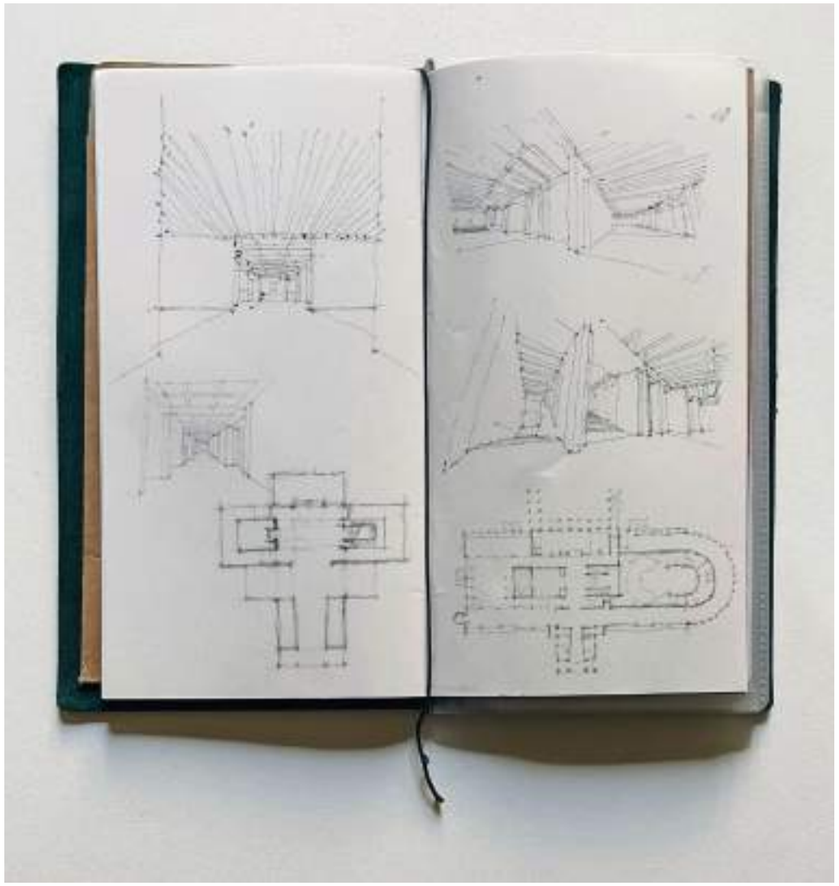
Credits: Photograph by Daniele Zipeto, 2024.

Palazzo dell'Arte, Giovanni Muzio (1931-1933)

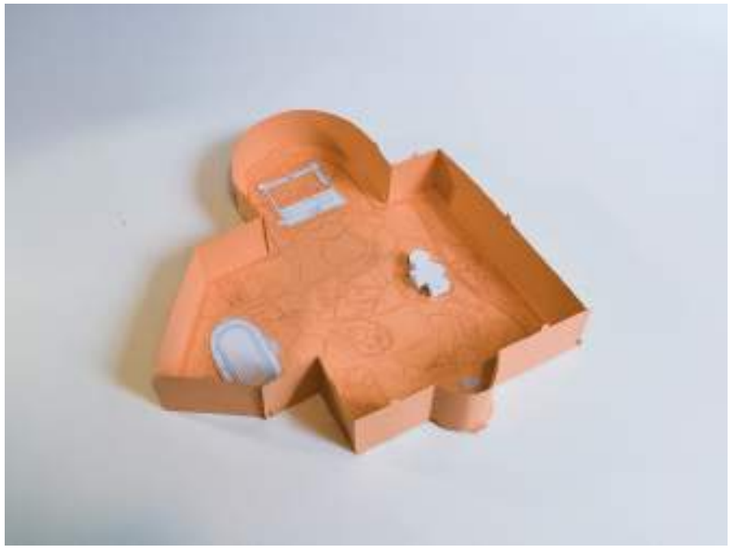
Visual interpretations

3 Sketches documenting a contemporary journey through the *Triennale* Building, comparing spatial reconstruction through orthogonal and oblique perspectives.

Credits: Polimi_UpGranT IPL--Reloaded, 2026. Sketches by Davide Montrasio.

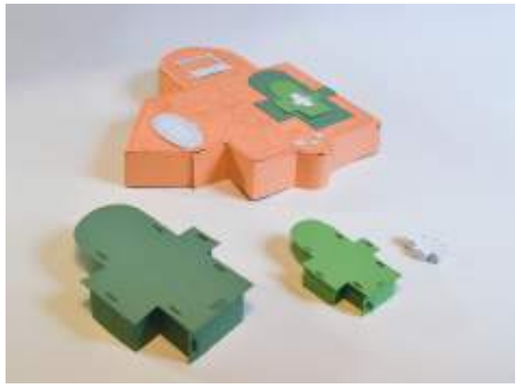


3 Souvenirs on Exemplary Buildings









Palazzo dell'Arte, Giovanni Muzio (1931-1933)

Models

4-7 The coloured paper model presents the geometric relationship between Parco Sempione and the building designed by Giovanni Muzio.

Structured as a nested system, the model consists of a paper box representing the park that folds inward to enclose the volume of the Triennale. "The relationship between the Park and the city [...] was the principle guiding both its location and its form."

Giovanni Muzio. In Fiori L. and Belski M.P. (eds.) *Giovanni Muzio: Palazzo dell'Arte*. Abitare Segesta, Milan

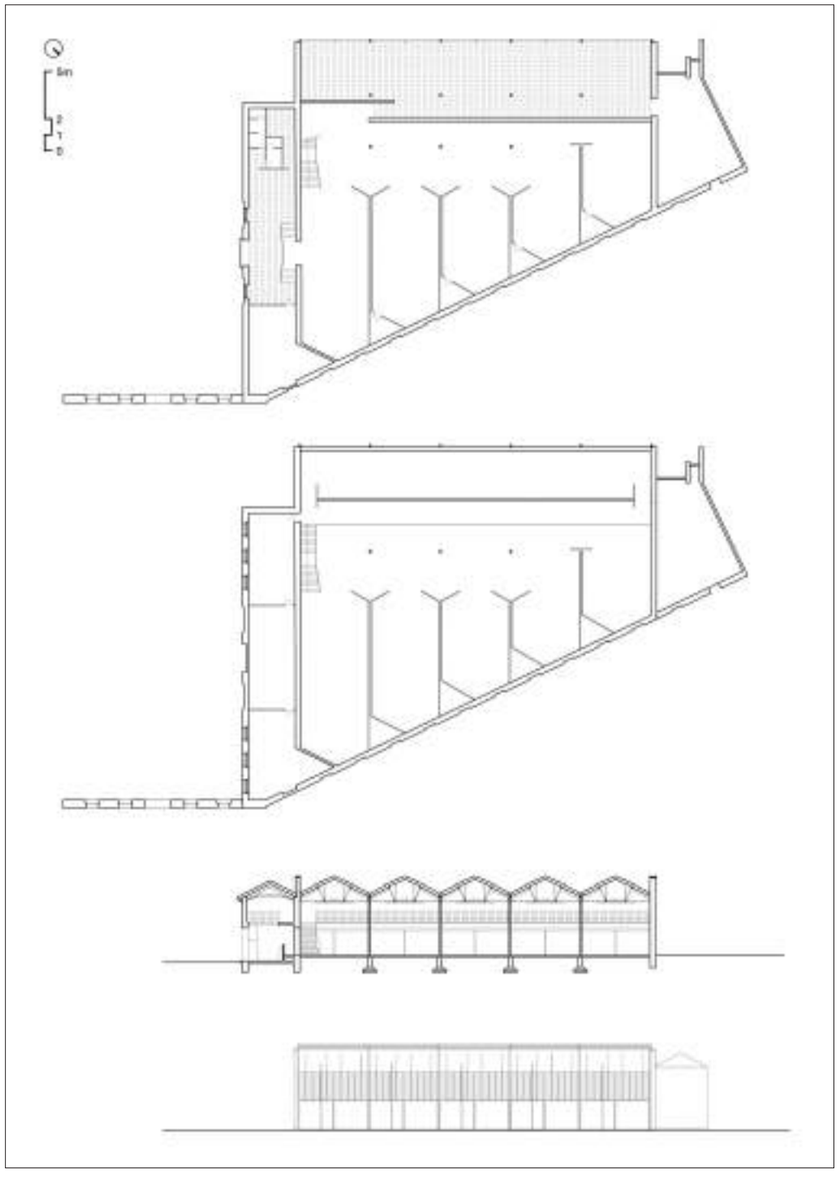
Credits: Polimi_UpGranT IPL--Reloaded, 2026. Model by Davide Montrasio and Simone Rizzini

The Pavilion for Contemporary Art, Ignazio Gardella (1947-1954)

Redrawings

8 Ignazio Gardella, *Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea* (PAC), Milan, 1947-1954. Top to bottom: ground floor plan; first-floor plan; longitudinal section; elevation towards the Villa Reale park.

Credits: Polimi_UpGranT Internship 2025. Redrawing by Hasib Jabril Rajput.



The Pavilion for Contemporary Art, Ignazio Gardella (1947-1954)

Visual interpretations

9 “I felt the impression of absolute emptiness, a blackness in which there was no presence. And of absolute fullness: an unheard-of light”.

Constantin Brâncuși. In Mola P. (2001). *Constantin Brâncuși. Aforismi*. Absconditia, Milan.

The image reveals the different ways in which light and shadow articulate the space, generating a drapery-like spatial effect.

Credits: Photograph by Daniele Zipeto, 2026.

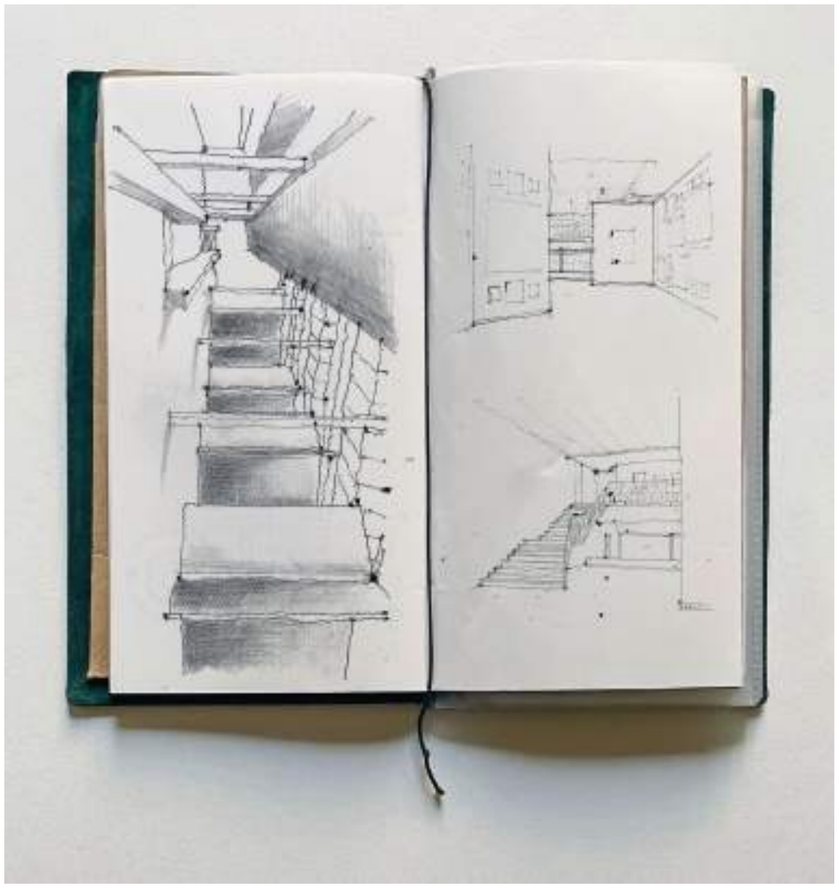


The Pavilion for Contemporary Art, Ignazio Gardella (1947-1954)

Visual interpretations

10 Sketches documenting a contemporary journey through the *Padiglione d’Arte Contemporanea* (PAC) by Ignazio Gardella. On the left, the effects of light and shadow sculpt the white surfaces, producing an effect akin to drapery.

Credits: Polimi_UpGranT IPL--Reloaded. Sketches by Davide Montrasio.











The Pavilion for Contemporary Art, Ignazio Gardella (1947-1954)

Models

11-14 The coloured pop-up paper model presents the continuous spatial flow shaped by light. The model takes the form of a 360° open pop-up book and is organised into four main sections representing the garden, the principal exhibition levels, and the upper gallery. Its vertical division aligns with the glazed wall that introduces daylight into the building and structures the stair sequence. The staircase occupies a central position and is oriented towards the light entering from the façade.

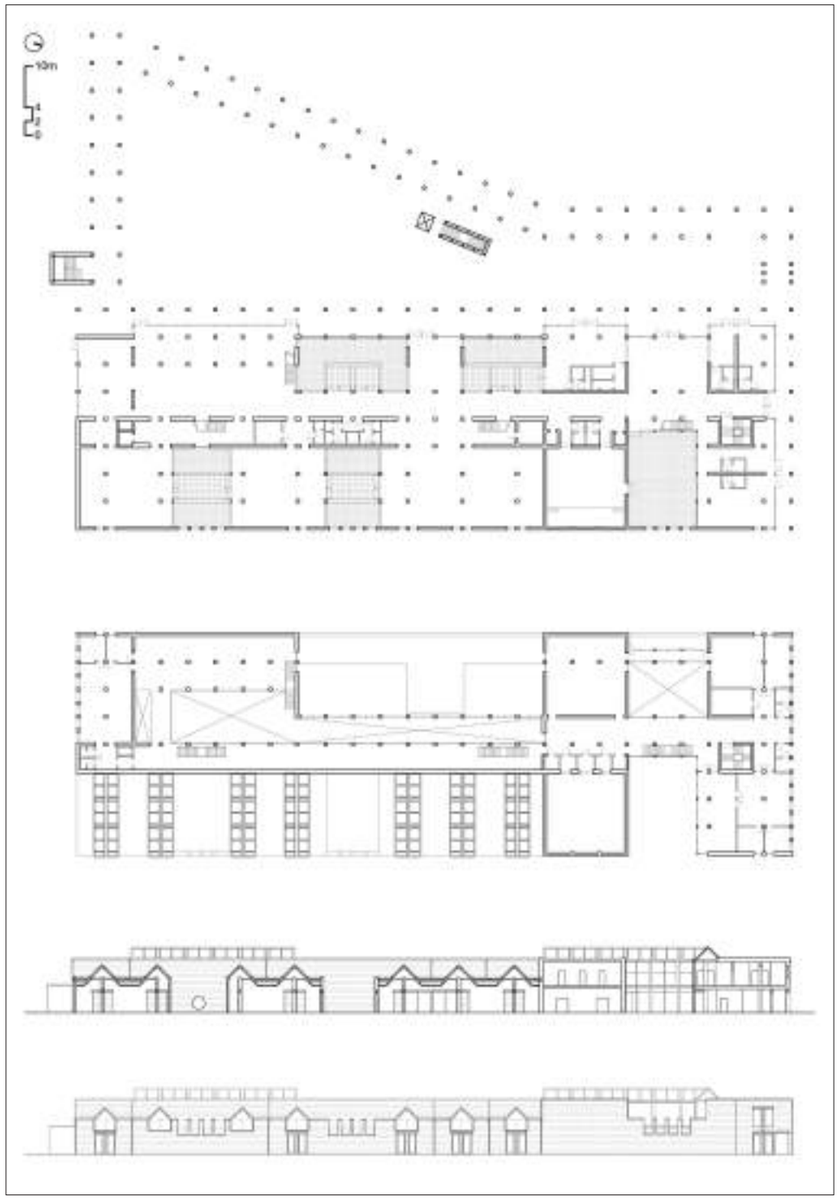
Credits: Polimi_UpGranT Internship 2025 (Teaching Module). Model by Silvia Gechele and Ludovica Vittoria Manfren.

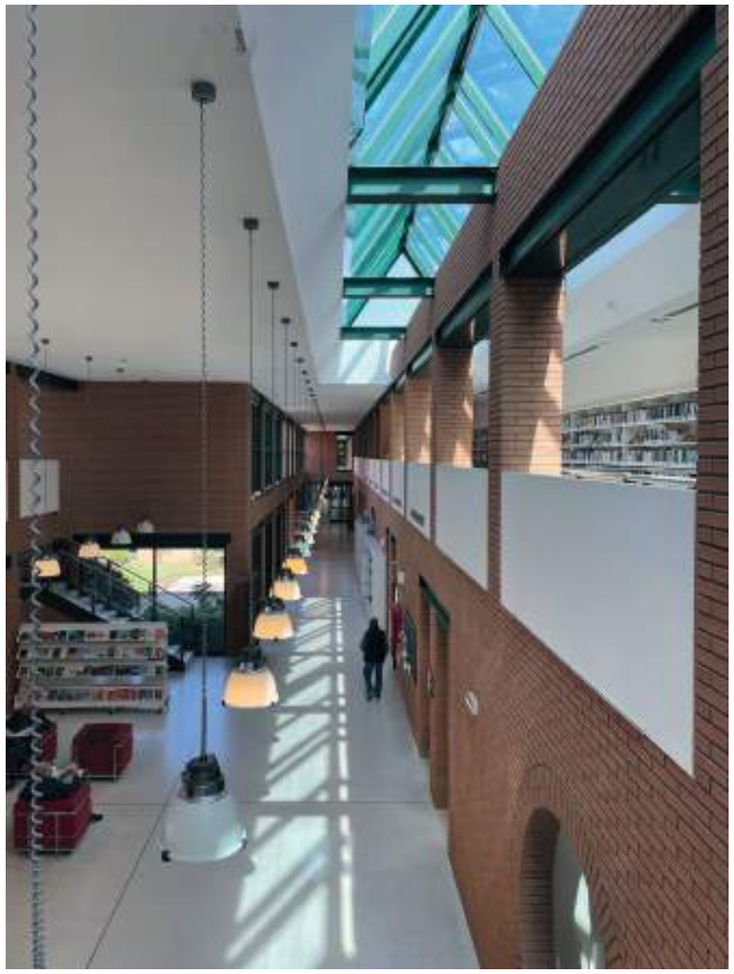
The Tilane Library, Gae Aulenti (2009)

Redrawings

15 Gae Aulenti, Biblioteca Tilane, Paderno Dugnano, Milan, 2009. Top to bottom: ground floor plan; first-floor plan; longitudinal section through the reading rooms and courtyards; elevation towards the railway.

Credits: Polimi_UpGranT Internship 2025 (Teaching Module). Redrawing by Hasib Jabril Rajput.





The Tilane Library, Gae Aulenti (2009)

Visual interpretations

16 Gae Aulenti, Biblioteca Tilane. View along the internal promenade.

"From the moment human beings began to write, they have felt the need to preserve documents. Even today, in an age shaped by computing and digital communication, vast numbers of libraries continue to be built, of every scale and for every kind of user. More than this, knowledge, technology, and the cultural and managerial strategies underlying libraries are increasingly becoming the subject of complex and highly refined forms of study."

Aulenti G. (2009) *Project Report*. Courtesy of Gae Aulenti Archive, Milan.

Credits: POLIMI_UpGranT Internship 2025 (Teaching Module). Photograph by Emanuela Margione, 2025.

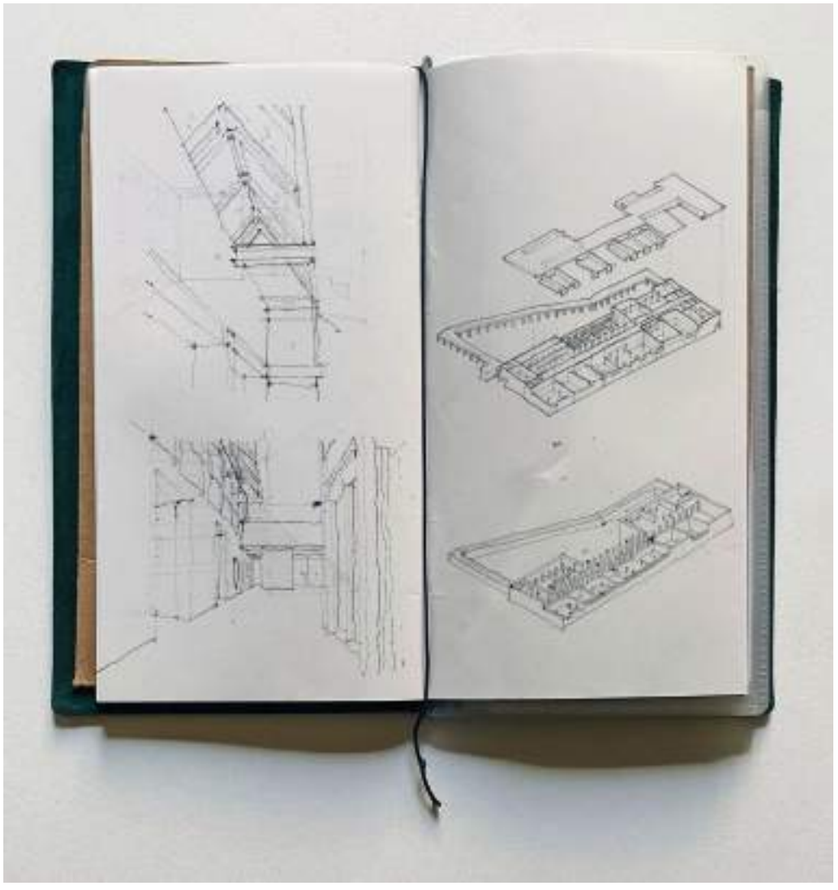
The Tilane Library, Gae Aulenti (2009)

Visual interpretations

17 Sketches documenting a contemporary journey through the Tilane Library by Gae Aulenti.

The roof sheds are detached from the main structure, and the thick wall reads as an element out of place; the building is then viewed in its entirety, as if it were a ruin.

Credits: Polimi_ UpGranT IPL--Reloaded. Sketches by Davide Montrasio







The Tilane Library, Gae Aulenti (2009)

Models

18-21 The coloured paper model, developed as part of the UpGranT Internship (2025), conveys the playful character of the rear façade of the Tilane Library. Conceived to unfold from a book in a pop-up format, the façade evokes the image of a magic castle through its crenellations. The stylised houses are assembled from modular cardboard elements in a contrasting colour, reinforcing the playful quality of the building designed by Gae Aulenti.

Credits: Polimi UpGranT Internship 2025 (Teaching Module). Model by Daniele Ravanelli and Simone Rizzini.





An imaginary dialogue: Luigi Moretti, Giò Ponti and Ernesto N. Rogers

– Domenico Chizzoniti

4 Learning by travel with...

The idea of an impossible interview with multiple authors is not new. On the contrary, it is a well-established literary genre that has inspired intriguing experiments in fictional crossings between characters and authors, producing narratives that are often fantastical and sometimes imaginary. Ernesto Pavolini codified it in a fine book, with a series of examples: Italo Calvino, cast as a correspondent in a scenic valley near Düsseldorf, questions the Neanderthal man about his unexpected notoriety; Edoardo Sanguineti encounters Francesca da Rimini over the phone, conflating Dante's heroine with a switchboard operator from the second infernal circle; Umberto Eco sets out to probe the inner life of the president of the Association of War Invalids of the Roman Republic.

Such experiments also appeared on Italian Radio Studio in the early 1970s, with the successful series *Interviste Impossibili* (Impossible Interviews), in which leading writers were invited to confront emblematic figures from history and myth, separated by centuries or even millennia. Andrea Camilleri, who often served as both director and author, aptly observed that, in this highly complex imaginative game, the interrogation of history frequently coincides with a self-reflexive movement among authors. The result offers a semi-serious, insightful depiction of a particular cultural climate, outlined through the protagonists' theoretical and ideological obsessions, in critical dialogue with history's deforming yet revelatory mirror.

In architectural terms, this scheme functions as the paradigm of creative freedom – experimentally fertile in evocation rather than in historical reconstruction. It prompts a confrontation within an architectural writing workshop and a unique historical reflection on a theme that may (though not necessarily) unite them: travel as a non-neutral instrument of thought and design, and as an experimental occasion for architecture's critical space. Or, as Claudio Magris puts it (2011, p. 9) "a continuous preface [...] noting in the notebook the landscape that [...] recomposes as we cross it [...]. And then [...] erasing and rewriting those notes, in that continual move from reality to paper and back again".

This assumes, of course, that we accept that the absence of authenticity does not undermine the verified sequence of events.

Accordingly, this free reconstruction would make it possible, at least in principle, to imagine Ernesto Nathan Rogers, Luigi Moretti and Giò Ponti – authoritative interpreters of a cultural season, through journals such as *Casabella*, *Spazio* and *Domus* – seated in the same room or lying on a couch before an analyst-interviewer.

In this way, the imaginary construction of an *impossible interview* on the role of the Grand Tour becomes a viable working trace for reflecting on travel as an exploration of ways of seeing, encompassing both the unexplored and the familiar within one's own world. This interior exploration finds clear expression in the journey proposed in 1914 by Louis Moilliet to Paul Klee, accompanied by August Macke:

> In the morning, painted outside the city; a gently diffused light falls, at once mild and clear. No fog. Then sketched in town. [...] In the evening, through the streets. A cafe decorated with pictures. Beautiful watercolors. We ransacked the place buying. A street scene around a mouse. Finally someone killed it with a shoe. We landed at a sidewalk cafe. An evening of colors as tender as they were clear. Virtuosos at checkers. Happy hour. Louis found exquisite color tidbits and I was to catch them, since I am so skillful at it. I now abandon work. It penetrates so deeply and so gently into me, I feel it and it gives me confidence in myself without effort. Color possesses me. I don't have to pursue it. It will possess me always, I know it. That is the meaning of this happy hour: Color and I are one. I am a painter (Klee, 1964, p. 297).

Conversely, retracing the works of Ponti, Rogers, and Moretti across Milan feels like going backwards, exploring the boundaries of their experiences with a space outside time, frozen between potential cities, imagined architectures, and the unforeseen places.

All that is required, then, is to imagine an impossible screenplay for an equally impossible three-way encounter... and to elicit from them what they never wrote or said...

For centuries, the Grand Tour was an educational journey: Venice, Florence, Rome, Naples, the ruins, the museums, the light. What remains of that idea in the 20th century?

ENR What remains is the essential: knowledge through experience. The Grand Tour was not only an itinerary, but a method. One learned to read cities as stratified texts. Today, the architect risks believing that a technique or an international style is enough. Instead, an education of the gaze is needed: understanding that every work is born within a continuity, within an environment made of history, uses, materials and memory.

GP Enthusiasm remains, too! The Grand Tour was a way of falling in love: seeing and becoming richer inwardly. I believe travel must ignite a happy hunger: it leads you to desire lightness, precision, invention. And then – let's say it – Italy is an open manual: not only antiquity, but applied arts, craftsmanship, proportions, colours. The Grand Tour can be a school of freedom.

LM It remains, if understood correctly, an exercise in analysis. The cultured traveller measured, drew and compared. It was not tourism: it was study. For me, a "tour" is worthwhile if it produces structural knowledge of forms, types and variations in space. Ruins are not a postcard: they are a laboratory. Rome, for example, has always been a complex machine. From classical to baroque, in architecture, infrastructure, and even in the urban rituals.

The historical Grand Tour was often an elite journey, with a shadow of appropriation: collections, ancient *souvenirs*, a foreign gaze that consumes. How would you rethink it, ethically, for the modern architect?

ENR I would rethink it as a responsibility. Travel not to take, but to give back: to give back understanding, respect, and project. Culture is not a quarry. The architect must learn to move among the *pre-existences*. Not as an obstacle, but as the project's living material. If the Grand Tour becomes a rapid form of consumption, it loses its formative meaning.

GP I do agree, travel must not be predatory. But I would add one thing: there is also a way of *taking* that is generous, because it transforms what you see into invention, and then you share it. Magazines, drawings, houses, furniture: they are gifts born from seeing. The important thing is not to mistake beauty for a trophy.

LM Ethics lies in the precision and honesty of inquiry. If you reduce a place to an image, you betray it. If you study it by its rules, constraints, and exceptions, you respect it. And above all, there is no single *Italian model* to export wholesale. Several principles and relationships change with context.

Many students today travel with a camera. Once there were the notebook, the sketch, and the measurement. What is supposed to be lost and what can be acquired?

ENR Photography is useful, but it risks becoming an alibi: it replaces the slow act of understanding. Drawing, even imperfect, is already an interpretation. When you draw, you choose what is essential. When you shoot, you often accumulate. The Grand Tour was a selection and awareness. I would still defend the practice of note-booking: it is both a moral and a technical exercise.

GP I do not demonise photography: it is a way of holding on to wonder. But it is true: the sketch forces you to feel proportion. And there is something else: one must photograph the air as well, not only the object! The light on surfaces, the distance between things, the way a window *makes* a room. If photography becomes mere collecting, then it is of no use.

LM I agree: the question is method. You can use photography as data, but you must then analyse it. If you do not measure, if you do not reconstruct geometrically, if you do not compare, you remain on the surface. The machine sees everything but understands nothing. Understanding is an intellectual operation.

In an era of rapid modernisation, can the Grand Tour become an antidote to haste?

ENR Yes, if it becomes a discipline: learning to observe before any intervention. Haste produces rootless architectures. The formative journey teaches you to recognise the long timescales of the city and of memory. It also teaches humility: we are not the first to build, and we will not be the last.

GP And it can even be an antidote to heaviness! Haste often produces coarse things. Travel teaches fineness: the handle, the threshold, the floor, the window. It then reminds you that beauty is a daily duty, not a luxury. The Grand Tour, if done well, makes you more demanding of yourself.

LM It is an antidote if it produces critical tools. Otherwise, it becomes just another form of consumption. One must travel as one does research: hypothesis, observation, verification. Only in this way does slowness become productive.

If you had to build a Grand Tour for architects in the twentieth century, which stops would be indispensable?

GP I would start from Milan – because industry is culture too – and then off, toward the light: Venice to learn that water is architecture; Vicenza for clarity; Florence for the intelligence of measure; Rome for infinity; Naples for vitality; and finally, the South, to understand that shadow is a material. And I would not forget the simple houses: the Italian lesson is not only monumental but also domestic.

ENR I would add *minor* towns and suburbs, as there you see the relationship between design and everyday life. The modern Grand Tour cannot ignore the issue of dwelling, schools, collective spaces, reconstruction and so on. And then an invisible stop: libraries, archives, the places where memory becomes a critical tool.

LM I would structure it by systems: not only cities, but typological sequences, such as the case of the theatre, church, palace, infrastructure, sports facility, and neighbourhood. And then Rome studied not as the *capital of ruins*, but as a phenomenon of transformation: overlaps, adaptations, torsions. Travel must produce mental maps, not nostalgia.

It seems that for all of you, travel is a creative act. But in what way did the Grand Tour also shape your way of looking, reading, interpreting and creating forms in space?

ENR The Grand Tour was never, for me, a simple itinerary of places, but an exercise of the gaze and of historical consciousness. To travel means to establish a relationship with what you see, with what has already been thought, built, lived. Travel taught me that every form in space is the result of a stratification of times, values, techniques and symbols. Looking at Rome, Athens, or the Italian medieval cities does not mean reproducing their forms in a simplistic way. Much rather, it means understanding their deep reasons: why a square is made that way, why a building dialogues with its context, and how a city grows through continuity rather than rupture. Travel, therefore, shaped my approach to design as an act of cultural responsibility. To create forms is to take one's place in a centuries-long conversation. The Grand Tour taught me to listen before speaking, to interpret before inventing.

GP For me, travel has always been a motive that triggers enthusiasm, a circumstance that produces discovery, a pretext to satisfy the desire for new things. The Grand Tour was a school of freedom. To travel means to multiply one's curiosity, to discover that there are a thousand ways of living, decorating, building, experiencing beauty. The Grand Tour taught me that architecture is never only structure or function, but a way of life. In Naples, in Venice, in Greece, or in the East, I learned that forms are born of light, of colour, of the patient work of the artisan, and of a direct relationship with the human body. To look means to allow oneself to be seduced; to read means to absorb; to interpret means to reinvent. In my work, I never wanted to be faithful to a single tradition, but to the pleasure of invention. The Grand Tour gave me the courage to mix, to be other, to believe that modernity can be elegant, happy, even playful.

LM Travel, for me, was an analysis. The Grand Tour is not a sentimental rite, but a critical tool. Studying ancient and baroque architecture meant dismantling it, understanding its inner laws, its geometric tensions, the relationships between space, body and movement.

In Rome, I understood that forms are never static: they are fields of dynamic forces that contend for space. Experience taught me to read architecture as an evolved, almost mathematical structure, in which every element is in harmonious relation with the others. To travel means to measure, compare, and verify. It is an almost scientific act. In my approach to creating, the Grand Tour nourished the idea that modernity should not deny the complexity of the past but surpass it through new tools: analysis, variation, and formal experimentation. Forms in space are not considered merely as a step of imitation: they represent an intellectual act of conceptualisation.

The three of you also played a role as cultural 'mediators': magazines, debates, and publishing. Can we say that you built a 'paper' Grand Tour, accessible to those who could not travel?

GP Yes, and I'm happy about it. A magazine is a ship. It carries ideas, images, and details. It lets people travel without a passport. But beware: it must not replace the world. It should only kindle the desire to go and see it.

ENR Magazines can educate on complexity. They can teach not to reduce architecture to fashion. If they become places of critique, then yes: they are an intellectual Grand Tour. A journey through positions, conflicts, and choices.

LM And they can also be tools of classification and analysis. The 'paper' journey matters when it orders phenomena, making them debatable and comparable. Showing is not enough: one must interpret.

So, what does the Grand Tour represent for you?

ENR The Grand Tour is, above all, a moral act. Not merely a geographical displacement, but also a virtual journey in the continuity of history. I believe deeply in the principle of environmental pre-existence: every place is a palimpsest, and travel serves to learn its secrets and how to read it. My real travels – from Trieste to Milan, from London to Buenos Aires – were above all journeys of civic formation. But the imaginary ones, perhaps more important, are journeys into the meaning of architecture and tradition, into what precedes us and founds us. The Grand Tour is an exercise of responsibility towards what we inherit.

LM For me, travel is a matter of forms. The Grand Tour is a laboratory of living geometries. When I observed Roman Baroque architecture or the cities of the Mediterranean, I wasn't seeking history itself, but rather the internal logic of structures: curves, tensions, and spatial relationships. My imaginary travels were often more radical than the real ones: mental explorations of spaces that do not yet exist but could exist. The Grand Tour, in this sense, is an atlas of formal possibilities.

GP I have always lived the Grand Tour as a journey of enthusiasm. The world is full of beauty, and the designer's task is to multiply it. In my travels – from Italy to Mexico, from Europe to Iran – I always sought lightness, grace, surprise. And then there are the imaginary travels, those I make every time I draw: vertical cities, houses light as sails, objects that bring poetry into everyday life. The Grand Tour is an invitation to look at the world with new eyes, always.

Last question: if you had to leave a charge to a student who is setting out today on their Grand Tour, what would it be?

ENR Set out with few certainties and many questions. When you return, do not bring back only images; bring criteria and responsibility. Seek continuity between what you see and what you will design.

GP Take lightness and rigour with you. Look at small things: a chair, a threshold, a balcony. And then dare: travel also means realising you, not making you scared.

LM Measure. Draw. Compare. Transform wonder into operational knowledge. The Grand Tour is not nostalgia for the ancient: it is the construction of a method for understanding the present.

Bibliographical references

KLEE F. (ed.) (1964) - *The Diaries of Paul Klee1898-1918*. University of California Press, Berkley.

PAVOLINI E. (ed.) (2006) - *Le interviste impossibili*. Donzelli, Rome.

MAGRIS C. (2011) - "Vietato rompere nidi e scrivere prefazioni" ['It Is Forbidden to Break Nests and Write Prefaces'], in Saramago, J. *Viaggio in Portogallo* [Journey to Portugal]. Feltrinelli, Milan, p. 9.

A PDF version of this book is available for free in Open Access at up.pt/press/

ISBN 978-989-746-465-2

Publisher
U.PORTO PRESS

Up
GranT

European Commission

POLITECNICO

U.PORTO
FACULDADE DE ARQUITETURA
UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO

ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA
DIPARTIMENTO DI ARCHITETTURA

Art Academy of Latvia

ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI

EKA

Workbook of Affinities

Updating the Grand Tour.
Memory and Invention of the
European Built Environment

The *Workbook of Affinities* comprises 7 sections that synthesise the results of the exercises undertaken by the UpGranT Consortium in the conception of a learning by travelling pedagogical model, re-empowering the Grand Tour's long-standing practice.

Section 1 UpGranT Consortium
Section 2 Politecnico di Milano · POLIMI
Section 3 Faculty of Architecture – University of Porto · FAUP
Section 4 Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna · UNIBO
Section 5 Art Academy of Latvia · LMA
Section 6 Aristotle University of Thessaloniki · AUTh
Section 7 Estonian Art Academy · EKA

– *Helder Casal Ribeiro, Silvia Ramos*

1 Grand Tourists P3

Ten architects who build, teach and travel

Wall atlas

– *Silvia Ramos, Helder Casal Ribeiro*

2 Grand Tour P11

Place, Presence and Occasion: an updated itinerary

Wall atlas

– *Helder Casal Ribeiro, Silvia Ramos*

3 Souvenirs on Exemplary Buildings P19

Three modern landscapes: measure, meaning and narrative

House of the 24: absolute geometric beauty

Santa Maria Church and Parish Centre: modern acropolis

Carandá Market, Braga: urban ruin garden

– *Silvia Ramos, Helder Casal Ribeiro*

4 Learning by travel with... P37

Travels with Nuno Melo Sousa

The UpGranT “Workbook of Affinities” is published under the Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnerships in Higher Education programme, funded by the European Union. Reference: 2023-1-IT02-KA220-HED-000158377.

The views expressed are those of the author(s) alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the Erasmus+ – INDIRE National Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting administration can be held responsible for them.

The contents in this section are the entire responsibility of the partner organisation and their authors.

Ten architects who build, teach and travel

– *Helder Casal Ribeiro, Silvia Ramos*

Peter Eisenman's interview for "Prespecta 41", with the focus on the concept of the *Grand Tour*, is subtitled *Grand Tourist* and introduced by the following perspective: "The idea of the grand tour in architecture is an English – if not a European – tradition, in which an older experienced traveller initiates a young person to the culture splendours of southern Europe. While the Grand Tour has come to be seen as an essential part of an architect's education, my travels with Colin Rowe were part of an 'accidental' education, but they had a profound impact on the manner in which I would subsequently practice" (Eisenman 2008, p. 131).

From Eisenman's words, we figure that a Grand Tourist may be an architect who undertook the Grand Tour as part of his cultural and architectural practice, demonstrating the generative role of travel in his built work, and at the same time be an architect willing to mentor students or young architects in the same kind of practice.

Within this European tradition, Portugal's circumstances were distinct until 1974 due to its harsh social and political status (a military dictatorship and the *Estado Novo* from 1926-1974), which imposed strong cultural and economic constraints, including restrictions on travel. Furthermore, Portugal's peripheral condition has amplified the isolation and constraints, but has also heightened the desire and meaning of travel, a condition that has changed significantly in the last 30 years. In these circumstances, travel influences have been seen more as inspiration than direct quotes, able to trigger new interpretations or beginnings, as in the case of the 'Porto School'.

1 Grand Tourists

Premises for a selection

The 10 Porto Grand Tourists are part of a constellation of architects generally referred to as the 'Porto School', united by a desire to reconquer the quality of the built landscape through a certain formal liberation, coupled with the accountability that follows. Accordingly, the first premise is that they have studied and taught architecture at the Fine Arts School of Porto, now the Faculty of Architecture – University of Porto.

The thread of Portuguese modern Architecture is linked to communities of practice, where a distinctive depiction between Lisboa and Porto (the two Fine Arts Schools) was relevant in the evolution of a practice and a specific line of thought. The inception of the designated 'Porto School', within the Fine Arts School of Porto (EBAP/ESBAP) and the Faculty of Architecture of Porto University (FAUP), is fundamental in this process, leading to the sedimentation and recognition of Portuguese Architecture hinged on drawing (freehand sketch) and a strong relation between professional practice and teaching within an atelier-teaching methodology.

The second premise draws on an amplified timeline of the 'Porto School' by identifying architects, representing different generations, born between 1910 and 1990, who developed their practices from the 1930s to the present.

From this universe of architects, a final premise highlights those recognised by their peers for their practice, both locally and internationally, or in other words, the ruling figures of Porto's architectural culture, both for their built work and for their academic commitments.

The Ten Grand Tourists

The first two architects to open the 10 Porto Grand Tourist selection are Alfredo Viana de Lima, representing the generation born in the 1910s, and Fernando Távora, representing the 1920s, both foundational figures of the

School's didactics and in the revision of the Modern Movement, in the 50s, with significant institutional travels.

Alfredo Viana de Lima (1913-1991) enrolled in 1929 at the Porto Fine Arts School and, in 1941, obtained his diploma in Architecture from the same Institution, although he had already been practising architecture since 1938. He taught at ESBAP since 1961, becoming a professor in 1974.

Examples of Viana de Lima's built work include the Aristides Ribeiro House (Porto, 1949-51), Marinhas House (Esposende, 1954-57), and the Faculty of Economics – University of Porto (Porto, 1961-74).

These examples reflect Corbusier's built work and writings, which served as a fundamental reference in the architect's practice, and were tested *in situ* and validated during his many travels. Alfredo Viana de Lima was a worldwide traveller, participating in UNESCO missions in Brazil, CIAM Meetings, and the Gulbenkian Mission in Africa, travelling from Asia to America and Africa.

Fernando Távora (1923-2005) attended the Architecture Special Course at Porto Fine Arts School in 1941, and he obtained his diploma in Architecture in 1952. Between 1957 and 1993, he taught first at ESBAP and then at FAUP.

Távora's architecture practice was based in Porto since the 1940s. Examples of Távora's built works, over time, include the Santa Maria da Feira Market (Santa Maria da Feira, 1953-59), the Santa Marinha da Costa Convent (Guimarães, 1976-85), and the House of the 24 (Porto, 1995-2002). These buildings are multi-referential, reflecting a wide range of interests and references, from Corbusier, Wright, BBPR, Gardella, Albini, Coderch, to Japanese culture, all of which were personally experienced during the architect's travels. Távora was an avid traveller. He received, in 1960, a grant from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the Institute for Culture of the United States and Japan, for travelling through the USA, Mexico, Japan, Thailand, Pakistan, Lebanon, Egypt, and Greece. Between 1951 and 1959, he participated in the Hoddesdon CIAM Meeting and the Otterlo Team 10 Meeting, among others. Távora's meaningful role in promoting travel as an architect and educator led to the creation, after his passing, of an annual travel grant in his memory, the Fernando Távora Award.

Representing the generation of the 1930s are two key figures, Alcino Soutinho and Álvaro Siza, who were strongly inspired by Carlos Ramos (ESBAP Director 1948-1969) and Fernando Távora's teachings.

Alcino Soutinho (1930-2013) joined the Porto Fine Arts School in 1948 and obtained his diploma in Architecture in 1957. Soutinho's architectural practice, based in Porto, also included teaching at ESBAP and FAUP between 1972 and 1999. Examples of Soutinho's built works include Pousada de S. Diniz (Vila Nova de Cerveira, 1970-74), the Museum Amadeo de Souza Cardoso (Amarante, 1978-80), and the Matosinhos Municipality (Matosinhos, 1981-87). These buildings reflect some of the main architectural references in the architect's work, including BBPR, Gardella, Albini, and Aalto. Some of these references may be corroborated by Soutinho's 1961 travel to Italy, funded by a grant from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

Álvaro Siza (1933) studied Architecture at the Porto Fine Arts School from 1949 to 1955, with his first project being built in 1955. As part of his architectural practice, Siza also taught at ESBAP from 1966 to 1969 and at FAUP until 2003. Selected examples of Siza's built works, spanning different phases, include the Leça da Palmeira Swimming Pool (Matosinhos, 1961-66), Santa Maria Church and Parish Centre (1990-96), and the Serralves Foundation (Porto, 1991-2004).

These buildings reflect multilayered and diverse references in the architect's practice, ranging from Picasso, Gaudí, Corbusier and Wright to Aalto, Loos, Tessenow, Taut, Duiker, Barragán and Louis Kahn, among others, all of which were experienced and deepened during the architect's travels. Siza is an avid traveller since his student days, with scholarly trips to France and Finland, and a life of travel spanning Scandinavia/Russia to Brazil, with significant incursions into Asia.

Representing the generation born in the 1950s are two architects strongly influenced by Aldo Rossi's writings, Eduardo Souto de Moura and João Álvaro Rocha, who reaffirmed an informed relationship between architecture and the other arts, namely Donald Judd, Richard Serra and Portuguese artists Ângelo de Sousa and Pedro Cabrita Reis.

Eduardo Souto de Moura (1952) attended ESBAP and completed his degree in Architecture in 1980. While still a student, Souto de Moura collaborated with Siza between 1974 and 1979. Since then, he has developed his practice based in Porto. Souto de Moura taught at FAUP, from 1981 to 1990 and returned in 2003. Examples of Souto de Moura's built works include the Carandá Market (Braga, 1980-2001), Santa Maria do Bouro Convent (Braga, 1989-1997), and Braga Municipal Stadium (Braga, 2000-2003). These examples reveal some key references in his work, namely Mies van der Rohe, Barragán and Russian constructivism, which he validated during his travels from North and South America to Iran.

João Álvaro Rocha (1959-2014) studied at ESBAP from 1977 to 1982, earning his degree in 1986. While completing his architecture degree, Álvaro Rocha began his architectural practice based in Porto and later in Maia. Álvaro Rocha taught in the Architecture course at the Porto School of Fine Arts from 1988 to 1989, and at FAUP from 1990 to 2001. A significant part of Álvaro Rocha's work was dedicated to social housing, including the Seara Housing Complex (Matosinhos, 1995-2004) and the Bajouca Housing Complex (Maia, 1997-2001). Important key references for these works, such as Mies van der Rohe, Taut, Rossi and Luis Barragán, were tested *in situ* during Álvaro Rocha's travels, including his trip to Italy in 1985 and his travels from Karnak to New York.

Representing the generation born in the 1960s are two pairs: João Pedro Serôdio and Isabel Furtado, along with Cristina Guedes and Francisco Vieira de Campos, the first generation to embrace international internships as a formative tool, expanding cultural contamination.

João Pedro Serôdio (1963) and Isabel Furtado (1965) both graduated from FAUP in the 90s, with internships in Switzerland (Herzog & de Meuron Studio and Atelier Michel Alder). Serôdio has been teaching at FAUP since 2002. Among the works developed by the studio over the last few decades, stand out: Pinheiro Manso Houses (Porto, 2004-12), I3S – Institute of Research and Innovation in Health (Porto, 2013-2015) and Subunit 3 – Coimbra University (Coimbra, 2001-2016), reflecting the journeys undertaken from Asia to Latin America.

Cristina Guedes (1964) and Francisco Vieira de Campos (1962) both graduated from FAUP and founded their atelier together in 1994. Both Cristina Guedes and Francisco Vieira de Campos combine design practice with teaching, currently at FAUP. Examples of the atelier's work are the Vallado Winery Estate (Régua, 2007-10), the Ropeway Cablecar (Vila Nova de Gaia, 2011-12) and the "Arquipélago" Building with João Mendes Ribeiro (Açores, 2014-22). These examples reflect fundamental references in the atelier's body of work, validated *in situ* by various travels from Mexico to Switzerland.

The last two Porto Grand Tourists are Nuno Brandão Costa representing the generation born in the 1970s, and Nuno Melo Sousa, representing the generation born in the 1980s, with whom the 'Porto School' tradition is being enhanced while at the same time stimulated by multi-referential influences.

Nuno Brandão Costa (1970) graduated from FAUP in 1994, with an internship at the Herzog & de Meuron office in Switzerland. Nuno Brandão began teaching at FAUP in 1999, one year after establishing his autonomous design practice in 1998. Built examples of Nuno Brandão's design practice include the Caminha Library (Caminha, 2005-16), Padrão da Légua School (Matosinhos, 2011), and Porto Intermodal Terminal (Porto, 2016-23), which reflect the key references of his work, validated *in situ* from travels ranging from Argentina to Ireland.

Nuno Melo Sousa (1988) graduated from FAUP in 2011, after an Erasmus programme at the TUDelft and an internship in Balkrishna Doshi's International Studio in Ahmedabad, India. Since 2012, Nuno Melo Sousa has based his atelier in Penafiel and currently teaches at FAUP. Examples of his design practice include Tâmega House (Marco de Canaveses, 2017, with Hugo Ferreira), Engenho I House (Canelas, 2021), and Corcet Headquarters (Penafiel, 2024). These works reflect the key architectural inspirations he encountered during his travels from Australia to Brazil, with particular emphasis on India and Thailand.

A transversal perspective

The 10 Portuguese architects selected have recognised the importance of undertaking the Grand Tour as part of their practice and, at the same time, have been willing to mentor students or young architects in the same kind of practice, particularly within the 'Porto School'.

This group of architects comprises what we may call a "community of practice", intergenerational, set on professional practice, personal affinities and a shared specific understanding of architecture and artistic culture. These communities run from Alfredo Viana de Lima and Fernando Távora attending the CIAM and UIA meetings together; Fernando Távora, Álvaro Siza and Eduardo Souto de Moura sharing projects and working in the same building, designed by Siza; João Álvaro Rocha designing with Eduardo Souto de Moura and having his office in one of Souto de Moura's buildings; João Pedro Serôdio, Nuno Brandão Costa and Francisco Vieira de Campos teaching design studio together in the same year, 4th year, like Nuno Melo Sousa and Cristina Guedes in the 1st year. Worthy of mention is also the travel group formed by Fernando Távora, Álvaro Siza, Alcino Soutinho, Eduardo Souto de Moura, and their respective families, which has endured for many years.

The academic connections and empathy among these architects and recognised artists, who were linked to the visual arts and taught at the ESBAP/FAUP, namely Júlio Resende, José Rodrigues, Ângelo de Sousa and Alberto Carneiro, are also significant in defining the community's character and identity.

The 'Porto School' architects, every so often, talk about their realised travels and the meaning of travel in their professional practice. There have been publications on the subject and exhibitions that, directly or indirectly, touch on the theme.

The collection of travels undertaken by these architects covers a wide geographical area and an extensive time span. Among the 10 selected architects, the first journeys occurred before the 1950s (CIAM, UIA); important journeys were taken in the 1960s through travel grants (Gulbenkian Foundation); and since the 1990s, relevant travel experiences related to teaching commitments and internships, mainly in Swiss offices, have occurred. The relevant body of work of Álvaro Siza, spread geographically since the 1980s, and Eduardo Souto Moura, in the last 20 years, amplifies the Grand Tour opportunities for Porto's architecture community (Europe, Asia and America).

Among all the travels, three destinations are shared by most, if not all, of these architects, whether in structured or occasional groups or on individual travel: Greece, and Italy.

Greece and Italy are mostly due to Fernando Tavora's compelling way of expressing his fascination with both cultures in his lessons in the first-year course (Távora 1993). Italy would be awakened by Vitruvius, to move through Pompei and Rome's Renaissance, culminating in critical modern architecture with E. N. Rogers (BBPR), Ignazio Gardella, Franco Albini, Carlo Scarpa, among others.

Greece, with its three sacred places, Delphi, the Acropolis of Athens, and Olympia, in order to emphasise their topographical, aesthetic, religious, and symbolic values and enhance the meaning of site knowledge and sensitivity for the architect's practice (the notion of place). The sun's reflection on the blue surface of the Aegean Sea, in open perspective with the mythological horizon, would close the impelling arguments.

> your – and our – school continues. Man and the Drawing of his world remain as our constant concern. We continue with determination and certainty.
> Farewell
> (Távora 1993).

1 Grand Tourists

Bibliography

CASTRO C. (2011) - *Viana de Lima, 1913-1991*. QuidNovi, Esposende.

CRACA F. (2003) - *João Álvaro Rocha Architectures 1988-2001*. Skira, Milan.

EISENMAN P. (2008) - "Interview with Peter Eisenman - The Last Grand Tourist: Travels with Colin Rowe". Grand Tour. Prespecta, 41, pp. 131-139.

ESPOSITO A., LEONI G. (2005) - *Fernando Távora. Opera completa*. Electa Spa, Milan.

MAININI G. (2004) - *Alcino Soutinho: progetti recenti 1995-2004*. Officina, Roma.

TÁVORA F. (1993) - *Teoria geral da organização do espaço. Arquitectura e Urbanismo: a lição das constantes*. Faup publicações, Porto.

(2000) - *Álvaro Siza: 1958-2000, El Croquis 68/69 + 95*. El Croquis Editorial, Madrid.

(2005) - *Eduardo Souto de Moura: 1995-2005, El Croquis 124*. El Croquis Editorial, Madrid.

(2006) - *Housing. Isabel Furtado, João Pedro Serôdio*. Caleidoscópio, Porto.

(2013) - *TC 111. Menos é Mais Arquitectos*. GG, Valencia.

(2023) - *TC 162. Nuno Brandão Costa*. General Ediciones de Arquitetura, Valencia.

(2022) - *En Blanco 32. Nuno Melo Sousa*. General Ediciones de Arquitetura, Valencia.


1


1a


1b


4


4a


1c


2


4c


4b


5


2a


2b


2c


3a


3


3b


5a


5b


5c

Wall Atlas

The Grand Tourists Wall Atlas underscores Fernando Távora's importance in establishing the practice of travel among the 'Porto School' and explores possible connections between five of Távora's destinations/travels and the built works of each of Porto's 10 Grand Tourists.

Images

Fernando Távora destinations, 1960

1 Egypt.

2 Taliesin West, Scottsdale, Frank Lloyd Wright.

3 Athens.

4 Crown Hall, Chicago, Mies van der Rohe.

5 National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo, Le Corbusier.

Porto Grand Tourists' built works

1a Alfredo Viana de Lima, Cortez House, 1940-1943 (demolished).

1b Fernando Távora, Santa Maria da Feira Municipal Market, 1953-1959.

1c Fernando Távora, Santa Marinha da Costa Convent, 1972-1985.

2a Álvaro Siza, University of Porto - Faculty of Architecture, 1979-1996.

2b Eduardo Souto de Moura, Amares Monastery, 1989-1997.

2c Eduardo Souto de Moura, Braga Municipal Stadium, 2000-2003.

3a Alcino Soutinho, Amadeo de Souza Cardozo Municipal Museum, 1978-80.

3b João Álvaro Rocha, Bajouca Housing Complex, 1998-2001.

4a Cristina Guedes and Francisco Vieira de Campos, Gaia Cable Car Stations, 2011-2012.

4b Cristina Guedes and Francisco Vieira de Campos (with João Mendes Ribeiro), Arquipélago, 2014-2022.

4c Nuno Brandão Costa, Porto Intermodal Terminal (2016-2021).

5a João Pedro Serôdio and Isabel Furtado, Teaching sub-unit 3 - University of Coimbra (2001-2016).

5b João Pedro Serôdio and Isabel Furtado, I3S Porto - Institute for Research and Innovation in Health (2009-2015).

5c Nuno Melo Sousa, Corcet Headquarters (2021-2024).

Credits

1-5 Archive Fernando Távora. Col. Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva.

1a Archive Alfredo Viana de Lima. Col. Centro de Documentação de Urbanismo e Arquitetura - Faculdade de Arquitetura da Universidade do Porto.

1b-1c Archive Fernando Távora. Col. Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva.

2a Archive Álvaro Siza. Col. Fundação de Serralves - Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto. Donation 2015.

2b-2c Archive Eduardo Souto de Moura. Col. Casa da Arquitetura - Portuguese Centre for Architecture.

3a Archive Alcino Soutinho. Col. Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva.

3b Luís Ferreira Alves. Archive João Álvaro Rocha. Col. APJAR - Associação Pró-Arquitectura João Álvaro Rocha.

4a Alberto Plácido. Archive Cristina Guedes and Francisco Vieira de Campos (menos é mais arquitectos).

4b José Campos. Archive Cristina Guedes and Francisco Vieira de Campos (menos é mais arquitectos).

4c Francisco Ascensão. Archive Nuno Brandão Costa.

5a Archive João Pedro Serôdio and Isabel Furtado.

5b Luís Ferreira Alves. Archive João Pedro Serôdio and Isabel Furtado.

5c Federico Farinatti. Archive Nuno Melo Sousa.

Memory and occasion: an updated itinerary

– *Silvia Ramos*,
Helder Casal Ribeiro

> Finisterre: a place where History has placed us as Southern Europeans, promised a future not even we ourselves suspected (Lourenço 1989).

For some years now, Porto has been part of the group of cities whose architecture sparks the curiosity of Grand Tourists. For the last few decades, Porto architecture has been in the spotlight, with two Pritzker laureates and a wide dissemination of its contemporary built landscape, designed by a young generation of architects.

Consequently, the promotion of architectural travel to Porto, not only among architects and students but also among the general public, is widely supported by various local institutions, such as Serralves Foundation, Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva, Casa da Arquitectura, Ordem dos Arquitectos, Porto Municipality, University of Porto, among others. Depending on the main areas of action, some institutions support the discovery of Porto's architecture, through do-it-yourself itineraries, by publishing thematic maps, mapping relevant buildings with key information in digital platforms, promoting exhibitions or annual events that allow the public to explore relevant works of architecture, organising small itineraries or visits to individual buildings.

Curatorial itineraries, in the sense of itineraries conducted within certain premises, are usually led by academic and cultural institutions to meet the requirements of cultural dissemination or continuous education for students and architects.

Premises

The conception of an updated version of the Porto Grand Tour within the UpGranT project is based on the challenge posed by today's widespread dissemination process, which transforms travel and knowledge into generic matters.

It was clear from the start that it is not possible to express in depth Portuguese culture or its architecture in a few days, particularly given the significant differences between the rich particularities that characterise the north and the south, hinged on the cities of Porto and Lisbon.

The Grand Tour seeks a *fil rouge* that will allow us to build an informed narrative portraying a certain way of thinking and being in a region, northern Portugal, linked to a particular school known as the 'Porto School', depicting the 10 Grand Tourists criteria. Nevertheless, these premises are guided by the curators' personal readings and perspectives toward the 'Porto School' notion and its relationship to the premises of modern architecture.

With the intention of challenging individual understanding of Portuguese architecture through the 'Porto School' *modus operandi*, the tour is organised around the 10 Grand Tourists and a selection of architectural works, already globally known and acclaimed, to confront an *in situ* comprehension of fundamental design themes and details imperceptible through social media or published literature. The selection of the works should function as a reference within the author's oeuvre, namely, in relation to the architectural references that it calls upon and works that are capable of engaging artists other than architects, relevant to the 'Porto School', as the sculptor Alberto Carneiro and the filmmaker Manoel de Oliveira.

In this conception, the Grand Tour recognises the singularity attributed to Fernando Távora, Álvaro Siza and Eduardo Souto de Moura's practice, selecting not only works from the first phase traditionally visited but also from

2 Grand Tour

the most recent phases. As a countermeasure, the set programme may integrate complementary visits according to each participant's personal interests and concerns.

An additional premise is the setting of itineraries that can be reproduced, namely by students or enthusiasts in architecture, prioritising the selection of public buildings or private complexes where an exterior visit alone already guarantees a valuable learning experience.

From a methodological perspective, the conception and organisation of this itinerary were inspired by the conversations conducted with Álvaro Siza and Eduardo Souto de Moura within the UpGrant project. Fernando Távora's travel diary also inspired the need for a precise rhythm between the works, in which silence is a fundamental mediator of a readable perception and long-standing knowledge, i.e., future design references.

The itinerary

In terms of organisation, the Grand Tour comprises at least 12 participants for 4 days, touring Porto and Northern Portugal through selected architects and exemplary buildings, scattered across locations and time.

The Porto Grand Tour is structured into four main itineraries of different spatial scope and rhythms, set in a clear pendular sequence centred on Porto, in open dialogue with territorial and neighbouring built landscapes: a Porto city centre UNESCO itinerary walk through that considers also the city's relation to the Douro River and its topographic waterfront, implying a sense of scale, character and atmosphere in dialogue with Vila Nova de Gaia; a Territorial itinerary to the North of Portugal, with Braga, Marco de Canaveses, Penafiel and Santo Tirso; a Porto Neighbourhood itinerary, with Matosinhos, Leça da Palmeira and Leça do Balio and an Urban Polarity itinerary through the Boavista axis and Serralves area. Each itinerary is designed based on key architectural works, bringing together distinct authors and their architectural expressions.

The territorial itinerary and the neighbourhood itinerary both correspond to a 1-day route. The first implies the use of private transportation, and in the second, although private transport is not essential, it could contribute to a more comfortable promenade.

Within a radius of no more than 65 km from Porto, the Territorial itinerary focuses on a distinctive interpretative meaning of place, presence and language, featuring works by Álvaro Siza and Eduardo Souto de Moura, individually and in co-authorship, as well as a work by Nuno Melo Sousa, all completed in the last 25 years. It includes visits to: Corcet Headquarters, by Nuno Melo Sousa (Penafiel, 2021-2024); Santa Maria Church and Parish Centre, by Álvaro Siza (Marco de Canaveses, 1989-2005); Braga Municipal Stadium and Carandá Cultural Market by Eduardo Souto de Moura (Braga, 2000-2003, 1980-2001); and the Abade Pedrosa Museum and the Museum of Contemporary Sculpture, a shared work between Siza and Souto de Moura (Santo Tirso, 2010-2015).

In a radius of no more than 18 km from Porto, the Neighbourhood itinerary begins with a set of early and paradigmatic works by Álvaro Siza, which also address Fernando Távora's practice, and ends with one of his most recent works. Among them, this route proposes a visit to works by Alcino Soutinho and João Álvaro Rocha, both representative of significant periods in each architect's body of work. This itinerary includes: Boa Nova Tea House (Leça da Palmeira, 1957-1970) and Leça da Palmeira Swimming Pool (Leça da Palmeira, 1959-1973 / 2019-2021), both by Álvaro Siza and located in his recently designed Leça da Palmeira Promenade; Quinta da Conceição Municipal Park and Tennis Pavilion by Fernando Távora and Quinta da Conceição swimming pool by Álvaro Siza (Leça da Palmeira, 1956-1960 / 1961-1966); Matosinhos Municipality by Alcino Soutinho (Matosinhos, 1981-1989); Seara Social Housing ensemble, by João Álvaro Rocha (Matosinhos, 1995-2004); Open Sculpture and Leça do Balio Monastery refurbishment, by Álvaro Siza (Leça do Balio, 2018-2024).

The Porto city centre UNESCO itinerary and the Serralves Foundation area itinerary correspond to a half-day route, set in a slow rhythm, by foot and public transportation.

Through Porto's city centre and its expanded contours, the itinerary brings together more recent works from the last years by Fernando Távora, Álvaro Siza, Eduardo Souto de Moura, Cristina Guedes, Francisco Vieira de Campos, and Nuno Brandão Costa. It includes: Casa da Música Metro Station by Eduardo Souto de Moura (1997-2004); Bouça Housing Complex by Álvaro Siza (1973-1977/2000-2006); Porto Intermodal Terminal by Nuno Brandão Costa, (2016-2021); Trindade Metro Station, by Eduardo Souto de Moura (1997-2004); Aliados Avenue Public Space, co-authored by Álvaro Siza and Eduardo Souto de Moura; the Time Out Market by Eduardo Souto de Moura (2018-2024); the Tower of the 24, by Fernando Távora (1995-2003) and the Gaia Cable Car Stations, by Cristina Guedes and Francisco Vieira de Campos (2011-2012). It could be interesting to amplify this itinerary by the inclusion of two more works on the enlarged contour of the city centre: the Faculty of Economics by Alfredo Viana de Lima (1961-1974) and the I3S Porto Institute for Research and Innovation in Health by João Pedro Serôdio and Isabel Furtado (2009-2015), both University of Porto.

The itinerary through the Serralves area highlights the close relationship between Álvaro Siza and the cultural Foundation, dating back to the early 1990s and continuing to the present, with Siza's response to the challenge of integrating the scale of public buildings into a residential setting.

The route includes visits to the Museum of Contemporary Art (1991-1999) with its new extension (2018-2023), to the House of the Cinema (2019-2021), and to the refurbished Villa and Gardens. This itinerary also highlights the new layout of Marechal Gomes da Costa Avenue, featuring its unexpected MetroBus stops, recently designed by Álvaro Siza (2024). Once again, we are faced with a unique response that evokes the architect's social responsibility to go beyond the functional brief. Álvaro Siza depicts a "bus stop" in its broadest terms, conceiving a place embedded in the avenue's urban structure, where we can catch public transport, going beyond the temporary shelter or iconic furniture piece.

The preparation for the Grand Tour to Porto includes creating a booklet, in a low-cost format, adapted for travel. The booklet includes a general and detailed programme of the tour, a short profile of the architects to be visited, and information on each building. This information includes the author's identification, location, and reference dates, but the materials available vary from building to building, resulting in a selection of images that complete the *in situ* visit. For example, the images can show project sectors that were not completed, reveal intermediate phases of the project or construction, clarify the identity/condition of the preexisting place, and offer views of the building that we cannot get from a visit (e.g. aerial views or urban plans). Most of these images correspond to archival materials. The source of all images is

identified at the end of the booklet. This list may also serve as a summary of essential bibliographic/archive references for each work.

The booklet also includes a 2D barcode that links to a selection of texts about Portuguese and Porto culture, as well as published thematic maps and brochures, most of which were also available on paper. Both materials were available online in open-access format.

In addition to the booklet, a Practical Guide is prepared to complement the Grand Tour's architectural experience with practical information, including extensive recommendations for dining and socialising, as well as suggestions for cultural events. These suggestions aim to introduce the traveller not only to some of the city's leading performance venues (and also relevant architectural works) but also to the international programming that engages and informs Porto's cultural scene. The same applies to restaurant selection, with recommendations that include both Portuguese cuisine (in traditional or reinvented forms) and gastronomy from other complementary cultures.

All the itineraries and the visits to the different buildings/places are guided.

Generally, the Grand Tour curators are prepared to guide the different visits through a personal architectural perspective, never doctrinaire, grounded in the theoretical/academic knowledge acquired over time about the author and his body of work, as well as in the repeated experience of visiting each specific building in person.

In some cases, the visit to the specific buildings implies an institutional guided tour, previously arranged to focus, as much as possible, on the architecture of the buildings and on less well-known details of their construction process (e.g., specific changes to the main design, demands/discussions with the clients, etc.). Other visits are organised with a client's representative and young local architects involved in the projects or in the refurbishment of the original buildings. These visits correspond to memorable moments, as they offer firsthand accounts of the building's design process and access to interior private spaces that are not easily accessible to the public.

The *in situ* experience

The UpGranT consortium tested this itinerary from June 5th to 9th, 2026.

The itinerary experience involved 14 professors from different academic institutions, 6 institutional partners, 3 institutional guides, and 3 young architects who guided visits to buildings they had worked on. Additionally, in a very particular situation, the Director of House of Cinema Manoel de Oliveira, António Preto, PhD in History and Semiology of Text and Image, guided a visit to the building and its main exhibition, not only revealing details of the relation with Álvaro Siza during the design project and the construction of the building, but also crossing over between Siza's architectural work, Manoel de Oliveira's films/archive and Jean-Luc Godard's artwork. Another moment summarises the itinerary's intention to bring together architecture, art, and culture as important informants, with a guided visit to Casa da Arquitectura, where, once again, building, architectural archive (Portuguese and Brazilian), and two exhibitions complement the cultural cross-over reading.[1]

The experience of each of the four proposed itineraries within the frame of the Porto Grand Tour shed light on many potential affinities between the visited works and architectural references that go across and beyond the European Union, with Alcino Soutinho's Matosinhos Municipality expressing a strong link to Italian architecture, namely BBPR, Ignacio Gardella or Carlo Scarpa, intertwined with a post-modern reading within Alvar Aalto's notions on space, texture and materials. The Seara Housing Complex by João Álvaro Rocha comprises Aldo Rossi's premises, Donald Judd's and Richard Serra's notions of repetition within materials, while the Gaia Cable Car Stations, by Cristina Guedes and Francisco Vieira de Campos, seem sensitive to Swiss architecture, with Peter Zumthor's notions as a catalyst.

The case of Nuno Brandão Costa's Porto Intermodal Terminal echoes Peter Markli and Herzog & de Meuron's practice, with Bellinzona architecture in the background, while the Corcet Headquarters by Nuno Melo Sousa evokes Asian and Brazilian brutalist traditions, informed by Lewerenz's notion of detail and Peter Markli's expression on form and materials.

The cultural affinities with some European architectures, and others, are widely documented through travel and have been extremely influential in preserving the openness and original impulse of Portuguese circumstance, which has been related to the geographic and poetic conditions of Portugal sitting on the southern edge of Europe, a place that is both marginal and isolated, "Finisterre", yet simultaneously a place of dreams and vertigo, thirsty for new cultures, environments, and perspectives for a deeper personal understanding of the world as a multilayered whole (Lourenço 1989).

This circumstance served as the foundational insight for the mainframe of Porto's Grand Tour.

1 The Porto Grand Tour was only possible with the collaboration of Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art, Casa do Cinema Manoel de Oliveira, Casa da Arquitectura - Portuguese Centre for Architecture, APJAR - Associação Pró-Arquitectura João Álvaro Rocha, International Museum of Contemporary Sculpture, and Fundação Livraria Lello. For the guided tours, we thank António Preto and José Fonseca - directors of Casa do Cinema Manoel de Oliveira and Casa da Arquitectura -, Diogo Veiga - Nuno Melo Sousa's collaborator -, and Nuno Reis Pereira with Diogo Nogueira.

Bibliography

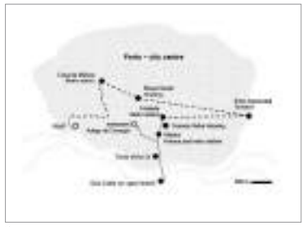
CASAL RIBEIRO H, RAMOS S (2024) - "Perfect Day(s). Revisiting Grand Tour Experiences". FAMagazine Research and Projects on Architecture and the City, 69-70, pp. 183-188.

LOURENÇO E, ed. (1989) - "Finisterra". Finisterra, 1, pp. 5-7.

SIZA A, coord (2012) - *Diário de "bordo" / Fernando Távora*. Fundação Instituto Arquitecto José Marques da Silva - Associação Casa da Arquitectura, Porto.

SIZA A, FRAMPTON K, TÁVORA F, RAYON J. (1988) - *Álvaro Siza: Travel Sketches*. Documentos de Arquitectura. Porto.

TAVARES A, BANDEIRA P (2011) - *Eduardo Souto de Moura: atlas de parede, imagens de métodos*. Dafne Editora, Porto.


1


2


3


4


5


6


7


8


9


10


11


12


13


14


15


16


17


18


19


20

Wall Atlas

The Grand Tour Wall Atlas retraces the essential markers of the four itineraries, from the conception phase to the Grand Tour implementation, through the intersection of *in situ* photographic insights from the different partners and archival images included in the dedicated booklet.

Images

1 Porto city centre UNESCO itinerary.

2 Porto Intermodal Terminal, Nuno Brandão Costa (2016-2021).

3 Time Out Market, Eduardo Souto de Moura (2016-2024).

4 S. Bento Metro Station, Álvaro Siza (2005).

5 Tower of the 24, Fernando Távora (1995-2003).

6 Gaia Cable Car Stations, Cristina Guedes and Francisco Vieira de Campos (2011-2012).

7 Porto territorial itinerary.

8 Corcet Headquarters, Nuno Melo Sousa (2021-2024).

9 Santa Maria Church and Parish Centre, Álvaro Siza (1989-2005).

10 Braga Municipal Stadium, Eduardo Souto de Moura (2000-2003).

11 International Museum of Contemporary Sculpture and Abade Pedrosa Municipal Museum, Álvaro Siza and Eduardo Souto de Moura (2010-2015).

12 Porto neighbourhood itinerary.

13 Boa Nova Tea House, Álvaro Siza (1957-1970).

14 Quinta da Conceição Municipal Park, Fernando Távora (1956-1960).

15 Matosinhos Municipality, Alcino Soutinho (1981-1989).

16 Seara Social Housing, João Álvaro Rocha (1995-2004).

17 Open Sculpture and Leça do Balio Monastery, Álvaro Siza (2018-2024).

18 Porto Serralves area itinerary.

19 Museum of Contemporary Art, Álvaro Siza (1991-1999).

20 Metro bus stops, Álvaro Siza (2024).

Credits

1, 3, 6, 7, 12, 14, 18 FAUP Team. Archive UpGranT.

2, 8, 11, 17 POLIMI Team, Archive UpGranT.

4 AUTh Team, Archive UpGranT.

9, 13, 19, 20 EKA Team, Archive UpGranT.

5 Archive Fernando Távora. Col. Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva.

10 Archive Eduardo Souto de Moura. Col. Casa da Arquitetura - Portuguese Centre for Architecture.

15 Archive Alcino Soutinho. Col. Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva.

16 Archive João Álvaro Rocha. Col. Casa da Arquitetura - Portuguese Centre for Architecture.

Three modern landscapes: measure, meaning and narrative

– Helder Casal Ribeiro, Silvia Ramos

3 Souvenirs on Exemplary Buildings

From the universe of the 'Porto School' Grand Tourists, the selection of three Exemplary Buildings takes into consideration their different circumstances, scales, programmes and the various calligraphies and languages they address. In terms of representativeness, the wide time range and geographic coverage of the case studies are also fundamental, as well as the availability of archival materials, with the objective of mapping and opening perspectives on the creative process by identifying the triggers and references encapsulated in the design. All these perspectives inform the construction of the readings present in the respective interpretive materials – architectural narratives, visual representations and models.

- House of the 24, Porto, 1995-2003, Fernando Távora.
- Santa Maria Church and Parish Centre, Marco de Canaveses, 1990-1996, Álvaro Siza.
- Carandá Market, Braga, 1980-2001, Eduardo Souto de Moura.

The three selected Exemplary Buildings are all public programmes – cultural, religious, and marketplace that sold fish, meat, and vegetables. The buildings were designed between 1980 and 2003, in three different regions of Northern Portugal (Douro, Tâmega/Sousa and Cávado), by Távora, Siza and Souto Moura, architects from different generations. Complementarily, the most recent case study to be completed (2003) is by the eldest of the three architects, and the youngest architect is the author of the building that first began to be designed (1980).

Travelling occupied a very special place in the cultural education of these three architects. Távora was the leading figure in motivating different groups of travellers, which included Siza and Souto de Moura. More than architectural affinities, the three architects have consistently shared a sense of culture and tradition, informed by planned travels over the years.

House of the 24: absolute geometric beauty

The Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva holds Fernando Távora's Archive, namely the documentation on the House of the 24, which includes drawings, written files, photographs, and models, produced between 1995 and 2003. The process reveals a project developed to a high level of resolution, with a specific architectural intent, enabling clear analysis.

Among the drawings, there is one hand-drawn by Távora, in which he includes, side by side, a quotation from the Italian architect Giuseppe Terragni. On this sheet, an A1-sized tracing paper, arranged horizontally, the background is filled with small sketches, calculations and notes.

At the top, aligned with the A1 vertical axis, Távora draws a ceiling plan and a longitudinal section, along with the building's two main façades and a detail of the interior stair. The five drawings are compactly arranged within a virtual rectangle organised in six sections. The free space in its lower right corner is dedicated to the Terragni quotation, again arranged in the interior of a virtual, well-recognised, geometric form.

Távora writes in Portuguese, by hand in ink and between double quotes *"It was necessary to draw our attention to a / rectangular form, to achieve the section of a particular rectangle that will underline, by / the harmonious relation of its measures, the entire / construction of the Monument with that value / of "Absolute" geometric beauty that is / prerogative of the exemplary architectures / of the great historical epochs"*, and he adds "Danteum 1938 / Giuseppe Terragni".[1]

Terragni's quote reflects on the construction of the Monument, understood as an exemplary architecture of a great historical era, and on the problem of its proportions and measure. He suggests that a specific rectangular form with a particular ratio of its sides may yield absolute geometric beauty.

Távora, in different small sketches in the background of his drawn sheet, studies this rectangular form. He studies three hypotheses: the double square, the root-2 rectangle, and the golden rectangle. From these three options, Távora selects the first hypothesis to proportion his Monument. From the façade to the ceiling and the interior staircase, all the elements in the composition correspond to submultiples of a square.

The House of the 24 referred to the 24 trades that governed the city, corresponding to the Tower-Building that housed the medieval city hall next to the cathedral tower.

The commission was set on a historically sensitive site, with significant transformations in the 40's, involving a complex dialogue between the buildings' existing ruins, with different platforms, and the imposing 12th-century cathedral, with important alterations in the Gothic and Baroque periods. The historically charged site obliged Távora to visit the city's archives to understand the urban setting and depict the surrounding constructions. Távora will find in a specific description the height of the pre-existing city hall, in palms, which he will transfer as a design theme into his proposal.

According to Távora, the main aim of the project was to transform the medieval ruin into a memorial of the city's glorious past and history, through the conception of an architectural object with interior space that evokes the ancient tower, establishing a volumetric dialogue with the surrounding settings, namely the cathedral.

Távora's design strategy was the opposite of simulating a medieval tower. Seeking to evoke it and unable to fully reconstruct its original form, the architect adopted a simple geometric shape with a square base for its plan and took into consideration the archaeological data on the conformation of the medieval outer walls to foreshadow the final volume of the Tower-Building, which can be broken down into a series of squares and rectangles generated from two overlapping squares. This volume, fitting into the surroundings and asserting itself in the city, was dimensioned using the palm as the main unit of measurement. The palm measure regulates the whole composition, as shown in all the drawings and registered in the building's glazed façade.

Távora addresses Terragni and the Danteum project for Rome, approximately 60 years after its conception. In the Danteum, Távora finds support and sustenance for his conviction regarding the harmonic laws that regulate the composition of exemplary architectures, imbued with a sense of political mission and historic relevance, such as those of Ancient Rome. Both the House of the 24 and the Danteum are largely programme-less in a conventional sense, yet layered with a rich, complex compositional premise that bridges the gulf between abstraction and figuration. This implies a design based on a proportioning system defined by ideal geometries (such as the square and the golden rectangle in the case of the Danteum) and mathematical rules that will ground the projects in the same harmonic laws.

Távora never visited the Danteum in Rome, as it was never built. The architect may have experienced, in loco, the absolute geometric beauty of harmonious geometric rules during one of his first travels to Italy, where he visited some of Terragni's built works.

1 Archive Fernando Távora. Col. Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva (PT_FIMS_FT_0290_pd0046).

One of Távora's first travels to Italy dates to 1948/1949. Távora was a young architect, recently employed by the Porto Municipality, travelling with his brother Bernardo Ferrão and a friend, Torcato Álvares Ribeiro, during the Portuguese fascist regime, with all its limitations and difficulties to travel. The journey began in Lisbon and had stops in Gibraltar and North Africa before reaching Italy, where he visited Palermo, Naples, Florence, Milan, Como, Turin, Bergamo, and Venice. In these cities, Távora experienced works of Italian Rationalism, namely Terragni and Lingeri, as well as buildings by Persico, Figini Pollini, Rogers, Muzio, Peressuti, and Bottoni.

Within the spirit of the future House of the 24, it is probable that Távora visited, in Como, the Casa del Fascio, as well as the Novocomum and the Parvulario Sant'Elia, by Terragni. The Milanese works of BBPR, particularly the writings of E.N. Rogers, set on an informed process of dialogue with the city's traditional urban pattern, but without compromising their contemporary language, could also have inspired Távoras' design options and themes.

Távora returned to Italy many times during his career, notably while designing the House of the 24. In 1999, the Basilica Palladiana in Vicenza organised a monographic exhibition on Siza's work, which Fernando Távora visited, as shown in photos of the two architects strolling in Piazza dei Signori next to Palladio's Loggia del Capitaniato, with the Basilica in the background.

Santa Maria Church and Parish Centre – a modern acropolis

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is the Portuguese institution that holds Álvaro Siza's Archive for the Santa Maria Church and Parish Centre project in Marco de Canaveses (1989 – 1996). The documentation is extensive and includes not only visual elements, such as sketches, drawings, and photographs (also of models), but also textual elements that cover different phases of the project's development and on-site implementation.

Among the documentation, the elements related to the Preliminary design, dated February 1992, stand out as an intermediate phase between the Initial study, dated August 1991, and the final detailed Design, dated November 1992 and January 1993. They are not as detailed in terms of material selection, structural systems, and construction solutions as the final design, but they are precise and synthetic in clarifying the overall design strategies, from the site plan and volumetric relationships to the character of the interior lighting.

In the corresponding descriptive report,[2] Siza explains the project's details or fundamental features. In this text, with 4 A4 pages, 8 bullet points and a set of short paragraphs, stands out as *a* simple translation of a complex thought, using concise, clear language to convey a space of deep emotional and intellectual meaning, making it accessible and universally understandable.
It is well known that not even Siza's precise words are enough to fully express a project, as its full comprehension can only arise from the total space experience. However, the report, in its dryness, offers us the right concepts to construct our personal narrative.

The report addresses siting, programme, relationship with the existing fabric, access, urban setting, space depiction, and construction options. In confronting this content with the *in-situ* visit, three main design themes are heightened: the high ground public square, the double/curved wall, and the sense of monument within its measures and proportions.

The project was commissioned to Siza with a Preliminary Programme dated December 1989, which Siza addresses in detail. This document expressed the intention to build a full parish complex with a church, mortuary chapel,

2 Archive Álvaro Siza. Col. Art Library - Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (AAS 002.90.1908.IC).

catechism and youth activities centre, auditorium, priest's residence, community space, and a small cafeteria.

The complex was to be located on a free plot in the centre of Marco de Canaveses, adjacent to one of its main avenues. This project site presented challenging contextual and topographic issues. Its borders were defined by buildings of different scales and purposes, and its main level was 4 meters above the main avenue and 2 meters below the secondary access street on the opposite side.

Siza's main design option was to lay out a public square, girded by the parish centre in tension with the church's main volume. The alignments, geometric relations and proportions come together in complementary shapes that define three clear moments. The auditorium and the parish facilities are conceived as a horizontal device that contains and regulates the site, articulating the ensemble volumetrically with the surrounding low constructions. In turn, the vertical volume of the church, set on the mortuary chapel, serves as the representative element of the public and sacred ensemble, particularly visible from the main avenue and integrated as a landmark into the urban landscape. Lastly, the public square mediates the two architectural bodies and articulates the surrounding levels, emphasising the church's main entrance façade and its volumetric predominance, evoking a modern Acropolis.

In the church's single nave, one of the most significant design features is the contrast between the continuous narrow opening on the southeast wall, at eye level, and the three large skylight openings on the opposite wall. These openings are also characterised by variable depths, taking advantage of the design decision to divide the wall into two surfaces and undulate the interior. The same strategy is used in a light-well behind the altar, simultaneously illuminating the mortuary chapel on the lower floor.

There is no record of Siza undertaking any specific travel for the Marco de Canaveses commission. However, the project reveals possible echoes of different references tested over the years by Siza during his many travels.

About a year before the church and parish centre were inaugurated, in 1995, Siza, along with Távora, took a grand tour to Finland, with a stop in Russia. A copy of this detailed travel itinerary is kept in Siza's Archive in the Serralves Foundation. It was an 11-day tour, visiting 16 locations and around 35 architectural works, mostly by Alvar Aalto. The route was organised around the cities of Helsinki, Turku and Jyvaskylä, where Siza had received the sixth Alvar Aalto Medal in 1988.

This was not the first Finnish travel that Siza undertook. It is well known that Siza travelled to Finland in 1968 as a student with a scholarship from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, visited Aalto's works and met Alvar Aalto in person.

Therefore, when Siza received the commission, he had not only studied Alvar Aalto's work through published bibliographies but had also experienced many of his buildings *in situ*, confirming much of what he was interpreting.
We may find coincident compositional themes between Siza's ensemble in Marco de Canaveses and Aalto's siting of the Cross of the Plains Church and Parish Centre in Seinäjoki, with the public square shaped by parish facilities and the sacred volume, underlined through volumetric tensions.

At the same time, we may find coincident architectonic themes between Siza's Santa Maria Church and Aalto's Church of the Three Crosses

(Vuoksenniska church), which Siza visited in Imatra in 1995, namely the double undulated wall that induces the opposites of interior-exterior and surface-structure.

We can also detect architectonic references in Siza's ensemble that go beyond Aalto. The long, narrow opening at the level of a parishioner's gaze in Siza's Church can conjure the Chiesa di S. Enrico in Bolgiano, by Ignazio Gardella, which plays with the same theme, while the tripartite main elevation may refer to Adolf Loos' Steiner House or to the main threshold in the rationalist Santissima Annunziata Church in Sabaudia, by Gino Cancellotti, a theme which Álvaro Siza also evokes in other projects.

Carandá Market, Braga – an urban ruin garden

Casa da Arquitetura – Portuguese Centre for Architecture holds Eduardo Souto de Moura's archive. Here, the documentation on the Carandá's design process dates from two periods more than 20 years apart (1980-1984 and 1999-2001) and is organised into three files, corresponding to the three projects developed for the area: the municipal market (1980-1984), the associated cafeteria (1982-1984) and, in a second phase, the dance school and urban garden (1999-2001), into which the market had been transformed.[3] For each project, these folders hold essentially sketches, drawings and photographs, together with photographed models.

In the archive, among the photographs of the market and the cafeteria, a sequence of three photos of a wooden model stands out.[4] The photographs invariably show the two projects, in elevated views from south to north, with the market in the foreground and the cafeteria in the background. The difference between them highlights the two fundamental architectonic elements into which the projects can be broken down: the planes/walls that contain the market and the columns/pillars that support the cantilevered roof. The first photo shows the complete compact model; in the second, the roof is removed, along with the columns; in the third, the roof is placed upside down on the model, underscoring the project's composition through the interplay between the systemised planes and the colonnade that supports the cantilevered roof.

The project's original site was a longitudinal open rural estate situated between two urban nuclei, with some rural, abandoned structures, mostly in ruins, at its centre.

The main structure of the proposed market was set as a straight line linking the two extremes of the interrupted city, like a public covered passage or gallery, over 164m long, bringing the two settlements together. The cafeteria would complement the composition as an exception to the main structure by inhabiting the existing rural structures in an open dialogue with the new structure, overlapping the existing elements in aesthetic opposition.

Over 20 years, the popular municipal market and cafeteria were transformed by the same architect into an urban ruin garden. The market's original programme was abandoned, while its structure, particularly the cantilevered roof, deteriorated, obliging an extensive intervention.
This condition demanded its re-evaluation. Souto de Moura's proposal was, instead of an extensive refurbishment, to use this unexpected opportunity to invert its use and scale by removing the roof and designing a walk-through garden with the colonnade's ruins, and to accommodate, in a strategic way, new cultural programmes in the remaining space.

In this metamorphosis process, the granite walls and concrete columns persist and inform the present proposal, serving as main characteristics of

3 Souto Moura will design a Music School in an additional phase (2004-2010), which is not represented in the archive and, as such, not included in this reading.

4 Eduardo Souto de Moura Archive Col. Casa da Arquitectura - Portuguese Centre for Architecture (PT_CA_ESM_PA-003-02-3-0024, -0034, -0033).

Souto de Moura's matrix, each referring to a specific architectonic reference in the architect's works.

In the original design, the solid walls, detached from the building and conceived as planes extending into the landscape, suggest the plan's composition as a modern neoplastic device. At the same time, the set of aligned columns/pillars that support the very long roof slab corresponds to a classical archetype, giving the building a timeless character.

Thus, the Carandá projects resembles in one hand the neoplastic component of the Mies van der Rohe's project for the Brick Country House, in which the wall is a plane that organises space, and on the other hand Roman markets, like the Trajano Market, or the Greek stoas, like the Attalos Stoa – architectural structures with elongated porticos and colonnades, used simultaneously as shelters, commercial centres and meeting places.

Souto de Moura did not visit Mies van der Rohe's Brick Country House, as it was never built. However, he certainly visited Mies' later works in the United States, which are based on these early pieces, namely the Pavilion, which Souto de Moura visited in Barcelona, experiencing and validating *in situ* its compositional principles.

Souto de Moura cherishes the memory of a trip to Athens in which he simulated Mies's visit to the Parthenon to study ancient Greece during the summer break at the Bauhaus. It is well known that Mies van der Rohe is one of his main references. Souto de Moura is an avid collector of publications on Mies van der Rohe and has carefully visited almost all of his buildings.

Additionally, Souto de Moura also identified Aldo Rossi's writings, namely the text on Diocletian's Palace in Split (293-305), as a reference for the Carandá Market inversion, in terms of programme, scale and significance.

When Eduardo Souto de Moura began his work on Carandá, he was a young 28-year-old architect. Távora had been his professor at ESBAP and, after the 1974 Revolution, Siza's office offered him one of the first professional experiences.

Souto de Moura probably first experienced travelling to Athens through Távora's travel logs while still a student. It is well known that Siza's first Grand Tours took place in Távora's office in *Palácio Atlântico*, or *Duque de Loulé*, or even at the Fine Arts School. Through Távora's words and gestures, all the young architects in his inner circle learn about the places and the buildings he has visited. Later, Souto de Moura returned to Greece several times, including once with Távora, on a memorable occasion.

Bibliography

SIZA A., HIGINO N., FERREIRA ALVES L. (1998) - *A Igreja de Santa Maria: Marco de Canaveses / Álvaro Siza*. Paróquia de Santa Marinha de Fornos, Marco de Canavezes.

SOBRADO J. (coord.) (2024) - *A urgência da Cidade: o Porto e 100 anos de Fernando Távora*. Câmara Municipal, Porto.

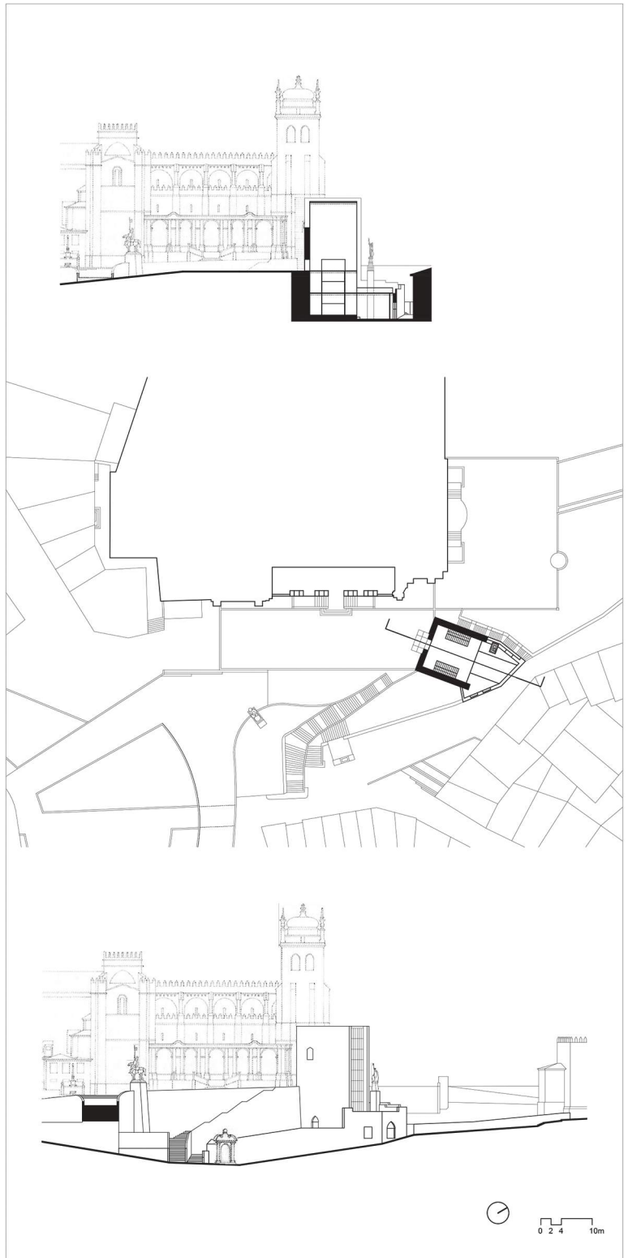
TRIGUEROS L. (ed.) (2000) - *Eduardo Souto de Moura*. Editorial Blau, Lisboa.

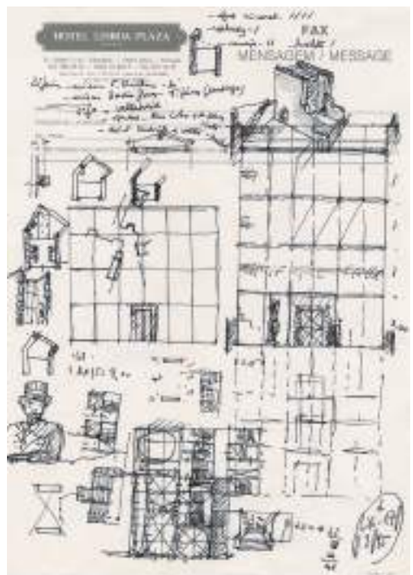
House of the 24: absolute geometric beauty

Redrawings

1 Representative matter: first-floor plan, east elevation, and section redrawings; sketch by Fernando Távora.

FAUP Team. UpGranT Archive. Archive Fernando Távora. Col. Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva.





3 Souvenirs on Exemplary Buildings

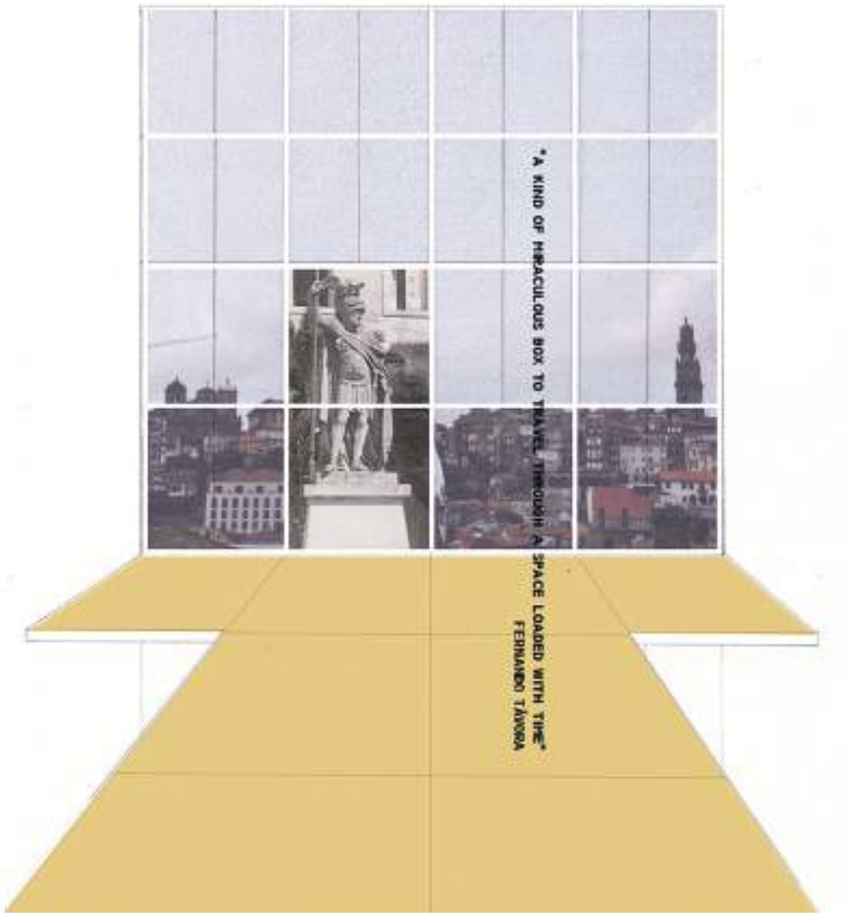
House of the 24: absolute geometric beauty

Architectural narratives

2 Multi-screen miraculous box: photomontage.

Readings developed with Anna Lopes, Hugo Pereira, Maria Gião, Parisa Etemadi, Tomás Martins (UpGranT IPL reload). FAUP Team. UpGranT Archive.

Written words by Fernando Távora, Project Report. Archive Fernando Távora. Col. Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva.

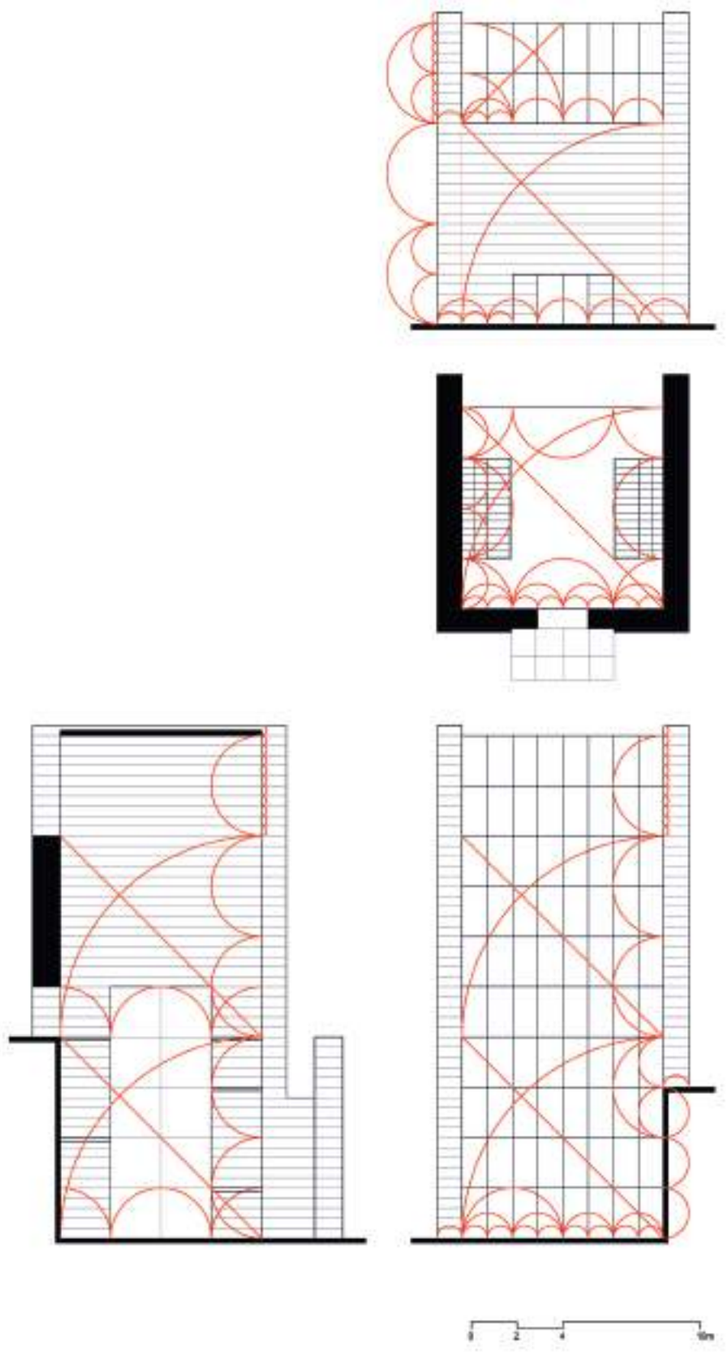


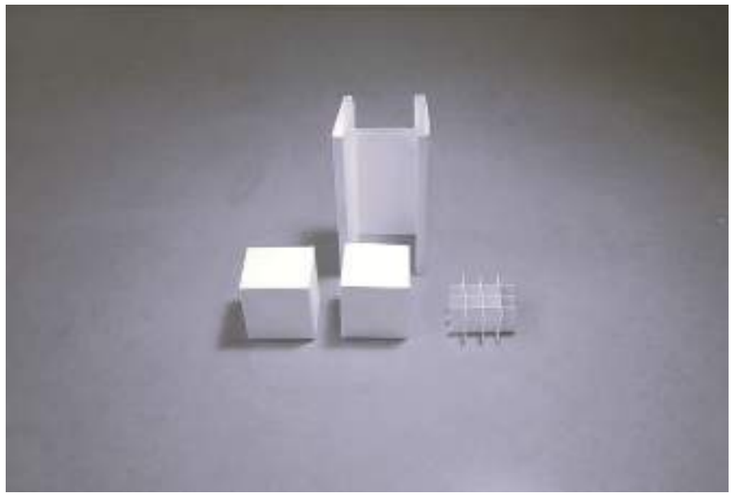
House of the 24: absolute geometric beauty

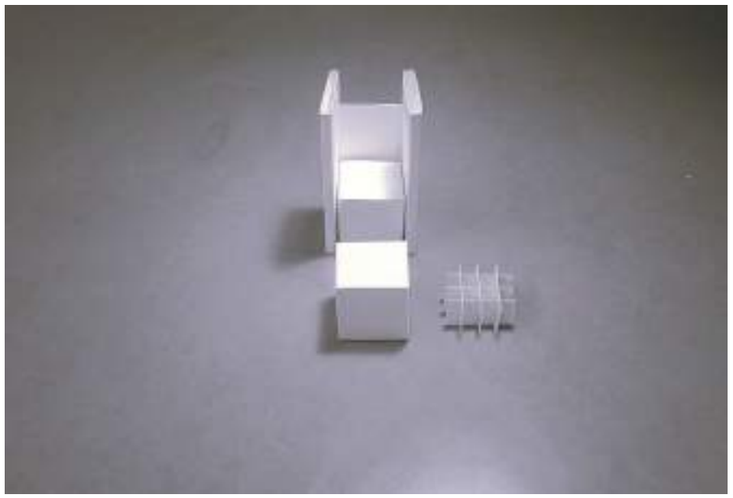
Visual interpretations

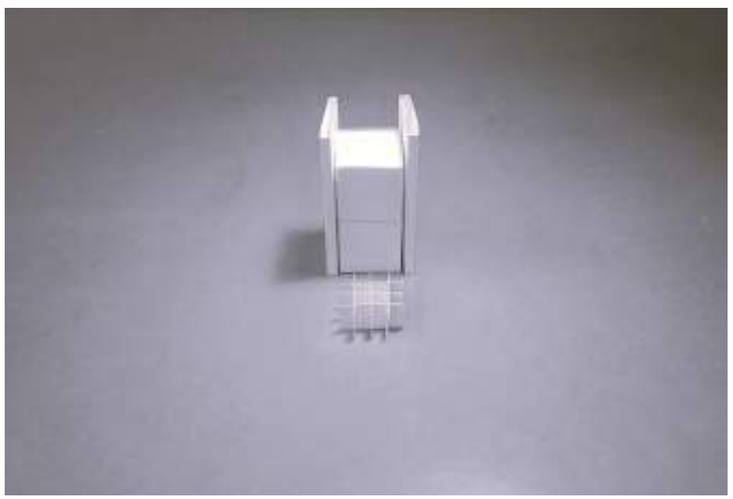
3 Latent geometric order: first-floor plan, east and west elevation, and section.

FAUP Team. UpGranT Archive.









House of the 24: absolute geometric beauty

Models

4 A symbolic modulated apparatus: paper model.

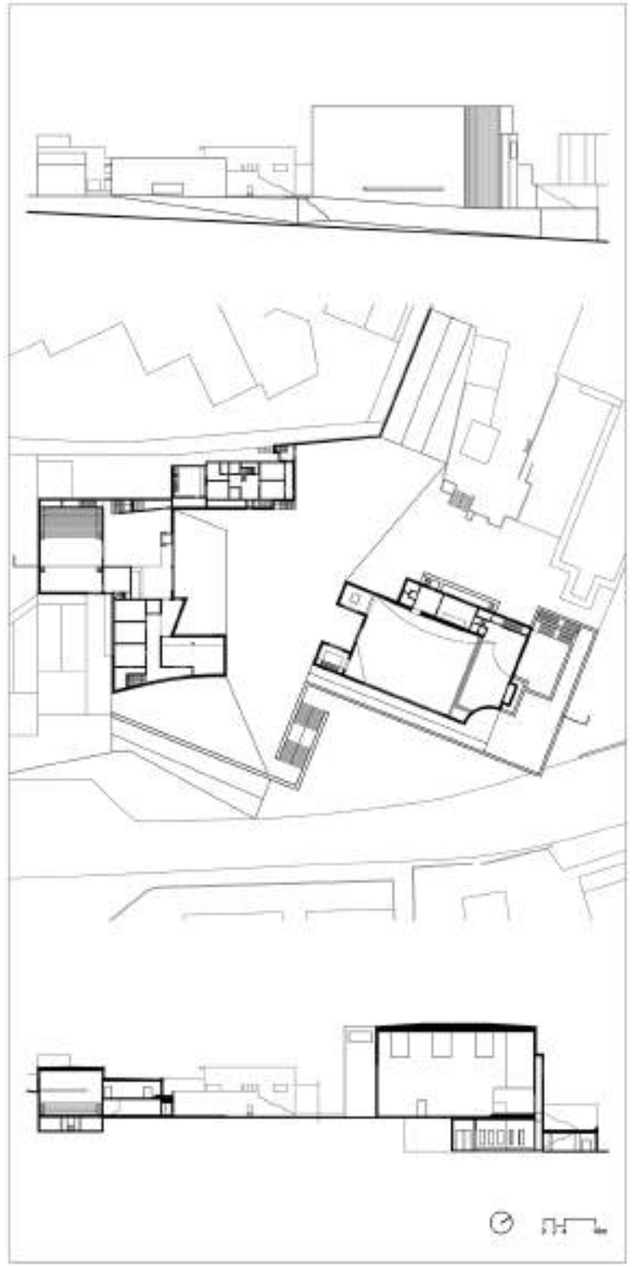
Readings developed with Anna Lopes, Hugo Pereira, Maria Gião, Parisa Etemadi, Tomás Martins (UpGranT IPL reload). FAUP Team. UpGranT Archive.

Santa Maria Church and Parish Centre: modern acropolis

Redrawings

1 Representative matter: ground-floor plan, east elevation, and section redrawings; sketch by Álvaro Siza.

FAUP Team. UpGranT Archive. Archive Álvaro Siza. Col. Biblioteca de Arte - Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.





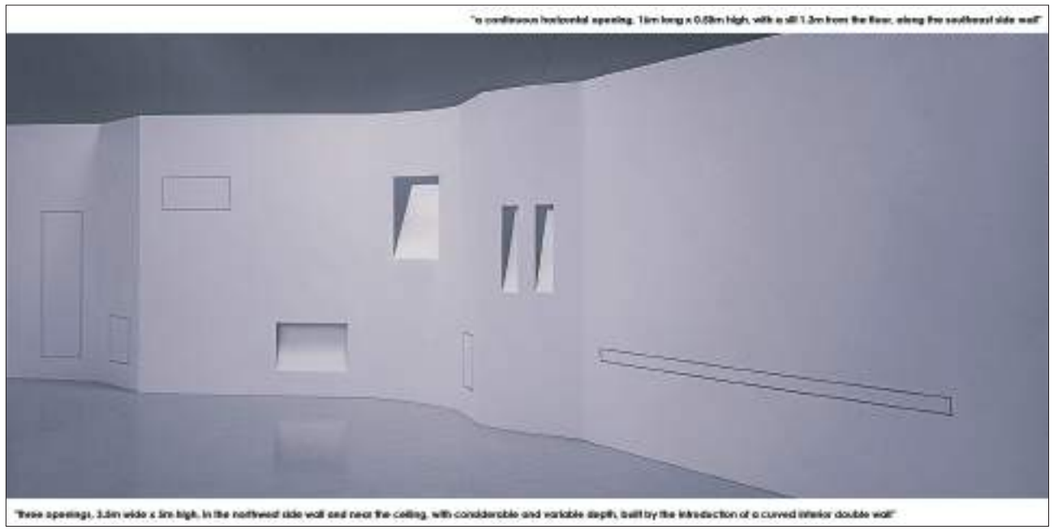
Santa Maria Church and Parish Centre: modern acropolis

Architectural narratives

2 Collection of openings: cuts and trims.

Readings developed with Anna Lopes, Hugo Pereira, Maria Gião, Parisa Etemadi, Tomás Martins (UpGranT IPL reload). FAUP Team. UpGranT Archive.

Written words by Álvaro Siza, Project Report. Archive Álvaro Siza. Col. Biblioteca de Arte - Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.

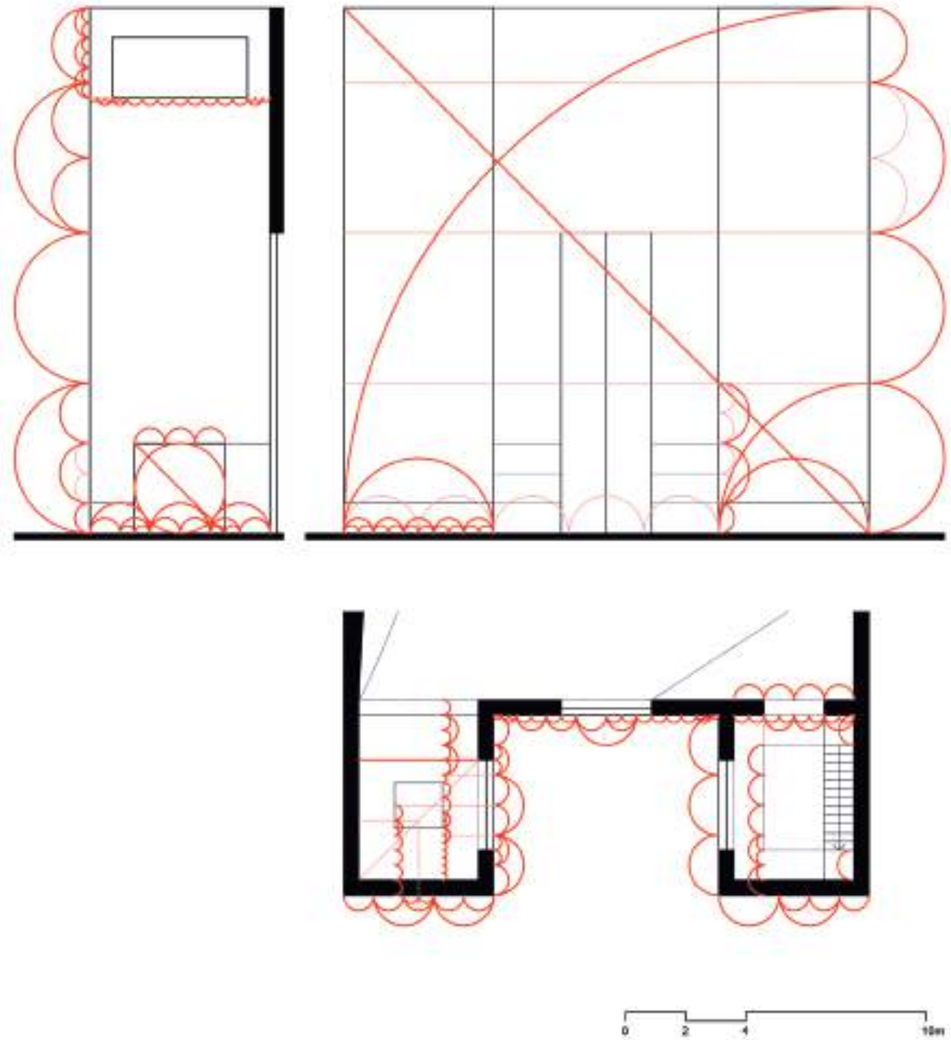


Santa Maria Church and Parish Centre: modern acropolis

Visual interpretations

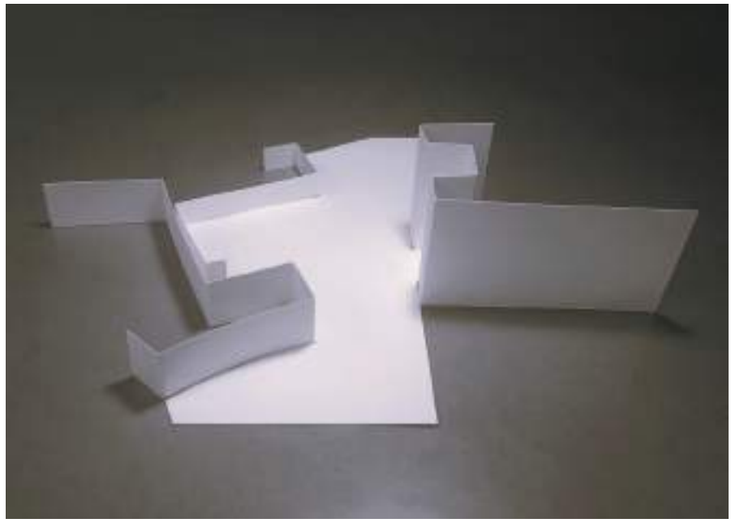
3 Latent geometric structure: east elevation and ground-floor plan

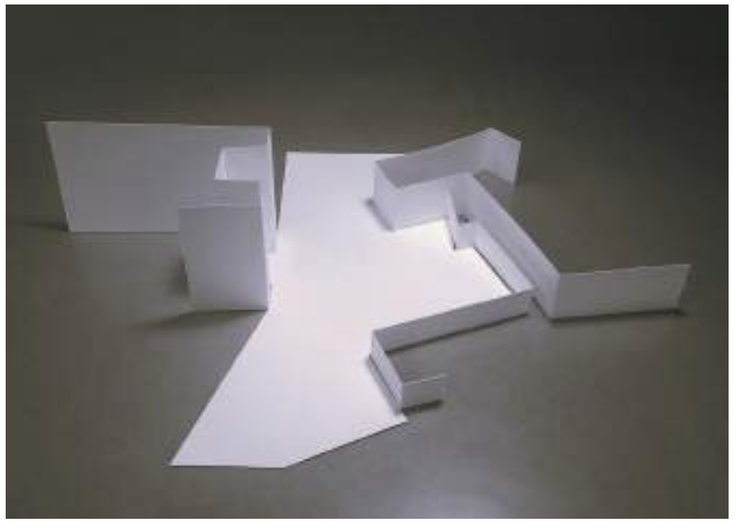
FAUP Team. UpGranT Archive.



Santa Maria Church and Parish Centre: modern acropolis

Models



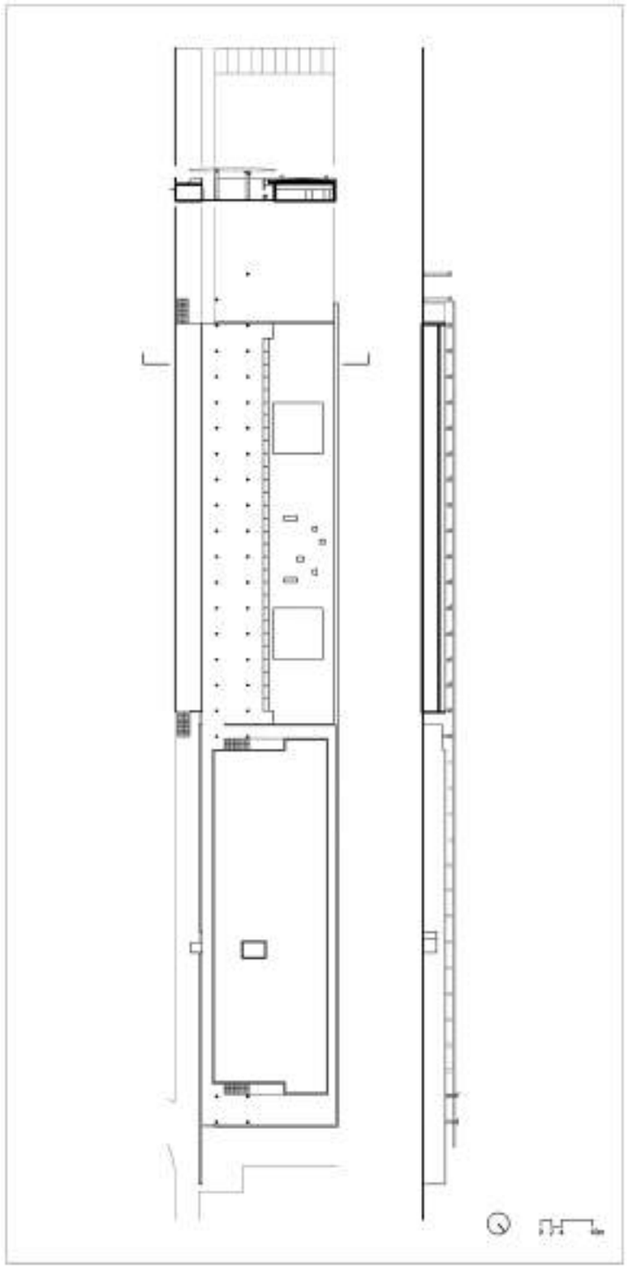


4 A public place trigger: paper model.

Readings developed with Anna Lopes, Hugo Pereira, Maria Gião, Parisa Etemadi, Tomás Martins (UpGranT IPL reload). FAUP Team. UpGranT Archive.

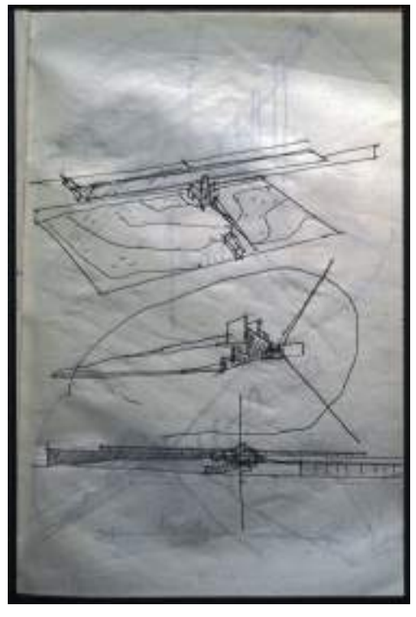
Carandá Market, Braga: urban ruin garden

Redrawings



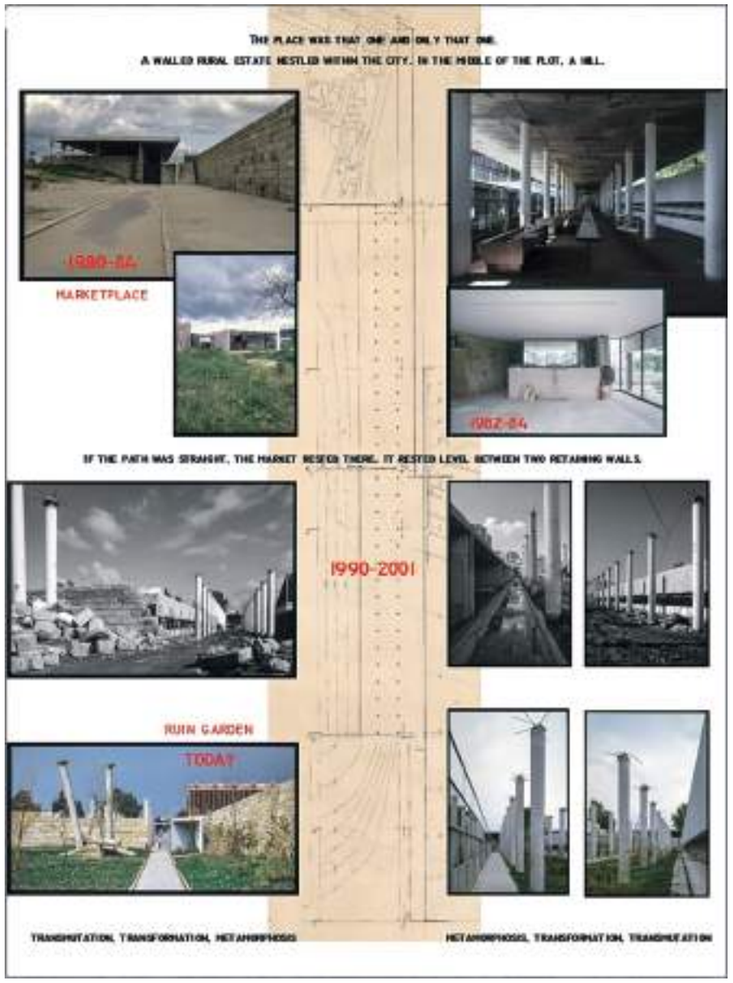
1 Representative matter: roof-plan, north elevation, and transversal section redrawings (project phase 2004-2010); sketch by Eduardo Souto de Moura.

FAUP Team. UpGranT Archive. Archive Eduardo Souto de Moura. Col. Casa da Arquitetura - Portuguese Centre for Architecture.



Carandá Market, Braga: urban ruin garden

Architectural narratives



2 Transmutation, transformation, and metamorphosis: trailer or script. FAUP Team. UpGranT Archive.

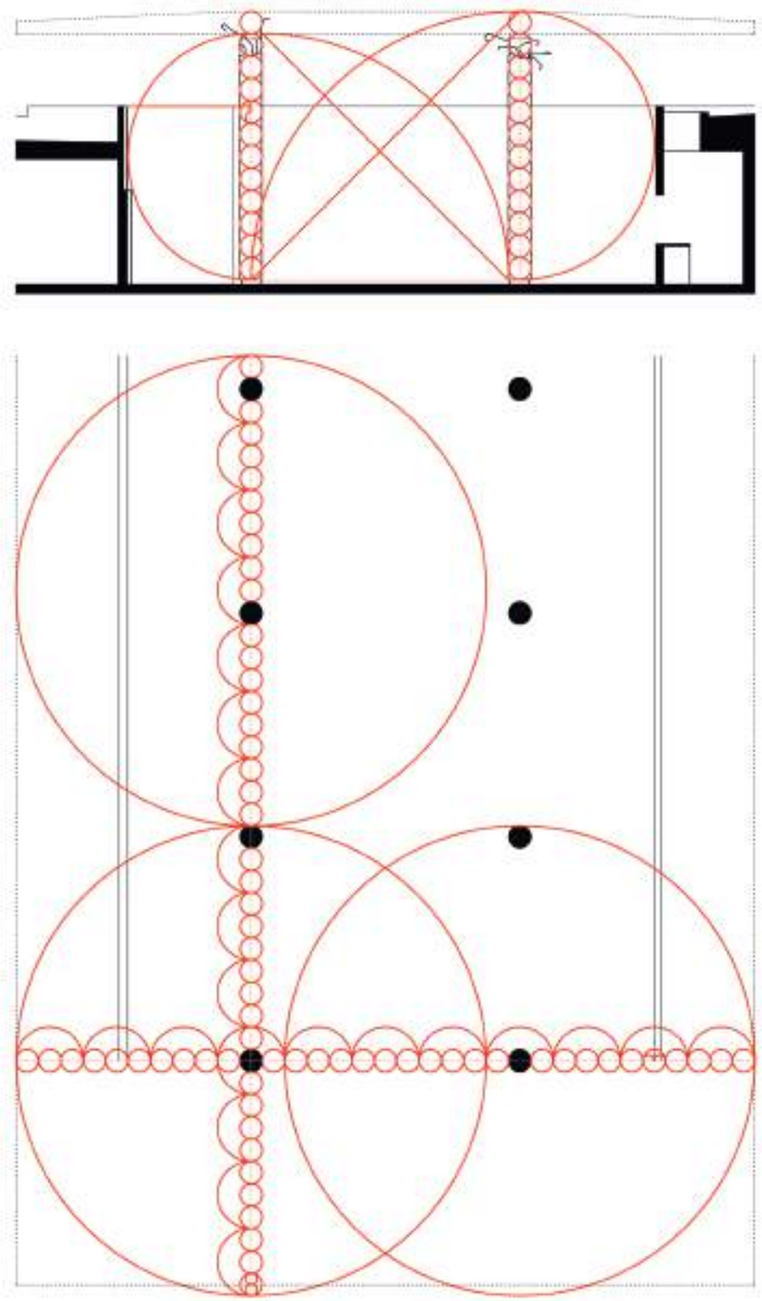
Written words by Eduardo Souto de Moura, Project notes. Archive Eduardo Souto de Moura. Col. Casa da Arquitetura - Portuguese Centre for Architecture.

Carandá Market, Braga: urban ruin garden

Visual interpretations

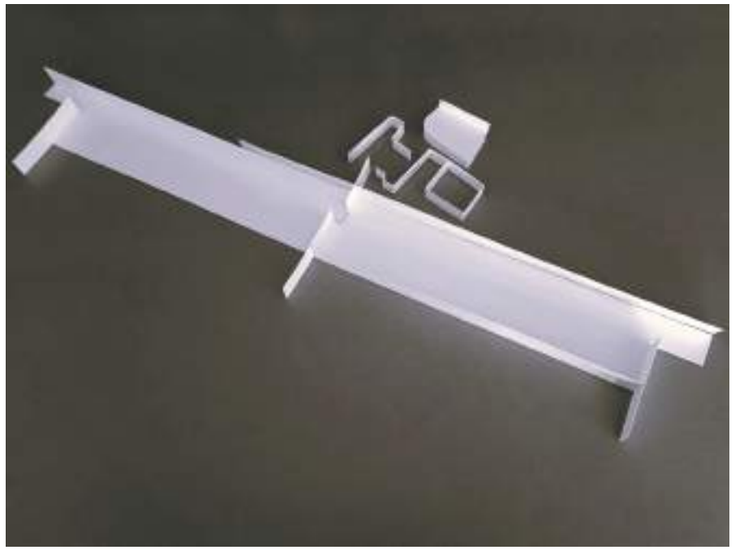
3 Latent geometric system: ground-floor plan and transversal section.

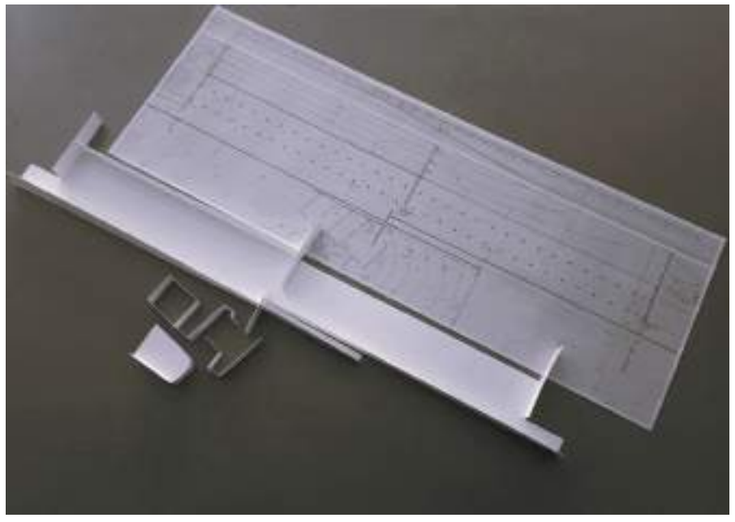
FAUP Team. UpGranT Archive.



Carandá Market, Braga: urban ruin garden

Models





4 A modern neoplastic device: paper model.

Readings developed with Anna Lopes, Hugo Pereira, Maria Gião, Parisa Etemadi, Tomás Martins (UpGranT IPL reload). FAUP Team. UpGranT Archive.

4 Learning by travel with...

Travels with Nuno Melo Sousa

– Sílvia Ramos,
Helder Casal Ribeiro

Short conversations were organised with the oldest and the youngest architects from the Porto's selection of the 10 Grand Tourists – Álvaro Siza, Eduardo Souto de Moura, and Nuno Melo Sousa.

The interview script addresses three major areas of concern – Foundational tours undertaken; Travels not realised and relevant even today; Itinerary for a contemporary Grand Tour (a suggestion for students) – to provide an updated reading on "learning by travelling" in Porto's architecture practice.

The text for this publication was transcribed and translated from direct speech, seeking to preserve not only its meaning and intent but also its informal and spontaneous character.

"There are places I will never go. Due to laziness or boredom, or premature fatigue. But there are also landscapes or buildings I should have visited a long time ago" (Radić, 2019, p. 127).

Travel in Nuno Melo Sousa's generation (born in 1988) is a commodity, socially available for exploration with relative ease. Portugal's peripheral condition is no longer a decisive factor, and the distance between continents is significantly shortened.

Nuno's curriculum clearly reveals the imprint travel has left on his personality, choices and architectural intent. For him, travel is confrontation, physical and mental, seen as an opportunity to go beyond one's expectations, move away from one's comfort zone. Travel is taken as a trigger to open perspectives, not to experience estrangement as an outsider, but rather to be embedded into the culture as a gateway towards personal insight or transformation.

The conversation with Nuno Melo Sousa began in the early afternoon on September 6, 2024.

1 Foundational travels undertaken

My most memorable tours are those that completely pulled the rug out from under my feet. Whenever I felt I was in a context that wasn't natural to me or in an unexpected environment, I was constantly challenged to review my expectations with the given reality. I had to overcome these obstacles in order to feel comfortable and at ease in that environment.

So, the first time I went out, apart from family trips to Spain, where the context was always very similar, was to England, where I attended summer camps to learn English. I remember it was quite a different atmosphere. I wasn't studying architecture yet, and the difference I felt was in the texture. It was all made of bricks - the floor was in brick, which turned onto the wall, which was also brick.

This reality resurfaced in the Netherlands during my Erasmus. I remember being in Delft and realising that the ugly became less ugly because it was all part of the same brick mass. It was the same thing, so it seemed I forgave more. While here [Portugal], because we use different materials and there is a clear difference between the floor and wall surfaces, we are less forgiving due to the much greater contrast and complexity. So, this whole thing about the unity of material, mass, and texture had a great impact, a first learning experience.

Despite this contrast, within the logic of background and foreground, life in the Netherlands followed the same parameters as in Portugal. The shops opened at nine o'clock and closed at noon, then opened at two and closed at six.

People had routines and customs that were very similar to mine, so this way of living was very similar to what we had in Portugal. Ultimately, in terms of scale, the doors were bigger, the ceilings were higher, and the bathroom layout was different; nevertheless, everything was pretty standard. So, it wasn't exactly a shock, nor anything that would make me invert my way of doing things or think differently.

I remember, in the first semester in Delft, for example, I tried to do a project as if I was still in FAUP. So, I chose a professor who would let me maintain this natural continuity, because I didn't identify with the studio's way of thinking about the projects' plasticity.

I thought it was going to be something particular, but it wasn't, and since it didn't offer me anything I wanted to learn, I tried to be with a teacher who identified with Porto's customs, traditions, and way of being. This doesn't happen in the second semester, because I exposed myself by going to India. I consider it to be the first great travel, in which we faced a reality whose norms and ways of being, even in the public space, have nothing to do with ours. The buildings are designed in such a way that good public architecture is truly open to interpretation, change, use, and has to last. So, this is the first time I think about a building, I look at a building, and I realise that this building is designed from the ground up to absorb all the changes it will be subject to, without compromising its DNA, its basic structure. From this comes the understanding of what constitutes a good siting, a good structural metric and a good spatial composition. The building's finishing (outer shell) must be autonomous from all this. In India, the way a building is coated or cladded is very different on the first day and after four years, when it has been inhabited. So, the building has to withstand these changes and hold in terms of scale, proportion and architectural promenade, which must be independent of the building's ornamentation or finishes. My trip to India was the first encounter with these notions.

So, India, without a doubt, because of the huge shock was a way of freeing myself from any constraints or embarrassments linked to the faculty. I would be a completely different person if I had stayed in Portugal. Then came the second phase in Asia, mainly the stay in Bangkok, because it is already a more refined Asia, as raw as India, but still with a lot of space to experiment, which liberates Architectural thought.

A first-person experience is always a first-person experience. Seeing an image, I imagine, is not the same as visiting Greater Kenya or the Pyramids of Giza. In fact, I have never visited a pyramid. I've never been to Machu Picchu either, it would also be one of those must-do trips. In fact, [Smiljan] Radić has a very beautiful text, "Every So Often a Talking Dog Appears", in which he talks exactly about what he didn't visit and what he thought about so many times that he ended up, in a certain way, visiting.

I did the same exercise with Peter Märkli's La Congiunta. I have "visited" this building many times through photographic records and plans, and I have studied the approach, the layout, the sequence of spaces, the cuts of each chamber, and I have imagined what it would be like to pass through each of those different openings. Now, visiting the building *in situ* validated an entire dreamlike space in my head. It was about conquering that space, being with the building, touching it, walking, sitting, and feeling time pass.

This experience has nothing to do with a photographic reading of the building. Especially because photographs can be very misleading, because they are not to scale, most of the time. The photographs do not capture our true interaction with the building.

Lina Bo Bardi's SESC Pompéia Factory, in S. Paulo, for example, is much more impressive, interesting and powerful *in situ* than all the images I saw. None of the images I've seen of that space actually represent it.

Another example: most of the photographs we know of the MuBE give the impression that the building is much larger than it actually is. The building is much smaller, much tighter, limited, making it quicker to walk around outside. However, when we go inside, it is surreal how much larger the spaces are than we expected.

In contrast, the Lewerentz Church is much smaller. This means that when we enter that space, it is impossible to photograph. You can guess the dynamics of the space from the sections and plans, and imagine what it will be like to walk through it, but it is entirely different to experience the building. Even arriving at the place. It seems like I've seen it I don't know how many times, but between parking, opening the trunk to get the camera, and realising which side I want to see the building from for the first time – I want to enter through the south façade, I want to go around and enter through the façade he wants me to enter through, etc – an expectation is created that transforms the perception of the building. The same happens in Dhaka with Louis Kahn or at Doshi's CEPT [University, School of Architecture], where feeling the different intensities of light, although suggested in the drawings, is completely unpredictable.

[The conversation continues with other destinations and impressions.]

2 Not realised travels

My last trip to Brazil was really a long-overdue travel that had been a fantasy of mine for many years, and in keeping with the fantasy, I didn't feel disappointed. I would also have really liked to visit Brasília and other works, for example, by Lina Bo Bardi and, possibly, more works by Paulo Mendes da Rocha, but it wasn't easy to do. This would be a second Brazil travel, and it would also be very powerful.

There is a tour to Switzerland that I have never taken. Despite contradicting everything I've been saying, Switzerland is anything but spontaneous, informal, and ordinary. Nevertheless, I think it could also be a very powerful journey to visit the German area, to visit a series of Peter Märkli's works, a series of Rudolf Olgiati, and even some Siedlungs.

I'm very interested in this tour, even though it hasn't happened yet.

Then a good tour of Italy, which I think is something I'm missing, because my trips to Italy have always been very occasional and work-related: Rome and Milan, in other words, Italy and Greece. The classics completely passed me by. They never sparked my imagination, nor were they ever a fantasy. In fact, they never stirred me up because I have this big gap in the historical perception of architecture. I only started looking at things that interest me that are very recent, from the last 100 years, or from 4000 years ago, things that are either too archaic or too contemporary, but never classical. Interestingly, some of the things I'm doing now are maybe even classic, but I don't have that background. So, maybe it would be interesting to question this, although I'm not aware of this influence; this could be a fascinating journey. Yes, Greece and Italy could also be powerful travel destinations for me.

3 Itinerary for a contemporary Grand Tour (a suggestion for students)

I think there are two possible ways out of this issue.

One possible way is the classic route, and the other is Asia...

Some friends won a competition and went to Asia for two months. They saw all those China/Japan/Korea/Taiwan buildings that pose a challenge, everything that is the most cutting-edge in terms of structure, imbalance, anti-gravity that you can imagine. Megastructures that, today in Europe, are completely impossible to build, but in Asia have not stagnated and continue to expand – the building could fall, but it has a centre of gravity. I will give an example: Taipei with the OMA [Performing Arts Centre], Mecanoo in Taiwan [National Centre for Arts], and OMA also in Beijing with CCTV [Television Cultural Centre]. All of this is, for me, very far from anything that can be found in Europe.

This has to do with tectonics and structure, but mainly with structural experimentation that can no longer be done in Europe, even in Switzerland, because nowadays, concrete and iron are increasingly being questioned, which is why recent competitions explore wood. So, to go see everything that can no longer be done here but can still be done and experienced in Asia.

Everything has to do with mental freedom, our understanding of sustainability, awareness of scale, and what should be done and what should be changed. This may be an interesting journey, in the same way that visiting a pyramid is visiting something completely out of scale, within a certain megalomania, which allows us to truly perceive our own scale.

This is a path. It could be a very powerful journey, which has nothing to do with what is still possible to build nowadays, except for the theoretical and practical sense of the structure. It is a bit like Paulo Mendes da Rocha's work on the "great span" within Brazilian culture. I don't think it's something that can be directly translated into our reality.

On the other hand, if I had to suggest a personal tour, I would say that students should see Lewerentz, La Congiunta by Märkli, the MuBE by Paulo Mendes da Rocha [Brazilian Museum of Sculpture and Ecology], SESC in Pompéia by Lina Bo Bardi, Kahn, it's mandatory to see Louis Kahn in Asia, and it's compulsory to see Le Corbusier in Asia. But this is the architecture that has had the most significant impact on me. It impacted me so much that it changed me, opened so many doors and opened my mind, perhaps much more than seeing the Parthenon or Classic Grand Tour examples at school. Possibly, the visit to the Acropolis, the Parthenon, would not have had the same meaning for me as visiting these contemporary Acropolises.

●

Two months earlier, in response to the same question, Eduardo Souto Moura, like Nuno Melo Sousa, placed an authorial and personal proposal: the reproduction of the trip which Mies took with his Bauhaus students in 1933. While Siza, with a humanistic approach and affirming today's necessary freedom of choice, placed the "whole world" as a destination hypothesis.

The interview with Nuno Melo Sousa closed on the porch of his office in Penafiel, at the end of a hot afternoon. Nuno Melo Sousa had welcomed us with a guided tour of a project under construction, Armazém Corcet, which set the tone for the conversation.

The authors thank Nuno Melo Sousa for the authenticity and generosity.

Bibliography

CASAL RIBEIRO H, RAMOS S (2024) - "Perfect Day(s). Revisiting Grand Tour Experiences". FAMagazine: Research and Projects on Architecture and the City, 69-70, pp. 183-188.

RADIĆ S. (2017) - "Every so often, a talking dog appears". In: *Every so often, a talking dog appears, and other essays*. 2G essays, Madrid, pp. 127-131.

A PDF version of this book is available for free in Open Access at up.pt/press/

ISBN 978-989-746-465-2

Publisher
U.PORTO PRESS

Up Gran T

European Commission

POLITECNICO

U.PORTO FACULDADE DE ARQUITETURA UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO

ALMA MATER STUDIORUM UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA DIPARTIMENTO DI ARCHITETTURA

Art Academy of Latvia

ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI

EKA

Workbook of Affinities

Updating the Grand Tour.
Memory and Invention of the
European Built Environment

The *Workbook of Affinities* comprises 7 sections that synthesise the results of the exercises undertaken by the UpGranT Consortium in the conception of a learning by travelling pedagogical model, re-empowering the Grand Tour's long-standing practice.

Section 1 UpGranT Consortium
Section 2 Politecnico di Milano · POLIMI
Section 3 Faculty of Architecture – University of Porto · FAUP
Section 4 Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna · UNIBO
Section 5 Art Academy of Latvia · LMA
Section 6 Aristotle University of Thessaloniki · AUTh
Section 7 Estonian Art Academy · EKA

– *Lamberto Amistadi*

1 Grand Tourists P3

Ten Faces for Italian Architecture

Wall atlas

– *Ildebrando Clemente*

2 Grand Tour P11

Architecture, Criticism and Fatality: a journey south from Cesena through Pesaro and Urbino, and north to Modena and Parma

Wall atlas

3 Souvenirs on Exemplary Buildings P19

– *Ildebrando Clemente*

The Pesaro School Campus: A field of artificial ruins

– *Ildebrando Clemente*

The profane and beautiful tower

– *Lamberto Amistadi*

Osoppo Town Hall: trip to the provinces

– *Cesare Dallatomasina, Giorgia Antonioli*

4 Learning by travel with… P37

Interviews with Uwe Schröder and Renato Rizzi

The UpGranT “Workbook of Affinities” is published under the Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnerships in Higher Education programme, funded by the European Union. Reference: 2023-1-IT02-KA220-HED-000158377.

The views expressed are those of the author(s) alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the Erasmus+ - INDIRE National Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting administration can be held responsible for them.

The contents in this section are the entire responsibility of the partner organisation and their authors.

Ten faces for italian architecture

– *Lamberto Amistadi*

1 Grand Tourists

As we know, there are many types of travel and also many ways to travel. The architect's journey has to do with the time of architecture, whose "sense of history" consists precisely in establishing "a relationship in time between the present moment and the moments that preceded it" (Rogers 1999, p. 9). From this point of view, travel takes place in space and time and is intertwined with the autobiographies of the Grand Tourists, in which travel became a memory of the travelling, in which "fragments of thought" were gathered together outside any reasoning of profit and the classifiable, and fished up from the seabed after the waters (time) had subjected them to a poetic transfiguration, to then be grafted onto the architectural composition process.

1 Luigi Vietti (1903-1998). He might well have given the same answer as Curzio Malaparte did to General Rommel: the house was already there: "I designed the landscape". The landscape that Vietti invented, together with Jacques Couelle and Michele Busiri Vici, under the aegis of the Aga Khan, is that of the Costa Smeralda, and it is so close to the image of Vietti's voyages on his sailboat along the coasts of Türkiye, Greece, and southern Italy that he was unable to shake off the tendency to regress into nostalgic historicism. This does not mean that his villas are not cheerful and brimming with expressiveness: they actually resemble the traditional costumes that the girls of Porto Cervo wear to look like real Sardinian peasant women. But this simplistic attempt to revive the hypothetical forms of a lost vernacular is precisely what makes these buildings an effective means of communication, certifying their success and that of the architect. The latter only seems to have benefited in part from his vision of the stereotomic purity of northern architecture during a trip to Stockholm.

Selected bibliography

DELL'AIRA P. V., PRANDI E. (2022) - *Luigi Vietti. Scritti di architettura e urbanistica (1932-1935)*. Altralinea, Florence.

DELL'AIRA P. V. (1997) - *Luigi Vietti. Progetti e realizzazioni degli anni '30*. Alinea, Florence.

2 Carlo Aymonino (1926-2010). One of the cornerstones of the so-called Italian tradition of Urban Studies is the Plan for Pesaro Old Town, drawn up by the Gruppo Architettura (Carlo Aymonino, Costantino Dardi, Gianni Fabbri, Mauro Lena, Raffaele Panella, Gianugo Polesello, and Luciano Semerani) between 1971 and 1974. For the first time, this plan put into practice the theory of the city 'by parts', whose formal completeness can be comprehended in the relationship between building typology and urban morphology. Historical cartography is understood synchronically to reveal the permanent characteristics of the city. But above all, it is a plan in which decisions and solutions are made through architecture. As part of the more general intermunicipal plan, the design of the Pesaro School Campus fell to Aymonino. By nature, he always travelled extensively, visiting and analysing numerous Italian and European cities: in *Origine e sviluppo della città moderna* (1971) ["Origin and Development of the Modern City"], drawings of Glasgow, Berlin, Paris, London, and Vienna appear, along with many others of Italian cities.

Selected bibliography

AYMONINO C. (1988) - *Piazze d'Italia*, *Progettare gli spazi aperti*. Electa, Milan.

AYMONINO C. (1975) - *Il significato delle città*. Altralinea, Florence.

3 Aldo Rossi (1931-1997). At the centre of the campus designed by Aymonino stands Rossi's tower, with all its references to the "*infanzia della forma*" [childhood of form] (Clemente 2008) and to the reality of a local 'exoticism' made up of bell towers, lighthouses, and dovecote towers. If, for Thomas Mann, the artist is an adventurer, Rossi was the restless and enthusiastic traveller, and his *Scientific Autobiography* is essentially an account of these

numerous journeys. Kurt Forster (2017) gives us a vivid account of his wanderings in the United States, in which

> New England lighthouses won a foothold in his imagination, and deserted stretches of Texas and California merged with his recollections of the agricultural landscape of Lombardy. Thanks to his childhood sensibility for rural conditions, the farmhouses of northern Italy and the ruins of costal settlements on the Pacific Ocean converged in his latent melancholy, precipitating maudlin memories of a private world long gone.

After his first trip in 1976, Aldo Rossi returned to the United States many times, teaching, giving lectures, and staging two highly successful solo exhibitions at the Institute of Architecture and Urban Planning in New York (1978) and at the Max Protetch Gallery (1980), culminating in being awarded the Pritzker Prize in 1990.

Selected bibliography

FERLENGA A. (ed.) (1989, 1992, 1996) - *Aldo Rossi, Opera completa, I, II, III*. Electa, Milan.
ROSSI A. (1982) - *The Architecture of the City*. Oppositions Books, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.
ROSSI A. (1981) - *A Scientific Autobiography*. Oppositions Books, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.

4 Luciano Semerani (1933-2021). Back in Pesaro, in 1978 Luciano Semerani and Gigetta Tamaro (1983, p. 113; Lee 2024) were commissioned to design the New Cemetery away from the city:

> There is no other architecture that, like the cemetery, finds its *raison d'être* in memory. Our cemetery too finds its *raison d'être* in memory. Our cemetery is built by assembling finished models and prototypes. It is constructed through references to our other architectural works, but within the layouts of different cities. [...] The cemetery is thus a synthesis of all the architecture we know.

Not only is architectural composition non-topical (Semerani 2010, p. 218),[1] but architecture itself seems placeless, traveling like the "Theatre of the World" on a raft or on wheels like a mask by John Hejduk; then they can also travel in the deeds of their creators and if – as Loos taught us – it is not worth wasting time inventing new architectural types when we have been tasked with building a city, the old works of architecture can take their place in the new "City of the Dead": the walls surrounding the villages of the Marches region, the path through the woods, the structure of the columbaria that echoes that of the Borgo Teresiano in Trieste, the shed roof over the entrance to the Cattinara Hospital, the public buildings of the San Giobbe project in Venice, or the square-plan volume with a hipped roof and large corner pillars of the Osoppo Town Hall.

Selected bibliography

SEMERANI L. (2013) - *Incontri e lezioni, Attrazione e contrasto tra le forme*, TECA 8. Clean, Naples.
SEMERANI L. (2000) - *Semerani e Tamaro, Architetture e progetti*. Skira, Milan.
SEMERANI L. (2000) - *L'Altro Moderno*. Allemandi, Turin-London.

5 Vittorio Gregotti (1927-2020). The beautiful brick courtyard building that houses the University of Bologna's Architecture Course on the Cesena Campus is the work of Vittorio Gregotti, one of Italy's most internationally renowned architects. Although his works undoubtedly rest on less risky foundations, between utopia and realism, it is equally undeniable that this disciplinary certainty led him to travel and erect buildings all over the world: the Belem Cultural Centre (1988-1993), the Olympic Stadium in Barcelona (1985-1989), Pujiang New Town, Shanghai (2000), as well as the restoration and extension of the South Bank Centre in London (1994), residential buildings in Spandau, Berlin (1993), the Opération Sextius-Mirabeau in France (1990), and many other minor works. Among these, the Belem Cultural Centre, located opposite the Tagus River, near the Jerónimos Monastery, certainly echoes the morphology of the giant terraces that sweep down from the hills of Lisbon, but also recalls the many stone fortresses that Portuguese navigators built along the coasts of Africa.

Selected bibliography

TAFURI M. (1988) - *Vittorio Gregotti, Progetti e architetture*. Electa, Milan.
GREGOTTI V. (1966) - *Il territorio dell'architettura*. Feltrinelli, Milan.

6 Gianugo Polesello (1930-2007). A well-known statement by Polesello (2002, p. 22) clearly reminds us of the type of journey that architects undertake in the completion of their work:

> The same argument then applied to works of architecture, and from there they are explained in part by our curiosity, our interest and our passion towards the world of architectural metaphysics, of timeless architecture, of mixing at the same time the Attic world or the Egyptian world and the modern world, of seeing the modern world as ancient and of being able to shuffle the cards.

The time of architecture thus appears different from chronological time. It is a circular, specific, and meta-historical time in which, as in dreams, events intermingle in the formal "internal" space where the work is generated between the initial hypothesis and the final outcome. Obviously, Polesello's design for the Las Palmas University Campus, like the other projects we have discussed, raises the issue of "environmental pre-existences", which means, as Rogers said, "[The architect] will not design a building in Milan that is the same as the one he would have designed for Brazil" (1997, p. 280); but just as there are different levels of depth, so there are various ways of attuning oneself to an environment.

Selected bibliography

ZARDINI M. (ed.) (1992) - *Gianugo Polesello, Architetture 1960-1992*. Electa, Milan.
GRANDINETTI P. (ed.) (1983) - *Gianugo Polesello, Progetti di architettura*. Kappa, Florence.

7 John Hejduk (1929-2000). "[He] was one of the most original American architects in the 1900s. [...] He studded his work and drawings with angels, demons, animals and machines, in a game of metamorphosis and transfiguration where architecture takes on the role of a sanctuary for art, for culture and for human spirit" (Amistadi, Clemente 2015, p. 3). His artistic life was shaped by a trip he took to Rome in 1953 with his wife Gloria. Their destination was the Palazzo dei Congressi by Libera and the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana by Guerrini, Lapadula, and Romano in the EUR district, which Hejduk had seen a few years earlier in a New York newspaper:

> I remember one evening back in the late nineteen forties (when there were still trolley cars moving through snow on frozen tracks in New York) that I first came upon two images, both being in Italy outside of Rome; of a place begun but not finished called "Terza Roma". Two photographic images which even today haunt; give one a chill; yet fascinate as certain strange unfamiliar landscapes do; which we sense to be mysterious and foreboding; seductive; and dangerous. It is the seemingly bucolic which disturbs (Hejduk 1980, p. 8).

Selected bibliography

HEJDUK J. (1993) - *Soundings*. Rizzoli International, New York.
HEJDUK J. (1989) - *Vladivostok*. Rizzoli International, New York.
HEJDUK J. (1985) - *Mask of Medusa: Works 1947-1983*. Rizzoli International, New York.

1 "Architectural design is taught to construct the future. Composition works rather in the non-topical. The non-topical is a categorical imperative. It derives from the permanent obligation to go inside, towards the interior of architecture, not towards its future, not towards its past."

8 Francesco Venezia (1944). We have included a Neapolitan architect among the Grand Tourists to extend the journey through Italy to where the Grand Tours of European intellectuals between the 17th and last century always took them: Naples and Sicily, after visiting Florence and Rome. Venezia has worked in both Naples and Sicily where, in the late 1980s, he designed the Palazzo di Lorenzo museum and a small open-air pavilion in Gibellina, in which fragments and ruins from Gibellina Vecchia were assembled and layered together with sculptures by Daniel Spoerri and Mimmo Rotella, whose stone sun is a tribute to Tommaso Campanella. His relationship with time dates back to the archetypal reasons for ancient architecture: in 2000, he staged the exhibition "The Etruscans" at Palazzo Grassi in Venice; in 2015, he designed the exhibition "Pompeii and Europe 1748-1943" at the Archaeological Museum of Naples and the Amphitheatre of Pompeii, where he displayed casts of the victims of the eruption in a space covered by a Roman dome built inside an Egyptian pyramid.

Selected bibliography

VENEZIA F. (2006) - *Francesco Venezia. L'architettura, gli scritti, la critica*. Electa, Milan.
VENEZIA F. (1990) - *Scritti brevi (1975-1989)*. Clean, Naples.

9 Renato Rizzi (1951). Among his many travels, the most important was the one that led him to meet Peter Eisenman in New York, where he was to live and work for ten years between 1984 and 1994. But on any journey worth its salt, the most interesting encounters are the unexpected ones, and his meeting with Eisenman was accompanied by another with John Hejduk, to whom Rizzi (2010, 2020) would go on to devote many studies. What he gained from this was the habit of tracing architecture back to its most authentic archetypal roots, where its form is generated by a relationship with the text: the Kabbalah for Eisenman and the Bible for Hejduk. Thus, just as in great literature, Rizzi's architectural space designates a metaphorical and ontological place where form originates and manifests, escaping from the domain of technology and communication. His major works include the Gdańsk Shakespeare Theatre (inaugurated in September 2014), for which he was awarded the Gold Medal for Italian Architecture in 2015, and Solomon's Cathedral, Lampedusa, a symbolic site of migration across the Mediterranean.

Selected bibliography

RIZZI R. (2015) - *Il daimon di architettura, Theoria*. Mimesis, Milan-Udine.
RIZZI R. (2013) - *Parma inattesa, Lo spazio del pudore*. MUP, Parma.

10 Uwe Schröder (1964). Although he was a professor at RWTH Aachen University, Schröder taught, held workshops, and seminars at numerous Italian universities, including those of Parma, Milan, Bologna-Cesena, Naples, Bari, Catania, and Rome, starting from 2000. It is precisely the dark marks on Giovanni Battista Nolli's "*Pianta Grande di Roma*" [aka "The Nolli Map"] (1748) that conveyed to him the conviction that the essential reasons for architecture lie in its "space," to the point that all other fundamentals can be traced back to the same concept: the *typos* as a syntactic relationship between "spaces" and the *topos* as a degree of internality/externality of city spaces, which must in any event be defined and delimited. Perhaps it is precisely this awareness of the value of urban boundaries that Schröder gleaned from his travels in Italy and which brought him closer – albeit in an original sense – to his tradition of urban studies. And it was yet another Italian city, Parma, which he used in comparison with Saint-Dié to establish the premises for an idea of the city "after the Time Regime of Modernity" (Schröder 2015).

Selected bibliography

SCHRÖDER U. (2022) - *Architettura lingua romana*. Aión, Florence.
SCHRÖDER U. (ed.) (2009) - *Die Idee der Stadt / L'idea di città, I/II/III*. Ernst Wasmuth, Tübingen-Berlin.

Bibliography

AMISTADI L., CLEMENTE I. (eds.) (2015) - *John Hejduk*, Soundings 0/I. Aión, Florence.

CLEMENTE I. (2008) - *Infanzia della forma, Opere e progetti di Aldo Rossi*. Adda, Bari.

FORSTER K. W. (2017) - "The Bustle of Milan and the Silence of New York: Words and Things". In: L. Amistadi and I. Clemente (eds,), *Aldo Rossi*, Soundings 1/II. Aión, Florence.

HEJDUK J. (1980) - "Cable from Milan". Domus, 605.

LEE B. (2024) - *Il Desiderio di architettura, Quattro progetti di Luciano Semerani e Gigetta Tamaro*. Doctoral Thesis in Architectural Composition, Cycle XXXVI, IUAV University of Venice.

POLESELLO G. (2002) - "Ab initio, indagatio initiorum. Ricordi e confessioni". In: P. Posocco, G. Radicchio and G. Rakowitz (eds.), *'Care Architetture'. Scritti su Aldo Rossi*. Allemandi, Turin.

RIZZI R. (2010) - *John Hejduk, Incarnatio*. Marsilio, Venice.

RIZZI R., PISCIELLA S. (2021) - *John Hejduk, Bronx, Manuale in Versi*. Mimesis, Milan-Udine.

ROGERS E. N. (1997) - "Le preesistenze ambientali e i temi pratici contemporanei". In: *Esperienza dell'architettura*. Skira, Milan.

SCHRÖDER U. (2015) - *Pardié. Konzept für eine Stadt nach dem Zeitregime der Moderne / Concept for a City after the Time Regime of Modernity*. Walter König, Cologne.

SEMERANI L. (2010) - "Introduction to Colin Rowe and Architecture as a Text". In: M. Marzo (ed.), *L'architettura come testo e la figura di Colin Rowe*. Marsilio, Venice.

SEMERANI L., TAMARO G. (1983) - "Progetto di progetti. Il cimitero di Pesaro". Lotus International, 38. Electa, Milan.


1


2


3


4


5

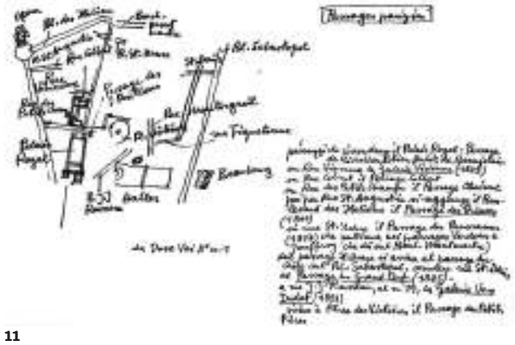

6


7


8


9


10



11


12


13


14


15


16


17


18


19


20


21


22


23


24

Wall Atlas

Images and credits

1 Francesco Venezia, Wooden pyramid in the Amphitheater of Pompeii for the exhibition *Pompei e l'Europa 1748-1943*, 2015.

2 Luigi Vietti, Travel notes on a visit to Alberobello, 1934. Fondo Vietti at the CSAC archive in Parma.

3 Renato Rizzi, *The Cathedral of Solomon*, Lampedusa, 2016.

4 Vittorio Gregotti, Belem Cultural Center, 1988-93.

5 Francesco Venezia, Palazzo di Lorenzo museum, Gibellina, 1981-87.

6 Fort Jesus, Mombasa (Kenya).

7 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Italian Landscape*, 1788. Salzburg Museum, displayed in the exhibition *Goethes italienische Reise* at the Ferdinandeum in Innsbruck.

8 John Hejduk, Sketches for Berlin Masque, 1981. Canadian Centre for Architecture.

9 Luciano Semerani e Gigetta Tamaro, Osoppo Town Hall, 1976-79. The *Ponte dei Sospiri* - a new "Bridge of Sighs".

10 The *Matryoshka*, the Russian dolls.

11 Carlo Aymonino, Study sketch of the *passages* of Paris. From: *Origine e sviluppo della città moderna*, Venice 1971.

12 Gianugo Polesello, Las Palmas University Campus, Gran Canaria, 1987-91.

13 Gianugo Polesello, Las Palmas University Campus, Gran Canaria, 1987-91. Detail.

14 The *Ponte dei Sospiri* in Venice.

15 Luigi Vietti, Hotel Cervo in Porto Cervo, 1962-63. Fondo Vietti at the CSAC archive in Parma.

16 Uwe Schröder, Student residence Rom Hof, Bonn, 2009-14.

17 Karl Friedrich Schinkel, Sketch of the church of Santa Maria della Salute in Venice. From: *Aus Schinkler's Nachlaß, Reisetagebücher, Briefe und Aphorismen*, Berlin 1862.

18 Renato Rizzi, Shakespearean Theater in Gdańsk, 2005-2014.

19 Luigi Vietti, Postcard of an housing district in Stockholm with travel notes, 1931-32. Fondo Vietti at the CSAC archive in Parma.

20 Aldo Rossi, The *Teatro del Mondo*, 1980.

21 Fotografia del Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana by Guerrini, Lapadula and Romano in the EUR district in Rome. From: John Hejduk, *Cable from Milan*, Domus, 605, 1980.

22 Giuseppe Vasi, Excavation of the Obelisk of Augustus in the Campus Martius. From: *Delle magnificenze di Roma antica e moderna*, 1752.

23 Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Marble fragments from the Map of Ancient Rome. From: *Le Antichità Romane*, Roma 1784.

24 Aldo Rossi, *Quaderni azzurri*, n. 42, 1990. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

Architecture, criticism, and fatality: A journey south from Cesena through Pesaro and Urbino, and north to Modena and Parma

– Ildebrando Clemente

The following arguments delve into the connections between architectural theory and design in relation to the concept of travel. In particular, in relation to the concept of travel understood not merely as a concrete experience of places from which to draw ideas and forms for a new project, but also as a dimension of the human soul, permanent, meta-historical, and therefore equally important for infusing authentic meaning into design invention. Before discussing the relationship between theory, design, and travel, however, I would like to present an itinerary of places, cities, and architecture from a real journey. It goes without saying that this itinerary should be considered a concrete and conceptual pretext for advancing some reflections on the connections between design and travel.

First stop: The University of Bologna Campus at Cesena. This complex, which also hosts degree courses in architecture, was designed by Vittorio Gregotti. Its construction was completed in 2018. Second stop: The School Campus in the city of Pesaro, designed by Carlo Aymonino. Design of this complex began in 1971, but the campus was only partially completed between 1975 and 1979. Third stop: A visit to the National Gallery of the Marches at the Ducal Palace of Urbino. This extraordinary monumental complex is the result of a convoluted, multi-layered urban history. The urban and architectural layout of the palace as we see it today was the work of Luciano Laurana (commissioned in 1468 by Prince Federico da Montefeltro to complete construction of the palace) followed by Francesco di Giorgio Martini, who took over from Laurana in 1472. Fourth stop: The San Cataldo Metropolitan Cemetery in Modena. An extension by Aldo Rossi and Gianni Braghieri designed in 1971 and inaugurated (albeit incomplete) in 1984. Fifth stop: Parma Old Town. The Baptistery of San Giovanni, designed by Benedetto Antelami and built between 1196 and 1216, Piazza Duomo (the cathedral square), and the Pilotta monumental complex.

As mentioned above, the following descriptions of the stages of a journey from Cesena to Pesaro and Urbino, and then from Cesena to Modena and Parma, are not intended as a simple retrospective account of an actual journey, but a pretext for bringing out themes and issues which testify to the idea of the project as the result of a distinctive relationship with the meaning of traveling. When we travel, wrote Claudio Magris, we live in some way convinced that we are immersed in a sort of "suspension of time that occurs when we abandon ourselves to its gentle flow and to what life brings – like a bottle opened underwater and filled with the flow of things", as Goethe commented while traveling through Italy. In a journey experienced in this way, Magris continued, "places become both stages and dwellings in the journey of life, fleeting stops and roots that make us feel at home in the world. [...] It is no coincidence that travel is first and foremost a return, and teaches us to live more freely, more poetically in our own home" (Magris 2014, pp. IX-X).

In short, again to paraphrase Magris, traveling means coming to terms with reality while embracing its alternatives. Among these is the opportunity to consider reality stripped of its unavoidable daily needs and chores, opening oneself up to the unexpected and its poetic aspects.

So, if it is possible to suspend certain needs and necessities while traveling and rediscover a richer, more poetic, and more conscious relationship with reality, can we similarly suspend functional necessities in design invention with the hope of rediscovering a greater poetic awareness of who we are and what we do? Proceeding with this simulation, we must first imagine a new rationality of architectural design to underpin invention: a *critical rationality* based on an equally *critical theory* of design (Horkheimer 1974).

In this perspective, the theme of travel is tasked with revealing the mystification of the modern design idea, based on an enhancement of *technical*

rationality capable of destroying the conditions of material poverty in human existence. In other words, revealing a way of reducing architectural design to a tool for dominating human space and time.

Since the hope that design can contribute to the pursuit of human happiness is sacrosanct, it can only be authentically expressed if it is part of a critical attitude towards reality.

Indeed, a *critical theory* arises out of a relationship with history and reality, taken not as mere horizons of meaning, but as opportunities to construct a critical point of view. A *critical realism* capable of strategically arguing the relationship between doing and thinking about architectural design.

In this sense, the reasoning and transmissibility of design knowledge, architectural knowledge, and its contents and forms, necessarily follows this sequence: *there can be no design knowledge without an explicit expression of a sort of critical realism towards present reality*. But what do we mean here by "realism" and, even more importantly, by the adjective "critical"? Let us say right away that the reference to critical realism is intended to make clear, in an unequivocal and essential way, a rejection of normative and positivistic attitudes towards reality, as developed and still operating within the framework of modern thought.[1]

One significant reaction to positivism that we would like to mention here is that of Walter Benjamin. Against the dominance of positivism, which posits progress as a triumphant element forever projecting into the future, regardless of its actual content of emancipation and justice in the present, Benjamin, as is well known, proposed an image of history and temporality in an intrinsic relationship with the past, with the dimension of the eternal and salvific, or, in secular terms, with an idea of revolution and emancipation from forms of utilitarian domination (Benjamin 1995).

Arguably, even today, positivism and normativism still represent the two cyclops that guide the prevailing attitude of contemporary design practice under the banner of profit and more or less veiled interests. The normative and positivist attitude is typical of a way of thinking that overlaps a complex, conflicting reality, with zero desire to concretely impact its processes.

On the contrary, it actively vies against those forces which seek to decipher the processes and contradictions of reality in order to operate realistically and critically within it.

The realism referred to here is one which questions actual reality (*Wirklichkeit*), i.e., what actually produces effects on reality, and not only in pseudo-material terms. It is a critical realism whose reasoning is based on German idealism.

What does "critical" mean in this context? It means that reality, like architecture, can be considered both for *what it is* and for *what it is not*; it is, in fact, riddled with contradictions. Consequently, a critical attitude consists in finding a way to bring these contradictions to light (Mordacci 2023).

We must now show which contradictions are apparently the most unruly, those which profoundly influence the connections between doing and thinking when it comes to architectural design.

First and foremost, we must note the contradiction between what can be done, how it can be done, and what cannot be done. The stalemate between affirmation and denial of design intentionality is resolved by the modern

1 For Max Horkheimer, critical theory must push critical reflection on the human condition and the contradictions of reality towards the universal emancipation of human existence from phenomena of domination. But at the same time, it is a critique open to imagination as a source of the search for freedom. See also: "Horkheimer: Teoria e Critica", in Giangiorgio Pasqualotto, *Teoria come utopia : studi sulla scuola di Francoforte*, Bertani Editore, Verona, 1974, pp. 133-186. As is well known, the search for truth redeemed from domination also forms the backdrop to Theodor W. Adorno's critical thinking. The aim of this approach is to scale back the ambitions of modern reason (modern rationality). According to Adorno, the latter can no longer claim to exhaust all that exists within itself. For Adorno, the task of criticism consists precisely in giving voice and veracity to the negative, to the heterogeneous, to that which instrumental reason excludes from the human horizon since it is deemed useless. See Th. W. Adorno, "Il funzionalismo oggi", in *Parva Aesthetica. Saggi 1958--1967*, Mimesis, Milan, 2011, pp. 147--163. See also: Th. W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, Einaudi, Turin, 1951.

normative attitude, guided by a technological positivism attentive to its own interests, which in effect imposes itself on this contradiction, freezing any possible expressive developments. The critical gesture, in contrast, allows us to understand the expressive formability of actual reality.

This implies recognizing that reality cannot be assumed as monolithic and unchangeable unless one adheres to normative rules which mystify the expressive aspects of the life of forms.

At the beginning of *The Soul and the Forms*, György Lukács invites us to question the possibility of knowing and communicating certain experiences that no mystifying attitude can express, but which nevertheless aspire to find expression. According to Lukács, the critic is, in fact,

> one who glimpses destiny in forms: whose most profound experience is the soul-content which forms indirectly and unconsciously conceal within themselves. Form is his great experience, form – as immediate reality – is the image-element, the really living content of his writhing. This form, which springs from a symbolic contemplation of life-symbols, acquires a life of its own through the power of that experience. It becomes a world-view, a standpoint, an attitude vis-à-vis the life from which it sprang: a possibility of reshaping it, of creating it anew. The critic's moment of destiny, therefore, is that moment at which things become forms-the moment when all feeling and experience on the near or the far side of form receive form, are melted down and condensed into form. It is the mystical moment of union between the outer and the inner, between form and soul. It is as mystical as the moment of destiny in tragedy when the hero meets his destiny, in the short story when accident and cosmic necessity converge, in poetry when the soul and its world meet and coalesce into a new unity that can no more de dived, either in the past or in the future (Lukács 2002, p. 23-24).

As is well known, one of the main reasons for the increase in the power of the regulatory and positivist structure of the modern world and its consequent ability to regulate reality is emancipation from the magical world together with sacred categories and forms. In other words, this has led, both historically and conceptually, to a liberation and emptying of what brought substance to the concepts of life, the notions of doing and building, and the categories of time and space. In the modern world, with the emergence of Thomas Hobbes' theological-political arguments and Descartes' philosophical speculations, space and time have increasingly been considered as empty dimensions, since they lack the anthropological and transcendental dimension of the sacred. Stripped of the constraints of the divine, no longer a centre radiating meaning, space and time allow human action to be affirmed as free and transformative, guided primarily by calculating reason and technology. In other words, as the technical, planning, and constructive action of human reason.

The modern project asserts that people must live according to reason, calculation, and measure, demystifying the intangibility of sacred, religious, and anecdotal concepts. This entails a gradual disentanglement from tradition. Accordingly, technical action, freed from the constraints of tradition and the sacred, can manifest as the sole universal medium of human relations and activities. This is no technophobia but, as the philosopher Emanuele Severino showed, technology tends to absorb, diminish, and demystify all the contradictions and potentialities of reality, imitating and replacing traditional metaphysics (Severino 2009).

Technology has become the horizon of human action. In architecture, this assumption of the technical element as a universal medium of reality has translated into an institutionalization as an economic-regulatory device.

Technology no longer only provides operational tools for design, but also fixes the field of possibilities, defining what can be conceived, represented, and built. Thus, the technical-normative device not only regulates design, but also governs the very conditions of its existence, absorbing and neutralizing the contradictions that would emerge from a critical confrontation with actual reality. Neutralizing everything in architecture that speaks to us of life and art.

With a touch of disturbing banality, we could say that despite the powerful empirical and necessary deployment of technical and technological apparatus, architecture is not simply a technical-constructive affair. It is also an ethical and aesthetic experience, expressing symbolic meaning and manifesting with its own soul, politics, and expressiveness.

Let us return to the concept of travel. Real and imaginary travel, a reality of experience and a device of thought capable of reactivating all those aspects which technical normativity cannot push, manipulate, or completely subjugate inside its steel cage. In even more radical terms, traveling is a mode of human experience that puts us in direct contact with unknown or little-known aspects which for some reason or other attract our attention. In this sense, journeys of the mind are even more complicated and rich than real ones and those in history.

In short, traveling means establishing a relationship with otherness, and therefore with a plurality of forms and timeframes, with the very real contradictions of experience. In this regard, anthropology speaks of the creative and imaginative dimension of travel. In this sense, we could use – even trivially – the word “discovery”. In fact, travel continually brings us small and large discoveries. And not only discoveries, but also clarifications: it brings into focus aspects of reality that we thought we already knew and understood. Looked at another way, travel is also a tool for reflecting on who we are.

A tool to reveal aspects of ourselves that can only emerge when we are far removed from the humdrum routine of everyday life.

Absent the worries and preconceived obligations, the profound needs of our experience come to the fore. The strangeness of things and the relationships we manage to establish with them gradually acquire more substance and nourishment for our soul. The stages of our journey do not follow a predetermined historical chronology. The buildings we visit, all more or less incomplete in their own way, never depict a compact, resolute, and conflict-free world. Considered as destinations on a journey of discovery, they manage to release, without any anecdotes, that vital energy without which no desire for freedom and planning can be conceived.

Nevertheless, in the words of Claudio Magris, the traveller (to whom we might add the traveling architect) always “remains faithful, even to missed and lost opportunities; he does not correct the past or himself with hindsight, but tries to take with him as many things as possible – perceptions, realities, hypotheses, projects – into the future, which is just as precarious and destined to be soon surpassed as that past” (Magris 2014, p. XXVII).

Bibliography

BENJAMIN W. (1995) - *Angelus Novus. Saggi e frammenti*. Einaudi, Turin.

HORKMEIMER M. (1974) - *Teorica critica*, Vol. I. Einaudi, Turin.

LUKÁCS GYORGY (2010) - *Soul and Form*, Columbia University Press, New York.

MAGRIS C. (2014) - *L’infinito viaggiare*. Mondadori, Milan.

MORDACCI R. (2023) - *Critica e utopia. Da Kant a Francoforte*. Castelvecchi, Rome.

SEVERINO E. (2009) - *Il destino della tecnica*. Rizzoli, Milan.




1

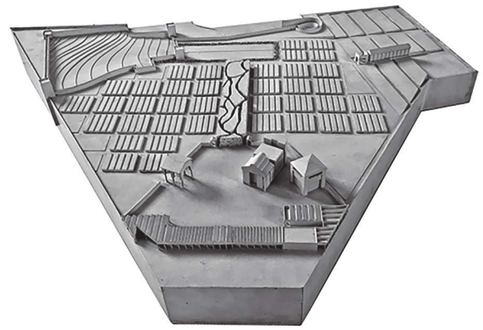

2


3


4


5


6

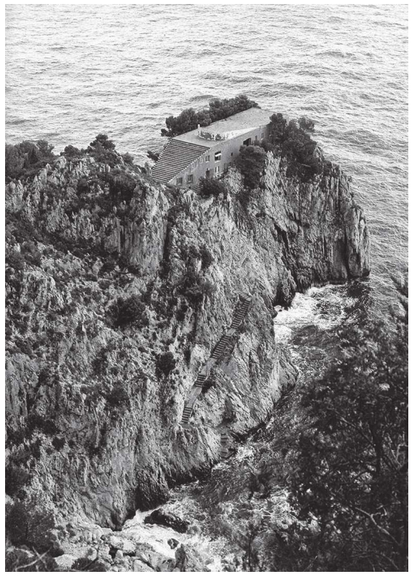

8


7


9


10


11


12

Wall Atlas

Images

Venice

· Aldo Rossi, The *Teatro del Mondo*, 1980.

· Baldassare Longhena, Basilica of Santa Maria della Salute, 1631-87.

Osoppo

· Luciano Semerani and Gigetta Tamaro, Osoppo Town Hall, 1976-79.

Trento

1 Renato Rizzi, Ghiaie Sports Area, 1984-98.

Mantua

· Leon Battista Alberti, Church di San Sebastiano, 1460.

2 Leon Battista Alberti, Basilica of Sant'Andrea, 1470-72.

Parma

· Benedetto Antelami, Baptistery, 1196-1212.

3 Study Centre and Communication Archive (CSAC).

· Giovan Battista Aleotti, Farnese Theater, 1617-18.

Modena

4 Aldo Rossi, San Cataldo Cemetery, 1980.

· Lanfranco, The *Ghirlandina*, 12th century.

Bologna

· Leon Battista Alberti obtained a degree in Canon Law in 1428 from the Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna.

5 Antonio di Vincenzo, Basilica of San Petronio, 1390-1663.

· Giuseppe Vaccaro, Faculty of Engineering Headquarters, 1931-35.

Cesena

6 Vittorio Gregotti, Cesena Campus, 2010-18.

· Matteo Nuti da Fano, Malatestiana Library, 1447-52,

Rimini

7 Leon Battista Alberti, Malatesta Temple, 1450-60.

Pesaro

· Carlo Aymonino and Gruppo Architettura, Plan for Pesaro Old Town, 1971-74.

· Carlo Aymonino, Pesaro School Campus, 1970-79.

· Carlo Aymonino, Benelli shopping and residential Center, 1974-83.

8 Luciano Semerani and Gigetta Tamaro, New Cemetery of Pesaro, 1978. Unbuilt.

Urbino

9 Maso di Bartolomeo, Luciano Laurana, Francesco di Giorgio Martini, Palazzo Ducale, 1454-82.

10 Piero della Francesca, *The Flagellation of Christ*, 1455.

· The *Città ideale*, 1480-90. Anonymous author.

· Casa Raffaello. Birthplace of Raffaello Sanzio.

Florence

11 Leon Battista Alberti, Palazzo Rucellai, 1446-51.

Rome

· Michelangelo Buonarotti, Vault of the Sistine Chapel, 1508-12.

· Raffaello Sanzio, *Stanze* in the Vatican Museum, 15087-24.

· The *Pantheon*, 2nd century AD.

· Giovanni Guerrini, Ernesto Bruno Lapadula, Mario Romano, Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, EUR district, 1938-43.

· Adalberto Libera, Palazzo dei Congressi, EUR district, 1938-43.

Naples

· Francesco Venezia, Exhibition *Pompei and Europa 1748-1943*, Naples and Pompeii, 2015.

Capri

12 Adalberto Libera, Curzio Malaparte, Casa Malaparte, 1938-40.

Gibellina

· Francesco Venezia, Palazzo di Lorenzo museum, 1981-87.

· Francesco Venezia, The *Giardino segreto* I, 1985-86.

· Francesco Venezia with Mimmo Rotella and Daniel Spoerri, The *Giardino segreto* II, 1987-91.

· Alberto Burri, The *Cretto di Burri*, 1984-2015.

– *Ildebrando Clemente*

3 Souvenirs on Exemplary Buildings

The Pesaro School Campus: a field of artificial ruins

Carlo Aymonino's first designs for the Pesaro School Campus date back to 1971. This project, developed in three versions between 1971 and 1975, included four main parts in its final form: a scientific high school, a technical commercial institute for accountants, an institute for surveyors, and a *Civic centre*. The complex also included gyms, a swimming pool, an athletics field, a library, study rooms, a lecture hall, and a cafeteria. However, the project was only partially completed: neither the *Civic centre* nor the *Civic tower*, the latter designed by Aldo Rossi in 1979, would be built.

This failure to complete the project has left behind an image of an unfinished structure, comparable to a singular landscape of urban ruins. This feeling of incompleteness is accentuated by the existing assemblage of parts of buildings, characterized as they are by a clear dialectic between the connection and disconnection of the parts and architectural elements with respect to the intelligibility of the overall design. The result is a pseudo-fragmentary image of the school complex: an artificial fragmentation obtained by the deliberate assembly of architectural parts and elements, organized planimetrically following courtyard patterns and juxtaposed almost sculpturally.

The only element capable of restoring an image of unity, at least in part, is the long portico punctuated by high walls, which governs the layout of the paths and at the same time defines the façades of the high school and technical institutes to the southeast. Further references to an assembly of potentially autonomous architectural parts include the references to Le Corbusier, the stereometric forms of Neoclassical civil architecture, and the iron and glass structures of the greenhouses and pavilions of 19th-century industrial architecture.

The perception of a compositional dialectic between the junction and disjunction of the parts of the Campus brings to mind Aymonino's well-known axiom, according to which the project must develop finite and recognizable forms in order to support operational hypotheses for the transformation of the city in completed parts (Aymonino 2000).

However, this aspiration is seemingly partially contradicted by the forms of the Pesaro Campus, characterized, as mentioned, by an assemblage of parts with approximate connexions which convey a disjointed and fragmented image. In that we set great store on Aymonino's theoretical reflections and projects, we have attempted to address this apparent inconsistency between theory and design through the construction of a model and preparation of interpretative drawings of the Campus.
The search for links between theory and urban design was in fact a distinctive feature of Aymonino's thinking, constantly oriented towards analysing the relationship between architecture and city, and between urban phenomena and architectural invention. This particular architectural invention is all the more incisive when it succeeds in manifesting what Aymonino defined as the qualitative leap of urban forms: a transition from the conditions of material necessity that bind human needs to architecture to the possibilities of representing its meanings (Aymonino 2000).

It is my belief that the interpretative redesign and physical model of the Pesaro Campus allow us to grasp this hypothetical qualitative leap as a conscious assumption, on the part of the architect, a living reason, one coming from the world of life and intentionally accepted and developed. The project thus takes the form of an intention. By intentionality, we mean the acceptance of the acts that define the experience of consciousness – thoughts, emotions, desires, and fantasies – in its movement towards reality (De Monticelli 2020).

It follows that consciously composing, narrating, and representing architecture always involves a fantastical storytelling aura, for better or worse.

Can we say that we are able to grasp the expressive and evocative image of the school complex as a large campus of artificial ruins?

In my opinion, the theme of ruins, Roman ruins, is mainly present in Aymonino's reflections and projects as an evocation of the disarticulation and fragmentation of the parts that characterized Piranesi's invented ruins. However, to grasp the essence of this image of the campus of artificial ruins, some reflections by Thomas Aquinas on beauty might prove helpful.

As we know, among the essential requirements that Thomas Aquinas identified in his *Summa Theologiae* to define *pulchritudo*, the beauty of a thing, was *integritas*. Along with integrity, he also indicated proportion and clarity as necessary. Integrity, as the word itself suggests, implies formal wholeness here. It indicates that an object is beautiful when it is complete, finished, and recognizable in all its parts. Without missing parts or obvious deformities. In short, a sort of complete and recognizable form.

We can deduce that in the *Summa Theologiae*, things which are fragmentary in form are to be considered ugly by their very nature. This axiom, which seems to know no exception in medieval figurative culture, nevertheless made room for fragments of ancient Rome (Monachese 2016).

Everything that recalled the glory of Rome, however incomplete or fragmentary it might be, possessed by its very nature a value that went far beyond its external worth and beauty. Pieces and fragments that even vaguely recalled the myth of Ancient Rome were considered, until the Renaissance and even afterwards, to be endowed with a sort of thaumaturgical value.

This conviction gave rise to a maxim that was destined to have a great influence on Western culture in the centuries that followed: *Roma quanta fuit ipsa ruina docet* ("The ruins of Rome teach us how great it once was").

It seems to me that this continuity and metaphysical coexistence of integrity and fragmentation is also evident at the Pesaro Campus. In some way, Aymonino seems to have concealed in the forms of the Campus that same life-bringing force that was attributed to the fragments and ruins of Roman antiquity. In this way, he infused the project with the positive values which identified the very myth of Rome: *autoritas*, *maestas*, and *decus*. In other words, order and, at the same time, the thaumaturgical auspice of architectural forms.

Bibliography

AYMONINO C. (2000) - *Il significato delle città*. Marsilio, Milan.

DE MONTICELLI R. (2020) - *Il dono dei vincoli. Per leggere Husserl*. Garzanti, Milan.

MONACHESE A. (2016) - *Tommaso d'Aquino e la bellezza*. Armando Editore, Rome.

THOMAS AQUINAS - *Summa Theologica*. Coyote Canyon Press, Claremont.

– *Ildebrando Clemente*

The profane and beautiful tower

So we built a small tower based on some drawings by Aldo Rossi for the *Civic Tower* at the Pesaro School Campus, designed by Carlo Aymonino between 1971 and 1979. The *Civic Tower*, together with the *Civic Centre* and a square designed by Aymonino, were never actually built.

As we all know, Aldo Rossi erected tower buildings. However, he also designed many that would never be built. Certainly, the construction of the *Teatro del Mondo*, with its installation in St. Mark's Basin in Venice during the 1980 Biennale, clearly expressed Rossi's extraordinary ability to push the theme of the tower into the realm of a world of eloquent but correspondingly chimerical architectural forms.

The tower popped up often as a singular urban feature in his drawings, watercolours, and prints. The tower was one of his obsessions. In particular, he was drawn to towers that taper upward in steps, like a ziggurat.

It is likely that the magnetism exerted by the tower building on Rossi's imagination also derived from the words that Leon Battista Alberti dedicated to this theme in *De re aedificatoria*, when he talks about watchtowers. In *Book VIII*, Alberti included "pure and simple towers" among secular public works, whose fundamental characteristic, analogously to roads, is their ability to offer protection and relief to the eyes and fatigue of travellers. Alberti described the construction of watchtowers as the result of a vertical superimposition of similar stereometric structures, becoming gradually smaller as they gained in height.

"But any tower that is to be utterly secure against the might of the weather, and wholly pleasing in appearance", wrote Alberti, "must have a round story sitting on top of a quadrangular one, followed by a quadrangular on top of a round, with each story being reduced gradually, according to the rules of columns" (Alberti 1988, p. 258).

On the other hand, the Latin word *turris*, from which the noun tower derives, came from the Greek **τύρσις**, where the lexical element **τύρ**, of Sumerian/Akkadian origin *dur*, *tur*, means an 'elevated construction'. The nominal suffix **σις**, instead, indicates the concrete result of an action: namely, lifting (Semeraro 2007, p. 297).

The beautiful tower, whether secular or civic, returns in the changing guise of an austere, venerable, or melancholic presence in Giorgio De Chirico's piazzas. It may have been from these appearances that it spilled over in an equally changeable and ambiguous way into Rossi's images.

Perhaps the point is that there is a romantic closeness between the towers described by Leon Battista Alberti based on the model of the eight superimposed towers of Babylon narrated by Herodotus, the meta-melancholic ones of De Chirico, and the surreal ones of Aldo Rossi.

What exactly do I mean? De Chirico's towers, like Rossi's, are *outside themselves*.

It is as if they arouse a sort of emotional vacillation in us. So that they seem close to us but at the same time intangible and distant. They are *outside themselves* because they seem detached from concrete reality, almost suspended in an emotional and mental space. Their objectual expressiveness conveys a feeling of magical instability, an effect of internal movement, almost of inner restlessness. The towers designed by Rossi are not simple constructions, but symbolic representations.

Thus, the *Civic Tower* of Pesaro reaches us as a metaphor for emotional duality, for a human condition that oscillates between hope and melancholy, between desire and loss.

In other words, the *Civic Tower* of Pesaro has slowly become an object of love, or, as Rossi himself said, an object of affection.

At a certain point, the sentimental journey through Rossi's pseudo-turreted images focuses on the drawings and photographs for the construction of the *Pinocchio Yatai* (Pinocchio Puppet and Cart) created for the Japan Design Expo '89 in Nagoya.

Pinocchio is driving a farm tractor. Attached to the tractor is a caravan consisting of four wooden structures mounted on wheels. The buildings are arranged from shortest to tallest, creating a cheerful and appealing single file. The tallest of the four buildings stands out for its ziggurat tower shape with a small pointed top and a flag, reminiscent of a lighthouse tower. The other three buildings, in contrast, with their somewhat child-like shape, are reminiscent of Rossi's famous seaside cabins. So we decided to add fake wheels to our installation, which in the meantime, piece by piece, was slowly taking shape in the model workshop of the Degree course here in Cesena.

The *Rossianna Tower* is 48 metres high. The one we built is exactly one-tenth of that size. As you can see from the photographs, we installed the tower on the pier of the south dam of the port of Ravenna. In front of the profane and beautiful tower, now erected and with the impending end of the fast, Lamberto comes out and says: "you know, now I understand Aldo Rossi a little better". A dear friend declared emphatically, "It looks like the *Teatro del Mondo* in erection".

We chose this unbuilt building by Rossi, redesigned it, and prepared technical drawings to build it on a smaller scale. We thought long and hard about how to build it, what materials to use, and what colour to paint it. We decided on the size and height, while at the same time seeking a logical and geometric correspondence with Rossi's own design.

At the same time, we exercised our right to interpret something that had never been completed. We then transported it to Ravenna by truck and, using a mechanical arm, installed it on the south pier. In short, teachers and students alike enjoyed an experience together.

We had an experience; we shared an experience: this is hard to understand if you haven't actually lived it. Which is the magic: having an experience. Isn't this the magic of travel, as well as, arguably, of architecture? Encouraging the sharing of experiences? The Tower, its reality and its image, are now part of our experience, their presence is now an active part of our experience.

And then: has this experience changed the way we see certain aspects of architecture? Has it made us more aware of what it means for us to learn to exercise a certain control over how and what we think and do?

On a practical level, it would be nice now to enter the tower and hear the pitter-patter of the rain falling, the distant song of the whales, as hypnotic as the shape of the Tower. Imagine how much fun children would have.

Bibliography

ALBERTI L. B. (1988) - *On the Art of Buildings in Ten Books, Book VIII*. The MIT press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass.

SEMERANO G. (2007) - *Le origini della cultura europea, Vol. II: Dizionari etimologici. Dizionario della lingua greca*. Leo S. Olschki Editore, Florence.

– Lamberto Amistadi

Osoppo Town Hall: trip to the provinces

If "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (Wittgenstein 1964, §5.6), then a homeland is always first and foremost linguistic: the horizon of shared consciousness referred to by Gadamer (2004; Amistadi 2003) is language, and the dwelling referred to by Heidegger (1971) is a dwelling in language.

Within this framework, travelling, being "abroad", represents that "mysterious moment" which projects us outside ourselves in time and space and introduces the possibility of the unexpected into our established habits. If the purpose of travel is "to strip the hard shell of habit from the heart" and revitalize our relationship with the world, then this purpose is very similar to the role that poetry plays in relation to language. In his essay *Passione e Ideologia*, Pier Paolo Pasolini (1960) speaks of dialectal poetry in an anti-homogenizing key; it is the task of educated authors to use dialect as a stylistic and ideological choice, not simply as the "natural" language of the people. This meaning coincides with the so-called "critical regionalism" discussed by Frampton (1983, pp. 20-21), for whom popular forms are reinterpreted in contrast with the modes and forms of modernity:

> Architecture can only be sustained today as a critical practice if it assumes an *arrière-garde* position, that is to say, one which distances itself equally from the Enlightenment myth of progress and from a reactionary, unrealistic impulse to return to the architectonic forms of the preindustrial past. [...] The fundamental strategy of Critical Regionalism is to mediate the impact of universal civilization with elements derived *indirectly* from the peculiarities of a particular place. [...] The case can be made that Critical Regionalism as a cultural strategy is as much a bearer of *world culture* as it is a vehicle of *universal civilization*.

The "particular place" we are talking about is a small municipality in Friuli-Venezia Giulia in Northeast Italy which, in May 1976, was hit by a devastating earthquake. As part of the reconstruction of the town of Osoppo, Luciano Semerani and Gigetta Tamaro were commissioned to design the Town Hall, which was completed in 1979.

Semerani & Tamaro's strategy was to recover elements of local tradition and poetically transform them through a series of compositional and rhetorical devices. The initial references were the *casoni* (farm buildings) of the old *Piani di Rifabbrico*,[1] a basilica-like hall and a reference to belonging to the Venetian Republic with a *Ponte dei Sospiri* – a new "Bridge of Sighs":

> The town hall of Osoppo stands as a monument representing the reconstruction process, as well as a symbol of institutional value. The architectural style provides the answer to the original request for a town hall that was anything but ordinary. The building is divided into three sections: one on a square base (the offices), with four large corner pillars supporting a hipped roof, reminiscent of Friuli barns; the second, on a rectangular base, covered by a keeled vault (the council chamber), reminiscent of the Basilica Palladiana in Vicenza; the third, a connecting bridge (*Ponte dei Sospiri*), a barrel-vaulted element resting on a deep arch, which also acts as a pivot in the translation and rotation dictated by the perimeter roads. The edges of the site, the axes of symmetry and the baselines of the façades intersect at notable points marked by certain objects, such as some fountains, a flag and a threshold. (Semerani 1991, p. 58)

Semerani himself gave an account of these compositional and rhetorical devices in an unpublished lecture given online during the Cesena Architecture Course in May 2021, a few months before his death:

1 The *Piani di Rifabbrico* (Rebuilding Plans) were local urban planning tools adopted in some Italian regions to rebuild and rationalize mountain villages damaged by bombing during the First World War or by natural disasters. They consisted of simple square-shaped buildings, usually three storeys high, with an attic for storing hay for animals and a hipped roof.

The town hall of Osoppo has given substance to four ideas that recur in our works in a more or less latent form:

The elimination of materiality in the elements of architectural construction;
1 The *Matryoshka*, the Russian doll that contains other identical but increasingly smaller dolls inside it, i.e. the interlocking of boxes of different sizes within a single formal configuration;
2 The use of the curved line as an "irruption" of the orderly narrative;
3 The "disembowelling" of buildings that produce an "urban interior" by staging their own "internal building organs".
4 The walls covered in white marmorino plaster become so thin that they recall the function of *periacti* in theatre set design rather than that of load-bearing structures.

The interlocking turtle shell, the *Matryoshka*, magnificently exemplified by Plečnik in his Ljubljana Cemetery, produces a notion of "interstitial space" that fits neatly among our other experiences of perceiving "space".

The preference for curved lines, more or less lower than our eyeline, is reminiscent of the thinking of Henry van de Velde, the master so dearly loved by Ernesto Nathan Rogers.

Van de Velde argued that in the line there is "the free affirmation of life in objects". The line draws its life from the same source of life that we see in objects; and like life, it is "will in motion", that is, our "self" in motion and "objectified" [...] "The line represents first and foremost the movement caused by my inner activity; it is an action that depends on me. But at the same time, this action is inherent to the line".

In conclusion, it is important to point out that an "urban space" includes not only "urban furnishings" but also "symbolic objects that measure space", such as the flower box, the commemorative corner column, and the Egyptian-style entrance ramp.

This was taught to us by Plečnik, who integrated the notion of "public space" with that of a "place in the city".

Bibliography

AMISTADI L. (2003) - "Luciano Semerani. La trasmissibilità dell'esperienza". In: *Ritratti, Otto maestri dell'architettura italiana*, edited by C. Quintelli. Celid, Turin.

FRAMPTON K. (1983) - "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance". In: *The Anti--Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, edited by H. Foster. Bay Press, Port Townsend, WA.

GADAMER H. G. (2004) - *Truth and Method*, trans. by J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall. Continuum, London-New York.

HEIDEGGER M. (1971) - "Building Dwelling Thinking". In: *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by A. Hofstadter. Harper Colophon Books, New York.

PASOLINI P. P. (1960) - *Passione e ideologia*. Garzanti, Milan.

SEMERANI L. (1991) - *Passaggio a nord-est*. Electa, Milan.

WITTGENSTEIN L. (1961) - *Tractatus-Logico--Philosophicus*, trans. by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness. Routledge, London-New York.

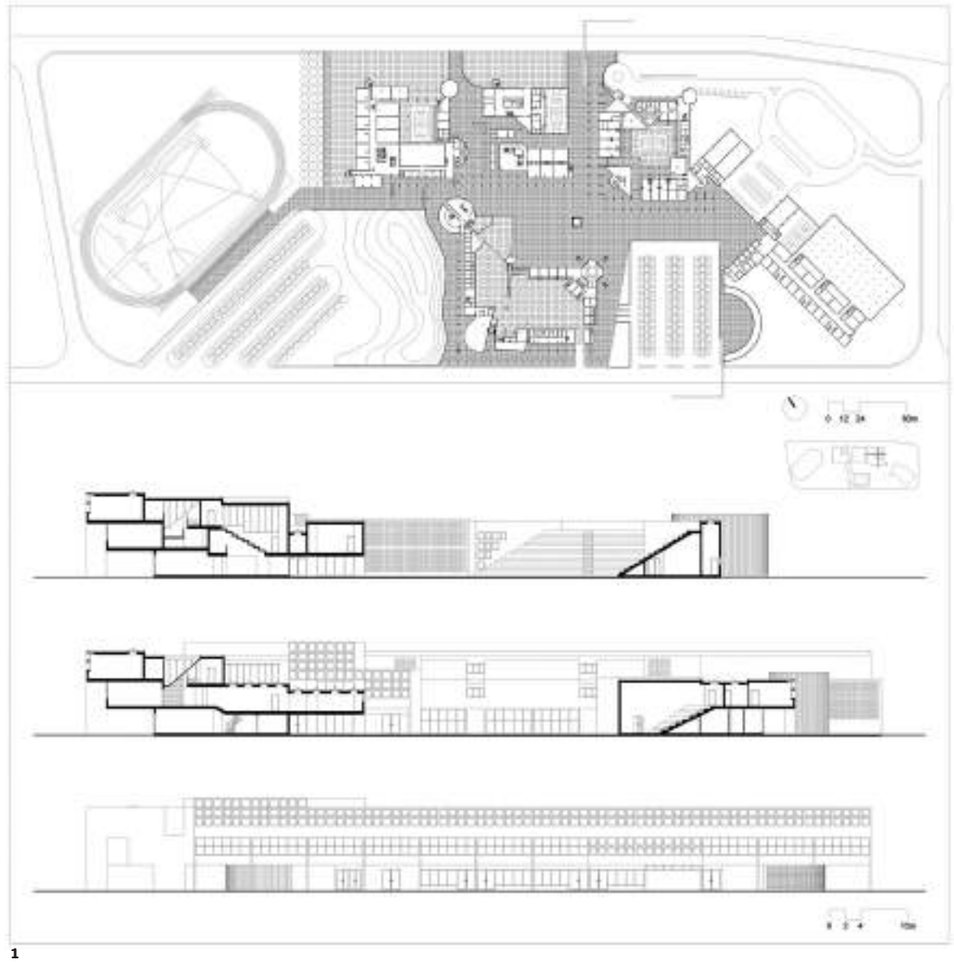
The Pesaro School Campus: a field of artificial ruins

Redrawings

1 Carlo Aymonino, Pesaro School Campus, 1970-1979. General floor plan.
Liceo Scientifico Marconi, 1970-73. Sections and south elevation.
2 Carlo Aymonino



2



1

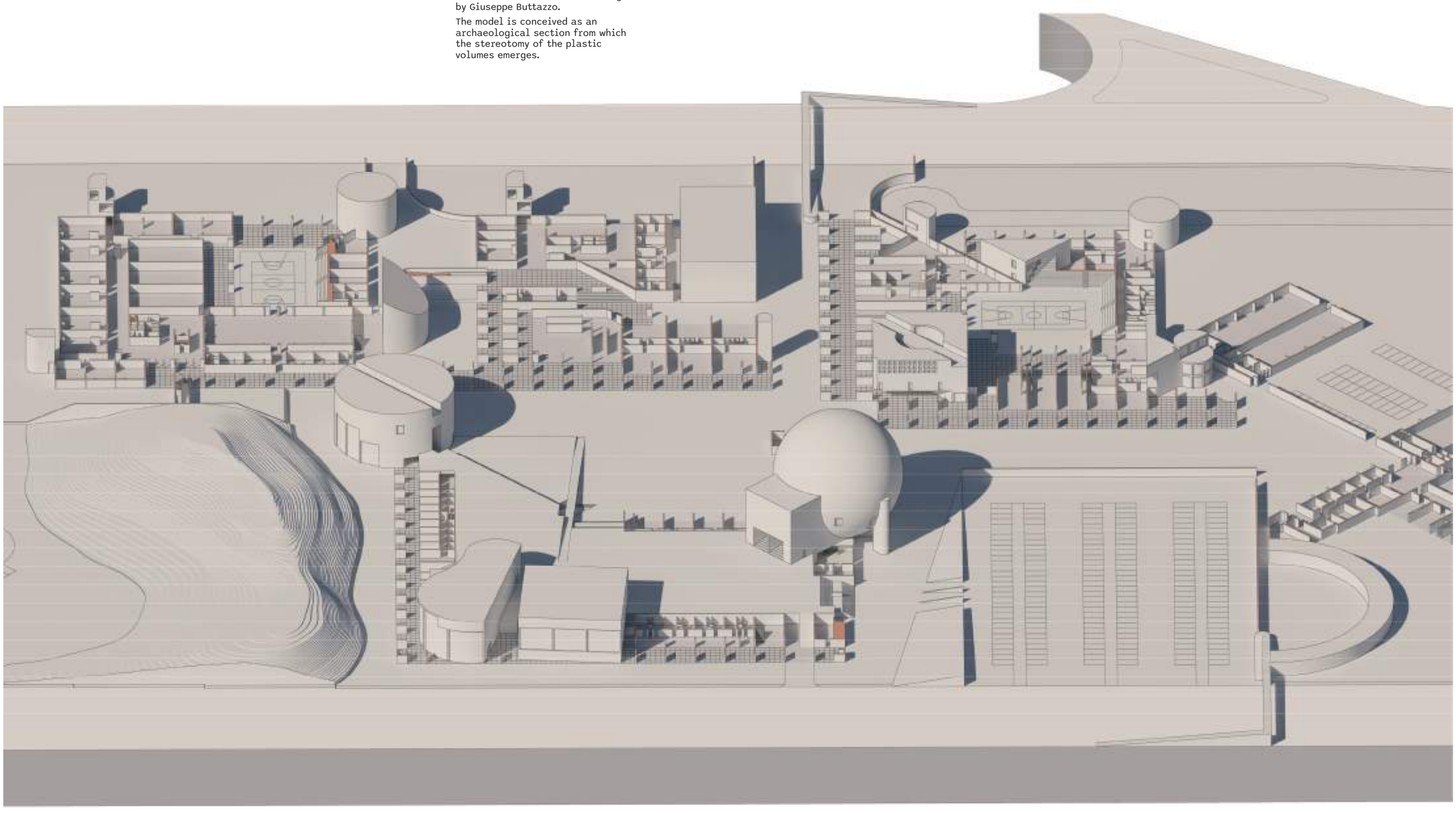
The Pesaro School Campus: a field of artificial ruins

Visual interpretations

Models

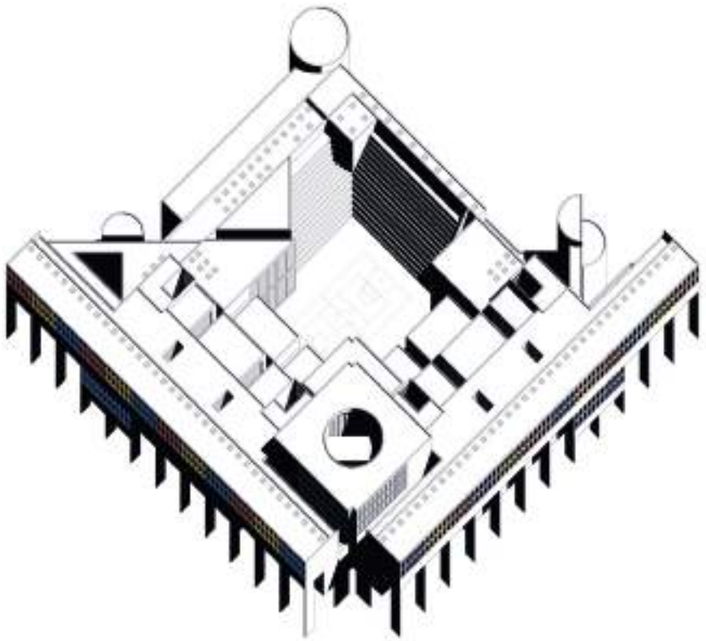
3 Carlo Aymonino, Pesaro School Campus, 1970-1979. View of the three-dimensional model. Drawing by Giuseppe Buttazzo.

The model is conceived as an archaeological section from which the stereotomy of the plastic volumes emerges.



The Pesaro School Campus: a field of artificial ruins

Architectural narratives



4 Carlo Aymonino, Liceo Scientifico Marconi, 1970-73. Axonometric projection. Drawing by Francesco Bruno.

The long rhythmic series of double--height sections of the mirrored portico recalls Gallaratese by Aldo Rossi, while the deep colored recesses of the windows pay homage to the Tourette convent and Le Corbusier's "unité d'habitation."

5 The empty corner of Aymonino's design.

6 Residential building in the Gallaratese district. Aldo Rossi participated in the construction of the Monte Amiata residential complex at the invitation of Carlo Aymonino, author of the general master plan.

7 Le Corbusier, Unité d'Habitation, Marseille, 1952.

8 Le Corbusier, Convent of Sainte--Marie de La Tourette, 1953-60.



5



6



7



8

The profane and beautiful tower

Redrawings

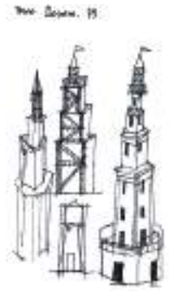
1 Aldo Rossi, Civic Tower within the Pesaro school Campus, 1979.

2 Aldo Rossi

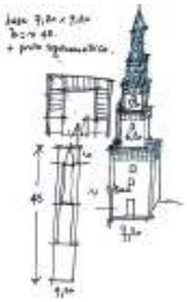
3 Aldo Rossi, Design sketches for the tower, 1979. From: Aldo Rossi, Die Suche nach dem Glück, Prestel 2003.

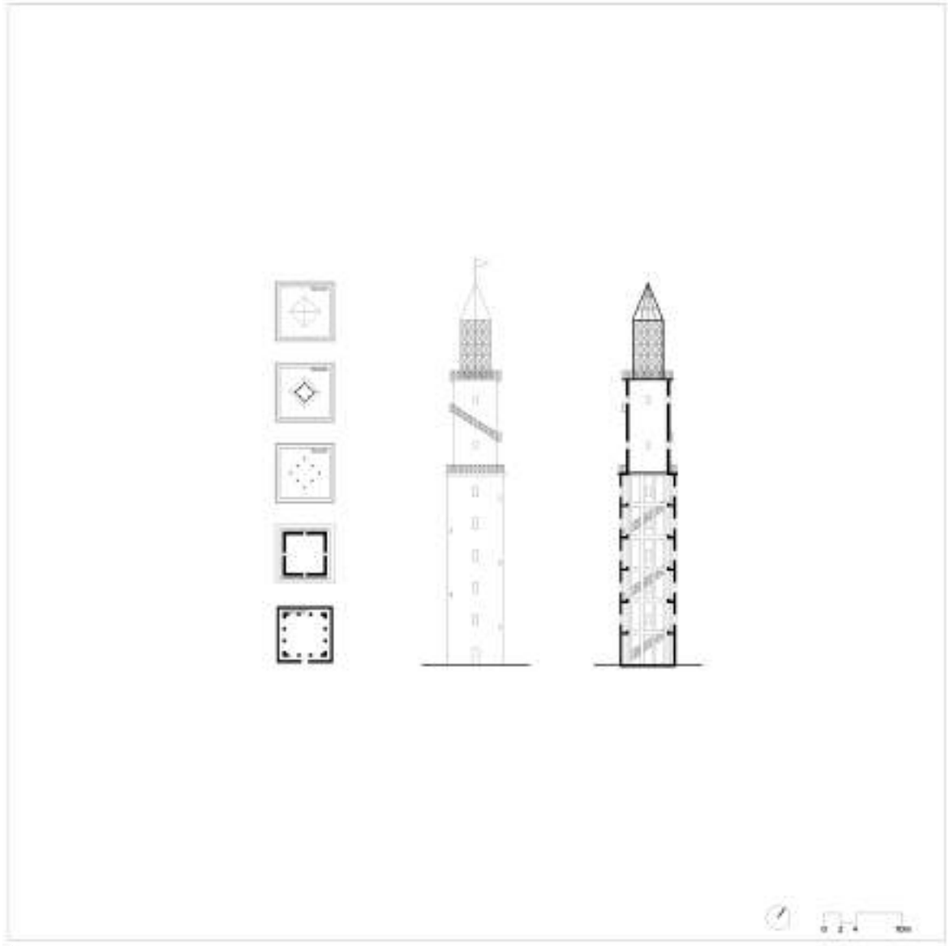


2



3





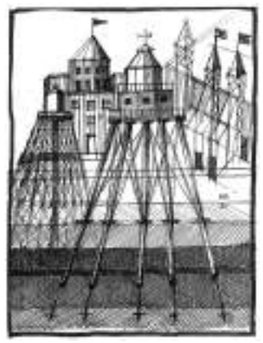
1

The profane and beautiful tower

Architectural narratives



5



6



7

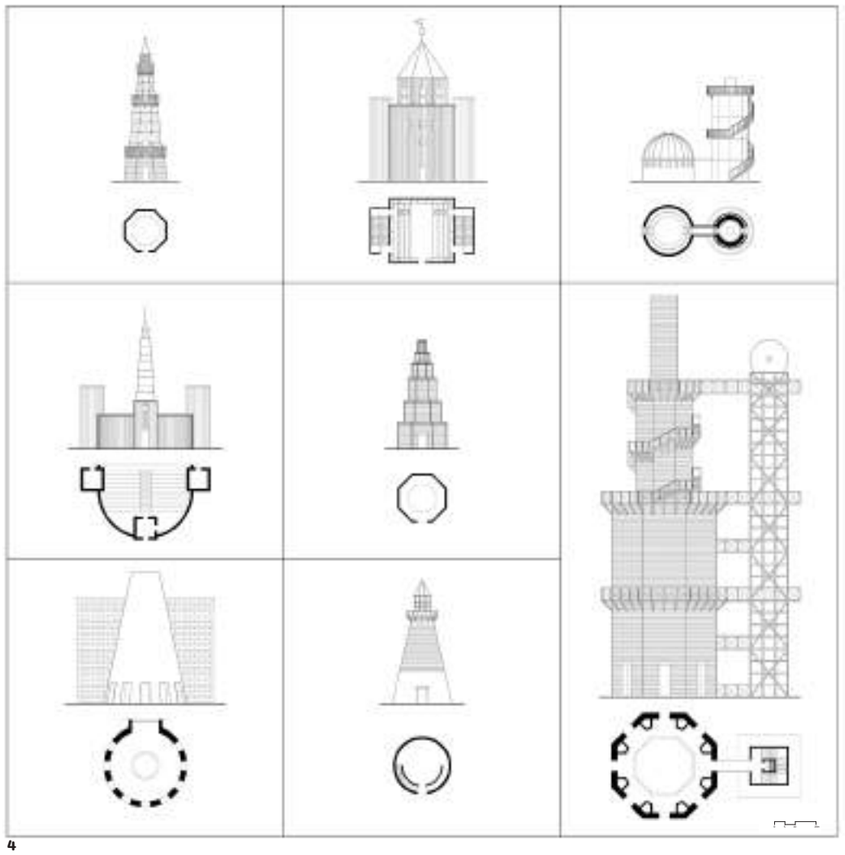
4 8 towers by Aldo Rossi. Synoptic table. Drawing by Sofia Tagliatesta.

From top left: Lighthouse in Rotterdam, 1988; The *Teatro del Mondo*, 1980; Tower in the garden of Villa Alessi on the D'Orta lake, 1986; Theater-Lighthouse in Toronto, 1988; Tower for the *Centro Città* commercial building project in Gifu (Japan), 1988; Tower for the *Deustsches Historisches Museum* project in Berlin, 1988-89; Project for the Fontivegge area in Perugia, 1982; Contemporary art center in Clermont-Ferrand, Vassivière, 1988.

5 Screw-pile lighthouse erected at port Fleetwood, on the Wyre, near Lancaster. Da: Charles Tomlinson, *Cyclopaedia of Useful Arts*, 1854.

6 Aldo Rossi, Drawing of Wyre Lighthouse with the Teatro del Mondo, 1980. From: Aldo Rossi, *Teatro del Mondo*, Venezia 1982.

7 Athanasius Kircher, "Turris Norizonta Sinenfium". From: *China monumentis*, 1667.



4

The profane and beautiful tower

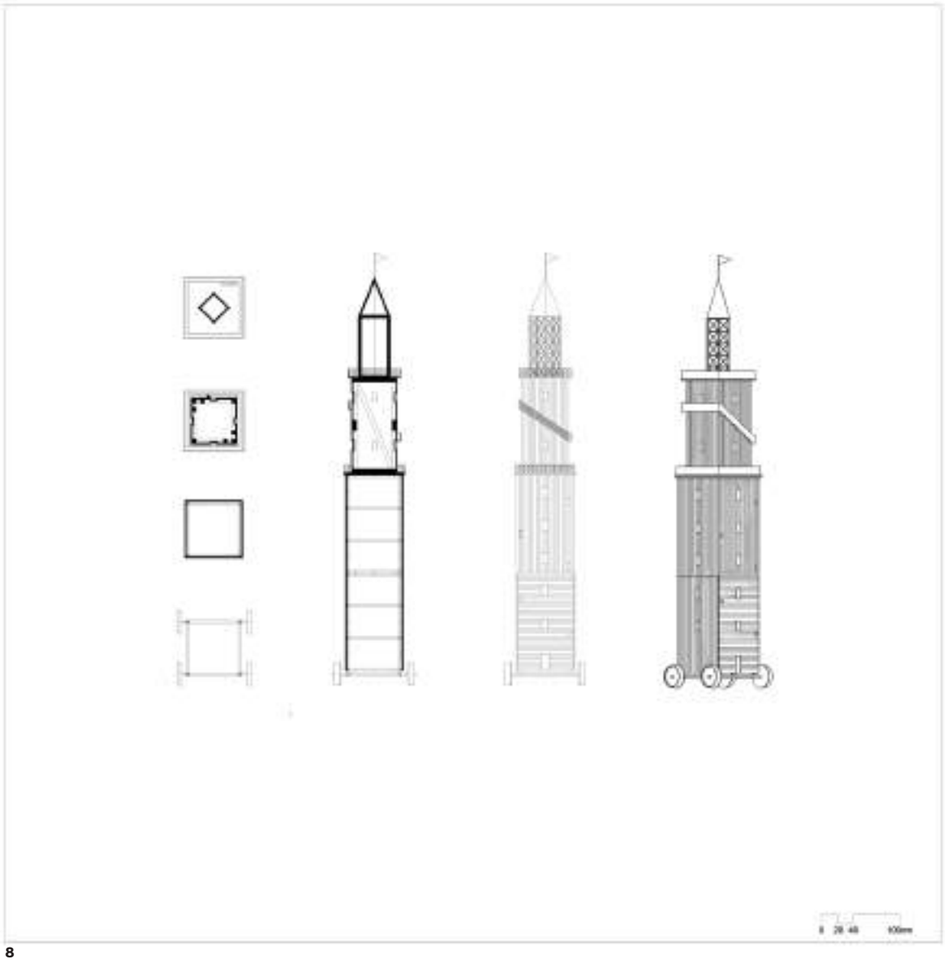
Visual interpretations

8 Modello interpretativo in scala 1:10 della Torre civica di Aldo Rossi. Disegni esecutivi.

9 Study models for the tower wheels.



9



8










The profane and beautiful tower

Models

10 1:10 scale interpretative model of Aldo Rossi's Civic Tower. Photographs by Michele Buda.

The model was built in the Modeling Laboratory (LaMo) of the Master's Degree Course in Architecture at the University of Bologna, Cesena Campus, transported and assembled on the south dam of the port of Marina di Ravenna near the "Porta del Pensiero".

Structural calculations: Giada Gasparini with Emma Ghini.

LaMo. Scientific Director: Francesco Gulinello; Technical Manager: Davide Giaffreda; Laboratory technician: Marika Mangano. With Mila Cappello and Armin Aziri, Thomas Capacci, Gina Celestini Radaelli, Jovita Maria Chirivì, Paola Valentina Di Silvio Vasquez, Lorenzo Forlivesi, Simone Monti, Matteo Suzzi, Arianna Toscano.

Osoppo Town Hall: trip to the provinces

Redrawings

1 Luciano Semerani and Gigetta Tamaro, Osoppo Town Hall, 1976-1979.

2 Luciano Semerani



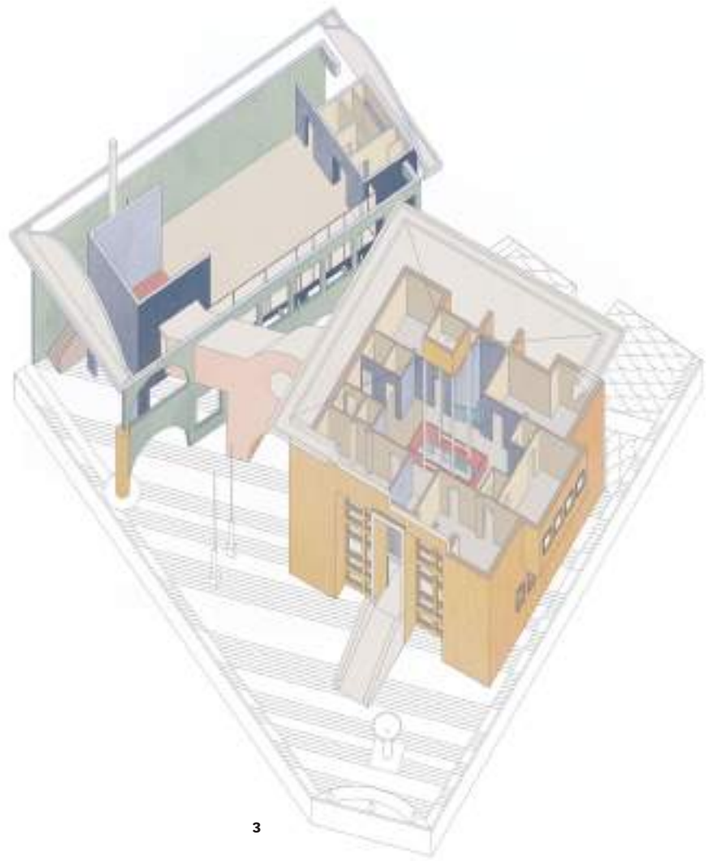
2



1

Osoppo Town Hall: trip to the provinces

Architectural narratives



3

3 Luciano Semerani and Gigetta Tamaro, Osoppo Town Hall, 1976-1979. Axonometric projection. Drawing by Luciana Cecilia Aloisio Delgado.

Photographs of the town hall.

4 The dematerialized volume of the "basilica" in relation to the large volume of the Piani di Rifabbrico (Rebuilding Plans).

5 The interstitial space between the skin and the internal organs of the "basilica".

6 Luciano Semerani, Design sketch with a reinterpretation of Friulian barns.



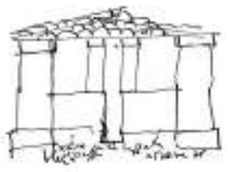
4



5



6



Osoppo Town Hall: trip to the provinces

Visual interpretations

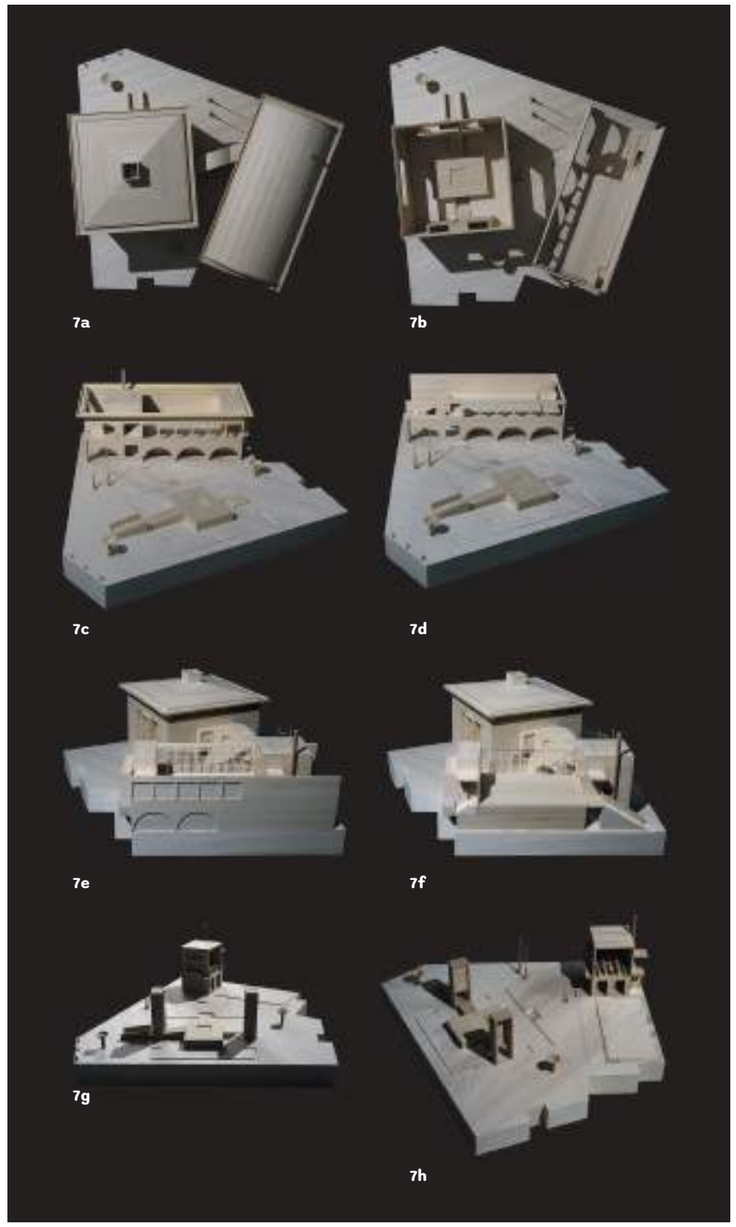
Wooden interpretive model of the town hall on a scale of 1:50. Photographs by Enrico Mambelli.

From above:

7 Zenithal views (7a, 7b): the "basilica" with and without the cornice (7c, 7d); the square-shaped office building seen from the town council chamber (7e, 7f); the town hall lot with the footprints of the buildings, the portals with the "Egyptian" ramp, and the furnished volume of the executive board chamber (7g, 7h).

Bottom left:

Some of the pieces that make up the town hall: the hipped roof of the "barn" (**8**), the barrel roof of the "basilica" (**9**), the cubic volume of the executive board chamber with its furnishings (**10**), the *Ponte dei Sospiri* (the "duck") (**11**); the internal façade at the back of the town council chamber (**12**).





8



9



10



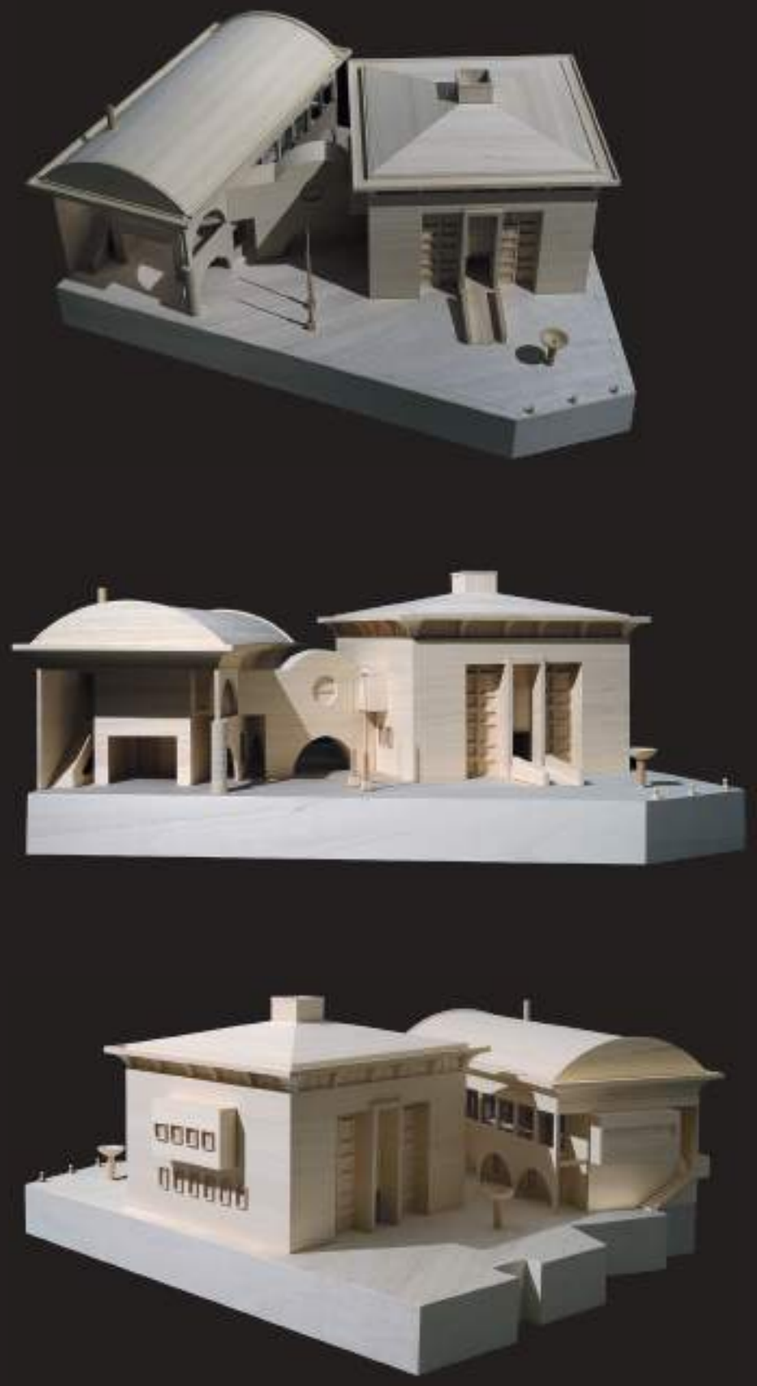
11



12

Osoppo Town Hall: trip to the provinces

Models



13 Wooden interpretive model of the town hall on a scale of 1:50. Views of the main south-facing façade and rear of the buildings. Photographs by Enrico Mambelli.

The model was built in the Modeling Laboratory (LaMo) of the Master's Degree Course in Architecture at the University of Bologna, Cesena Campus

LaMo. Scientific Director: Francesco Gulinello; Technical Manager: Davide Giaffreda; Laboratory technician: Marika Mangano. With Mila Cappello and Armin Aziri, Jovita Maria Chirivì, Paola Valentina Di Silvio Vasquez, Arianna Toscano.

Interview to Uwe Schröder

Uwe Schröder was born in 1964 in Bonn and studied architecture at the Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule Aachen and the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. He has had his own studio in Bonn since 1993 and has received numerous prizes and awards for his work, including the German Critics' Prize in the architecture category (2004), the scholarship of the German Academy of Rome Villa Massimo (2005), the North Rhine-Westphalia Architecture Prize (awarded in 2011 and 2018). After teaching in Bochum and Cologne, he was Professor of Design and Theory of Architecture at the Fachhochschule Köln in Cologne from 2004 to 2008 and has been Professor of Spatial Design at the RWTH Aachen University in Aachen since 2008. He has taught as visiting professor at the University of Bologna (in 2009–10 and 2024–25), the University of Naples 'Federico II' (2016), the Polytechnic University of Bari (2016), the University of Catania (2018), the Polytechnic University of Milan (2019), and the University of Parma (2020-21). His work has been shown in numerous solo and group exhibitions, including: "Uwe Schröder. Architettura degli spazi", Chiesa dello Spirito Santo, Cesena, Italy (2010) and "Uwe Schröder. Sugli spazi della città", Palazzo della Gran Guardia, Padua, Italy (2011). Recent publications about his research, teaching and design work include *Stadtraumgestaltungen* (Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König, Köln, 2025) and the monograph *Uwe Schröder. Werkverzeichnis* (Jovis Verlag, 2026).

– Interviews by Cesare Dallatomasina and Giorgia Antonioli

4 Learning by travel with...

Where have you been and when?
In the last 25 years, my Grand Tour has taken me to Italy not once, but again and again. As an architect and professor of architecture, I have traveled the countries of Italy, from the south to the north, seeing cities and landscapes. In recent years, I have been back to Rome again and again.

How were you documenting the visited places?
The places I have visited have become part of my architectural memory. In design processes, I can draw on this archive through memory.

I undertook most of these trips together with my students. The places have manifested themselves in their designs.

Considering Souvenirs as a tool to revive the memory of visited places, triggering processes of re-reading, reinterpretation, and invention, what was in your "luggage" at the end of your journey? What were you bringing back home?
I bring back postcards from my travels, preferably old and in black and white.

Can any trips be considered particularly important in terms of your architectural creations?
A collection is created with every journey, a collection of references. I call the reminiscent updating of the references in the design reception.

Can you point out some specific references where a building you have seen/experienced has influenced your own work?
Yes, most recently the Tempio Malatestiano by Leon Battista Alberti in Rimini. The layering of the façade, the different orders, the combination of old and new have influenced my current design work for a city museum in Schwerin.

What role has knowledge exchange with foreign colleagues played in your design experience?
The exchange with Italian colleagues from various universities has opened up new cultural horizons for me.

Would it be correct to say that travel gave you a set of intellectual tools?
Yes, travel creates a reference system as an individual memory.

Interview to Renato Rizzi

If you could put together a contemporary Grand Tour of European architecture and cities, what would it be? What cities, buildings, people, etc., would you include there?
The Gran Tour is a journey through space and time. It is about connecting places with history, history with culture and culture with the present.

What is/could be the role of getting to know architecture on-site in architecture education? Do you think "learning by travelling" is still possible?
Learning by traveling is still necessary.

Do you think that travel has become more of a tool for professional advancement than intellectual development?
Intellectual development is also a necessary prerequisite for professional education.
The Gran Tour is an essential component of this education.

How would you promote "learning by travelling" in architecture education and among a wider public?
During regular trips as part of the architecture course, we link places, cities and landscapes with specific design tasks lasting one or two semesters. Designing leads the students to an in-dense examination of their travel experiences.

Where have you been and when?
I've travelled a great deal. Having worked for ten years in New York with Peter Eisenman and John Hejduk allowed me to cross all the continents.

But the real journey is not physical. It is the *serendipity* of Eisenman who, while openly declaring that he promoted Modernism, was reinterpreting the symbols of its origins: the Jewish Kabbalah. Who would ever have thought it? That's a journey and a half! Eisenman always wanted to keep the relationship between his work and Jewish culture under wraps. However, it's enough to pore over his projects to understand their complexity and the reference to the three great Kabbalistic symbols. The ten *Sephirot*, or instruments of God, correspond to the first productive phase of his work. The *Tzimtzum*, the catastrophe of the diaspora, represents the separation between place and individual, the second phase. Finally, the *Shevirat HaKelim*, the image of the breaking of the vases, is the dispersion of the Jews in the world, the last phase of his work.

While John Hejduk, of Catholic culture and a Bohemian family, reread the Bible – both the Old and New Testaments – without hiding anything. In addition to numerous projects, Hejduk wrote 176 poems: poetry was his architectural cultural program.

Isn't this an extraordinary journey? No critics have ever been able to establish the connection between his poems and his architecture, yet the former are the foundations of them.

Today, to be honest, we should be founding the universities of architecture again from scratch, to recover the value of "virtue". We need to start afresh from the word *Architecture*, an extraordinarily important word.

What journey, including intellectual and therefore not only physical, would you recommend to an architecture student?
Traveling is very important to see things directly with our own eyes. That said, there are some extraordinary books which let the mind travel much more than the body. Derek Walcott, a Caribbean writer and Nobel Prize winner, in his most important book *Homer* speaks directly with Homer and Dante. He rewrote the *Odyssey* in a Caribbean language with a completely different plot, while using the same names and heroes of Homer along with Dante's hendecasyllabic verses.

Nabokov, on the other hand, began his autobiography *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* with this sentence: "The cradle rocks above an abyss, and common sense tells us that our existence is but a brief crack of light between two eternities of darkness. And a child has no problem playing with the darkness". This is the image of each of our lives: children are not afraid to play with darkness, on the contrary they quiz it continuously. This is the spirit we must hang onto even as adults.

What landscape, place, city, or architectural work would you recommend a student visit?
I would have to say Venice. I'm from Trentino and I never thought I would move here, but it's such a wonderful miraculous city (hidden by eyes).

In fragment 262 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche states that "Men, to demonstrate the value of *aretè* – virtue – chose the most inhospitable place, a swamp, to found a city: they built Venice".

Nietzsche! Who has always been considered the theoretician of the Superman... One would have to read Heidegger's text on Nietzsche to understand that there is nothing of the Superman at all. The Superman, as understood by Nietzsche, is the one who has the most decency of all, is the most docile, the one who has the greatest *Theoria*.

Renato Rizzi (Rovereto, 1951). Full professor of architectural design, IUAV University of Venice. Academic Member of the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, Rome since 2018. President of the Italian Republic Award, 2019. He has held seminars and conferences at some of the most important universities of architecture as Harvard, Princeton, ETH, etc. From 1984 to 1992 he collaborated with Peter Eisenman, New York, on the projects *Giulietta e Romeo*, Verona (1986, Stone Lion, III Biennale di Arch. of Venice), *Parc de la Villette*, Paris (1986), *Monte Paschi*, Siena (1988), etc.

Among the main international projects: The Great Egyptian Museum, Cairo (2002, third prize); MOMA Museum of Warsaw (2007, Honourable Mention); John Paul II Centre, Krakow (2007, Special Mention); Research Tower, Padua (2008, fourth prize, in collaboration with Peter Eisenman); Museum of Judaism, Ferrara (2010, Special Mention).

Main completed projects: Area Sportiva Ghiaie, Trento (1984-1998); Museo del Futurismo Fortunato Depero, Rovereto (1992-2008); Shakespearian Theatre, Gdansk (2004-2013).

Projects are published in the main international magazines, Casabella, Domus, Architectural Review, Detail, Anyone, and have been exhibited several times at the Venice Biennale, Triennale di Milano, etc.

Main awards: Fritz Höger, Berlin, 2017; Architizer A, Belgium, 2016; Iconic Award, Munich D.B, 2015; Gold Medal, Milan, 2015, 2009; Compasso d'oro, Milan, 2015, 2011; Award of the Council of Europe for Landscape, 2009.
Most recent significant publications: *Solemnidad de la Civilidad*, vol. I, with A. Tagliapietra, Ed. Mimesis, 2020, Milan; *John Hejduk. Bronx. Manuale in versi,* with S. Pisciella, Ed. Mimesis, 2020, Milan; *Eppure*, Ed. Mimesis, 2021, Milan; *Il Daimon di Architettura*, vol. I, II, III, with S. Pisciella and A. Rossetto, Ed. Mimesis, 2014, Milan.

Latest cultural project: *NSA Nuova Scuola Architettura*, ten conferences per year with the focus on the secret of the name Architecture.

The image of Venice was born with the so-called *Legge D'Aula*, which decreed that all the buildings lining the canals must be the same: all of them must have a central hall passing from front to back and two lateral parts for the services. The great hall must overlook the outside, because the citizen must be able to see inside the house – a metaphor for St. Mark's Square. Are all the buildings in Venice really the same?

Not one is the same as another! They're all completely different, each with their own precious mask, inlaid and embellished. While today, urban planning laws make cities all the same. The dissolution of form travels the entire equator, from east to west, from north to south.

Where are the outskirts of Venice?

Although it's still a perfect city, with its well-defined shape, it has an inner suburb, at its core. They keep on destroying the buildings, splitting the houses up internally for short-term rentals. Airbnbs are quick to destroy, alter, hasten, and demolish... This is a periphery that is growing inwards. But what has changed in our time for this formlessness to emerge?

Our outlook is so miserable as to be frightening. We are all narcissists; we can't take our eyes off the mobile phone's little window. Narcotized, we look in the mirror and say, "How beautiful I am!" This is auto--referencial. The word *Architecture* itself says the opposite: *archè* and *téchne*.

We must move away from being *nominative* to being *dative*, that is: those who receive, the true subjects of culture. We are *singularities*. In our eye, the black hole is the pupil; around it, the iris: the image of a universe. We own the representation of *singularity*, and it is our only truly distinguishing feature. The ray of light enters the pupil and reaches the back of the eyeball, the blind spot; from there the optic nerve starts, thanks to which we can build images in the mind.

To see we continue to open and close our eyelids: darkness, light, darkness, light... It's the darkness that allows us to see, not the light!

What relationship do you have with the memory of what you see? How were you documenting the visited places?
After visiting Patagonia, I read Chatwin and Theroux.

Chatwin went to Patagonia only because he had seen in the cupboard of his grandmother, whom he loved very much, an old piece of a mysterious animal skin and he wanted to find its owner. That's the reason he went there.

An object encapsulates a mystery and the ancient memory of discovery. Reading Derek Walcott, one understands that civilizations don't collapse because of the malice of people. He said that civilizations disappear because there's no more Architecture.

No more Architecture!

Architecture is the only art that remains, it's constantly visible, because it stands there. You can hide a painting or a book in a drawer. Architecture no.

Architecture has both a public and an individual dimension, but the individual one must not overpower the public one.

This is the truth. While today everything is "*ora pro me*".

A PDF version of this book is available for free in Open Access at up.pt/press/

ISBN 978-989-746-465-2

Publisher
U.PORTO PRESS

Up
GranT

European Commission

POLITECNICO

U.PORTO
FACULDADE DE ARQUITETURA
UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO

ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA
DIPARTIMENTO DI ARCHITETTURA

Art Academy of Latvia

ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI

EKA

Workbook of Affinities

Updating the Grand Tour.
Memory and Invention of the
European Built Environment

The *Workbook of Affinities* comprises 7 sections that synthesise the results of the exercises undertaken by the UpGranT Consortium in the conception of a learning by travelling pedagogical model, re-empowering the Grand Tour's long-standing practice.

Section 1 UpGranT Consortium
Section 2 Politecnico di Milano · POLIMI
Section 3 Faculty of Architecture – University of Porto · FAUP
Section 4 Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna · UNIBO
Section 5 Art Academy of Latvia · LMA
Section 6 Aristotle University of Thessaloniki · AUTh
Section 7 Estonian Art Academy · EKA

– *Liene Jākobsone, Manten Devriendt*

1 Grand Tourists P3

Grand Tours from the Soviet periphery

Wall atlas

– *Liene Jākobsone, Manten Devriendt*

2 Grand Tour P13

The Diverse Faces of Latvian Architecture

Wall atlas

– *Liene Jākobsone, Manten Devriendt*

3 Souvenirs on Exemplary Buildings P21

Summerhouse, Modris Ģelzis

Social club for the Zvejnieks kolkhoz, Marta Staņa

Residential building at 19 Firsa Sadovņikova Street, Juris Poga

4 Learning by travel with... P39

**On a Tight Leash: Traveling as a Soviet Architect.
Liene Jākobsone in conversation with Jānis Lejnieks**

The UpGranT “Workbook of Affinities” is published under the Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnerships in Higher Education programme, funded by the European Union. Reference: 2023-1-IT02-KA220-HED-000158377.

The views expressed are those of the author(s) alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the Erasmus+ – INDIRE National Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting administration can be held responsible for them.

The contents in this section are the entire responsibility of the partner organisation and their authors.

Grand Tours from the Soviet periphery

– *Liene Jākobsone, Manten Devriendt*

From the 1950s onwards, travel became increasingly accessible and popular in Western Europe, for both tourism and business reasons. Meanwhile, behind the Iron Curtain, there was an entirely different world, from which only a select few could travel abroad. This world–the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) – was conceived as an economically, ideologically and geographically disconnected political entity. However, albeit extremely limited, there was exchange between the who worlds. To promote a better understanding about how this exchange took place, this essay discusses the experiences of architects in the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic, which existed in the territory of Latvia from 1940 to 1941 and from 1944 to 1990, after its annexation to the USSR. It provides insights into the Baltic region, which was well connected to Western Europe and culturally and economically thriving until WWII, when it was occupied by the USSR and fell into stagnation.

Traveling from Latvian SSR

For the citizens of the USSR, traveling both within the union and abroad, was strictly controlled by the state. Depending on the destination, various types of approval were required. Travel for architects was considered part of the so-called ‘qualification raising measures’, which also included lectures, exhibitions, film screenings, foreign language courses, painting and drawing workshops, etc. The organisation of trips to local destinations was the responsibility of the local unions of architects, whereas all travel abroad was exclusively managed from Moscow, with the local unions tasked with providing the allocated number of participants.

Initially only travels within USSR and to socialist block countries, such as Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic or East Germany, were organised. The first travels by Latvian architects to the Western world are documented in the 1964. The congress documentation states that as part of the lectures and reports delivered at the Union of Architects, there has been the “Report of the participants of excursion, architects Lūse, Savisko, Markova, Dmitrijeva, “On the tour of a group of architects to Austria”. Demonstration of coloured diapositive slides.” (Latvijas PSR arhitektu savienība 1965, p. 26). In this report of the 1965 Congress, which covers activities undertaken during the preceding three years, architects’ international travel is mentioned only in this instance. The four individuals referenced provide an indication of the exceptionally limited number of travellers, particularly in light of the fact that the Union at that time comprised 257 members.

The numbers of travellers in the years to follow remains extremely small in comparison to the member of the union (only those were eligible to apply for the trips). To gain insight into practicalities regarding traveling, several architects who were practicing during the Soviet years were interviewed, born on 1950 and later. This means that the accounts refer to events from the late 1970s and 1980s. Lejnieks remembers that every year Union announced open application to several trips abroad (Lejnieks 2024). However, the number of available positions was limited to a couple of places per trip, which may have deterred many architects from applying. There were no clear selection criteria either, and the interviewees could only speculate on the reasons they were chosen, such as, for instance, being active in the union’s youth section. When asked, why according to him such trips were organised at all, Andris Kronbergs[1] pondered that it could be an attempt to uphold a narrative that such thing as an Iron Curtain would not exist, that there is a movement of people (Kronbergs 2024). He also thinks that the travel opportunities provided architects with invaluable professional knowledge, thereby enhancing their overall satisfaction with working conditions and the Soviet system in general. Lejnieks confirms this, stating that when Soviet architects were tasked with designing a hotel for foreign guests, they lacked the necessary knowledge to

1 Andris Kronbergs (1951) was a practicing architect during the Soviet period, currently runs the architecture office “Arhis arhitekti”.

1 Grand Tours

Part of this text was published in: Jākobsone L. (2024) - "Restricted Grand Tours. Architects' Experiences in the Soviet Periphery". FAMagazine: Research and Projects on Architecture and the City, 69-70, pp. 104-115.

meet Western standards. Consequently, visiting such places abroad was essential to be able to deal with these design tasks. Ināra Kārkliņa[2] shares how her trip to the USA in 1989 provided her with valuable knowledge on hospital design, while she was herself involved in designing an extension to the Institute of Traumatology in Riga (Kārkliņa, 2024). This travel opportunity, however, was not obtained through the Union of Architects but instead, thanks to her active participation in the Society for Latvian and Foreign Cultural Relations.[3] In the USA, the visit of the hospital was made possible thanks to the professional and personal relationship between the director of the Institute of Traumatology Viktors Kalnbērzs, and Kristaps Keggi, a senior medical professional who had emigrated from Latvia with his family during WWII. At the time of Kārkliņa's visit, Keggi was working as a researcher at Yale University and practicing surgery at a local hospital. Kārkliņa recalls how excited she was about this opportunity, noting that, in general, travels organised by the Society for Cultural Relations did not specifically focus on architecture. The groups of travellers consisted of professionals from a variety of cultural sectors, and members of the groups were not permitted to wander around on their own when abroad. This account highlights the challenges and unpredictability of travel for Soviet Latvian architects.

Regarding the travels of architects, the Soviet Union of Architects in Moscow allocated a small number of places to other countries of the USSR, who's local Architects' Unions had to announce the call and select participants. Lejnieks remembers that there was an unwritten rule that the same person was not granted the right to travel more often than once in three years (Lejnieks 2024). He himself entered the Union of Architects as a young and active architect in 1978, and already in 1980, he was offered the opportunity to join a trip to Japan. A day before his scheduled flight to Moscow, followed by onward travel to Tokyo, he was requested to present himself at *Cheka*.[4] He was interrogated on his personal relationship with an individual who had contacts abroad and according to the Soviet secret services, was a dissident. Although Lejnieks reportedly was not privy to the details of the situation and had not engaged in any dissident activities himself, he was denied travel abroad on the basis of this accusation.

Lejnieks was asked by his colleagues at the Union of Architects to refrain from applying for further travels in the following years, as they were concerned that the permit would be rejected by the *Cheka* anyway. In such case the place allocated by Moscow would get lost, and some other architect would be deprived from the opportunity to travel. In this regard, the following remark included in the 1974 Congress documents raises questions: "Regardless of the fact that the number of applications to specialised touristic tours exceeds the number of places, there have been cases when the allocated places have not been filled. For instance, in 1974 the [evaluation] commission has been forced to renounce of the places in tours to Bulgaria, Rumania and partly also German Democratic Republic due to the lack of interest" (Latvijas PSR arhitektu savienība 1974, p. 54). It is surprising that, despite the limited travel opportunities and significant interest from architects, the places are not being used. The reasons for this are unclear, however. Applicants may have been denied travel by the *Cheka*, after being approved by the Union of Architects, like Lejnieks was for his trip. But it is equally possible that the announcement of the travel opportunity or the selection process for candidates may not have been handled in a timely manner by the Union of Architects or other institutions. In any case, this is clear evidence of the paradoxical nature of the Soviet system and the ineffectiveness of its administration.

Delights and challenges of Soviet travellers

Travelling abroad, especially to Western countries, was a unique experience at the time, even more so given the extreme differences in everyday life on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Although the official reason for the trips was to see Western architecture, it could be argued that the most emotionally overwhelming aspect of the travels was related to everyday occurrences.

One thing that struck Soviet citizens was the abundance of shopping opportunities provided by huge department stores full of consumer goods and equipped with escalators. This was in stark contrast to the permanent scarcity of everyday commodities in the USSR. However, the travellers could barely purchase anything due to the extremely low value of the rouble compared to foreign currencies. To deal with this situation, they sometimes resorted to some rather unusual business practices. One of the architects recalls selling Soviet vodka to locals during their trip to Finland. They had taken the permitted number of bottles with them and managed to trade them at the hotel for a considerably higher price, which was still a bargain for the Finns. The money they made allowed them to cover some of their daily expenses.

Poga tells a funny story about his trip to Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria. He and a couple of colleagues had won second place in an architectural competition and had to travel there to collect the prize money (Poga 2024). The prize money was huge-7000 Bulgarian leva-more than a car would have cost at the time. After receiving it, they realised that they would not be permitted to take this amount of cash out of the country. So, they split the money and decided to buy something with it instead. It was only then that they realised that the shops had the same empty shelves as in their home country.

Reflecting on their travels from their current position as citizens of a democratic capitalist country, architects remember being surprised by some of the experiences shared by their Western counterparts. Kārkliņa recalls visiting the studio of Latvian expatriate architect Andrejs Legzdiņš in Stockholm. Among many positive things, Legzdiņš had pointed out the difficulties related to running one's own architecture practice. Kārkliņa only fully understood these difficulties after the fall of the USSR, when the state design institutes were dissolved, and she established her own architecture office. Treimanis remembers a similar confrontation when he visited the German Democratic Republic for an awards ceremony following an architecture competition (Treimanis 2024). They had been celebrating their success with representatives of the other teams, who were from a variety of countries, including Western ones. At some point, someone mentions the Finnish team who had not been able to attend the event due to urgent professional commitments. Treimanis awkwardly jokes about having pity for those unable to join such a joyful party because of work. He then realises that not everyone finds the joke equally funny. Having urgent duties also means having commissions, which is something a Soviet architect would not have had to worry about.
These stories reveal the stark differences in professional and personal life experiences between the Soviet and Western worlds. Professionally, architects in the Latvian SSR lacked opportunities for self-expression, as well as information and enriching experiences. In their personal lives, they were forced to live with constant material scarcity and under strong ideological control. They had to be cautious not only about what they said in public and in private, but also about what they owned and who they socialised with. At the same time, life moved at a much slower pace. They did not have to worry about their jobs or salaries; however low they were. They sought joy elsewhere, hoping to break free from Soviet occupation soon.

Grand Tourists

Latvian research team opted for a clearly defined historical period as the main criterion for selecting architects and buildings for the Grand Tour. It focuses on Soviet modernism that gradually acquired postmodern features–the period between Khrushchev's "Thaw" (1955) and the restoration

2 Ināra Kārkliņa (1950) was a practicing architect during the Soviet period.

3 Society was founded in 1956 as part of the Soviet Union's Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries and its goal was to promote mutual rapprochement in the fields of science and art, literature, school, tourism, sports, everyday life and the economy between Soviet citizens and foreign peoples. One of its tasks was also to monitor the counter-propaganda spread by the people who had emigrated or flead the Soviet Union and lived abroad (Latvijas Nacionālais arhīvs 2025).

4 All-Russian Extraordinary Commission (Всероссийская чрезвычайная комиссия), Cheka is the pronounciation of the initials in Russian title - ЧК.

of Latvian independence in the 1990s. Furthermore, the ambition was to identify architects who either realised historically relevant work during this period or who lived and studied then but later became important figures.

This resulted in the following selection of 10 architects: Juris Poga (1957), Andris Kronbergs (1951), Zaiga Gaile (1951), Ināra Kārkliņa (1950), Viktors Rimša (1936), Oļģerts Krauklis (1931-2023), Modris Ģelzis (1929-2009), Lia Asta Knāķe (1929-2019), Daina Dannenberga (1929), and Marta Staņa (1913--1972). This period seemed interested also because of the facts described before: extremely limited travel oportunities and other circumstances determined by the totalitarian regime. The research objective was to discover how these conditions might have affected architecture. Other selection criteria include gender (striving for gender balance) and age (some of the architects selected were still alive and could be contacted as primary sources for an opinion and undocumented facts).

Although modern movement[5] in this region started in the 1920's along with most of Europe, its development was interrupted by the Socialist Realism imposed in the USSR by the regime during the reign of Stalin.[6] In the meantime in Latvia, some of the most prominent architects, such as Eižens Laube, initially rejected modernist principles, considering them an international fad that promotes generic formal language, and instead supporting eclectic reinterpretations of historic styles in a locally meaningful, nationalistic manner. Hence, starting from the 1920's until the end of the WWII, two distinct architecture schools existed alongside: one seeking for expressions of national characteristics in architecture based on historic heritage, and the other following the trends of modern movement.[7]

At the end of WWII, most of the Latvian architects and leading academic staff of the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Latvia left the country in fear of Stalin's persecutions.[8] The local architecture scene was disrupted, many Russian architects migrated to Latvia and Socialist Realism architecture appeared also in Latvian cities. However, shortly after Stalin's death a resolution 'On the liquidation of excesses in planning and building' was issued (1955) and modernist principles were embraced by the Soviet officials as an approach that permitted maximum standartisation, and hence efficiency and replicability.

Although modernism in Europe and in Latvia is nowadays generally perceived as a contemporary architectural expression, Soviet modernism still has a negative connotation since in the collective memory it is still linked to the oppressive totalitarian regime. Aside from sentimental reasons, also objective circumstances of the Soviet system played a role: "builders and contractors were placed above the architects,"[9] which often resulted in buildings and public spaces of poor technical, functional and aesthetic quality, regardless of the efforts of the architects. Hence, this research project is also an attempt to discover more about the challenges of the time and how they were overcome: what were the sources of knowledge and inspiration behind the iron curtain, and how were the extremely limited travel opportunities experienced?

Juris Poga graduated from the Faculty of Architecture and Construction of the Riga Polytechnic Institute in 1981. In the same year, he started working at the "Pilsētprojekts" institute, where he worked until 1990. In 1994, he established his own company "Arhitekta J. Pogas birojs". Member of the Latvian Union of Architects since 1985. From 1999 to 2005, he was the head of the Latvian Union of Architects, then the chairman of the board. Author of the apartment building in Frisa Sadovnikova street 21 (1992) – a project selected as one of the exemplary buildings for this research project.

5 Also known as 'functionalism' when referring to its manifestations in interwar Latvia (Krastiņš, J. (2005). *Rīgas arhitektūras stili* (Architectural Styles in Riga). Jumava, Riga, p. 163.)

6 Udovički-Selb D. (2009). "Between Modernism and Socialist Realism: Soviet Architectural Culture under Stalin's Revolution from Above, 1928–1938" in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 68, No. 4, pp. 467-495, University of California Press, p. 467.

7 Horsta K. (2023). Arhitekts Ernests Štālbergs (1883-1958) (Architect Ernests Štālbergs (1883-1958)). Doctoral thesis. Art Academy of Latvia, Riga, p. 57.

8 Lejnieks J. (2012). *Marta Staņa. Vienkāršī, ar vērienu.* Rīgas pilsētas arhitekta birojs, Riga, p. 31.

9 Belogolovski V. (2014). "Re-examining Soviet Modernism" in NRJA, *Unwritten*, p. 62.

6 7

Marta Staņa studied at the Faculty of Architecture of Latvia State University. One of her projects – Dailes Theatre (in collaboration with Imants Jākobsons, Harolds Kanders, 1959-1976) is still considered a bright example of Soviet modernist architecture. Large par of her creative life was spent on projects for a former fishermen's village, turned into a prosperous Kolkhoz during the Soviet times. For this new development, she designed residential buildings, a school, as well as kolkhoz's main social and cultural venue "Zvejnieks" – building included in the selection of the exemplary cases of this research project. In her creative work she explored principles and means of expression of modernism, searching for a locally relevant expression. She was also engaged in developing innovative interior and furniture design proposals.

Modris Ģelzis graduated from the Department of Architecture of the Faculty of Engineering and Construction of the State University of Latvia in 1955. Most of his work is characterised by clean forms and functionality characteristic to modernist architecture. Together with engineers, he developed an experimental residential building in panel constructions on Saulgožu iela (1958). In 1990, he represented Latvia at the first Nordic-Baltic Architecture Triennale in Tallinn. After the liquidation of "Pilsētprojekts" in 1991, he established his office "Architekta Modra Ģelža birojs". Already the architect's first works - the bookshop "Art Book" (1958) and the Dzintari summer concert hall (1959, included in the Latvian culture canon) - gained the attention of the public due to the open use of natural materials and the originality of the form, which particularly stood out in his project of the summer house for the architect's own family in Pabaži (1959) – of of the exemplary buildings chosen for this research project.

Andris Kronbergs graduated from the Faculty of Architecture and Construction of the Riga Polytechnic Institute in 1975. He acquired work experience at the State Urban Design Institute of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Latvia ("Pilsētprojekts") (1974-1985), in a workshop led by Modris Ģelzis. A. Kronbergs was the deputy chief architect of Riga (1985-1996), and since 1992 he has been the head of the design office "ARHIS". Some of his most relevant projects include an apartment building on Miera street 90 (1992), an apartment building on Vasaras street 7, and the Bank of Latvia (2001, in collaboration with Ināra Kārkliņa, Vilnis Uzors and Māris Kārkliņš).

Zaiga Gaile is an expert in the restoration of architectural heritage, the author of several books and numerous publications. In 1975, she graduated from the Faculty of Architecture of the Riga Polytechnic Institute. She has been running her office "Zaigas Gailes birojs" since 1992. Her most prominent projects include Berga Bazars quarter reconstruction, Riga (1993), Žanis Lipke Memorial, Riga (2012), and the reconstruction of "Jaunais Rīgas teātris" (2024).

Ināra Kārkliņa graduated from the Riga Technical Institute and worked at the "Pilsētprojekts" institute, within which she designed the Traumatology Institute (1992). Since 1991 has been managing the "Forma" architectural office. From 1995 to 2005, joining forces with "Arhis", she co-founded the office "Kronbergs, Kārkliņš and partners" to collaborate on the project of the Bank of Latvia.

Viktors Rimša graduated from the Moscow Institute of Architecture in 1962. From 1962 to 1998 Rimša worked in "Latgiproprom" institute in Riga, from 1975 taking the role of chief architect. From 1963 – 1973 he actively participated in project competitions. Among his designs is the new production building of the "Dzintars" factory (1963-1969), the "Rīgas Modes" building (1965-1973), the Central Mechanization and Automation Design Bureau in Riga – now the hotel AC Hotel by Marriott Riga (1969).

Oļģerts Krauklis graduated with distinction from the Department of Architecture of the Faculty of Engineering and Construction of the Latvian State University in 1955. He has participated in the development of various building projects and interiors; in his creative work he cultivated the traditions of modernism and paid attention to the inclusion of works of art in the spatial environment of the building. In 1960, his panoramic cinema-concert hall project was noticed at an exhibition in Moscow and built in Ceļinograd, current Astana, 1963 (project developed in collaboration with Daina Danneberga). Together with Arijs Ishanovs, Krauklis designed the Executive Directorate of Vidzeme Suburb, Riga (1980). Krauklis was the chief artist of the Art Fund (1983-1991), participated in exhibitions, was a member of the Latvian Artists' Union, a restorer of the Rotary movement in Latvia in the 90s, and a knight of the Order of the Three Stars.

Lia Asta Knāķe created some of the first modern post-war interiors. By introducing fundamentally new techniques – clean lines, dynamic shapes - she created identity for cafes that became Riga's symbols and public face for decades. Lia Asta Knāķe was noticed and received prestigious offer to design "Enerģētiķu nams" – now known as Latvenergo building on Pulkveža Brieža iela. The building was implemented in several stages since 1971: three construction stages were completed in the 1980s, but the last stage unfortunately no longer aligned with the architect's project.

Daina Dannenberga studied at the Faculty of Architecture of the Latvia State University but later entered the Leningrad Engineering Institute. She held various positions in the design institute "Latgiprogorstroj", and from 1960--1986 worked as a chief architect. She designed both residential and public buildings that are still in use and hold historical significance. The 70's and 80's was the most prosperous period in Danneberga's career. Her most prominent project is the student campus of Riga Polytechnic Institute (RPI), now Riga Technical University (RTU), in Ķīpsala (1969-1986).

Bibliographic references

BELOGOLOVSKI V. (2014) - "Re-examining Soviet Modernism" in NRJA, *Unwritten*

HORSTA K. (2023) - *Arhitekts Ernests Štālbergs (1883-1958)* (Architect Ernests Štālbergs (1883-1958)). Doctoral thesis. Art Academy of Latvia, Riga.

KĀRKLIŅA I. (2024) - Interviewed by the author on May 15 2024.

Latvijas PSR arhitektu savienība (1948) - *Latv. PSR arhitektu II kongresa materiāli (protokoli, atskaites, delegātu saraksti u. c.) 1948. gada 8.-24. maijs*, Latvian State Archive (LV_LNA_LVA_F273_1_129).

KĀRKLIŅŠ M. (2024) - Interviewed by the author on May 15 2024.

KRASTIŅŠ J. (2005) - *Rīgas arhitektūras stili* (Architectural Styles in Riga). Jumava, Riga.

KRONBERGS A. (2024) - Interviewed by the author on January 23 2024.

LATVIJAS Nacionālais arhīvs (2025) - *Latvijas un ārzemju kultūras sakaru biedrība (Society for Latvian and foreign cultural relations)*, https://kgb.arhivi.lv/dokumenti/vdk/piesegorganizacijas/draudzibas-biedriba, accessed on May 26 2025.

LATVIJAS PSR ARHITEKTU SAVIENĪBA (1951) - *Latv. PSR arhitektu 3. kongresa materiāli (protokoli, atskaites u. c.) 1951. gada 10.-14. decembris*, Latvian State Archive (LV_LNA_LVA_F273_1_130)

LATVIJAS PSR ARHITEKTU SAVIENĪBA (1965) *Latv. PSR Arhitektu savienības 7. kongresa materiāli (atskaite, delegātu saraksti u. c.) 1965. gada 28.-29. maijs*, Latvian State Archive (LV_LNA_LVA_F273_1_134)

LATVIJAS PSR ARHITEKTU SAVIENĪBA (1974) - *Sojuz Arhitektorov Latvijsoy SSR (*Союз Архитекторов Латвийской ССР*) 1971-1974*, https://www.latarh.lv/storage/files/LAS%20IX%20kongress.%20(1970-1974).pdf, accessed on May 26 2025.

LEJNIEKS J. (2012). - *Marta Staņa. Vienkārši, ar vērienu.* Rīgas pilsētas arhitekta birojs, Riga.

LEJNIEKS J. (2024) - Interviewed by the author on January 26 2024.

POGA J. (2024) - Interviewed by the author on May 2 2024.

TREIMANIS E. (2024) - Interviewed by the author on May 24 2024.

UDOVIČKI-SELB D. (2009). "Between Modernism and Socialist Realism: Soviet Architectural Culture under Stalin's Revolution from Above, 1928-1938" in Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Vol. 68, No. 4, pp.467-495, University of California Press.

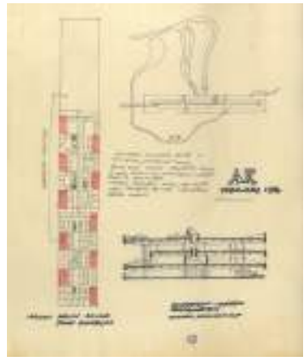

1

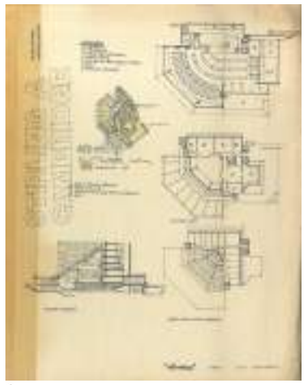


2


3


4


5


6


7


8


9


10


11


12


13


14


15


16


17


18


19


20


21


22


23


24


25


26


27


28


29


30


31


32


33


34


35


36


37


38

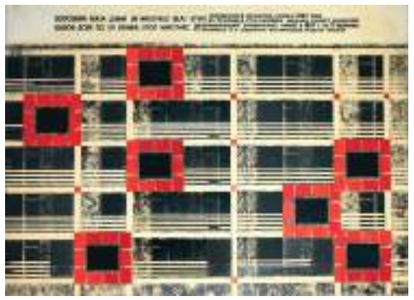

39


40


41


42


43


44


45


46

Wall Atlas

1-2 Archival documentation of congresses of the Architects' Union of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic contains some testimonies on the official trips abroad. In the Soviet Union, travel for architects was considered part of the so-called *qualification raising measures*. The organisation of trips to local destinations was the responsibility of the local unions of architects, whereas all travel abroad was exclusively managed from Moscow, with the local unions tasked with providing the allocated number of participants.

●

Many Latvian architects of older generation have fond memories of Western architecture magazines, such as "Architectural Review", "Domus", "Abitare", "L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui", and "Deutsche Bauzeitschrift". Given that the access to there magazines was quite limited architects developed unusual practices for conserving valuable graphic data. They traced the pages of the magazines onto tracing paper, thus both copying and studying the subject of interest. These drawings sometimes depict specific technical details, floor plans or sections, or pieces of furniture. In other cases, they reproduce entire magazine pages, including their original graphic layouts.

3-6 Scans from the personal archives of architects Ināra Kārkliņa and Māris Kārkliņš, who even used to mount the documents onto a cardboard base so that they could last longer and be passed around the office among staff as a source of visual inspiration.

7-16 Scans from Modris Ģelzis's personal archive contains 394 drawings, digitised for the first time as part of the *Updating the Grand Tour* project and now housed at the Latvian Museum of Architecture in Riga. The documents reveal his idiosyncratic combinations and keen interest in furniture, interiors and housing design, with clear influences from Scandinavian architects such as Jorn Utzon, Arne Jacobsen and Alvar Aalto, and references to his own summerhouse in Saulkrasti.

●

A series of perspectives on the detailing of Latvian architecture, as seen through the eyes of students, professors and historical sources.

17-26 Photographs by students Inga Sedova and Rebeka Ludriķe demonstrate a meticulous analysis of the building through surveying and detailed study. By visiting the building on multiple occasions, they sought to thoroughly grasp and understand the details.

27-36

The Grand Tourists, professors from various universities, unlike the students, visited the buildings only once. Their photographic analysis focuses on details, colours, light and views, and constitutes a quest to uncover the architect's intentions.

27 Photograph by POLIMI Team

28-30 Photographs by FAUP Team

31-35 Photographs by LMA Team

36 Photograph by AUTh Team

F 37-46 In addition, there is a photographic overview of public and residential architecture drawn from books. The photographs from the publication "Laikmetīgā arhitektūra Padomju Latvijā" (1966) showcase Soviet-period architecture in Latvia and provide insight into the state of the art of Latvian architecture at the time.

The Diverse Faces of Latvian Architecture

– Liene Jākobsone, Manten Devriendt

Grand Tour #2 is a route that runs from Riga to Tallinn, crossing two Baltic states – Latvia and Estonia. After a long and turbulent political history in this geographically significant region of Northern Europe, the two nations were first proclaimed independent countries in 1918. However, after WWII they were again occupied and annexed by the Soviet Union and regained their independence only in 1990. The totalitarian Soviet regime determined not only political, economic, and social life but also imposed strict rules on creative expression, including architecture. Hence, one can observe pronounced conceptual and formal differences in buildings conceived and realised during different historical periods – interwar, Soviet Stalinist, Soviet modernist, and independence.

Considering the selection criteria adopted by the Latvian research team, the route follows in the footsteps of architects who were professionally active during the Soviet period and shortly thereafter – during the turbulent transition toward capitalist democracy. The tour offers four diverse but complementary trajectories that are conceived with the idea of facilitated logistics behind.

Cross-section of the city

This tour connects the two sides of Riga across the Daugava River – the historic right bank and the more recent left bank. It focuses on public buildings whose architecture boldly communicates the values of its time.

The reconstruction of a 19th-century Neo-Gothic guild building at 6 Amatu Street, Riga, and its conversion into a modern Philharmonic concert hall (now the Lielā Ģilde) by architects Modris Ģelzis, Vera Savisko, and Jānis Kārkliņš in 1964 demonstrates a modernist attitude in the decisiveness of the new volumes, spatial configuration, and detailing. At the same time, the architects remain respectful of the existing building – an approach many other modernists did not adopt in their pursuit of the new, often neglecting what came before.

Just a couple of hundred metres away from this architectural masterpiece stands the former building of the Union of Latvian Fishermen Kolkhoz (13 Jauniela, Riga), designed by Daina Danneberga and completed in 1967. It demonstrates a similarly attentive attitude toward the medieval urban fabric of Old Riga and its architectural language. The office building features a functional floor plan that is clearly expressed in the façade, yet it adopts a pitched roof typical of the historic architecture, thereby rejecting one of the most characteristic features of modernism – the flat roof.

The Riga Pārdaugava Region municipal building (46 Eduarda Smiļģa Street, Riga), designed by Jānis Kārkliņš, Viktors Valgums, and Modris Ģelzis and completed in 1975, is a freestanding office block complemented by a composition of additional building volumes accommodating various public functions. It is situated within a large park on the left bank of Daugava River and elevated on typical modernist pilotis, allowing the ground-floor perimeter to be fully glazed. The building makes convincing use of prefabricated vibration-compacted concrete panels, which give the façade its pronounced vertical rhythm.

On the same side of the river – generally known as Pārdaugava ("across the Daugava" in Latvian) – along one of the city's main traffic axes stands the Bank of Latvia building (3 Bezdelīgu Street, Riga), designed by Andris Kronbergs, Ināra Kārkliņa, Vilnis Uzors, and Māris Kārkliņš and completed in 2001. It represents a completely different kind of architecture – a contemporary approach that still retains certain modernist features but has freed itself from the constraints of strict regulations and the material scarcity of the Soviet era.

2 Grand Tour

Along the Brīvības Street
Brīvības Street is one of the central traffic axes connecting Riga's city centre with the A1 motorway, running in a straight line for almost 10 kilometres.

One can begin this tour at the former Aeroflot offices at 54 Brīvības Street. The building was designed by the leading Latvian modernist architect Modris Ģelzis and completed in 1991. It exhibits clear postmodern features that reflect the shifting times – the liberation from the Soviet Union and the transition from totalitarian socialism to capitalist democracy – and their influence on architectural thought. Suddenly, there was a newfound freedom to experiment more radically, and this opportunity was seized immediately.

Just a hundred metres further along, at 49 Brīvības Street, stands the modernist composition of *Rīgas Modes* – a Soviet state-run clothing enterprise – alongside one of the gems of National Romanticism from the Art Nouveau period, designed by Eižens Laube. The striking contrast between the architectural expression of the two buildings perfectly illustrates the extreme diversity of Riga's architecture. Designed by Viktors Rimša and completed in 1973, the *Rīgas Modes* building features a tower rising above the turn-of-the-century pitched roofs, which housed office and manufacturing spaces, as well as an elevated horizontal slab used for fashion shows. The fully glazed ground-floor spaces were dedicated to a showroom for the company's production.

Further along Brīvības Street stands the Dailes Theatre (75 Brīvības Street), designed by Marta Staņa, Imants Jākobsons, and Harolds Kanders and built between 1959 and 1976. It is one of the most expressive and original modernist buildings in Riga, remarkably well preserved and still serving its original purpose as one of the city's central cultural venues. Its main architectural features include the large auditorium volume clad in brown glazed clinker bricks, intersected by a horizontal foyer volume overlooking the surrounding public space. A massive sculptural support structure within the lobby, along with stairs and passerelles cutting through this double-height space, enhances the visitor's experience.

The Riga Vidzeme Region municipal building (266 Brīvības Street, Riga), designed by Oļģerts Krauklis and Ārijs Išhanovs and completed in 1980, features a distinctive triangular floor plan that makes the volume stand out while blending sensitively with the surrounding trees. It is an example of late modernist thinking that has shifted away from the dominance of rigid rectangular volumes and prefabricated concrete toward a more elaborate architectural expression using red brick – a typical local material that conveys an elevated status and high quality.

Residential quarters
Soviet architecture was largely focused on residential construction, as many cities were recovering from the damage of the Second World War, while much of the existing housing stock no longer met modern standards of comfort. In addition, large populations were relocated across regions to support newly established industries operating at the scale of the entire Union.

Most standardised residential building projects were developed centrally in Moscow institutes and were intended to be used as widely as possible throughout the Union. This policy was rooted in the belief that designing site-specific, original projects would be a waste of time and human resources. As a result, Latvian architects were primarily engaged in adapting standardised designs to local conditions – in other words, positioning them on allocated plots, adjusting plans to site dimensions, and revising material specifications according to availability.

However, there were occasions when limited architectural modifications to standardised residential buildings were possible. This was the case, for instance, when a building was intended for more privileged groups of people according to certain criteria. In such instances, higher ceilings might be introduced, or red brick – an expensive and scarce material – could be used for façades instead of the prefabricated concrete panels typical of standard projects. In other cases, departures from the standard were initiated by the architects themselves. Nevertheless, such efforts required considerable justification, as any variation had to be defended in terms of cost and material availability, and could not exceed prescribed norms.

The residential building at 313 Brīvības Street, Riga, designed by Marta Staņa, Imants Jākobsons, and Harolds Kanders and completed in 1970, is one such example. It was treated as an experimental case, allowing the architects considerable freedom in their design solutions. The most notable features are the decorative glass façade panels and the floor plans, which enable cross-ventilation of the apartments.

A large residential complex situated between Skolas, Baznīcas, and Bruņinieku Streets in Riga was designed by Modris Ģelzis and completed in 1971. It features considerably larger apartments with corner windows and deep loggias. One of its most valuable aspects is the attention given to the existing vegetation: large oak trees were preserved, with the building volumes arranged around them – an approach that contrasts with the traditional modernist *tabula rasa* strategy.

Latvian architects embraced postmodernism in the late 1980s as a phenomenon of the Western world. They had grown weary of state-imposed socialist modernist dogmas and were eager to explore this new and fashionable architectural language. The residential building at 90 Miera Street, Riga, designed by Andris Kronbergs and Jānis Lejnieks and completed in 1989, illustrates this development. Its relatively simple overall composition features folly-like towers with curved roof sections and a sharp corner detail projecting from the main building volume.

Similarly postmodern is the residential building at 19 Firsa Sadovņikova Street, Riga, designed by Juris Poga and completed in 1992. The building demonstrates a clear affinity with Aldo Rossi's *Casa Aurora*, completed a few years earlier. According to Poga, he was inspired by the project after encountering it in *Domus* magazine. The use of red brick and green detailing indeed recalls the Italian reference, while the most architecturally compelling aspects are the organisation of pedestrian and vehicular circulation at the rear of the building, as well as the split-level apartment layouts in one of its wings.

A couple of years later, in 1994, Juris Poga completed another innovative project – the residential building at 37 Ūnijas Street. A long sequence of identical sections, slightly shifted in relation to one another to enhance the perspective view, is characterised by extensive flat wall surfaces in red brick punctuated by relatively small windows. This elevation faces a busy traffic road. On the opposite side, the building opens toward a much more intimate inner courtyard, providing ample sunlight and fresh air to the residents. The building also features a non-functional, purely aesthetic corner tower and a pitched fronton above each entrance, giving it the appearance of a contemporary fortress.

Seaside life
Moving further along the Brīvības Street axis and out of Riga toward the Estonian capital, Tallinn, one passes through Saulkrasti and Zvejniekciems – a continuous seaside agglomeration now known as a popular summer getaway for many Latvians.

Already during the Soviet era, Saulkrasti was identified by urban planners as a suitable location for summer cottages. These were typically self-built structures, set on small plots where people devoted themselves to growing vegetables, fruit, and flowers both as a hobby and as a means of subsistence.

Although incredibly compact and functional, it also seems to be designed prioritising aesthetic experience over functionality – as a resistance to the Soviet Socialist requirement for extreme austerity in architecture by Chrushchev's decree of 1955.

One such summer cabin was built by Modris Ģelzis for his own family (10 Inčupes Street, Saulkrasti, 1959). The summerhouse is a tiny dwelling of less than 20 m², equipped with built-in sleeping areas, a shower, and a living space ingeniously organised around a kitchen that cuts through it. Despite its modest size and intimate character, the building has been granted the status of a Cultural Monument of State Significance – undoubtedly a well-deserved recognition for an edifice in which envelope and interior form an inseparable whole, carefully positioned among the pines on a Baltic seaside dune. The building carries evident references to Scandinavian architecture, much admired by Ģelzis, as reflected in his redrawings from foreign architectural magazines. Although extremely compact and efficient, it also appears to prioritise aesthetic experience over strict functionality – supposedly an implicit resistance to the Soviet socialist requirement for austerity in architecture, formalised in Khrushchev's 1955 decree.

Further along the route toward Tallinn, one passes through Zvejniekciems – a former fishermen's village that developed into a prosperous kolkhoz, still focused on the fishing industry. In the early 1950s, the young Marta Staņa arrived here in search of work where her talent and energy could be put to good use. She took on the position of construction manager (as an architect was not considered necessary) and was given the opportunity to conceive the master plan for a new village and to design low-rise apartment buildings for local fishermen and their families.

Staņa, although a fierce fan of modern movement (standpoint for which she was even fired from the teaching position as a practice assistant at the faculty of architecture just a year before), had clearly attempted to design the building according to the political preferences. Yet, one could argue that she has managed to trick the clerks with something that draws inspiration from Nordic Classicsm and work of architects such as Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerentz.

The growing community also required a social and cultural venue, and Staņa therefore designed the social club for the *Zvejnieks* kolkhoz (Atpūtas Street, Zvejniekciems; Marta Staņa, Andris Kalniņš, 1956). The design began in 1951, when Stalin was still in power, along with his dictate on architectural expression that promoted an imperial style, often referred to as Stalinist Baroque. Although Staņa was a committed proponent of the modern movement – a position that had even led to her dismissal from a teaching role as a practice assistant at the Faculty of Architecture just a year earlier – she clearly attempted to design the building in line with prevailing political expectations. Yet one could argue that she managed to outmaneuver the authorities with a design that instead draws on Nordic Classicism and the work of architects such as Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerentz.

Soon after Staņa began designing the Zvejniekciems School in 1955, she was able to return to modernist architecture, as political attitudes had shifted radically following Khrushchev's decree. As a result, a functional building clearly inspired by examples from the Western world was completed in 1959. Particular emphasis was placed on ingenious daylighting solutions, as well as on covered outdoor play spaces for children.


1


2


3


4


5


6


7


8


9


10


11


12


13


14


15


16


17


18


19


20


21


22


23


24


25


26


27


28

Wall Atlas

Professors study Latvia's architectural masterpieces with great attention and precision. The buildings are approached from the perspective of the architect's original intention, with the aim of understanding the spatial logic, materiality and design decisions as clearly as possible. They take the time to move through the spaces, pause, observe and consciously absorb the sequence of experiences.

During these visits, an interplay emerges between analysis and experience. Technical details are meticulously examined and discussed, whilst at the same time leaving room for intuitive interpretation. The process unfolds as an alternation of intensive discussions and moments of silence, in which there is also room for personal reflection. This results in a layered reading of the buildings, in which knowledge-sharing and individual experience constantly reinforce one another.

Philharmonic concert hall, Modris Ģelzis
1 Photographer Sílvia Ramos
2 Photographer Liene Jākobsone
3 Photographer Sílvia Ramos

Union of Latvian Fishermen Kolkhoz, Daina Danneberga
4 Photographer Sílvia Ramos

Riga Pārdaugava Region municipal building, Modris Ģelzis
5 Photographer Sílvia Ramos
6 Photographer Liene Jākobsone

Rīgas Modes, Viktors Rimša
7 Photographer Sílvia Ramos

Dailes Theatre, Marta Staņa
8 Photographer Sílvia Ramos
9 Photographer Emanuela Margione
10, 11 Photographer Cesare Dallatomasina
12 Photographer Alexandra Vougia

Residential complex situated between Skolas, Baznīcas, and Bruņinieku Streets, Modris Ģelzis
13 Photographer Sílvia Ramos

Housing block Firsa Sadovnikova street, Juris Poga
14, 15 Photographer Cesare Dallatomasina

Summerhouse, Modris Ģelzis
16 Photographer Liene Jākobsone
17, 18 Photographer Sílvia Ramos
19 Photographer Cesare Dallatomasina
20 Photographer Sílvia Ramos
21-25 Photographer Cesare Dallatomasina

Clubhouse Zvejniekciems, Marta Staņa
26 Photographer Emanuela Margione
27 Photographer Cesare Dallatomasina

Social club for the Zvejnieks kolkhoz, Marta Staņa
28 Photographer Liene Jākobsone

– Liene Jākobsone, Manten Devriendt

3 Souvenirs of Exemplary Buildings

Anonymous References

Modris Ģelzis was born in 1929 in Latvia during the democratic and prosperous interwar period. However, his architectural education took place under Soviet occupation, during Stalin's regime. This shaped his trajectory in fundamental ways: most advocates of modernism at the university had either fled to the West during the Second World War to escape state repression or had been dismissed from their positions.

He graduated in 1955 – the same year Khrushchev issued his decree against the "excesses" in architecture. This marked a sharp turn in architectural policy, partly redirecting it toward the path it had followed before Latvia's annexation into the Soviet Union. Only partly, however, because the decree promoted an extreme austerity, where everything was subordinated to cost and material availability. Furthermore, even the design process itself was constrained – standardised projects developed centrally in Moscow were adapted and implemented across the entire Union. Unique, original designs were permitted only on rare and exceptional occasions. This stood in contrast to Western modernism, which, while functional and rational, was also strongly driven by aesthetic and the pursuit of originality.

Ģelzis was a committed modernist. Much of his work is defined by clean forms and functionality, but also by expressive elements that exceeded the expectations of Soviet officials. He admired Western modernist architecture, and this is clearly reflected in his own oeuvre, including the summer house he designed for his family in Pabaži (1959).

Later in life, he was able to travel abroad several times. But when he designed this small jewel, his main sources of inspiration were Western architectural magazines, which he accessed through his workplace via the state library. To preserve ideas for future reference, he and his colleagues would retrace images from these magazines onto tracing paper.

Over time, he built up a substantial collection of these drawings, carefully organising them thematically on sheets and storing them in folders. Before his death, this collection – along with much of his architectural archive – was donated to the Latvian Museum of Architecture. As part of the *Updating the Grand Tour* project, the Latvian team digitised his collection of retracings. It offers a revealing insight into how he viewed Western architecture, as well as into his interests and sources of inspiration.

The collection reveals a particularly strong interest in interiors and furniture design. Many of the drawings document interior views and individual pieces of indoor and outdoor furniture and lamps. Chairs appear with striking frequency, alongside detailed studies of their proportions and construction.

Alongside these are plans of interiors, often focusing on compact living environments and their functional organisation. Particularly notable is the concentration of studies from the 1950s, when Ģelzis closely examined private houses and holiday homes. He retraced both photographic views and architectural plans, suggesting a deliberate effort to understand not only the appearance but also the spatial logic of these buildings. It is likely that this period of study informed the design of his own summer house, completed in 1959, where these influences were translated into a personal architectural language.

Later, his focus appears to shift toward larger public and residential buildings, reflecting the development of his professional career. He went on to design two concert halls, a theatre, several administrative buildings, residential complexes, and a sanatorium.

At the same time, it is difficult to determine exactly when the retracings were made, as they were not dated. The source material spans a wide range, from magazines published in the 1930s to those from the late 1980s. It reflects his sustained interest in early functionalist examples as well as in modernism at its peak, followed by a gradual shift toward detailing and furniture design. By this point, he had likely developed his own architectural language and was primarily seeking specific solutions for technical detailing and planning principles.

The retracings offer a curious insight into Ģelzis' way of engaging with foreign architecture. Most of the drawings include only basic bibliographic information – the title of the magazine they were traced from (often abbreviated to initials), along with the issue and year. When depicting architecture, he occasionally notes what is shown, such as a house or an airport, and sometimes the city or country in which it is located. In the case of furniture, however, almost no commentary is added beyond these minimal references.

Notably, he almost never records the names of architects or designers, with only very rare exceptions. Among hundreds of retracings, the only figures he identifies are well-known modernists – Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, Marcel Breuer, Walter Gropius, Alvar Aalto, and Eero Saarinen – along with several Finnish architects, including Aarne Ervi, Toivo Korhonen, Jaakko Laapotti, Timo Penttilä, Kari Virta, and Eero Virkkunen. It is therefore striking to find a small sketch of the canonical Eames House, identified only by its location – Los Angeles – and the source of the image, *The Architectural Review*. The same applies to other notable examples, including major museums and concert halls, which remain largely unnamed despite their prominence.

This way of handling references suggests something important: Ģelzis did not fully see himself as part of the world he was studying. The examples he retraced remained largely anonymous – valuable as sources of technical solutions or aesthetic inspiration, but detached from their authors, who were rarely acknowledged. It also points to the nature of his engagement with foreign architecture, which appears relatively superficial. Ģelzis seems less interested in the stories behind the buildings – in the architects' intentions, conceptual thinking, or the reasoning that shaped them – than in the formal and technical aspects he could extract and adapt.

The slight departure from this pattern in the case of Finnish architects may be explained in a similar way. They were geographically and culturally closer, and therefore more tangible – figures he might have encountered in person, or expected to encounter in the near future. Travel and exchange between the Soviet Union and Finland were comparatively more active, shaped by specific political agreements, which may have made these architects feel less distant and more real within his frame of reference.

Seen in this light, the retracings are less a record of admiration than a tool of translation – an attempt to access a distant architectural culture under conditions that limited direct engagement. Their anonymity is not simply a matter of omission, but a reflection of a structural distance, in which architecture circulated as images and fragments rather than as authored works embedded in discourse. Ģelzis' archive reveals a practice shaped by this condition: selective, pragmatic, and oriented toward extraction rather than interpretation. The borrowed forms are not reproduced but reassembled, filtered through local constraints and personal intuition. What emerges is a situated modernism – formed in a system that both restricted access and made such acts of appropriation necessary.



<u>List of magazines referenced in the retracings of Modris Ģelzis:</u>
L'Architecture d'Ajourd'hui – France
L'Architecture Française – France
La Maison Française – France

Deutsche Bauzeitschrift – Germany
Architectur und Wohnform – Germany
Architectur und Inendekoration – Germany
Baumeister – Germany
Form – Germany
Moderne Bauformen – Germany
Möbeldesign – Germany
Möbelkultur – Germany
Detail – Germany

Architectural Review – United Kingdom
Architectural Design – United Kingdom
Decorative Art – United Kingdom
Architectural World – United Kingdom
Habitat – United Kingdom

Mobilia – the Netherlands

Bauen + Wohnen – Switzerland

Domus – Italy
Abitare – Italy

Byggmästaren – Sweden
Arkitekten – Sweden

Arkitektur – Norway
Byggkunst – Norway

ARK – Finland

Architektura ČSR – Czechoslovak Socialist Republic

Projekt – Poland

Japan Interior Design – Japan
Japan Architect – Japan

Interior Design – USA

Postmodern Dreams of a Soviet Generation

– Liene Jākobsone

Juris Poga is born in 1957 and is still a practicing architect. From the three architects of the chosen exemplary buildings, he is the only one alive, so I have the chance to talk to him in person. In our conversation on May 2, 2024, Juris talks a lot about his past travel experiences, yet, similarly to other architects of his generation I've talked to, his recollections mostly focus on anectodes from the Soviet life rather than architecture. Nevertheless, there are episodes in his story that reveal the situations architects faced at the time, the inspirations they had and ultimately – what have been the architectural references for his projects.

When asked about his travels, Poga immediately recalls a trip to Sofia, Bulgaria, in the mid-1980s. Although this was not his first journey outside the USSR – he had previously travelled to Poland with a group of coursemates during his studies – it appears to have been the most adventurous.

He and a couple of colleagues had won second place in an architectural competition and travelled there to collect the prize money. The sum was substantial – 7,000 Bulgarian leva, more than the cost of a car at the time. However, after receiving it, they realised they would not be permitted to take such an amount of cash out of the country. They divided the money among themselves and decided to spend it instead. Only then did they discover that the shops were as empty as those back home.

He continues the story with a wealth of vivid details about their adventures, clearly relishing the memory of those carefree, youthful days. At the same time, he takes evident pride in the project they submitted, and this part of our conversation shifts toward his views on architecture at the time.

Poga recalls how they – young, ambitious architects who had leafed through the limited selection of foreign architecture magazines available at their workplace – became aware of the rise of postmodernism. It was clear to them that they needed to adopt this new and fashionable style for their competition entry. He jokingly describes their understanding of what a "proper" postmodern project should include: an oblique line of seven degrees here and there, along with some unusual windows.

They were also influenced by postmodernist architects in neighbouring countries, such as Leonhard Lapin in Estonia and Eugenijus Miliūnas in Lithuania. The latter would later design a building that Poga and his contemporaries describe as "a cult object" for Latvian architects: the Mykolas Žilinskas Art Gallery in Kaunas, inaugurated in 1989 – a monumental museum featuring characteristic postmodern elements such as symmetry, triangular forms, and decorative columns.

In Sofia, Poga recalls being particularly impressed by a visit to the Vitosha New Otani Hotel (now the Hotel Marinela Sofia), designed as part of the Japanese New Otani hotel chain by the Metabolist architect Kisho Kurokawa and completed in 1979. He remembers the Japanese gardens within the building, the lofty atriums, and its openness toward public outdoor spaces. This seems to stand in stark contrast to Soviet architecture that is much more hostile and made to create hierarchies between those who can enter and those who can't.

Further, when asked about his architectural references from abroad, Poga points to indirect sources. This is not unusual under Soviet conditions, when travel was a privilege granted to only a few. He recalls attending slideshow evenings at the Latvian Union of Architects, organised whenever a member had returned from abroad and was expected to share their impressions with the wider professional community. These events were considered an important part of ongoing professional development, given that most architects would never have the opportunity to travel and experience any of it firsthand.

Poga specifically mentions lectures by Modris Ģelzis, who spoke about his trip to London, and by Ivars Strautmanis, who reported on his journey to the United States. Both presented numerous colour slides, and the small lecture hall at the Union was typically filled to capacity with curious architects.

He also recalls a memory from his early childhood. When Poga was less than ten years old, his mother visited Moscow to see the exhibition "Архитектура США" ("Architecture of the USA"), one of the official American cultural exhibitions organised during the Cold War by the United States Information Agency in 1965. She brought home the exhibition's official catalogue – a glossy, full-colour, magazine-like publication. Poga remembers being struck by the intensity and clarity of the images, unlike anything he had encountered in the books or magazines available in the USSR at the time. It is evident that he returned to this catalogue repeatedly later in his life as a young architect, as he is still able to recall some of the leading American architects featured in it.

Our conversation then turns to the project of his that was included in the selection of exemplary buildings by the Latvian *Updating the Grand Tour* team – the residential building at 19 Firsa Sadovņikova Street in Riga. The building demonstrates a clear affinity with Aldo Rossi's *Casa Aurora*, completed a few years earlier, in 1987. Poga encountered the project in *Domus* magazine, which became a key source of inspiration. The use of red brick and green detailing recalls the Italian reference, while the most architecturally compelling aspects lie in the organisation of pedestrian and vehicular circulation at the rear of the building, as well as in the split-level apartment layouts in one of its wings.

Poga explains that the entire residential complex – with hundreds of apartments and occupying almost an entire city block – was developed as part of a new experimental municipal programme, the "Youth Residential Complexes." The initiative aimed to alleviate the housing shortage by involving young families directly in the construction of their future homes.

At the time, most standardised residential building projects were developed centrally in Moscow-based institutes and were expected to be used as widely as possible across the Soviet Union. This policy was grounded in the belief that designing site-specific, original projects would be an inefficient use of time and human resources. As a result, Latvian architects were primarily engaged in adapting these standardised designs to local conditions – positioning them on assigned plots, adjusting plans to fit the site, and modifying materials based on availability. Occasionally, however, there were opportunities to introduce more substantial changes to the standard designs, and this project was one such case.

With the aim of popularising the newly established "Youth Residential Complexes" programme, municipal officials were open to a more progressive design, provided it remained based on the standard 103rd series. In addition to the previously mentioned references – Aldo Rossi's *Casa Aurora* and the Karl Marx-Hof in Vienna (Karl Ehn, 1930), both of which informed the project's aesthetic – Poga also points to a residence built in the 1920s in Sverdlovsk, USSR (now Yekaterinburg, Russia), as a key inspiration for its functional organisation.

He had the opportunity to visit the city and explore dormitory-type housing developed during the early radical communist period for communes attempting to implement collective ways of living. Although not visible on the façades,

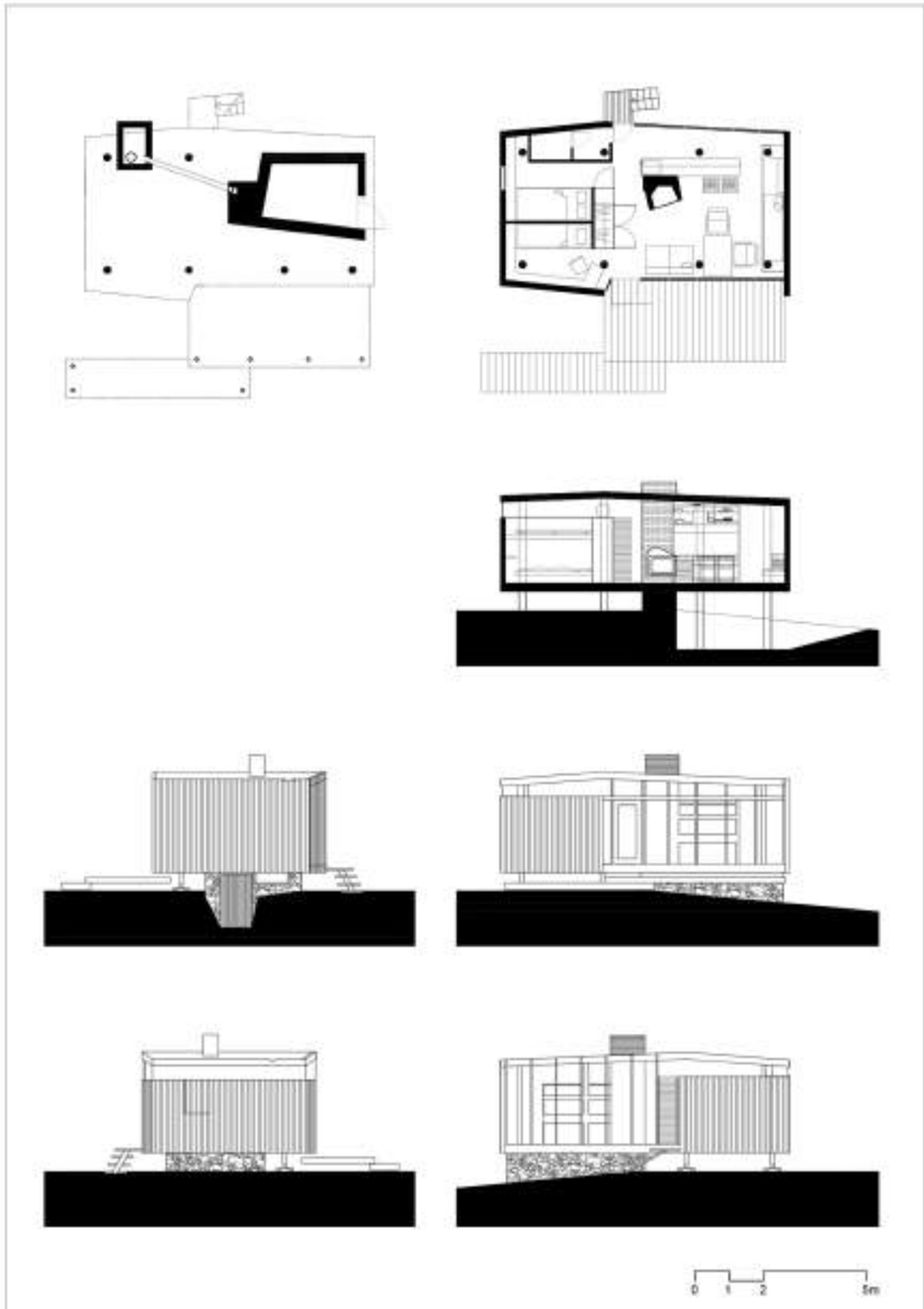
the Sverdlovsk project employed a principle akin to Le Corbusier's split-level planning. Long central corridors ran through the building, with shared sanitary and kitchen facilities at their ends, and small apartments arranged along both sides.

A comparable layout was developed in one wing of the Sadovņikova Street complex. On the north-facing street side, corridors occur on every other floor, while the apartments are accessed via split levels – requiring residents to ascend or descend half a storey.

Poga's account reveals how architectural ideas circulated not through direct experience, but through fragments – magazines, lectures, and distant encounters. His work thus emerges not as an isolated gesture, but as part of a broader effort to translate global architectural currents into the constraints of the late Soviet context.

**Summerhouse,
Modris Ģelzis**

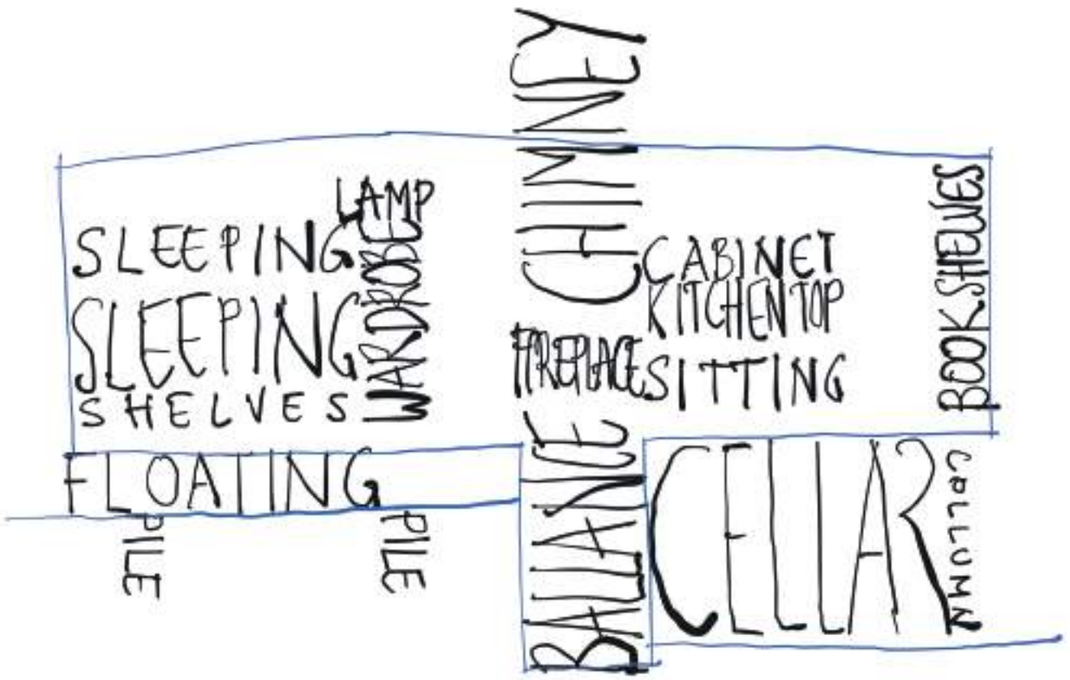
Redrawings



3 Souvenirs on Exemplary Buildings

**Summerhouse,
Modris Ģelzis**

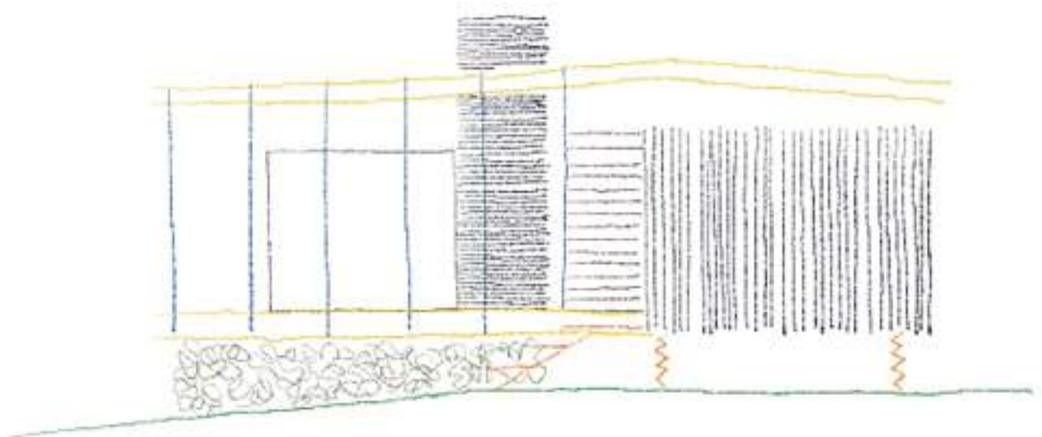
Architectural narratives



**Summerhouse,
Modris Ģelzis**

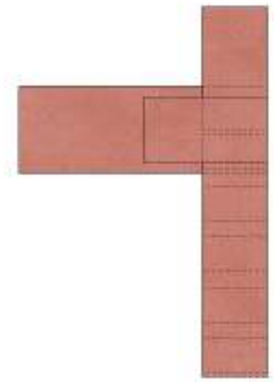
Visual interpretations

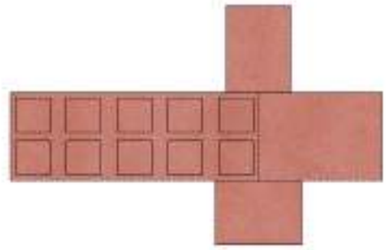




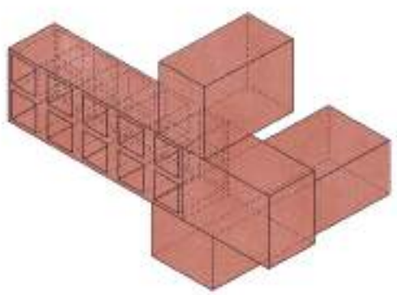
Summerhouse, Modris Ģelzis

Models



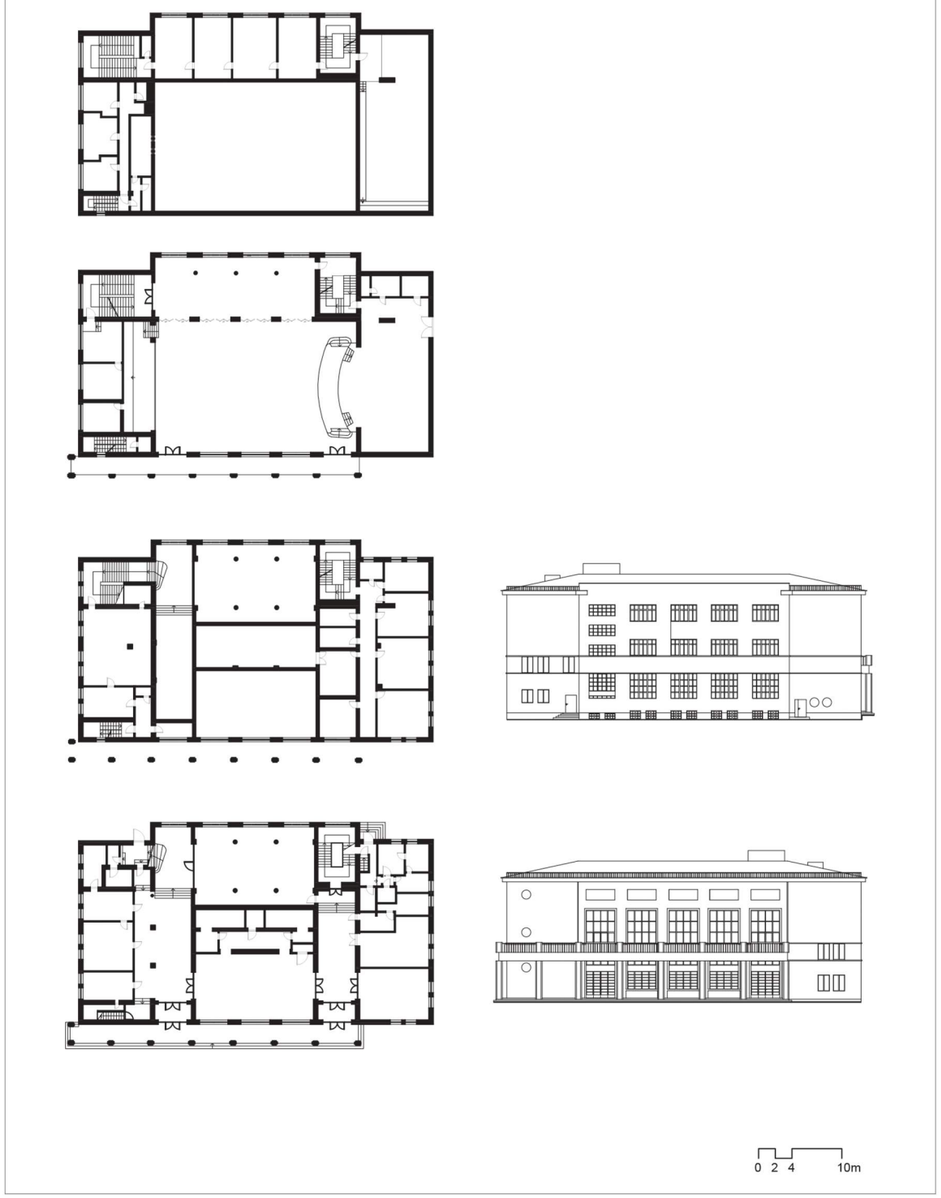






Social club for the Zvejnieks kolkhoz, Marta Staņa

Redrawings



Social club for the Zvejnieks kolkhoz, Marta Staņa

Architectural narratives

Social club for the Zvejnieks kolkhoz, Marta Staņa

Visual interpretations



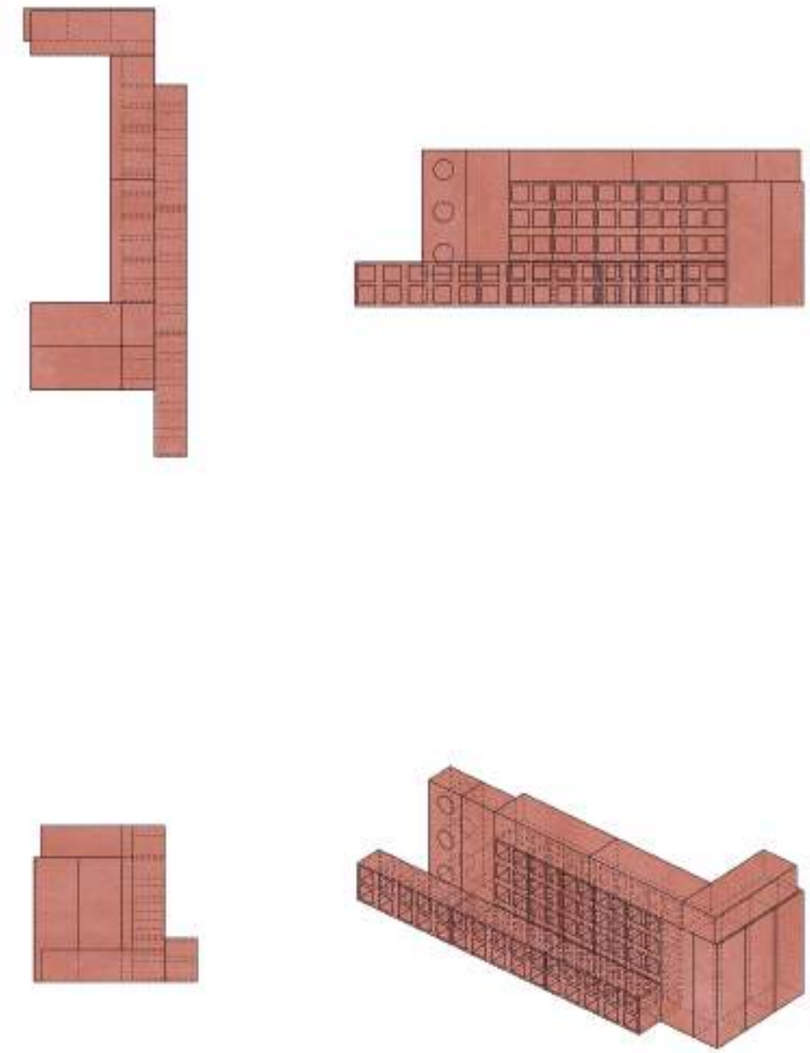




3 Souvenirs on Exemplary Buildings

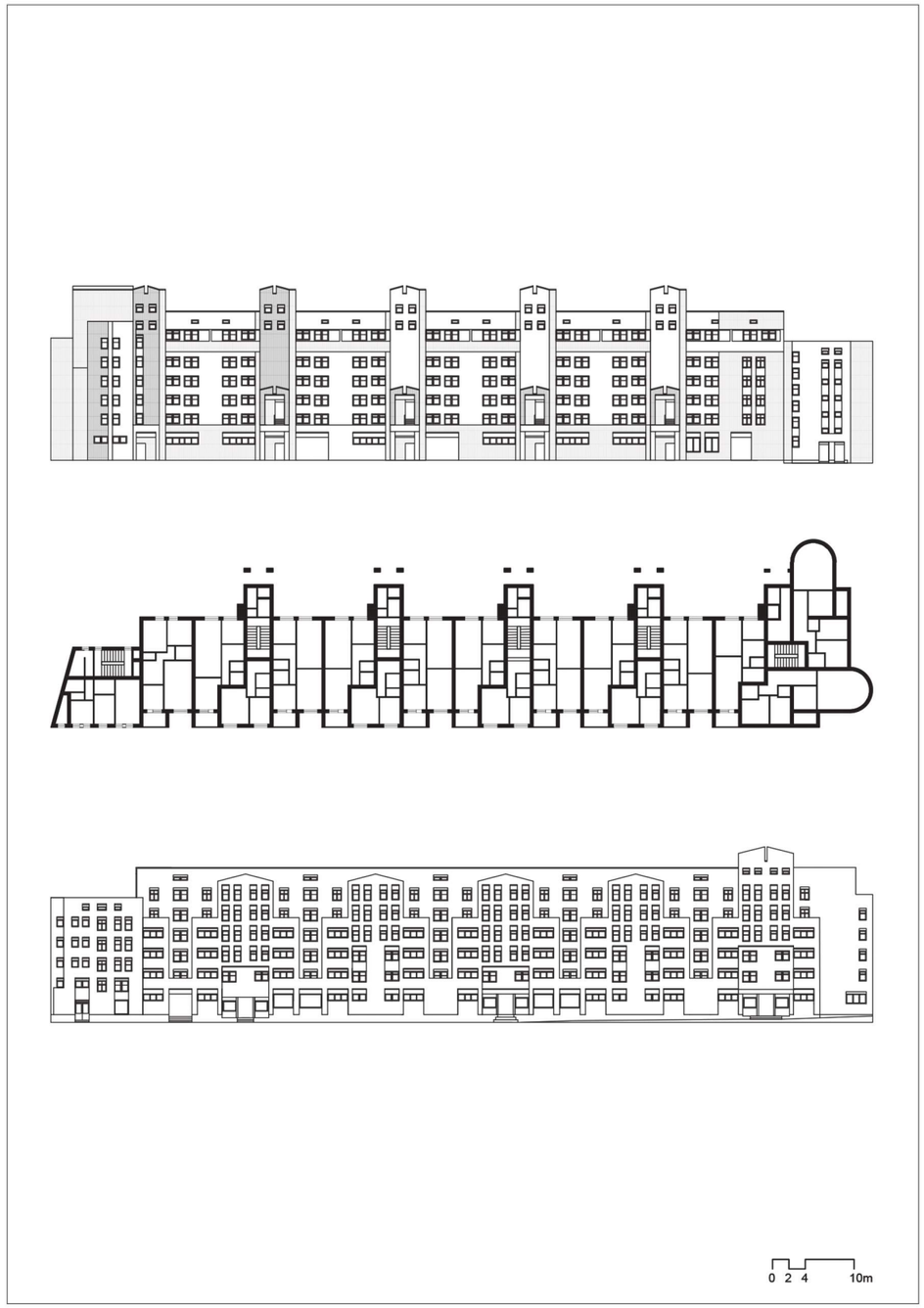
Social club for the Zvejnieks kolkhoz, Marta Staņa

Models



Residential building at 19 Firsa Sadovņikova Street, Juris Poga

Redrawings



Residential building at 19 Firsa Sadovņikova Street, Juris Poga

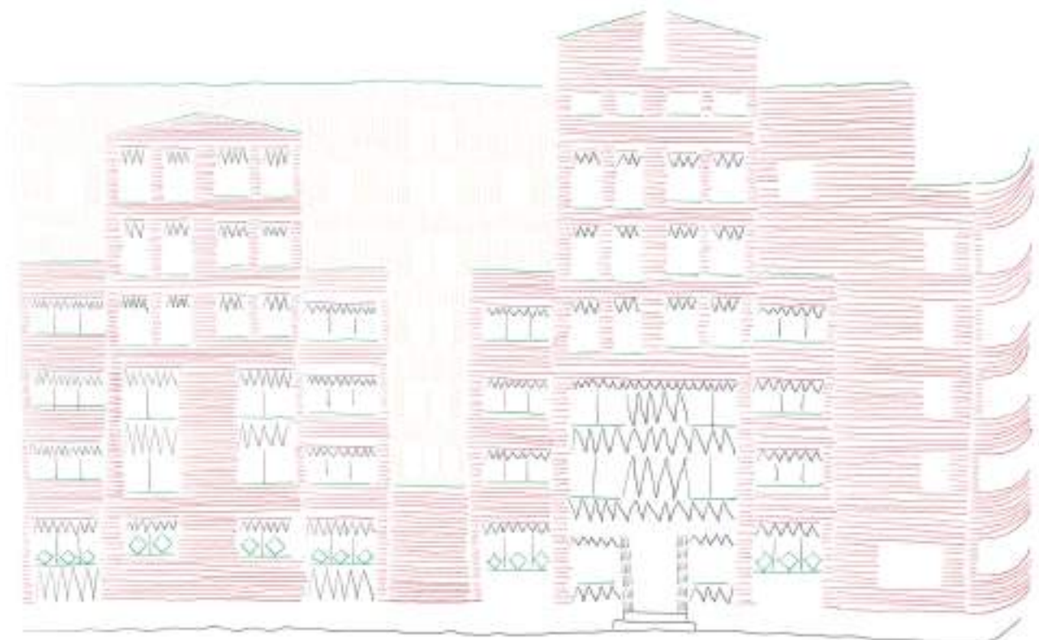
Architectural narratives

Residential building at 19 Firsa Sadovņikova Street, Juris Poga

Visual interpretations

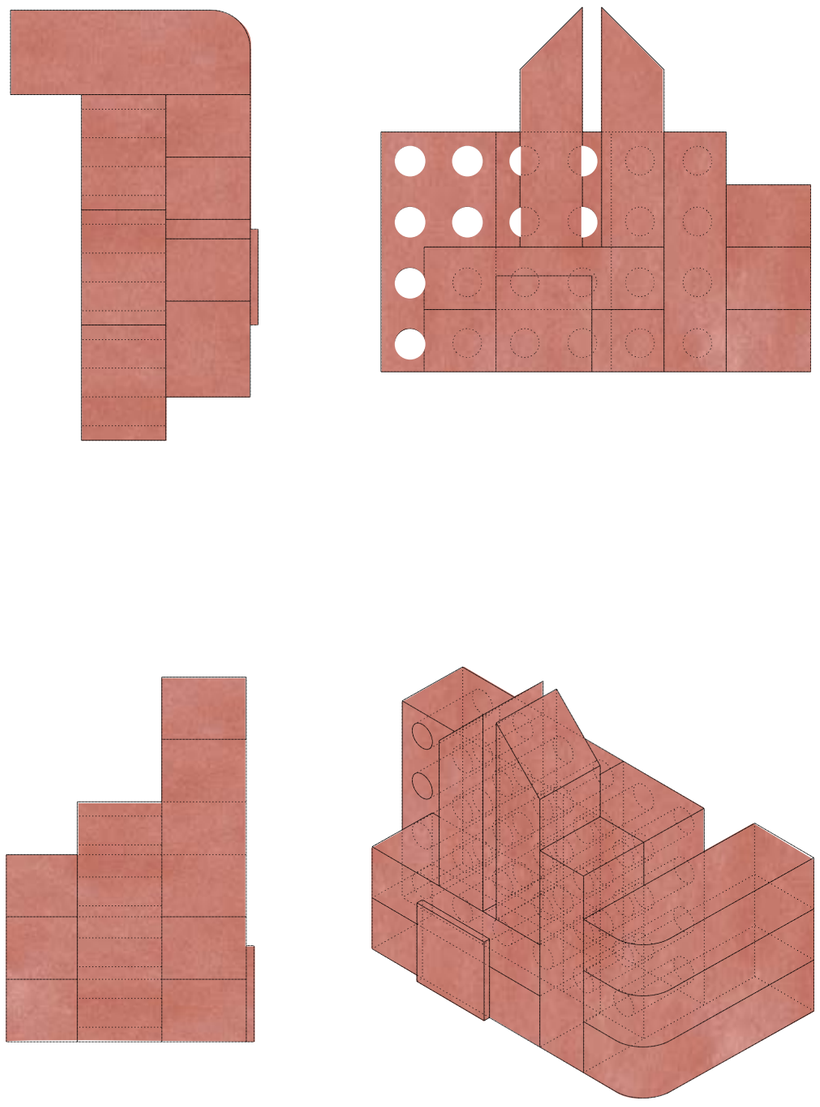






Residential building at 19 Firsa Sadovņikova Street, Juris Poga

Models



4 Learning by travel with...

On a Tight Leash: Traveling as a Soviet Architect

– Liene Jākobsone in conversation with Jānis Lejnieks (1951-2026) on January 26, 2024.

Tell me how architects traveled during the Soviet period?
Only members of the Union of Architects were allowed to travel. Each year, the Latvian SSR Union of Architects was allocated about ten countries, and for each country it could send around two people. The board of the Union of Architects published this list, and then members of the union could apply for the country they wanted to go to. There was a foreign relations commission within the union. Each year there were about three to four applications per trip, and then this commission would review them.

So few? Wasn't there a lot of interest in these trips?
Well, okay, maybe ten. But you understand – if only two people had to be chosen... And besides, one person could travel no more often than once every three years, so if you had recently managed to go somewhere, you didn't submit an application in the following years. I graduated from RPI (now RTU) in 1975 and joined the union in 1978, and I was quite active there. In 1980 a trip to Japan was announced – one spot – and I was given it. It was incredibly cool! But at that time I had an acquaintance, a buddy, Alfrēds Stinkuls – a kind of hippie who has written a book about himself; he had gone to America and now lives in Latvia. I used to visit him occasionally to listen to music. But it turned out that he had some kind of connections with the émigré community. So one day, before my departure to Moscow (through which we were supposed to travel onward to Japan), I was summoned to the Cheka. There they questioned me thoroughly about Stinkuls – how I knew him, how long, where I had met him... And in the end they said: "You know, you won't be going to Japan this time."

Just because of an acquaintance?
Yes, apparently I was acquainted with some kind of dissident.

But then in 1982 the trade union offered me a trip to Czechoslovakia. I hadn't even applied for it. Whether it was some kind of apology for the Japan incident, I don't know.

Other than that, I didn't get to go anywhere else. At the Union of Architects they told me quite directly: back then they didn't let you go on that trip to Japan, and we lost the spot. If we give you another chance, there's a risk that the Cheka won't let you go again and we'll lose the spot once more – one that someone else could have used.

Later, in 1988 – by then it was already the time of perestroika – I applied for a trip to Finland. That was a really great trip. It was my first time in Finland, and we spent about ten days traveling by bus all over the country: Helsinki, Tampere, Turku. There were two of us from Latvia – me and Lilija Saško – and from the entire union there were about 30 people altogether.

Who planned the itineraries for trips like that?
That was done in Moscow. In Finland there was a local guide, though, who led the tours in Russian – a nice lady who clearly had guided architects many times before. We visited various churches, Aalto's studio, the Paimio Sanatorium designed by Aalto, in Tampere we looked at work by Reima Pietilä, and then there were also some examples of postmodernism in Helsinki.

So was Finland your first foreign architectural experience?
Yes, it was a kind of positive shock – a very good impression. First of all, you walk into a shop and see: an escalator, three floors, and goods! In the late 1980s, in Riga, the shelves in any department store were empty

Then in 1990 some acquaintances from Denmark came to visit us and stayed at our place for about a week. After that, one of those Danish students invited me and Irēna [Lejnieks' wife] to Copenhagen that same summer. We had a private invitation, and I even went to Leningrad [now Saint Petersburg] to arrange the visas.

At that time we also visited our friend, the architect Sarmīte Zirdziņa – now Andersone – who had married a Swede and has been living in

Sweden for 30 years now. Back then she was only just starting to travel there and work, and we went with her to Helsingborg in Sweden, even though we didn't have visas for that country. But the border between Denmark and Sweden is open, and Sarmīte had an idea: she said she would come pick us up in Copenhagen, and we would all take the ferry across to Helsingborg together. She only warned us not to speak Latvian to each other on the boat!

All in all, the architecture of the Scandinavian countries is fairly similar. In Copenhagen, of course, there are huge numbers of bicycles and, for us, all kinds of other surprises – for example, streets full of bicycles that no one even uses anymore. In the early 1990s, those everyday, domestic contrasts were the most astonishing thing when traveling around Europe.

But what do you think was the intention of Soviet officials in organizing these trips abroad? Overall, after all, they tried to prevent people in the Union from finding out that life outside the Union was better.
Already right after the death of Joseph Stalin and the end of the era of Soviet baroque that he introduced, Moscow consistently looked toward the West. At that time, books in Russian also began to appear – about Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, Alvar Aalto. These were mostly monographs written by Russian authors. After all, Le Corbusier had also designed a building in Moscow – the Centrosoyuz Building – and German architects, too, cooperated with the Soviet authorities; they were present in Moscow.

In the Soviet Union, books titled *Za rubezhom* ("Abroad") began to be published, describing how those simple functionalist buildings were being constructed in the West. There was also literature available in university and design institute libraries, and once a week they would bring in about five or six journals from the state library, such as Architectural Review and Domus.

But surely first-hand experience leaves a completely different impression than magazines do?
Yes, of course. That's why anyone who had traveled somewhere was required, after returning, to give a presentation to colleagues at the Union of Architects. They would show 100 slides or more; 30–50 people would be sitting in the hall, and the author would talk. Gunārs Melbergs traveled quite a lot. With his talk about America, he even organized, I think, three separate sessions – about what the cities were like: the skyscrapers, the metro, the traffic – how everything functioned. And then people who would never go there themselves would sit watching with their mouths open – so that's what America looks like! They'd look at the photos and wonder: the sidewalks are all covered with dark blobs! Turns out people spit their chewing gum on the ground there! Those were the kinds of surprises Melbergs talked about.

Well, if you are kept on a tight leash, a week or two abroad – even once every three years – felt like a huge adventure.

But surely it didn't benefit the Soviet authorities if people came back from these trips realizing that they themselves were kept on a tight leash?
True – but at the same time the government understood that Western knowledge was necessary. After all, hotels for Western visitors also had to be designed, such as the *Latvija International*. Hotels intended for international contacts in the Soviet Union had to be no worse than those in the West. And for an architect to be able to design such a hotel, they needed to go and see for themselves – if only to Finland or somewhere similar – what that architecture was actually like, what such a hotel looked like: its style, its details. Of course, you could look at drawings published in books, but an architect also needs to be able to "feel" things a little.

A PDF version of this book is available for free in Open Access at up.pt/press/

ISBN 978-989-746-465-2

Publisher
U.PORTO PRESS

Up Gran T

European Commission

POLITECNICO

U.PORTO FACULDADE DE ARQUITETURA UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO

ALMA MATER STUDIORUM UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA DIPARTIMENTO DI ARCHITETTURA

Art Academy of Latvia

ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI

EKA

Workbook of Affinities

Updating the Grand Tour.
Memory and Invention of the
European Built Environment

The *Workbook of Affinities* comprises 7 sections that synthesise the results of the exercises undertaken by the UpGranT Consortium in the conception of a learning by travelling pedagogical model, re-empowering the Grand Tour's long-standing practice.

Section 1 UpGranT Consortium
Section 2 Politecnico di Milano · POLIMI
Section 3 Faculty of Architecture – University of Porto · FAUP
Section 4 Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna · UNIBO
Section 5 Art Academy of Latvia · LMA
Section 6 Aristotle University of Thessaloniki · AUTh
Section 7 Estonian Art Academy · EKA

– Apostolos Kalfopoulos,
Alexandra Vougia

Damien Mac Uladh,
copy editor - proof reader

– Alexandra Vougia

1 Grand Tourists P3

Instances of direct and oblique learning: some notes on the history of 20th century-Greek architecture

Wall atlas

2 Grand Tour P11

Grand Tour #4

Wall atlas

– Alexandra Vougia

3 Souvenirs on Exemplary Buildings P19

Balancing Affinities: Architecture between individual creation and disciplinary

"Polytechneion" of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Kazazis Residence in Panorama

Museum of Byzantine Culture

4 Learning by travel with… P37

Excerpts from interviews with Grand Tourists: Anastasios Kotsiopoulos, Nikolaos Kalogirou, Morpho Papanikolaou, Rena Sakellaridou, Lois Papadopoulos

The UpGranT “Workbook of Affinities” is published under the Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnerships in Higher Education programme, funded by the European Union. Reference: 2023-1-IT02-KA220-HED-000158377.

The views expressed are those of the author(s) alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the Erasmus+ - INDIRE National Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting administration can be held responsible for them.

The contents in this section are the entire responsibility of the partner organisation and their authors.

Instances of direct and oblique learning: Some notes on the history of 20th century-Greek architecture

– *Alexandra Vougia*

1 Grand Tourists

> Travel, in the younger sort, is a part of education, in the elder a part of experience (Bacon 2008, p. 374).

Among his *Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall* (1625), the English philosopher Francis Bacon included “Of Travel”, a piece on the distinctive social ritual of travel as performed during the 17th century by the ruling elite of the Western world. Bacon understands this form of travel as a project of continuous expansion of knowledge and encounters, a commitment to and longing for cultural maturation and identity formation. In the four centuries since, the direct, as well as oblique, exposure to what lies beyond has been considered a vital pedagogical device within the architectural discipline.

This tendency could not be absent from the architectural history of contemporary Greece and will be illustrated through the life and work of the ten chosen Greek architects. The main criteria for selecting these architects were their willingness to expose themselves to, and comprehend, the intricate processes of architecture as a cultural and social production and their consistently extroverted attitude, demonstrated through physical travel as well as through other, oblique means. Our intention was to represent different generations and ideologies of the architecture of the 20th and 21st centuries produced mostly in Thessaloniki. In all cases, architectural exploration constituted a central pursuit in the formation of architectural language and the construction of a personal thesis in response to the heavy cultural dilemma between modernism and the various notions of (Greek) tradition.

The first pair of architects consists of Nikolaos Mitsakis (1899-1941) and Patroklos Karantinos (1903-1976). Both were part of the first generation of students admitted to the School of Architecture of the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) that opened in 1917. After the completion of their studies, they were confronted with the realities of an impoverished Greek society after the First World War and the Asia Minor Disaster in 1922. Their travels were liminal, however, this lack of physical travel was compensated for by up-to-date architectural libraries that enabled both to actively study interwar European Modernism.

Mitsakis did not pursue any further studies. Apart from the mandatory postings during his military service, he never travelled abroad again. However, he was fluent in French on his mother’s side, a fact that facilitated his access to international discourse through other channels. He maintained an impressive library, including extensive runs of Greek and international magazines published during the 1920s and 1930s, such as *L’ Architecture d’Aujourd’hui*, *Cahiers d’Art*, and *Der Baumeister*, as well as several Le Corbusier first editions. For most of his life, Mitsakis served the public sector. He studied the seminal works of European modernism closely, allowing different levels of spatial exploration to inform his designs – most notably in the Secondary School for Girls (1933) and the Gregorios Palamas School (1936-1939) in Thessaloniki. At the same time, these explorations were always evaluated through a critical consideration of local tradition, with these two approaches always in a prolific relationship, as shown in his design for the Agia Sofia School Complex (1928-1932).

Karantinos had a similarly limited experience of physically travelling abroad. His only trip was to Paris, for family reasons (1927-1928). There, he worked briefly in the office of August Perret and became interested in the work of Le Corbusier and in “New Architecture”. Yet, Karantinos travelled extensively in Greece, exploring the countryside in a localised Grand Tour that continuously informed his architectural practice. However, he cultivated an ongoing dialogue with the contemporary architectural scene, gradually achieving international recognition as a modern European architect. He participated in the CIAM IV committee (1933) while he maintained correspondence with

Alberto Sartoris, Walter Gropius, briefly Sigfried Giedion, André Bloc of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd hui*, Christian Zervos of *Cahiers d'art*, and others. He continued this exchange after the Second World War and regularly received invitations to feature his work in international publications and exhibitions.

Like Mitsakis, Karantinos worked for the public sector for most of his life. His association with Thessaloniki was decisive for his professional and academic career. In 1951, together with Kostas Bitsios and Alexandros Loizos, he won the first and third prizes in the competition for the Faculty of Chemistry of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTh). That year marked the beginning of a long and productive period during which Karantinos was involved with the planning of AUTh's campus expansion and the design of several buildings: the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics (1955-1961), the Student Dormitories (1955-1961), the University Observatory (1957-1961) and, in collaboration with Ioannis Liapis and Elias Scroumbelos, the "Polytechneion" (Faculty of Engineering, 1957-1962). Teaching became a significant part of his later career. In 1959 he was appointed professor at the newly established AUTh School of Architecture, a position he held until 1968, when he was dismissed by the Greek military junta.

The next two architects can be considered unequivocal Grand Tourists: figures who continuously pushed physical and intellectual boundaries in pursuit of expanded embodied knowledge and cultural experience. Constantinos A. Doxiadis (1913-1975) and Dimitris A. Fatouros (1928-2020) travelled and worked abroad systematically, understanding the process of experiencing other architectures, places and cultures as an ontological inquiry. Each architect, in their own way, exploited the radical modernisation of Greek society following the Second World War and the Greek Civil War, establishing a previously unimaginable global presence. For Doxiadis, the project of Greek modernisation required an undeniable trust in internationalism, a condition that, today, can be interpreted with all its negative ideological dimensions: colonialism, Western domination, capitalism. In contrast, for Fatouros travelling fulfilled a personal project: a more critical, adventurous process of perpetual learning and self-transformation.

Doxiadis is among the most influential architects and urban planners of the postwar period internationally. He graduated from the NTUA School of Architecture in 1935 and was awarded his PhD from the Technical University of Berlin, a year later, and he lectured extensively in several universities in the United States and Europe. Doxiadis served the project of Greek modernisation as both a public servant and private practitioner. He was appointed chief town planner for Greater Athens (1937), head of the Department of Regional and Town Planning of the Ministry of Public Works (during the Second World War), undersecretary and director-general of the Ministry of Reconstruction (1945-1948) and undersecretary of the Ministry of Coordination (1948-1951).

He founded his private practice, Doxiadis Associates, in 1953. Gradually, the firm became international, receiving commissions from the United Nations across the Middle East, Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas. To develop an informed, complete assessment of local conditions and support his wide network of projects, Doxiadis personally visited each site. It is during this period that he developed a deeper insight into foreign lands, cultures and communities, and began systematically to record his experiences in a series of diaries. Doxiadis' confidence in the global character and interdisciplinarity of spatial design culminated in the organisation of the Delos Symposia (1963-1975). These took place aboard a ship in the Aegean Sea, concluding in the ancient theatre of Delos, with a celebratory signing of the annual declaration. At the first symposium, Buckminster Fuller, Marshall McLuhan and Sigfried Giedion were among the intellectuals invited by Doxiadis.

Fatouros is also considered one of the most prolific Greek architects of the 20th century, not only in terms of architectural production but also his visual work, writings, teaching and a broader contribution to Greek culture. He completed his studies at the NTUA School of Architecture (1952) and in 1959, he became a professor at the new AUTh Department of Architecture, where he remained until his retirement, in 1996. Fatouros taught and lectured extensively in various universities in Europe and the United States, such as Yale University (visiting fellow, 1966-1967), MIT, Cornell, Berkeley (visiting lecturer, 1967), Columbia, Stockholm, Helsinki, UCL, Tallinn, Milan and Delft. During his undergraduate studies, Fatouros participated in a student trip to Egypt by boat (1949), and he came to understand travel as an essential element of architectural learning and teaching. He spent extended periods living abroad during the 1950s and 1960s, while he continued to travel regularly to Europe, the US and Asia throughout his life. His unceasing curiosity allowed him to associate himself with leading cultural figures of the 20th century, such as Serge Chermayeff, John Cage, Christopher Alexander, Giulio Carlo Argan and Yona Friedman.

Fatouros founded his practice in 1952. His extroverted attitude allowed him to explore architectural language through the humanist lens of late-modernist and, later, postmodern discourse and he always infused his design qualities with critical social and other contextual parameters. He worked extensively in Thessaloniki, in projects such as the Kazazis Residence in Panorama (1962-1964 & 1973), the Secondary School in Lagadas (with Vassilis Giannakis, 1965-1967), a residence in Ano Poli (with Dimitris Efremidis, 1988--1990), and, more recently, served as consultant in the design of the Thessaloniki Concert Hall by Arata Isozaki & Associates and Schema 4 Architects (2004-2010).

Kyriakos Krokos (1941-1998) shaped a hugely personal journey in the history of Greek architecture. A seeker of nature, light and tectonics, he considered the direct observation and physical experience of the Greek landscape as an essential element of his constitution as an architect and painter. Krokos graduated from the NTUA School of Architecture in 1967. During his studies, he travelled to France and the Netherlands (1966), and he made several more trips abroad in the early 1970s. From that period onward, he frequently toured Greece in a continuous effort to expand his knowledge and understanding of the country's materiality and memory. He founded his studio in 1976 and, two years later, won the first prize in the competition for the Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki (1978--1993). His last two projects were also completed in Thessaloniki and the broader area: a house in Kassandra, Chalkidiki (with Melina Hadjiyiannouli, 1993-1996) and two houses in Pylea, Thessaloniki (with Melina Hadjiyiannouli and Giorgos Yabanis, 1994). Krokos never taught in Greece or abroad; however, during the last decade of his life, his work became internationally known as it often represents a distinct path in late 20th-century Greek architecture.

The remaining five architects were all born during the critical decade following the Second World War and benefited from the positive results of the process of modernisation, democratisation and general economic improvement in Greek society during the second half of the 20th century. They thus integrated into their architectural practice and discourse the critical, humanitarian aspects of late-modernist architecture, its local interpretations and postmodern translations to varying degrees. Anastasios Kotsiopoulos (b.1946), Lois Papadopoulos (b.1949), Nikos Kalogirou (b.1951), George P. Triantafyllidis (1954-2017), as well as the architects of SPARCH, Rena Sakellaridou and Morpho Papanikolaou (both born 1955), exemplify the dissolution of rigid common denominators in architectural historiography and the growth of interwoven trajectories of thought and practice.

Papanikolaou studied at the Iuav University of Venice, but the rest graduated from the AUTh School of Architecture, and all subsequently continued their studies abroad, not just in Europe but also in the United States. Compared to previous generations, they held a privileged position in terms of access to travel, which, for most, already began during their studies. Exploring buildings and cultures abroad, as the original Grand Tour entailed, became both a means to expand knowledge and an occasion for pleasure – and, for those who became academics, an essential pedagogical tool.

Kotsiopoulos is a prolific architect and academic. He taught architecture at AUTh from 1971 to 2013 and played a key role in the development of the university's new master plan (1989-1993), completing several new buildings and extensions, most notably for Karantinos' Faculty of Physics and Mathematics (with Schema 4, 1992-1996) and the AUTh Library (with SPARCH, 1991-1995 & 1999). He considered the direct encounter of buildings and urban spaces as an essential means of expanding architectural knowledge in unparalleled way and undertook many trips throughout his life to satisfy this incessant inquiry for exploration.

Papadopoulos taught architecture in Thessaloniki and Volos from 1978 to 2016, while also lecturing in various universities and institutions abroad, most notably at the Polytechnic of Central London, the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc), Columbia University and the Kyoto School of Architecture. Since his first trip abroad, to Salzburg as a student, organised by Frei Otto in 1971, he travelled extensively, seeking encounters that revealed the pluralism of the unfolding postmodern discourse, which proved formative for his architectural culture. Papadopoulos was a regular participant in international architectural exhibitions, attending, for example, almost every single edition of the Venice Biennale of Architecture since 1991, while in 2006 was the national commissioner (with Elias Constantopoulos) of the Greek Pavilion at the 10th Venice Biennale.

Kalogirou's work also embodies this receptiveness and expanse that emanate from an unprejudiced exposure to diverse experiences. He taught in Thessaloniki from 1983 to 2019 and has travelled abroad on numerous occasions to study, learn, teach, and conduct research. At the same time, since the early 1970s, he has consistently explored Greece to unearth the country's spirit. His research and design work ranges from the architectural to the urban scale as well as exhibition design. In Thessaloniki alone he designed, among other projects, the new HELEXPO Gates (1996-1997) and the White Tower Square (1996-2006), both with Katerina Tsigarida and Alexandros Skouvaklis, and a residence in Panorama (with Kostas Manolidis, 2001-2005). He was the national commissioner (with a team of colleagues from the AUTh Department of Architecture) of the Greek Pavilion at the 17th Venice Biennale in 2021.

Triantafyllidis' case is, perhaps, somewhat distinct from that of the rest of the architects in this group, in that, apart from his graduate studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), completed in 1983, he rarely travelled abroad. However, like Mitsakis and Karantinos, he maintained an extensive collection of international architectural periodicals, such as *Lotus*, *L'Architecture d'Aujourd hui*, *Domus*, *Architectural Review* and *Casabella*, along with a large library of books and literature related to architecture. Triantafyllidis founded his practice in Thessaloniki in 1986 and taught at the Department of Architecture of the University of Thessaly from 1999 until his death in 2017. In Thessaloniki, he designed the Kakkavas Office Building (with Fatouros, 1990) and a residence in Thermi (with Dimitra Gourgioti, 2003-2010).

Sakellaridou and Papanikolaou founded SPARCH in 1982. Both studied abroad at various points and have continued to travel regularly abroad since then, much like the other architects of their generation. Grand Touring the world and experiencing the built environment became a manifestation of an innate curiosity for exploration in pursuit of learning, understanding and expanding the practice of architecture itself. In Thessaloniki, besides the AUTh Library extension (designed with Kotsiopoulos, 1991-1995 & 1999), Sakellaridou and Papanikolaou completed the New Building of the National Bank of Greece (2000-2002) and the "Horizontal House" in the suburban area of Thermi (2008), among other projects.

Bibliography

BACON F. (2008) - "Of Travel". In: B. Vickers (editor), *Francis Bacon: The Major Works*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 374-375.

GIACUMACATOS A. (1996) - *The Architect Kyriakos Krokos*. Exhibition Catalogue. Greek Participation in the VI International Exhibition of Architecture - La Biennale di Venezia.

GIACUMACATOS A. (2003) - Στοιχεία για τη νεότερη Ελληνική αρχιτεκτονική: Πάτροκλος Καραντινός [Elements about the modern Greek architecture - Patroklos Karantinos]. National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation, Athens.

DOXIADIS C. A. (2006) - *Texts, Design Drawings, Settlements*. Edited by Alexandros-Andreas Kyrtsis. Ikaros, Athens.

FESSAS-EMMANOUIL H. and MARMARAS V. (2013) - *12 Greek Architects of the Interwar period*. Crete University Press, Heraklion.

PADADOPOULOS L. and TSITIRIDOU S., ed. (2009) - *Dimitris A. Fatouros*. Domes, Athens.



1



3



2



4

1 Grand Tourists



Wall Atlas

Images and credits

1 Travel Souvenirs, Personal Archive of architect Lois Papadopoulos

2 Travel Souvenirs, Archive of architect D. A. Fatouros at MIET/ELIA - Greek Literary and Historical Archive (ELIA) - National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation (MIET)

3 Travel Souvenirs, Personal Archive of architect Morpho Papanikolaou

4 Travel Souvenirs, Personal Archive of architect Nikolaos Kalogirou

5 Travel Souvenirs, Personal Archive of architect Anastasios M. Kotsiopoulos

2 Grand Tour

Grand Tour #4 Thessaloniki

In planning of GT4, taking place in Thessaloniki, in June 2026, we asked among ourselves, the following, more or less obvious but crucial, questions:

- How do you plan a four-day architectural Grand Tour in Thessaloniki?
- How do you choose what to include? What is the correct “blend” of places and buildings to be visited?
- How do you combine your selections in different groups and itineraries and how do you allocate them across separate days?
- Other complementary issues regarding the what, when, which, whom and who, of such planning were temporarily set aside, as raising the above questions, immediately, led us to more insightful problematizations:
- How can our Grand Tour lead to a rich comprehension and creative interpretation of Thessaloniki?
- How can we “animate” an inspiring itinerary through the different scales and layers of the city’s urban topography?
- How can we augment this time-condensed Grand Tour, so that it leads to an informed perspective on the city’s identity(ies)?

In response to all these questions, we began to discuss how – complementing visits to significant buildings and important configurations of urban space – GT4 will also propose a method of *reading* Thessaloniki’s physical geography, its historical topography as well as its contemporary urban structure.

We elaborated on how visits to the project’s selected “exemplary buildings” cannot occur independently of their broader context, namely, the historic, economic, social and cultural circumstances, that shaped the conditions for the buildings’ emergence, and within which they can be fully understood.

We continued by discussing how our walking itineraries of Thessaloniki could also propose a method of recognizing and understanding its past, present and (near-)future tensions that compose the city’s contemporary urban experience.

In the end, we decided to devise a coherent plan of *strolls, encounters and meetings* that we believe can lead to a clarification of the city’s metropolitan fabric, a delineation of its relationship with its physical topography and a comprehension of its multicultural historic physiognomy.

Last but not least, we made the decision to invite three esteemed professors emeriti of our School – two of whom are themselves selected Grand Tourists – to present three seminars: (i) Vilma Hastaoglou will concentrate on the history of the urban fabric of Thessaloniki; (ii) Nikos Kalogirou will deliberate on the history of the Aristotle University campus; and (iii) Lois Papadopoulos will reflect on the strategy of the urban interventions of the architectural program of “Thessaloniki ’97 – European Capital of Culture”.

Therefore, we proceeded with planning GT4, through the introduction of 4+1 different organizational *schemata,* for navigating Thessaloniki’s multiplicity. Each of the first four schemata (The University Campus, The Municipal Axis, The Palimpsest, The Promenade) corresponds to a different stroll – one stroll per day. The +1 schema (Metropolitan Events) is to be experienced diagonally, intersecting the four other, either through direct experience, in the case of events taking place concurrently with GT4, or, through histories to be narrated by members of our extended team, in the case of past events.

The 4+1 *schemata* are as follows:

1 The University Campus Since its foundation in 1926, immediately adjacent to the historic center of Thessaloniki, the Aristotle University campus has been a major force of modernization. Today, it covers an area of approximately 33 hectares, and hosts more than 85,000 students. The campus, the largest in Greece, contains a series of significant educational buildings and compounds, built during the university's various developmental waves. Over the past hundred years, it has been a continual site for the application of various forms of modern architecture. For example, the campus' developmental boom, taking place from the late 40s till the early 70s, has led to the design and construction of a series of exemplary buildings reflecting the principles of the International Style, Monumental Modernism and Brutalism. They include five buildings by the selected Grand Tourist P. Karantinos such as the Faculty of Chemistry, (1947, in collaboration with A. Loizos K. Bitsios), the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics (1955), and the "Polytechnion" Faculty of Engineering (1958, in collaboration with I. Liapis, P. Skroumbelos). Other buildings include the exemplary complex of the Administration Building, the Venue Hall and the Central Library (1961-1971), as well as the buildings for the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Theology (1962-1974), all of which were designed by architects K. Fines & K. Sp. Papaioannou. One should also highlight the paradigmatic Student Halls of Residence B' and C' (1962-1967) designed by architects N. Dessylas, D. Kontargyris, A. Lambakis, P. Loukakis. In the late 1990s and early 2000s new significant buildings of Postmodern and Neomodern principles were constructed in the campus, the most important being the exemplary New Library Building (1991-1995 & 1999), located adjacent to the existing central library, designed by Grand Tourists A. Kotsiopoulos, R. Sakellaridou and M. Papanikolaou. In this sense, on might argue that the Aristotle University Campus arguably encompasses a condensed architectural history of modernism in Thessaloniki, allowing it to function as a compact introduction to the city's 20th and 21st century architecture.

2 The Municipal Axis Through its gradual formation, the city's eastern cultural axis, has acquired a metropolitan significance. Starting from the waterfront and the Royal Theatre of Thessaloniki (1938-1940) by selected Grand Tourist C. A. Doxiadis, in collaboration with A. Skepers, it traverses the New City Hall (1987 & 2009 T. Biris, D. Biris et al.) the Archaeological Museum (1960) by selected Grand Tourist P. Karantinos, the Museum of Byzantine Culture (1978 & 1989-1993) by selected Grand Tourist K. Krokos, the Thessaloniki International Fair (TIF) site (1926-...), the Museum of Contemporary Art (1992), located within it, ending, after passing through the Aristotle University campus, at the university's Teloglion Art Foundation (1997-1999) by K. Lambrou, N. Marda, K. Moraitis and E. Konstantakou. The axis crosses a series of exemplary 20th century buildings that showcase different strands of modern architecture in Thessaloniki: Modernism, International Style, Classical Modernism, Brutalism, Critical Regionalism, Postmodernism and Neomodernism. The TIF site, since its foundation in 1926, in a location adjacent to the university campus, has been a site of continuous architectural experimentation. At least 15 exemplary buildings, included in the historical canon of Greek modern architecture – but now demolished – were constructed as exhibition pavilions, demonstrating that the exhibition grounds have operated as a testing ground par excellence for modern architecture. These buildings include pavilions designed by Grand Tourists C. A. Doxiadis (1939-1940) and D. A. Fatouros (1961). Other exemplary pavilions, designed between the mid 1950s and late 60s, as well as the Hellenic Telecommunications Organization (OTE) Tower (1969), and the Palais des Sports (1960-1966) have undergone changes, transformations and restorations, with only few of them remaining more or less intact. In recent years the TIF site has been the focus of a controversial debate regarding its future development which will make for an interesting discussion during our GT4 itinerary.

3 The Palimpsest The Palimpsest consists of: the listed traditional settlement of the Upper City quarter; the city's two pedestrianized Historical Axes, that is the metropolitan boulevard of Aristotelous Street and its parallel axis of Gounari Street; and the diagonal axis of Pavlou Mela Street. In the Upper City quarter, GT4 will take in a series of significant residential buildings, including the ones by selected Grand Tourists D. A. Fatouros (1989), N. Kalogirou (1987 & 2000) and A. Kotsiopoulos (1998). In various ways, these residential buildings successfully combine the principles of modern architecture with local vernacular elements, as prescribed in the building requirements for this listed area. The quarter also includes the important "corbusian" building for ecclesiastical studies (1966-1969) by the architect N. Moutsopoulos, as well as certain open terraces, such as that of the "Trigoniou Tower", which offers panoramic views of the city. The two pedestrianized Historical Axes combine an anthology of fatti-urbani, historic monuments, public buildings, markets, and urban open spaces, exemplifying the city's historic urban fabric, its multi-cultural mosaic and its diachronic urbanity, from its ancient past to its contemporary present. More specifically, the eastern archaeological axis of Gounari Street joins the Roman "Rotunda" with the Arch of Galerius and the Galerius Palace complex, ending at the Old Waterfront through its newly designed pedestrian extension. The central archaeological axis of Aristotelous Street, which also functions as a metropolitan boulevard, epitomizes the city's urban plan, as designed by E. Hébrard, after the Great Fire of 1917. At its highest point, it starts from Agios Demetrios Church, with the adjacent Yeni Hamam baths and the near by Alaca Imaret Mosque. Then it crosses the archaeological site of the Roman Forum, to reach Upper Aristoteles Square with the Bey Hamam baths at its side. Moving across Egnatia Street it can be combined with a detour to the close-by Bedesten Market, and the newly excavated Decumanus Maximus – Thessaloniki's principal Roman street – which can be visited inside the new Venizelou metro station. Thenceforth, strolling towards the sea, along the homogeneous facades of the boulevard, it reaches Aristotelous Square, the city's main public square facing Mount Olympus across the sea. Between these two main archaeological axes, lies Pavlou Mela Street, the city's major diagonal axis, with its significant Bauhaus-style old Ilyssia cinema (1930) by architect L. Zoidis and various examples of "Polykatoikia" (apartment block) adhering to Eclecticist, Art-Deco and early Modern principles. Thessaloniki's diagonal axis leads from the White Tower all the way up to the Agia Sophia Church and its adjacent three school complexes: two (1931 & 1933) by the selected Grand Tourist N. Mitsakis and one (1936) by the very significant architect D. Pikionis. Between these two archaeological axes are the old Athonos and Vatikioti markets, followed by the equally important old Vlali and Kapani markets on the other side of Aristotelous Street, as well as the Old Central City Market (1924) designed by the architect E. Modiano.

4 The Promenade The Promenade starts from the Thessaloniki Port's First Pier, that was "given back" to the city, expanding its central metropolitan area, during the hosting of the European Capital of Culture (1997). It has become a dense culture hub, with its redesigned warehouses hosting three museums (of cinema, photography and experimental art), four cinema halls, exhibition and venue spaces and a new public urban space by the sea that provided new perspectives of the city. It also contains the significant terminal and Customs Building (1911) designed by Al. Vallaury and the Greek Red Cross early modern building (1929). After a brief detour through the port's adjacent historic commercial areas of Ladadika and Frangon (the French and Italian quarters), and the city's Jewish Museum, the stroll crosses through the historically significant Eleftherias Square, to return to the Old Waterfront.

The promenade continues along the sea offering privileged views on an array of more than 20 paradigmatic examples of Polykatoikia designed over the last century. This first part of the promenade ends at the White Tower Square, immediately after encountering the significant modern building of Thessaloniki Officers Club (1951-1958) by architect P. Mylonas located across the street. The second part of the promenade starts at the "Royal Theatre of Thessaloniki" (see second day of GT4). From there, the promenade continues along Thessaloniki's redesigned New Waterfront (originally constructed as a city extension in 1953), which was redesigned by architects P. Nikiforidis and B. Cuomo in 2001 and constructed from 2006 to 2014. By forming a linear coastal network of public spaces, the redesigned New Waterfront enriches the metropolitan character of the city by renewing its relationship with the sea. Walking along the series of thematic gardens, one also encounters the Makedonia Palace Hotel (1962-1971) by selected Grand Tourist C. A. Doxiadis and a second array of important examples of Polykatoikia built since the 1960s . Small detours from the promenade lead to the significant French Institute building (1972) designed by architect D. Molfessis, the Rationalist Italian Umberto School (1933) by architects M. Paniconi and G. Pediconi and the two Italian Tobacco Monopoly buildings (1958), as well as a series of important eclecticist mansions built at the turn of the 20th century. The Promenade ends at Thessaloniki's Concert Hall, with its two buildings: the first initially designed by architects P. Tzonos, G. Hoipel and X. Skarpia-Hoipel which was constructed in 2000 under the supervision of a different design team, and the second (2004-2005 & 2010) designed by architects Araamta Isozaki & Associates, and Schema 4 Architects. From then on, GT4 embarks on a public transport water bus to experience the city's total view from the sea.

+1 Metropolitan Events These involve recurring events that have shaped and continue to reshape the present character of the city, the most important being: (i) the annual Thessaloniki International Film Festival, which is preparing its 66th edition; (ii) the International Documentary Festival, which is working on its 29th edition; (iii) the 9th edition of the Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art, which GT4 will visit, since it runs concurrently with it; and (iv) the annual Reworks Music Festival which is approaching its 22nd edition. They also include one-off major events that took place in the past and became catalysts for rethinking the city: (i) the 2nd Biennale of Young Artists from Mediterranean Europe (1986), and (ii) the hosting of the European Capital of Culture (1997). Of course, none of these Metropolitan Events could have taken shape without the energy of numerous smaller-scale, bottom-up, and independent art initiatives, a long-standing tradition in the city. The euphoric venues of these metropolitan events, with their ephemeral architectures, their eccentric installations, their critical – even radical – re-appropriation of the city's cultural and other infrastructures, and their iconoclastic use of its historic monuments, have all played a crucial role as critical mechanisms for reimagining the city. In this sense, the hosting of Metropolitan Events is critically important, provided that they operate as originators of innovative ideas, as generators of the city's new exemplary spaces, and as platforms where the new urban symbolisms and the new meanings of buildings and city areas are set into motion.

Last Note In the planning of GT4, 4+1 organizational schemata delineated above – the Campus, the Municipal Axis, the Palimpsest, the Promenade, + the Metropolitan Events – are useful only insofar as they function as components of a diagram, highlighting and hopefully clarifying the crucial constituents of Thessaloniki's urban fabric. It goes without saying that other, alternative readings of the city exist that are equally valid to those proposed here. Nevertheless, we believe that our conception of GT4 offers an effective, even fruitful, method for recognizing and understanding the undivided metropolitan experience of Thessaloniki.

Bibliography

FILIPPIDIS D. (1984) - Νεοελληνική Αρχιτεκτονική [Modern Green Architecture]. Melissa, Athens.

GIACUMACATOS A. (2004) - Ιστορία της Ελληνικής Αρχιτεκτονικής – 20ος Αιώνας [History of Greek Architecture -20th Century]. Nefeli, Athens.

KALOGIROU N. (2017) - Η Πανεπιστημιούπολη του ΑΠΘ [The Campus of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki]. University Studio Press, Thessaloniki.

KOLONAS V. (2016) - Θεσσαλονίκη 1912-2012 – Η Αρχιτεκτονική μίας Εκατονταετίας [The Architecture of a Century]. University Studio Press, Thessaloniki.


Grand
Tour #1


Grand
Tour #2


Grand
Tour #3


Grand
Tour #4


05-08 jun 2026
Thessaloniki
Open Seminar
Team Meetings
Updating the Grand Tour
Memory and Invention of the
European Built Environment
Grand
Tour #4
Politecnico di Milano, Italy
Faculty of Architecture - University of Porto, Portugal
Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna, Italy
Art Academy of Latvia, Latvia
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece
Estonian Art Academy, Estonia
upgrandtour.eu
Up
Gran
T
POLITECNICO
PORTO
Art Academy of Latvia
EKA


Up
Gran
T
Updating the Grand Tour
Memory and Invention of the
European Built Environment
Politecnico di Milano, Italy · Faculty of Architecture - University of Porto, Portugal
Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna, Italy · Art Academy of Latvia, Latvia
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece · Estonian Art Academy, Estonia
2024
Grand Tour #1
Milan - Bologna(Italy)
Grand Tour #2
Riga - Tallinn (Latvia - Estonia)
2025
Oxford Tour #3
Porto (Portugal)
2026
Grand Tour #4
Thessaloniki (Greece)
Identifying the Grand Tour
as a legacy, UpGranT proposes
to restore travel to the core
of EU architects' education.
upgrandtour.eu
EKA


Up
Gran
T
Updating the Grand Tour
Memory and Invention of the
European Built Environment
GRAND TOURISTS
TIMEMARKERS
upgrandtour.eu
EKA

Images and credits

Grand Tour #4 (GT4) communication materials - poster and flyer - within the UpGranT's communication series.

Content: AUTh Team

Graphic design: Marta Ramos

3 Souvenirs on Exemplary Buildings

Balancing Affinities: Architecture between individual creation and disciplinary knowledge

– Alexandra Vougia

Dimitris A. Fatouros (1928-2020) was one of the most prolific Greek architects of the 20th century. A designer, a painter, and an educator, he explored constantly – through both his visual but also written work – the intricate tangents of aesthetic creation. "The creative process is multilayered, multimodal, and continuous even if it exhibits local breaks", he wrote in his essay "Taxonomies and Correlations" (Fatouros 2003, p. 177). "Connections and interactions", he continued, "are occasionally presented individually and occasionally in tandem, at times they are explicit and other times not". If then, the process of creation itself is manifold, its interpretation is even more tangled. The latter requires the suspension of any immediate factual system and the surrendering instead to a journey of strands, meeting and turning points, deviations, and, of course, dark corners. The various forces of cognitive thoughts and speculations, affinities and prejudices, all reach a unique balance that triggers the first moments of creation and its further unfolding.

This multilayered intelligibility is a methodological component that was maintained throughout the process of interpreting the three chosen exemplary buildings completed in Thessaloniki: the "Polytechneion" of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Faculty of Engineering, AUTh) (1957–1962) by Patroklos Karantinos, in collaboration with Ioannis Liapis and Elias Scroumbelos, the Kazazis Residence in Panorama (1962–1964 and 1973) by Dimitris A. Fatouros, and the Museum of Byzantine Culture (1978–1993) by Kyriakos Krokos. The selection of the buildings was based on the distinct perspectives that they offer when analysed in tandem: successive generations of architects, alternative approaches to the language of architectural modernism and the influences of any local dialects, along with alternative ways in which architectural references have been absorbed. In parallel, our objective was to select projects of various scales, both private and public. Each building acts in a paradigmatic manner, as symptomatic of its historical era and the architectural ideology of its creator. However, it is in their concurrent function as a constellation that they may reveal the nebulous, but unique, processes of architectural creation.

The first exemplary building is the Polytechneion, designed by Karantinos (1903-1976) with Liapis (1922-1993) and Scroumbelos (1921-2006). By the time of their collaboration in the second half of the 1950s, Karantinos was already a prominent architect, both locally and internationally, mostly known for his work as a member of the Design Office for New School Buildings of the Ministry of Education as well as a private practitioner, designing and completing both public and private buildings.[1] In terms of his global reputation, Karantinos had participated in the CIAM IV committee while represented Greece at the 6th Milan Triennale (1936) and the Paris International Exhibition (1937) with various works. He maintained correspondence with prominent architects and architectural historians and theorists during the interwar period,[2] but after the Second World War he also regularly received invitations to present his work in international publications and exhibitions, most notably from Le Corbusier, who invited him to participate in CIAM VII in Bergamo (Giacumacatos 2003).

French modernism was influential for Karantinos, particularly the work of Le Corbusier and his mentor August Perret, whose work Karantinos encountered during his trip to Paris from 1927 to 1928. While this visit was Karantinos' only trip abroad, it was formative to the evolution of his discourse and practice. During his time there, he worked for a few months in Perret's office, some years after Perret had completed works such as the Notre-Dame de la Consolation in Le Raincy, east of Paris (1922), and while he was designing the Cortot Hall, at Paris' École Normale de Musique (completed between 1928 and 1929). Most importantly in Paris, however, Karantinos closely studied the work of Le Corbusier and "L' Esprit Nouveau". He frequently mentions the genius of the two French architects – Perret and, of course,

Le Corbusier – whom he praises as “great architects, although they did not have degrees from established architectural schools, since these schools had lost all contact with life and had not even grasped the dynamism and cosmogony of our century”. (Giacoumacatos 2003, p. 629). However, it is Le Corbusier that Karantinos mentions more often than any other architect. “Le Corbusier”, he said, in a lecture right after the former’s death in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, “in the troupe of pioneers of modern Architecture, is the Apostle with the broadest view of human problems and ideas with vivid conception and great extensions. He is the tireless fighter, bearer of the messages of the great change of the twentieth century, a turbulent era, when man is going through a crisis of adaptation to constantly new measures, holding tremendous forces in his hands and moving in the vast space of the universe” (Giacoumacatos 2003, p. 629).

Karantinos’ association with AUTh was lengthy and enriching for his design practice. He contributed to the revisions of the campus’ master plan and completed several new buildings, experimenting and developing spatial themes that gradually became more sophisticated. Before the Second World War, and despite several extended master plans,[3] AUTh remained confined to a rather limited area on the edges of Thessaloniki’s city centre. It was only after the war that the idea of a large, comprehensive university infrastructure emerged. Karantinos was then the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs’ envoy, observing the discussions and representing the state’s support for the endeavour. The new master plan, designed by Meteorology Professor Vassileios Kyriazopoulos, followed “the concept of elementary organic zoning [that], if anything, saved the design from the monumental, architectural neo-academic treatment that characterized Hebrard’s previous plan” (Giacoumacatos 2003, p. 415). It is this postwar character that led the campus’ urban scale to adhere to modernist ideals of plastic composition, reflecting a modernised educational vision and ultimately producing the image we see today.

Karantinos’ more direct involvement with AUTh began with the 1951 competition for the Faculty of Chemistry, in which he won first and third prizes for entries produced in collaboration with Kostas Bitsios and Alexandros Loizos. Karantinos subsequently completed the adjacent building for the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics (1955-1961), the Student Dormitories (1955-1961) on the northern edges of the university campus, and the University Observatory (1957-1961). The competition for the Polytechneion coincided with its inauguration in 1957, when it included only two Schools: Civil Engineering and Architecture. The first prize went to N. Desyllas, D. Kontargyris, A. Lambrakis and P. Loukakis, while Karantinos, in collaboration with Liapis and Scroumbelos, won second prize. Owing to the young age of the winning team, the university administration decided instead to proceed with the second-prize entry.

The building site extends alongside Egnatia Street on a north-south axis. Along this axis, the architects arranged a series of volumes whose pure composition reflects the clarity of modernist clustering. A spiral element containing the complex’s main circulation routes wraps around an open-air atrium and unfolds, towards the south, as an elevated corridor. The Faculty’s main entrance is located on the north side of the atrium. A monumental staircase leads – beneath a projecting, solid volume hovering over a classical portico – to the interior and a generous foyer overlooking the atrium. The foyer functions as the core of a centrifugal synthesis: three nodes are positioned on its other sides, directing the flow to the distinct volumes of the complex. On the north side of the foyer stands the trapezoidal volume of the Faculty’s large amphitheatres, which sit on top of each other. The plasticity of this volume, with its paraboloid roof, stands in contrast to the austerity of the rest of the composition. Across the entrance, the foyer leads to the eight-floor austere volume housing the administration and office spaces, while on the south side of the atrium the spiral extends the circulation, through an elevated corridor, towards the two distinct wings of the schools.

The overall composition of the complex is dynamic, with a precise volumetric ordering characteristic in Le Corbusier’s work; Karantinos’ affinity is evident in this case. Giacumacatos suggests that the Polytechneion most prominently echoes Le Corbusier’s entry for the competition for the headquarters of the League of Nations in Geneva (1927); a clear spatial order of interlocking volumes that articulates functional clarity – a clarity, however, that is not derived from classical notions of symmetry, proportion, etc., but from the plastic balance of the overall prismatic synthesis (Giacoumacatos 2003, p. 437). Like the League of Nations building, the individual volumes of the Polytechneion achieve a rich balance. The former combines a curvilinear auditorium volume with orthogonal office wings; the latter merges the trapezoidal volume of the amphitheatres with the administration slab and the Faculty blocks. It is, however, the introduction of the diagonal axis – in the arrangement of the wings in a 45-degree angle – that supersedes Le Corbusier’s austerity and could be attributed to Liapis and Scroumbelos. The Polytechneion openly reveals the multilayered network of affinities that generated its original design: pre-existing, personal spatial ideas, disciplinary experience and technical and typological insight, dwelling inspiration but also moments of exception and unexpected influence by younger, yet greatly talented, colleagues.

The second exemplary building is the Kazazis Residence in Panorama by Dimitris A. Fatouros (1928–2020). Fatouros was a genuine Grand Tourist of the 20th century; consistently inquisitive, receptive to new experiences and active in expanding his own horizons and those of his peers and students. Fatouros founded his practice in 1952 and continued to build until the 2000s. Openness and critical approach were characteristics of his work – he designed and completed architectural projects that range from interior design projects and residences to large-scale public works like educational and cultural buildings and very often in collaboration with other colleagues. However, Fatouros was not just an architect; he was a painter, philosopher, writer and public intellectual.[4]

Among his polyphonic work, the question of dwelling held a central position. “The reason for the existence of architecture, whether we like it or not, is the wonderful complexity of the place of dwelling, of man’s position in the world”, he wrote (Fatouros 2002, p. 107). The finest answer is embodied in the Kazazis Residence. The project was completed in two consecutive stages (1962-1964, with an extension in 1973), both following the same generative idea. It constitutes an emblematic project in Fatouros’ work, both for the multimodal response it provides to the question of modern dwelling and for the articulation and plurality of languages and affinities used. The project is at once transhistorical and entirely contemporary; typological archetypes that emerge from ancient places of dwelling co-exist with canonical paradigms of 20th-century modernism, blended with other mystical tangents that critically enrich his architecture with the genius loci. The abundant nature of the suburban site and the adjacent forest, the environmental conditions and other physical parameters of the site (slope and orientation), material concerns and the refined technical aspects of the construction process all creatively contribute to the subtle design of the Kazazis Residence.

The plan generates the overall design. Simple orthogonal volumes that contain the main functions slide horizontally, generating liminal, transitional spaces that define the various programmatic clusters of the house. There is an overall lack of legible hierarchy in this fragmentation. Corridors are almost entirely absent, and the residence is organised via the spatial ordering of an

1 Karantinos worked in the Technical Service of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (1930-1938 and 1946-1958) and, briefly, in the City Planning Council of the Ministry of the Administration of the Capital (1939-1940).

2 Karantinos was in contact with Alberto Sartoris, Walter Gropius and, briefly, Sigfried Giedion, with the editor of *L’Architecture d’ Aujourd hui* André Bloc, Christian Zervos of *Cahiers d’art*, and other international magazines such as *Deutsche Bauzeitung*, *Forum*, *Quadrante*, *Architettura and Cahiers d’architecture*. In 1937, he was elected “honorary corresponding member” of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) along with Perret and Gropius.

3 Most notably by Ernest Hébrard (1929-1930) and Nikolaos Mitsakis (1939).

4 Fatouros was a founding member of scientific and cultural societies such as the Hellenic Society of Aesthetics, Hellenic Institute of Architecture (EIA), Societé d’Esthétique Experimentale and the International Association of the People and their Surroundings (IAPS). He was President of the Panhellenic Association of Architects (1973-1974 and 1974-1975), of the National Centre for Social Research (1981-1991), of the State Museum of Contemporary Art in Thessaloniki (1998-2001), and the Greek Language Centre (2001-2005). In addition, he was the General Director of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education (September-November 1974) and Minister of Education (1993-1994).

uninterrupted journey between indoor and outdoor, private and collective, raised and lowered spaces, that narrate the alternative scenarios of inhabiting the dwelling. The dominance of liminal spaces and the lack of an overarching, synthetic geometry continue to define the discourse between the building and its environment. The house is raised in relation to the street level, a gesture that attempts to further highlight the shifting, horizontal plane.

In a description of the project, the historian Vassilis Kolonas mentions two major references for Fatouros: the series of Prairie Style Houses by Frank Lloyd Wright, and particularly the Frederick C. Robie House in Chicago, Illinois (1906-1908), and Le Corbusier's manifesto Villa Savoye in Poissy, near Paris (1929-1931). However, Fatouros was a profane agent of affinities, always moving beyond the evident gestures. As Kolonas notes, in the Kazazis Residence Fatouros adopts the prismatic articulation of programmatic clusters typical in Wright's compositions but loses the centre – so important in the work of the American architect. On the other hand, the Kazazis Residence accepts the enriching moments of transparency as a material and volumetric interpretation demonstrated in Le Corbusier's "machine à habiter" but turns its condensed geometry upside down (Kolonas 2009, p. 257). This project clearly reveals Fatouros' esoteric and mystic process of creation, highlighting the value of the unexpected deviations, and, of course, the magic of dark moments.

The final third building is the Museum of Byzantine Culture by Kyriakos Krokos (1941-1998). Beyond established genealogies, Krokos traced an entirely personal journey in the history of 20th-century Greek architecture. As Giacoumacatos writes, "Krokos' architecture can be placed on that notional axis that includes extremely personal investigations of masters such as Louis Kahn and Luis Barragán or – using an analogy from outside architecture – the timeless music of Igor Stravinsky" (Giacoumakatos 1996, p. 11). For Krokos, architecture cannot be considered a simple spatial creation but is an inquiry that investigates ontological questions – and he assigned to the craft of architecture a deeply utopian, hyper-humanistic dimension, an existential study at once personal and shared.

Born on the island of Samos, Krokos studied at the School of Architecture of the National Technical University of Athens. He travelled abroad only briefly during his studies and in the following decade. In 1966, he travelled to France and the Netherlands and lived briefly in Paris in 1970, where he became a student of the painter Yannis Tsarouchis. In 1971, he visited the Netherlands and Morocco. From that period onward, he toured Greece in a continuous effort to expand his understanding of the country's materiality and memory of the land, which formed the basic elements of his architecture.

Not his first work, the design for the Museum of Byzantine Culture was certainly his most complex. Ideas that had been prominent in previous projects reappeared here in a more conscious and mature manner, with elements such as typological clarity and refinement of construction becoming the defining elements of the project. The building itself projects the complexities of large-scale public construction in Greece. In 1977, the Central Archaeological Council, through the Ministry of Culture, announced a "Panhellenic architectural competition for preliminary designs for the Byzantine Museum of Thessaloniki". The first prize was awarded to Krokos, who immediately after began, in collaboration with the architect Yiorgos Makris, the design of the final study, which was completed ten years later. After several delays, the building's foundations were laid in February 1989, and the building was completed in October 1993.

While the completed building differed slightly from the original competition entry, it kept the basic generative ideas. The overall composition is almost impossible to decipher in terms of architectural order, but its conceptual origins can be unravelled to a certain extent. Like the Kazazis Residence, the plan is the generator. A perpendicular grid gives birth to an assemblage of plastic volumetric massing, set in a simultaneously pericentric and spiral arrangement. The upward, radial circulation begins from another archetypical spatial element of Greek architecture: the atrium, namely the enclosed yard that forms the nucleus of the composition. The independent, spiral circulation route wraps around the former and the core spaces of the museum, revealing outwards the autonomous volumes of the exhibition spaces. Other transhistorical archetypes of the country appear often: semi-open stoas and outdoor staircases. There is a lack of evident hierarchy in the overall complex, while this volumetric entanglement is echoed in the elevations as well. This labyrinthine composition, however, is bound together by the simplicity of its material structure and the refinement of the construction language – handmade brick and chiselled concrete articulate all orthogonal volumes, assigning a unifying veneer to the ordered composition. The labyrinthine construction echoes the archaic references of Krokos' architecture, the Minoan Palace of Knossos in Crete paired with "the prudent craft sensitivity of Athenian neo-classicism and the ideological charge of the rationalistic visions of the '30s" (Giacumacatos 1996, p. 15).

If we were to return to Fatouros' initial reference to the process of creation as a manifold one, we could support that this linear, chronological account of the three exemplary buildings demonstrates the gradual passage through entirely different operations, interpretations and misinterpretations that are involved in the tracing of architectural affinities. Regardless of their language and scale, and of their typological and functional virtues, buildings narrate complex stories. They narrate the existence of constellations in the Benjaminian sense. For the German thinker, "ideas are related to things as constellations are to stars" (Benjamin 2009, p. 34). In the process of interpreting buildings, we construct affinities, we establish relationships between objects, ideas, memories, and experiences that often wish to remain unseen. However, it is through this process that we can to ultimately understand ourselves and that mitigates our fear of the dark.

Bibliography

BENJAMIN W. (2009) - *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Verso Books. London.

GIACUMACATOS A. (2003) - Στοιχεία για τη νεότερη Ελληνική αρχιτεκτονική: Πάτροκλος Καραντινός [Elements about the modern Greek architecture - Patroklos Karantinos]. National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation, Athens.

GIACUMACATOS A. (1996) - *The Architect Kyriakos Krokos*. Exhibition Catalogue. Greek Participation in the VI International Exhibition of Architecture - La Biennale di Venezia.

KALOGIROU N. (2017) - Η Πανεπιστημιούπολη του Α.Π.Θ. [The University Campus of A.U.Th.]. University Studio Press, Thessaloniki.

PADADOPOULOS L. and TSITIRIDOU S., ed. (2009) - *Dimitris A. Fatouros*. Domes, Athens.

FATOUROS D. A. (2003) - Η Επιμονή της Αρχιτεκτονικής [The Persistence of Architecture]. Kastaniotis Publications, Athens.

FATOUROS D. A. (2002) - "Dimitris A. Fatouros". In: Y. Aesopos and Y. Simaioforidis (editors), Τοπία Εκμοντερνισμού – Εκτιμήσεις [Landscapes of Modernisation - Appraisals]. Metapolis Press, Athens.

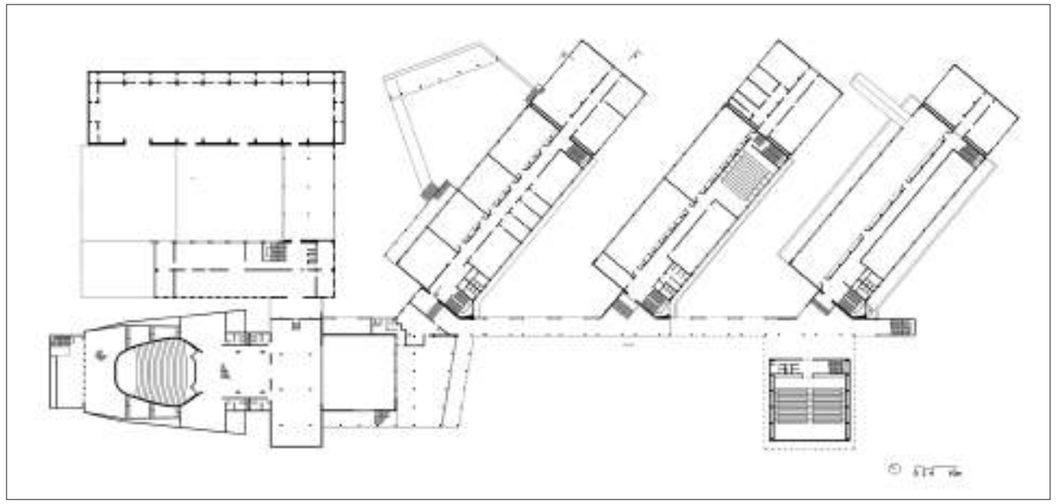
FESSAS-EMMANOUIL H. and MARMARAS V. (2013) - *12 Greek Architects of the Interwar Period*. Crete University Press, Heraklion.

"Polytechneion" of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

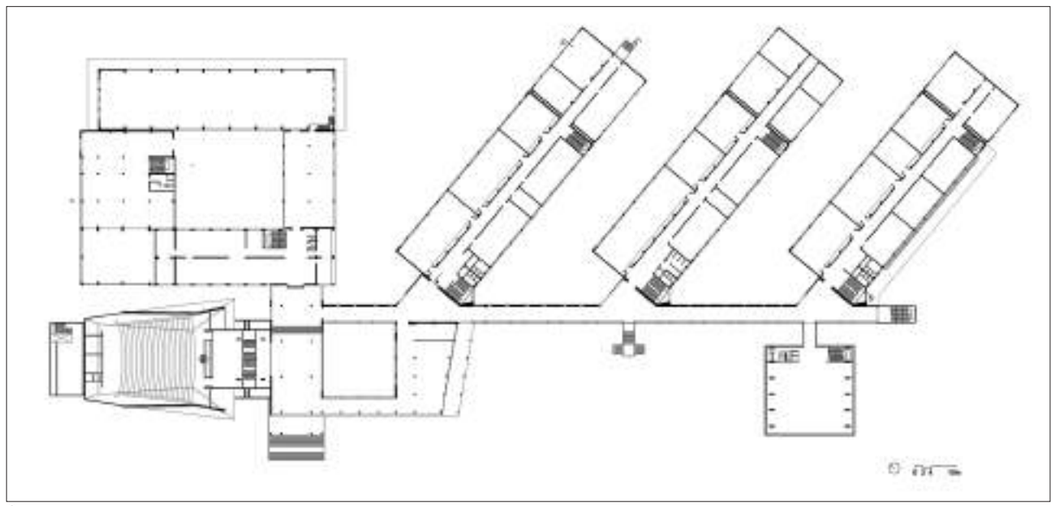
Redrawings

Selected Redrawings done by architect Konstantinos Zves

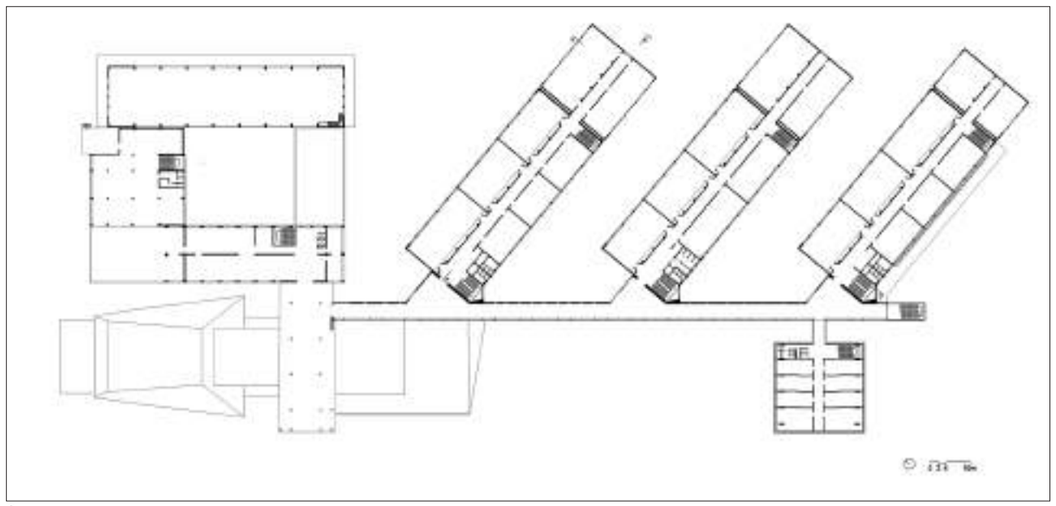
1 Basement plan.
2 Ground floor plan.
3 First floor plan.
4 Cross sections and elevation.



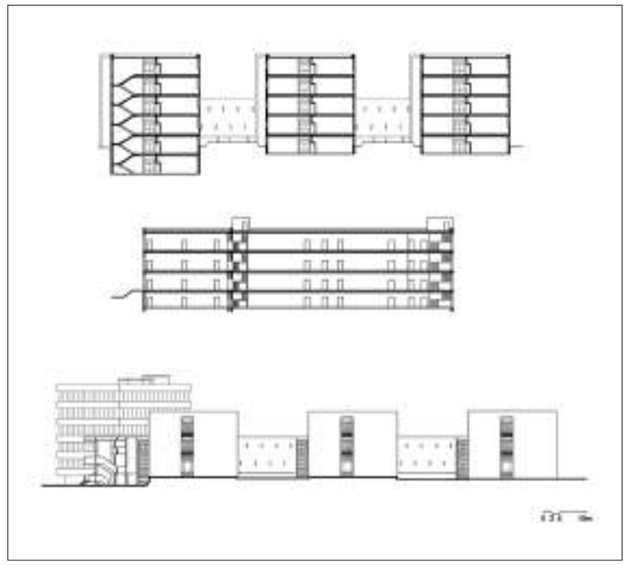
1



2



3



4

"Polytechneion" of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Architectural narratives

5 "Plain Language" Architectural Narrative by Alexandra Vougia & Apostolos Kalfopoulos.

"Polytechneion" Faculty of Engineering, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 1957-1982 *
Patroklos Karantinos in collaboration with Ioannis Liapis and Elias Scroumbelos

order * τάξη | táksi

In the case of the Polytechneion, order is the placing of the different programmes in distinct volumes. The orthogonal masses of the two schools (of Architecture and Civil Engineering), the slab of the office spaces, and the trapezoidal auditoria are all attached to the spiral circulation.

Στο κτίριο της Πολυτεχνικής Σχολής, τάξη είναι η τοποθέτηση των διαφόρων προγραμμάτων σε ξεχωριστούς όγκους. Οι ορθογώνιοι όγκοι των δύο Τμημάτων (Αρχιτεκτονικής και Πολιτικών Μηχανικών), ο πύργος των γραφείων και τα τραπεζοειδή αμφιθέατρα συνδέονται με τη σπείρα της κυκλοφορίας.

portico * πρόστωο | próstoo

The portico is a basic element of ancient Greek temple architecture. It is a covered entrance to a building, supported by regularly spaced columns. The contemporary use of this element indicates the main entrance to the building.

Το προστώο είναι βασικό στοιχείο της αρχαίας ελληνικής αρχιτεκτονικής ναών. Είναι μια σκεπαστή είσοδος σε ένα κτίριο, που στηρίζεται σε κίονες σε κανονικές αποστάσεις. Η σύγχρονη χρήση του στοιχείου αυτού τονίζει την κεντρική είσοδο στο κτίριο.

atrium * αίθριο | éthrio

The atrium is a large, open space inside a building. The atrium is the outdoor public space of the building and the circulation of the Polytechneion wraps around it.

Το αίθριο είναι ένας μεγάλος, ανοικτός χώρος μέσα σε ένα κτίριο. Το αίθριο είναι ο υπαίθριος δημόσιος χώρος του κτιρίου και η κυκλοφορία της Πολυτεχνικής Σχολής τα τυλίγει.

diagonal * διαγώνιος | ðiaɣónios

In contrast to geometry, in architecture any line at an angle can be called diagonal. In the design of the Polytechneion the diagonal creates unusual and non-specific spaces.

Σε αντίθεση με τη γεωμετρία, στην αρχιτεκτονική οποιαδήποτε γραμμή υπό γωνία μπορεί να ονομαστεί διαγώνιος. Στο σχέδιο της Πολυτεχνικής Σχολής η διαγώνιος δημιουργεί ασυνήθιστους και μη συγκεκριμένους χώρους.

orientation * προσανατολισμός | prosanatolizmós

The rotation of the Schools' orthogonal masses achieves the best orientation for the educational spaces. The typical floor has a corridor and rooms on either side. The large studio spaces enjoy the steady North light, while the typical classrooms face toward the warm, South light.

Η περιστροφή των ορθογώνιων όγκων των Τμημάτων πετυχαίνει τον καλύτερο προσανατολισμό των εκπαιδευτικών χώρων. Ο τυπικός όροφος έχει διάδρομο και χώρους και από τις δύο πλευρές. Οι μεγάλοι χώροι των εργαστηρίων απολαμβάνουν το σταθερό βόρειο φως, ενώ οι τυπικές αίθουσες διδασκαλίας είναι στραμμένες προς το ζεστό, νότο φως.

*Architectural Narratives in Plain Language - Plain Language simplifies complex information to make exhibitions and broadcasted programs accessible, engaging, and welcoming to all non-specialised visitors and audiences, including also non-native speakers and those with learning disabilities.

"Polytechneion" of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Visual interpretations

Visual Reinterpretations by architecture students:

6 Maria Theodora Agalidis, Eleni Panou, Danae Mitakidi, Katerina Vardikou, Myrsini Vlahou

7 Maria Theodora Agalidis & Danae Mitakidi

8 Myrsini Vlahou

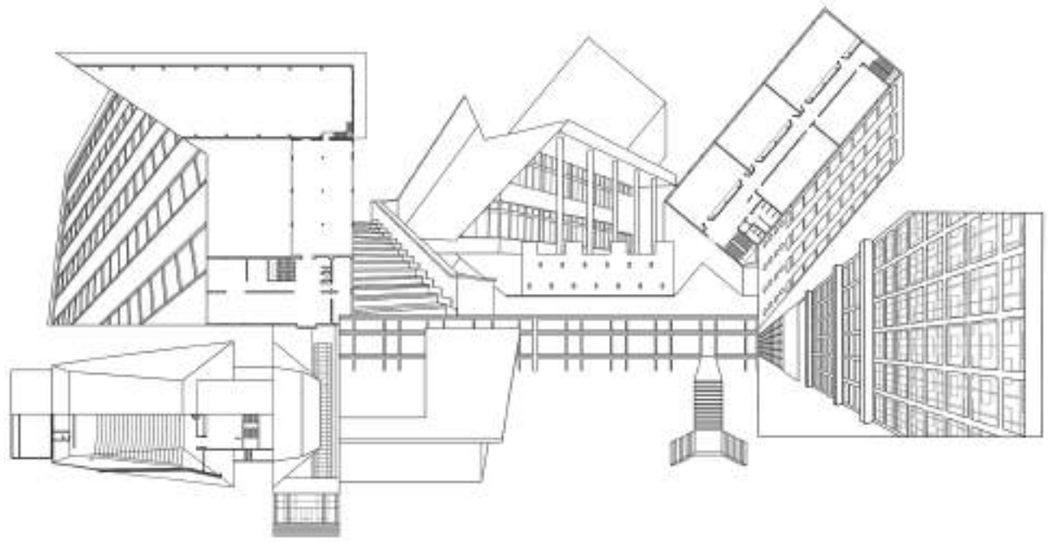
Photos by Elissavet Vlahou & Stamatios Vouzikis



6



7



6

"Polytechneion" of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Models











9 Architectural Model in scale 1:200, constructed by architecture students: Maria Theodora Agalidis, Eleni Panou, Danae Mitakidi, Katerina Vardikou, Myrsini Vlahou

Photos by Elissavet Vlahou & Stamatios Vouzikis

Kazazis Residence in Panorama

Redrawings

Selected Redrawings done by architect Konstantinos Zves

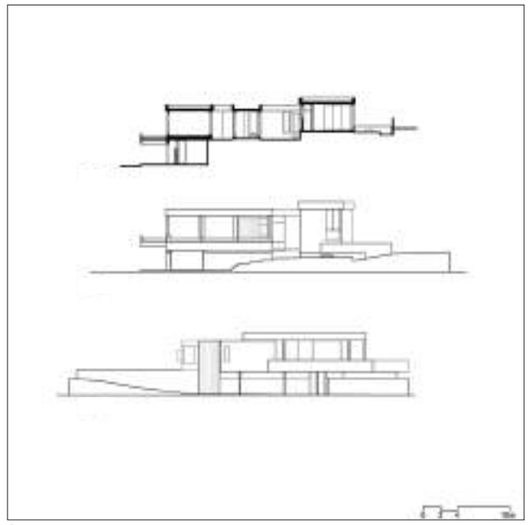
1 Plans

2 Cross sections and elevations

3 Site plan



1



2



3

Kazazis Residence in Panorama

Architectural narratives

4 “Plain Language” Architectural Narrative by Alexandra Vougia & Apostolos Kalfopoulos

Kazazis Residence in Panorama, 1962-1964 & 1973 *
Dimitris A. Fatouros

landscape * τοπίο | topío

The landscape is the sum of the features of an area of land, in relation to their appearance. Each person looks at the landscape in a unique way. In this project, the landscape is an element of the house itself and continues the unique life of the inhabitants outside.

Το τοπίο είναι το σύνολο των χαρακτηριστικών μιας έκτασης γης, όπως αυτά εμφανίζονται. Κάθε άτομο κοιτά το τοπίο με έναν μοναδικό τρόπο. Σε αυτό το έργο, το τοπίο αποτελεί στοιχείο του ίδιου του σπιτιού και συνεχίζει τη μοναδική ζωή των κατοίκων έξω.

horizontality * οριζοντιότητα | horizontiótita

Horizontality refers to the quality, state, or spatial property of being parallel to the horizon. Fatouros uses the horizonal plane to organise the main functions of the house and take advantage of the physical characteristics of the plot, such as the view and slope. The horizonal plane extends beyond the enclosed spaces of the house into the open and looks toward the horizon.

Η οριζοντιότητα αναφέρεται στην ποιότητα, την κατάσταση ή την χωρική ιδιότητα ενός πράγματος να είναι παράλληλο με τον ορίζοντα. Ο Φατούρος χρησιμοποιεί το οριζόντιο επίπεδο για να οργανώσει τις κύριες λειτουργίες του σπιτιού και να εκμεταλλευτεί τα φυσικά χαρακτηριστικά του οικοπέδου, όπως η θέα και η κλίση του. Το οριζόντιο επίπεδο εκτείνεται πέρα από τους κλειστούς χώρους του σπιτιού και στο ύπαιθρο και κατά τον ορίζοντα.

transitional space * μεταβατικοί χώροι | metavatiki hóri

In architecture, transitional spaces are intermediate zones that link different areas or rooms, for example, indoor and outdoor spaces, private and public, etc. In this building, the transitional spaces become a characteristic element of the plan. They grow into a new program as important as the usual functions of a house.

Στην αρχιτεκτονική, οι μεταβατικοί χώροι είναι ενδιάμεσες ζώνες που συνδέουν διαφορετικές περιοχές ή δωμάτια, για παράδειγμα, εσωτερικούς και εξωτερικούς χώρους, ιδιωτικούς και δημόσιους, κ.λπ. Σε αυτό το κτίριο, οι μεταβατικοί χώροι γίνονται ένα χαρακτηριστικό στοιχείο της κάτοψης. Εμφανίζουν ένα νέο πρόγραμμα τόσο σημαντικό όσο οι συνηθισμένες χρήσεις ενός σπιτιού.

corridor * διάδρομος | ðiáðromos

The corridor is a long (usually indoor) passage that connects different spaces or parts of a building. In Kazazis residence, the corridors appear only in the private parts of the building.

Ο διάδρομος είναι ένα μακρύ (συνήθως κλειστό) πέρασμα που συνδέει διαφορετικούς χώρους ή μέρη ενός κτιρίου. Στην κατοικία Καζάζη, διάδρομοι εμφανίζονται μόνο στα ιδιωτικά μέρη του κτιρίου.

hierarchy * ιεραρχία | ierarçía

Hierarchy is a system in which people and things are arranged according to their importance. In architecture, hierarchy applies to spaces. In this project happens the opposite. Here, the aim of the design is the lack of any obvious hierarchy. All spaces are equally important in the life of the house.

Η ιεραρχία είναι ένα σύστημα στο οποίο οι άνθρωποι και τα πράγματα είναι διατεταγμένα ανάλογα με τη σημασία τους. Στην αρχιτεκτονική, η ιεραρχία εφαρμόζεται σε χώρους. Σε αυτό το έργο ισχύει το αντίθετο. Εδώ, ο στόχος του σχεδιασμού είναι η έλλειψη προφανούς ιεραρχίας. Όλοι οι χώροι είναι εξίσου σημαντικοί στη ζωή του σπιτιού.

*Architectural Narratives in Plain Language - Plain Language simplifies complex information to make exhibitions and broadcasted programs accessible, engaging, and welcoming to all non-specialised visitors and audiences, including also non-native speakers and those with learning disabilities.

Kazazis Residence in Panorama

Visual interpretations

Visual Reinterpretations by architecture students:

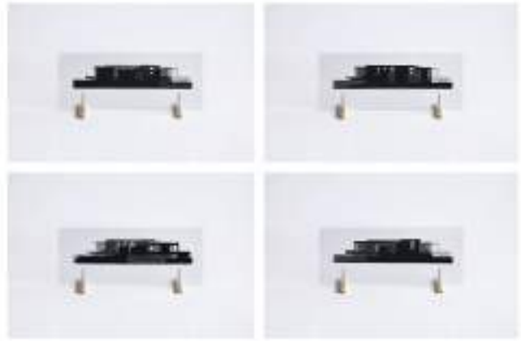
5 Irini Mavridou

6 Vassiliki Topriska

7 Theodora Vassiliadou

8, 9 I. Mavridou & Th. Vassiliadou

Photos by Elissavet Vlahou & Stamatios Vouzikis



5



6



7



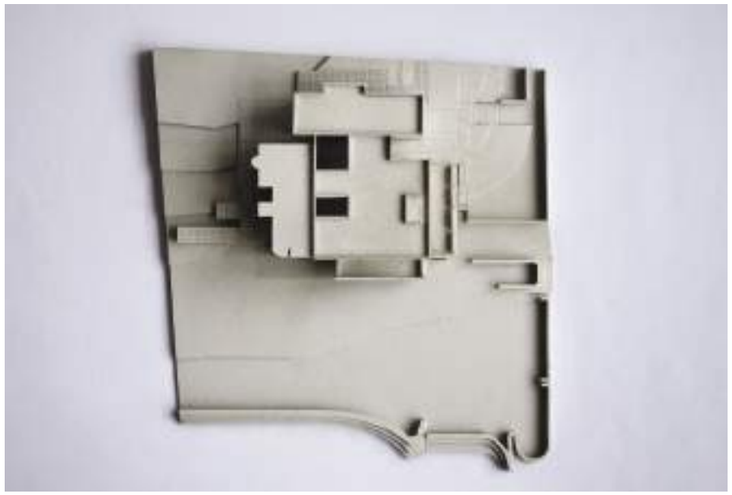
8

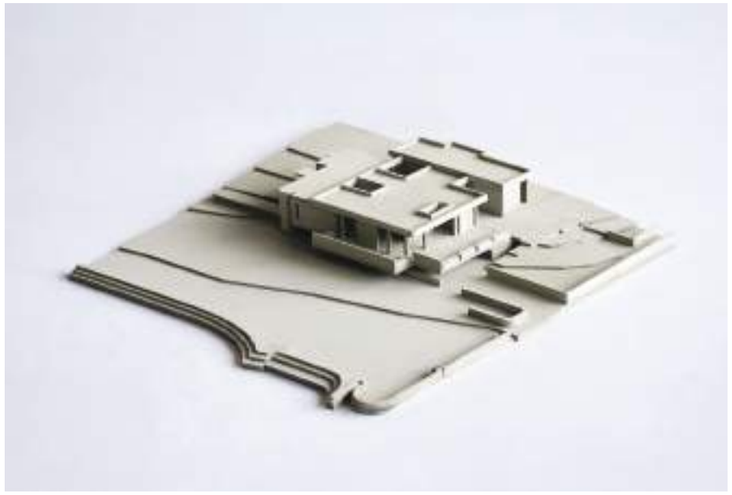


9

Kazazis Residence in Panorama

Models









10 Architectural Model in scale 1:200, constructed by architecture students: Efthymia Kantourou, Irini Mavridou, Vassiliki Topriska, Theodora Vassiliadou,

Photos by Elissavet Vlahou & Stamatios Vouzikis

Museum of Byzantine Culture

Redrawings

Selected Redrawings done by architect Konstantinos Zves

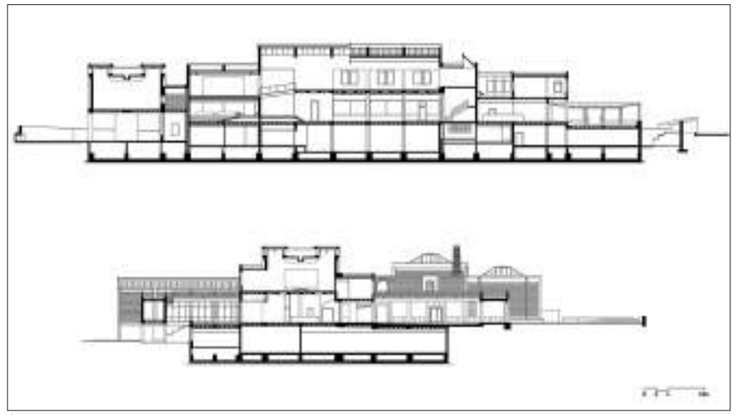
1 Ground floor plan

2 Cross sections

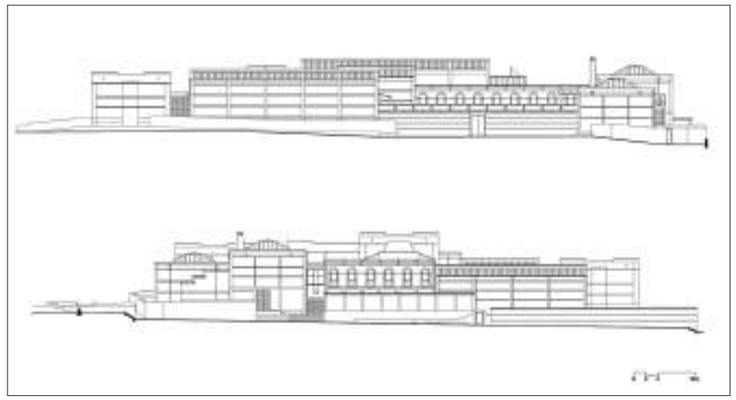
3 Elevations



1



2



3

Museum of Byzantine Culture

Architectural narratives

4 “Plain Language” Architectural Narrative by Alexandra Vougia & Apostolos Kalfopoulos.

Museum of Byzantine Culture, 1978-1993 *
Kyriakos Krokos

assemblage * συναρμογή | sinarmoʝí

An assemblage is a group of things. The design of the museum looks like an irregular assemblage of volumes. However, there is a hidden system behind the project that is based on a series of straight lines that meet at right angles. This system controls all parts of the whole.

Η συναρμογή είναι μια ομάδα πραγμάτων. Ο σχεδιασμός του μουσείου μοιάζει με ένα ακανόνιστο σύνολο όγκων. Ωστόσο, υπάρχει ένα κρυφό σύστημα πίσω από το σύνολο του έργου που βασίζεται σε μια σειρά από ευθείες γραμμές που τέμνονται σε ορθή γωνία. Αυτό το σύστημα ελέγχει όλα τα μέρη του συνόλου.

labyrinth * Λαβύρινθος | lavírinθos

The labyrinth is a system of complex passageways that intend to complicate navigation. Although the building might appear as 'labyrinthine' from the outside, there is a clear design that organises the planning of the spaces.

Ο λαβύρινθος είναι ένα σύστημα σύνθετων διαδρομών που σκοπό έχουν τη δυσκολία πλοήγησης. Αν και το κτίριο μπορεί να φαίνεται ως ένας 'λαβύρινθος' από έξω, υπάρχει ένας σαφής σχεδιασμός που οργανώνει τον σχεδιασμό των χώρων.

stoa * στοά | stoá

The stoa is another a basic element of ancient Greek architecture. It is a freestanding covered walkway with regularly spaced columns on one side. It provides an open, but protected, space. In the Museum of Byzantine Culture, the stoas wrap around the courtyards offering a protected move between the open and closed spaces.

Η στοά είναι ένα ακόμη βασικό στοιχείο της αρχαίας ελληνικής αρχιτεκτονικής. Είναι ένας ανεξάρτητος στεγασμένος διάδρομος με κίονες στη μία πλευρά, τοποθετημένους σε κανονικές αποστάσεις. Παρέχει έναν ανοιχτό, αλλά προστατευμένο χώρο. Στο Μουσείο Βυζαντινού Πολιτισμού, οι στοές τυλίγουν τις αυλές προσφέροντας μια προστατευμένη κίνηση από τους ανοιχτούς προς τους κλειστούς χώρους.

brick * τούβλο | túvlo

Bricks are rectangular blocks of hard material used for building walls. Historically, it has been used across different cultures for its resisting qualities and ease of production and laying. Krokos used this ancient material and its construction methods with a contemporary eye.

Τα τούβλα είναι ορθογώνια στοιχεία από σκληρό υλικό που χρησιμοποιούνται για την κατασκευή τοίχων. Ιστορικά, έχουν χρησιμοποιηθεί σε διαφορετικούς πολιτισμούς για τις ανθεκτικές τους ιδιότητες και την ευκολία παραγωγής και τοποθέτησης. Ο Κρόκος χρησιμοποίησε αυτό το αρχαίο υλικό και τις μεθόδους κατασκευής του με μια σύγχρονη ματιά.

archetype * αρχέτυπο | arxétipo

In architecture, an archetype is the 'first form' that is a constant reference for building types. Often, archetypes influence the collective unconscious, the part of mind that affects emotions. Krokos believed in this power of archetypes and used them in his work, sometimes in a clear way but sometimes not.

Στην αρχιτεκτονική, ένα αρχέτυπο είναι η «αρχική μορφή» που αποτελεί σταθερή αναφορά για τους τύπους κτιρίων. Συχνά, τα αρχέτυπα επηρεάζουν το συλλογικό ασυνείδητο, δηλαδή το μέρος του μυαλού που επηρεάζει τα συναισθήματα. Ο Κρόκος πίστευε σε αυτή τη δύναμη των αρχετύπων και τα χρησιμοποίησε στο έργο του, άλλοτε με σαφή τρόπο και άλλοτε όχι.

*Architectural Narratives in Plain Language – Plain Language simplifies complex information to make exhibitions and broadcasted programs accessible, engaging, and welcoming to all non-specialised visitors and audiences, including also non-native speakers and those with learning disabilities.

Museum of Byzantine Culture

Visual interpretations

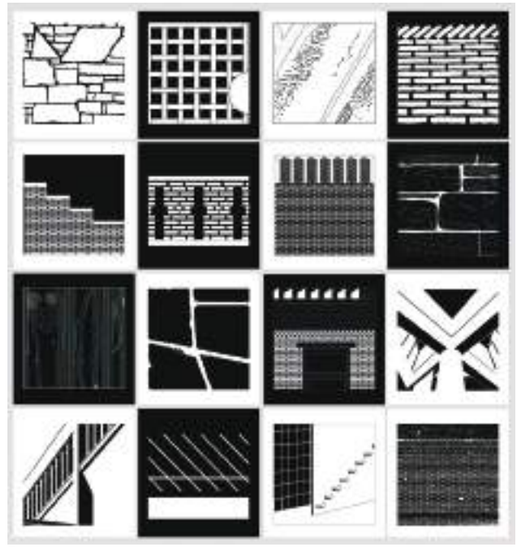
Visual Reinterpretations by architecture students:

5 Emmanuela Hassapi & Vassiliki Kapeleri

6 Marios Alexandros Poulimenos, Theodoros Raphail Tsikanteris

7 Sofia Psychoudaki

8 M. A. Poulimenos, S. Psychoudaki, Th. R. Tsikanteris



5



6



7



8

Museum of Byzantine Culture

Models











10 Architectural Model in scale 1:200, constructed by architecture students: Efthymia Kantourou, Irini Mavridou, Vassiliki Topriska, Theodora Vassiliadou,

Photos by Elissavet Vlahou & Stamatios Vouzikis

Excerpts from interviews with Grand Tourists:

AK Anastasios Kotsiopoulos
NK Nikolaos Kalogirou
MP Morpho Papanikolaou
RS Rena Sakellaridou
LP Lois Papadopoulos
and disciplinary knowledge

4 Learning by travel with...

On the reasons for Travelling and Preparation

AK Firstly, it was the curiosity to see what was happening outside Greece, in every aspect of everyday life, and secondly for studying.

NK The trips abroad were essentially undertaken for educational purposes (postgraduate studies, teaching as a visiting professor, participation in exhibitions, educational excursions, etc.).
By constrast, the trips within Greece were carried out with the intention of exploring the genius loci.

[...]

Preparations in earlier times included gathering information from publications, discussions, and correspondence. In more recent years the internet was added as a source.

MP The reasons were educational, either for studies or for teaching.

[...]

There was a combination of preparation and non-preparation, based both on travel guides, maps, architectural references and literary books related to places leading to the creation of lists of places, buildings, museums and events as well as on randomness, in the sense allowing for unplanned encounters...

RS At first, it was graduate studies, but also a very strong desire to be as far from home as possible. Later, the reason was to see and experience architecture and to understand what other architects are doing. This has been a very strong trend in my life. About 15 years ago, I also started my "far--away" trips, to experience nature and to understand more of the world and its different cultures.

[...]

I do not know why, but I do not prepare properly for my trips... I am not the type that knows everything when I go to a faraway place. I live very much in the moment. [...] When I travel for architecture though, I am much better prepared about buildings I want to visit.

LP For my graduate studies in London (1974-1976). There was also a subsequent stay in London, during my first sabbatical, (1982-1983), as a visiting researcher. [...] My early academic career years (1978-1991) coincided with my initial encounter with postmodern discourse and its diverse pioneers – representing a somewhat epistemological break, inaugurating what in the Venice Biennale ("The Presence of the Past", 1980) was announced as "The end of prohibition". [...] My second sabbatical (1992-1993) to the USA and Japan familiarized me with alternative facets of reality – empirical and theoretical. [...]

On Tools for Documentation and Architectural "Souvenirs"

AK I used a camera that I owned at the time. If I remember correctly it was a Yashica – with double lenses that I used through most of my studies.

[...]

Obviously, now I would use a good quality mobile phone. What else? [...] Also a notebook with a good quality pencil, in case I find the time in my studio to capture through drawing something that has impressed me, after I have seen and photographed it; not the same thing, but something inspired by it; something that might also be surreal.

[...]

As far as souvenirs are concerned, I remember our inability to buy things, during that first educational trip, because we counted every last penny for our budget. [...] I have to say though, that travelling by bus around Europe for 30 days, passing through the most different places was a sensation. These experiences were the gains that we had and they were exciting.

NK In all travels a camera, a notebook, and maps were used. [...] Nowadays, despite any personal reservations, the smartphone offers exceptional capabilities as a multi-tool, enabling photographic captures, videos, notes, and guided tours, among other things.

At the same time, I believe that kinesthetic experiences, even through a slow-paced exploration or a seemingly simple visit, remain irreplaceable.

[...]

A valuable acquisition from travel experiences is the broadening of mental and visual perception. Mental conceptualization constitutes the primary "luggage" that one brings back home. Still, my favourite method of recording has always been photographic documentation and acquiring relevant publications and printed material.

MP A few photos, mainly of the areas that were not photographed in the official publications, [...] and a few notes and observations in a notebook. [...] Today, I would focus on fewer and particularly personal photos, insisting more on notes and sketches of impressions.

[...]

Souvenirs included gifts, tickets, books and magazines, exhibition cataloguess, restaurant menus, purchases of objects, clothes and accessories.

RS My camera and lately my smartphone. [...] I was documenting through photos; many photos and the emotions I felt. Having worked for a long time on my analytical side I feel confident now to rely more on my intuitions.

[...]

As for my luggage, first of all, I bring with me some sense of a magic prolongation of time. Time gets really dense and expands when I travel. Usually, I bring back only a few souvenirs, if they mean a lot to me. Not souvenirs for the sake of them. I am not a collector. If possible, I would like to live in empty spaces. But I always buy myself a gift, to keep the memory alive when I wear it. When visiting the Venice Biennale though (almost always), I bring back books, leaflets that I find interesting, the whole memorabilia.

LP In a public talk that I gave on *experiencing the city, as a supplement to architectural studies*, I discussed how, when I return, for example, to my "ethnographic" walks in London, I recall [...] that the era was *pre-digital* and information had a completely different structure; it was, in the final analysis, limited. Indeed, anyone who treated the valid tourist guides with suspicion was obliged to compile the pragmatics of the metropolis and establish the critical relationships that would allow one to decode the image of the city and the socio--spatial conjuncture and context within which the feeling for the city, its "city sense", is produced. [...] My studies themselves, together with my subsequent stay in London, during my first sabbatical [...] are self-evidently counted among the irreplaceable periods of my architectural education. Because my wanderings in the structures and events of the metropolitan space provided me with valuable knowledge and emotional excitement, ultimately formative for my architectural consciousness.

On Visited Buildings becoming References and Influences

AK It is difficult to give a specific answer. You take some elements from all the important buildings you have seen and you don't copy any of them, of course. You incorporate all of that; all of them together and none of them alone. Deep down this is what it is.

[...]

Of everything I saw on this first trip, I was particularly impressed – and I want to say this because I have never changed my opinion, by Le Corbusier's Ronchamp. This was an unforgettable experience. [...] In later trips, it was the I. M. Pei's expansion of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, with its amazing lighting from the ceiling, and his Louvre Pyramid, mainly for its boldness. Also, the Pompidou Centre in Paris, where what impressed me more than anything else was the slightly sloping public urban square towards its façade.

NK I believe that organized visits to settlements and buildings are essential and irreplaceable. Architecture has a materiality that can only be perceived through on--site experiences involving all the senses – visual, auditory, olfactory, and tactile.

[...]

I would particularly highlight the experiences that emerged from my studies in Paris and later, during a temporary sojourn, in London as a visiting professor at the AA School. These experiences significantly influenced the way I conceptualize my architectural creations. The impact of certain innovative modern landmarks of the time (such as the Brutalist buildings in Britain or the much-discussed Pompidou Centre) was, de facto, decisive but remained indirect. [...] Also, a decisive factor for my compositional approach was the multiple trips to Greek traditional settlements, as I believe that the universality of architecture must adapt to the specific local conditions and culture.

MP Almost every trip had a special architectural significance at the time it took place. I would especially single out my stays in and several trips to Italy for their dense stimuli in art, architecture, design and gastronomy. Travels to NY, Japan and India have also been important. Concepts such as those of size, crowds, austerity, decoration, the relationship between architecture, nature and tradition, have influenced my approach.

[...]

In terms of architects' works visited, I could selectively mention buildings by Sanaa, Zumthor, Herzog and de Meuron, Le Corbusier, Tadao Ado and Palladio. I think they are references to the experience of atmosphere, to geometry, to textures, to light.

RS My graduate study years in Vancouver [...] and also, my trips to Europe [...] Trips to Venice for the Biennale, to Berlin and to Rotterdam for an exhibition we participated in, to the US, and to Japan. Our architectural tour to Switzerland and the works of Sanaa and Zumthor, and another one to see Vitra and to enjoy the Ronchamp. And, of course, our trip to India and Dacca to see works by Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn. A real pilgrimage. [...] In Canada I became fascinated by the Museum of Anthropology at UBC by Arthur Erickson. [...] Also, I felt very moved by Olafur Eliasson's exhibition in a pavilion designed by David Adjaye for the Architecture Venice Biennale.

[...]

Lately I also travel a lot to more distant places. I have gradually developed a deep love for nature and the wilderness and I want to be able to explore the vastness of the world. If my architectural trips gave me a better understanding of contemporary and historical architecture, my other trips expand my horizon on a different level. [...] Realizing the richness and beauty of the whole world makes me more humane and able to open up my personal boundaries. Isn't this important for our architecture?

LP In London, Bill Hillier opened my primary modernist education [...] to a French inspired epistemological-cum-social thinking vision (Lefebvre, Castells, Harvey), though rather irrelevant or pretty difficult to be deduced to architecture or design thinking. [...] In my first academic career years, I met the legacy of neo-realists and in particular Aldo Rossi, his *Architecture of the City*, [...] and his incomparable visual sensitivities, i.e., solid forms and pictorial excellence. Inspired by this spirit, we, some colleagues and students, embarked on a theory crusade – translating his magnum opus, reforming our design courses into typology research projects etc. [...] During my second sabbatical, I first experienced the affinities between NY and European cities' syntax and city sense. Then, while being informed, via Reyner Banham, on LA's Four Ecologies, I felt astonished at its wastelands and its adjacent deserts, with Frank Lloyd Wright's dispersed architectural traces. Paradigmatic architectural case studies, such as Craig Ellwood's fascinated me, though the immense landscape

seemed to devour them. [...] On the contrary, in the case of Japanese architecture, *fragility* falls in the realm of mystic metaphor [...]. "Lost in translation", I often found myself stressed when communicating with the undecipherable ritual interplay between silence and the protective care towards the "other".

On the Relevance of Learning--by-Travelling and on Suggested Itineraries

AK It is necessary. Erasmus networks help but it could be much more extensive. It could be an essential part of architectural studies, so that students can encounter buildings in three dimensions. [...] Nothing can replace the real visit and the direct experience that one has of a building and urban space. This is where scales change and the perspective differentiates. [...] And this has a huge impact on the production of atmosphere. Let's not forget the "genius loci" of the phenomenologists...

[...]

Making suggestions for travelling is really difficult. Some buildings I would suggest would be the famous extension of the Delft University Library for its relationship with the ground; some of Foster's early works in the U.K.; and some "protagonists" of Modernism, like the Ronchamp.

NK New tools for knowledge and design greatly facilitate architectural education. Potential side-effects arise when screens and virtual realities dominate. Antidotes include fieldtrips, visits to construction sites, and experiencing realized architecture. Traveling broadens knowledge, and in my opinion, learning through traveling is both possible and necessary.

[...]

Given the geographical richness and significant cultural diversity in the broader European area, it is difficult to make suggestions. Based on my personal experiences, I would recommend, for various reasons, Paris, London, Italy – especially Venice – Barcelona, Lisbon, and Istanbul. To my students seeking advice on postgraduate studies, I suggest living for a while in a European metropolis, as it offers parallel experiences that are irreplaceable and equally important to formal education.

MP In my opinion, learning by traveling is not only possible, but it is a necessary form of knowledge, complementary to architectural education. I believe that architectural experience on-site cannot be compared to any form of image and online information.

[...]

I would suggest a tour to major cities of all European countries, with a programme of visits to both popular and unpopular destinations. Such a tour would promote architectural experiences of comparison and contrast. A tour's main focus and intention would be to observe people, space and art as well as environmental behaviour.

RS Learning by traveling is not just possible; it's necessary. Images and the internet cannot recreate, at least for now, the real experience of sensing a space, its atmosphere, materiality, form, detailing, context and people.

[...]

Difficult to say... Paris and London, Rome, Milan, Venice, Florence, Barcelona, Berlin, Oslo and Rotterdam.

The above excerpts were selected and put together from separate interviews conducted (and translated) by members of the AUTh team.

A PDF version of this book is available
for free in Open Access at
up.pt/press/

ISBN 978-989-746-465-2

Publisher
U.PORTO PRESS

Up
Gran
T

European Commission

POLITECNICO

U.PORTO
FACULDADE DE ARQUITETURA
UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO

ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA
DIPARTIMENTO DI ARCHITETTURA

Art Academy of Latvia

ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI

EKA

Workbook of Affinities

Updating the Grand Tour.
Memory and Invention of the
European Built Environment

The *Workbook of Affinities* comprises 7 sections that synthesise the results of the exercises undertaken by the UpGranT Consortium in the conception of a learning by travelling pedagogical model, re-empowering the Grand Tour's long-standing practice.

Section 1	**UpGranT Consortium**
Section 2	**Politecnico di Milano · POLIMI**
Section 3	**Faculty of Architecture – University of Porto · FAUP**
Section 4	**Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna · UNIBO**
Section 5	**Art Academy of Latvia · LMA**
Section 6	**Aristotle University of Thessaloniki · AUTh**
Section 7	**Estonian Art Academy · EKA**

– *Gregor Taul, Merilin Tee*

1 Grand Tourists P3

Ten Grand Tourists from Estonia

Wall atlas

2 Grand Tour P11

Architecture and identity: an Estonian journey across time

Wall atlas

3 Souvenirs on Exemplary Buildings P19

Searching sources: Exemplary Buildings in three acts

A three-layered home between rural roots and the emancipating city. Erika Nõva's Own House

Houses Grow into Homes. Vello Asi's Own House

Alvar Alto – no question. Pärnu KEK terraced housing complex Kuldne Kodu (Golden Home)

4 Learning by travel with... P37

Learning by travel with Vilen Künnapu

The UpGranT "Workbook of Affinities" is published under the Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnerships in Higher Education programme, funded by the European Union. Reference: 2023-1-IT02-KA220-HED-000158377.

The views expressed are those of the author(s) alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the Erasmus+ - INDIRE National Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting administration can be held responsible for them.

The contents in this section are the entire responsibility of the partner organisation and their authors.

Ten Grand Tourists from Estonia

1 Grand Tourists

Herbert Johanson (1884-1964) was one of the most active and influential architects in Estonia during the interwar period. Together with his colleague and friend Eugen Habermann (1884-1944), he designed over 200 building projects spanning a wide range of typologies.

From 1904 to 1910, Johanson studied at the Riga Polytechnic Institute, with supplementary studies at the Technical University of Darmstadt between 1906 and 1908. He worked in Riga throughout the 1910s, and from 1924 to 1944 headed the Project Bureau of the City Architect of Tallinn. During the 1930s, he also served as chairman of the Estonian Association of Architects.

Among Johanson's most notable works are the Building of the Parliament of Estonia (with Eugen Habermann, 1920), an expressionist landmark, and the Tallinn Central Fire station in Raua Street (1936-1939). His commitment to modernist principles and the extensive use of local limestone gave rise to the term limestone functionalism, most clearly exemplified by his Chapel at Liiva Cemetery (1934-1935).

In 1944, Johanson emigrated to Sweden, where he continued to practise architecture until his death in 1964.

Selected works
Ristiku Basic School (1927-1929), Liiva Cemetery Chapel (1934-1935), Residential House (currently Kalamaja Museum, 1934).

Selected travels
Denmark, German Empire, Republic of Latvia, Republic of Lithuania, Norway, Republic of Poland, Sweden, Weimar Republic.

Selected bibliography
HALLAS-MURULA K. (2025) - *Eugen Habermann ja Herbert Johanson: Eesti modernismi klassikud* [Eugen Habermann and Herbert Johanson: Classics of Estonian Modernism]. Tallinn City Archives and Estonian Museum of Architecture, Tallinn.

Erika Nõva (1905-1987) was the first professional female architect in Estonia. She graduated from the Tallinn Higher Technical School in 1931 and quickly became a prominent public voice, publishing articles in newspapers and journals to raise awareness among women and the wider public about improving everyday living conditions.

During the 1930s, Nõva worked for the Settlement Board of the Estonian Ministry of Agriculture, which was responsible for establishing new settlement areas on state-owned land. In this role, she designed hundreds of farmhouses – including her own home in Nõmme – that drew inspiration from traditional Estonian rural architecture. While the appearance of these houses often reflected a national romantic aesthetic, Nõva's design principles and ground plans were distinctly modern and, in many ways, emancipatory – more so than the 'high-modernist' villas that adhered to bourgeois ideals.

She also designed several schools in Tallinn and across rural Estonia. During the Soviet period, Nõva continued her professional work, focusing on spatial planning for municipalities and agricultural areas.

Selected works
Architect's own house (1937-1938), Tallinn English College (with Alar Kotli, 1938-1939), Kalev Stadium (with Alar Kotli, 1949-1955).

Selected travels
Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, Finland, People's Republic of Bulgaria, Socialist Republic of Romania.

Selected bibliography
LASS A. (editor) (2006) - Arhitekt Erika Nõva. Minu töö ja elu. [Architect Erika Nõva. My work and life]. Estonian Museum of Architecture, Tallinn.

PARBUS T. & RUUDI I. (2014) - "Emancipating architecture. Erika Nõva and the modernist architecture discourse from a gender-critical perspective". Proceedings of the Art Museum of Estonia, 4 (9), pp. 231-254.

Mart Port (1922-2012) completed his architectural studies at the Tallinn Polytechnical Institute in 1950. He became one of the leading figures in Estonian architecture, serving as Chairman of the Union of Soviet Estonian Architects from 1955 to 1979. Port travelled widely and was eager to learn from international developments, incorporating global ideas into the local architectural discourse.

In Soviet Estonia, most architectural work was undertaken by five state design institutes, each specialising in a particular field: Kommunaalprojekt for public amenities and facilities, Maaehitusprojekt for rural architecture, EKE Projekt for collective farms, Tööstusprojekt for industrial buildings, and Eesti Projekt for urban planning, housing, and major public structures. Some collective farms and factories maintained their own design offices, while certain projects – such as military installations or the television tower – were handled by all-Union design bureaus based in Moscow or Leningrad.

From 1961 to 1989, Port served as Chief Architect of Eesti Projekt, the institute that had the greatest impact on Estonia's built environment. Under his direction, Eesti Projekt produced statutory plans for Tallinn, Tartu, Pärnu, and Viljandi, as well as for Tallinn's districts of Mustamäe, Väike-Õismäe, and Lasnamäe.

Port also contributed to several landmark projects, including the Viru Hotel, the Building of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Estonia, the Planners' House, and the Maarjamäe World War II Memorial.

Selected works
Viru Hotel (1968-1972), Central Committee of the Communist Party of Estonia (with Raine Karp, Uno Tölpus, Olga Kontšajeva, 1966-1968), Lasnamäe district plan (with Malle Meelak, Irina Raud, Oleg Žemtšugov, 1977).

Selected travels
Belgium, Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, Federal Republic of Germany, Finland, France, German Democratic Republic, Greece, Hungarian People's Republic, Italy, Polish People´ s Republic, Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, USA.

Selected bibliography
PORT M. (1966) - *Arhitekti pilguga Inglismaal*. [An architect's perspective on England]. Eesti Raamat, Tallinn.
TAUL G. (2024) - "Soviet Estonian Architects' Travels During the USSR. The Case of Mart Port". FAMagazine: Research and Projects on Architecture and the City, 69-70, pp. 116-137.

Vello Asi (1927-2016) was a leading Estonian interior architect who graduated from the State Art Institute in 1954. In close collaboration with Väino Tamm, with whom he completed dozens of projects, Asi became one of the foremost figures in modernist interior design in Estonia.

Together, they created some of the most memorable interiors for cafés and public buildings in Tallinn, while also contributing to international projects. Asi designed exhibition displays for several large-scale All-Union exhibitions abroad and spent a month in London in 1968 preparing a major Soviet exhibition.

Alongside his design work, Asi had a long and influential career as a lecturer, leaving a lasting impact on generations of Estonian interior architects. In recognition of his legacy, the Estonian Academy of Arts annually awards the Vello Asi Prize to its most outstanding interior architecture student.

Selected works
Architect's own house (1963-1970), Tallinn Writers' House hall and offices (1962-1963), Viru hotel interior (with Väino Tamm, Loomet Raudsepp, Taevo Gans, Mait Summatavet, 1969-1972).

Selected travels
Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, Denmark, Finland, German Democratic Republic, Mongolian People's Republic, Polish People's Republic, United Kingdom.

Selected bibliography
JAGODIN K. (2007) - *Tamm ja Asi: sisearhitektid Väino Tamm ja Vello Asi* [Tamm and Asi: interior architects Väino Tamm and Vello Asi]. Estonian Museum of Architecture, Tallinn.

Raine Karp (b. 1939) studied construction at the Tallinn Polytechnic Institute (1957–1959) and architecture at the Tallinn State Institute of Applied Art (1959–1964). He worked in several state design institutes – Eesti Kommunaalprojekt (1960–1963), Eesti Projekt (1963–1973; 1978–1990), and Eesti Tööstusprojekt (1975–1978) – which enabled him to engage with a wide range of architectural typologies.

Karp authored some of the most monumental examples of Estonian modernist architecture from the 1960s to the 1980s. His best-known works, the Linnahall Convention Centre and the National Library of Estonia, have become enduring national symbols and are now protected architectural monuments.

As a distinguished architect, Karp was among the few of his generation able to travel abroad. A visit to Tokyo shortly after the 1964 Olympics left a strong impression on him, particularly the solemn monumentality of the structures he encountered there – an influence traceable in his own architectural language.

Selected works
Architect's own house (1968-1975), Residential quarter at Trummi 21 (1969-1971), Tallinn City Hall (with Riina Altmäe, 1974-1980).

Selected travels
Belgium, Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, Finland, Federal Republic of Germany, France, German Democratic Republic, Italy, Japan, Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, South Korea, United Kingdom, USA.

Selected bibliography
KARP R. & VÄLJAS M. (editors) (2016) - *Arhitekt Raine Karp = Architect Raine Karp*. Estonian Museum of Architecture, Tallinn.

Toomas Rein (b. 1940) graduated from the Tallinn Polytechnic Institute in 1958 with a degree in industrial and civil engineering, and from the Faculty of Architecture of the Tallinn State Institute of Applied Art in 1967. From 1967 to 1986, he worked at EKE Projekt, an architectural bureau responsible for designing buildings for collective farms across Estonia.

Rein designed numerous public buildings, particularly in rural areas, including collective farm centres, administrative buildings, schools, kindergartens, and recreation facilities. Among his most notable works are the Rapla KEK Administration Building, the Linda and Tsooru Collective Farm Centres in Võrumaa, and the Viljandi Fire Station.

A distinct chapter in Estonian architecture of the 1970s is marked by Rein's projects for Pärnu KEK, most notably almost a kilometre-long terraced housing complex – one of the grandest residential undertakings of Soviet Estonia. The Rapla KEK building also stands out as a unique phenomenon in the nation's architectural landscape. In 2015, it was officially recognised as a cultural monument – the first Soviet-era collective farm edifice to receive such designation.

Selected works
Pärnu KEK construction company terraced housing complex Kuldne Kodu (1972-1987), Rapla KEK administrative building (1971-1977), Otepää High School annex building (1998-2000).

Selected travels
Finland, France, Italy, People's Republic of Bulgaria, Polish People's Republic, Spain.

Selected bibliography
REIN T. & VÄLJAS M. (editors) (2010) - *Arhitekt Toomas Rein* [Architect Toomas Rein]. Estonian Museum of Architecture, Tallinn.

Vilen Künnapu (b. 1948) graduated from the Estonian SSR State Art Institute in 1971. With his inquisitive mind and relentless pursuit of new ideas, he has shaped Estonian architectural culture in multiple ways over the past half-century.

In the 1970s, Künnapu emerged as a leading neo-functionalist architect; in the 1980s, he was among the foremost advocates of postmodernist theory and formal experimentation. During Estonia's transition to democracy, he achieved outstanding success in international architectural competitions, surpassing any of his contemporaries. In the 2000s, Künnapu became one of the country's most commercially successful architects – yet, paradoxically, by the early 21st century, he was also regarded as one of its most eccentric figures within the profession.

In the mid-2010s, Künnapu decided to withdraw from architectural practice, devoting himself primarily to painting, where his visionary and spiritual sensibilities continue to find expression.

Selected works
Tervis Sanatorium extension (1976–1988), Teelehe Road group of houses (with Ain Padrik, 1997), Elephant House (2011–2013).

Selected travels
Finland, France, Greece, Hungarian People's Republic, Italy, Norway, Polish People's Republic, USA.

Selected bibliography
KÜNNAPU V. (2001) – *Üle punase jõe. Valitud tekste 1972–2001 = Across the Red River. Selected texts 1972–2001*. Tallinn College of Engineering, Tallinn.
KÜNNAPU V. & GRIGOR I. (2015) – *Vilen Künnapu: kunst, arhitektuur, revolutsioon = Vilen Künnapu: Art, Architecture, Revolution*. Estonian Museum of Architecture, Tallinn.

Siiri Vallner (b. 1972) began her architectural studies at the Estonian Academy of Arts in the early 1990s, a period of profound transition in Estonian architecture. In this atmosphere of uncertainty and rapid change, Vallner was among the first students to take part in an exchange programme in Copenhagen, where the Danish government had established a special course for international students. Among the lecturers was Jan Gehl, who introduced students to the principles of architecture and urban planning shaped by the ideals of the welfare state through extensive study tours across Denmark.

Vallner continued her studies in Washington, D.C., at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, where Jaan Holt, an Estonian émigré, was Professor of Architecture. Holt – a former student of Louis Kahn and Kahn's long-time structural engineer August Komendant – created tuition-free study opportunities and scholarships for Estonian students. While Kahn had left Estonia as an infant, Komendant emigrated as an adult during the Second World War.

After completing her studies, Vallner spent a year in New York, working in a large architectural practice. Upon returning to Estonia, she co-founded Kavakava architecture office. In 2008, after receiving the Young Architect Award and the accompanying travel scholarship, she embarked on a classic *Grand Tour* through Italy and Greece, continuing onwards to the Middle East and India.

Selected works
Pärnu City Centre Sports Hall (2003–2005), Short-term accommodation units (2010–2012), Vana-Kalamaja street (2017–2023).

Selected travels
Denmark, Egypt, Greece, India, Italy, Syria, USA.

Selected bibliography
PAULUS K. (editor) (2010) – *Siiri Vallner: Young Architect of the Year 2008*. Estonian Association of Architects, Tallinn.
TAUL G. & TEE M. (2024) – ""You need to see the space where you can feel infinitely comfortable to know what an architect can do at all". Interview with Estonian Architect Siiri Vallner". FAMagazine: Research and Projects on Architecture and the City, 69-70, pp. 189–202.

Margit Argus (b. 1981) is the founder of studio ARGUS. She studied interior architecture at the Estonian Academy of Arts and took part in an exchange programme at the Politecnico di Milano. Before establishing her own practice, Argus collaborated with Margit Aule at KAOS Architects, developing contemporary and experimental projects that often engaged in a dialogue with heritage.

While ARGUS has undertaken a wide range of commissions – including schools, apartment buildings, hotels, and university campuses – the studio is best known for its sensitive restoration and renovation of historical buildings. It has also received recognition and numerous awards for its design work for Estonian diplomatic missions abroad. The embassies in London and Moscow, in particular, highlight the studio's inventive approach and its ability to engage with architecturally and symbolically charged contexts.

Selected works: Energy Discovery Centre (studio ARGUS and Lumia, 2010–2014), Estonian Embassy in London (studio ARGUS, 2013–2015), Põltsamaa castle reconstruction (studio ARGUS and Lumia, 2021–2023).

Selected travels
Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Japan, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Mexico, Russian Federation, USA, Vietnam.

Selected bibliography
PEERNA J. (2020) – "Interview with Architect and Creative Partner at Kaos Architects: Margit Argus". Vaba Eesti Sõna.

b210 Architects emerged from a group of architecture students at the Estonian Academy of Arts who valued collaboration and enjoyed working together. The name refers to B210, the number of a shared studio space that architecture, design, and art students informally rented to complete their master's theses around 2010. Just a few months after graduating, the group achieved their first success by winning an architecture competition.

What distinguishes b210 is that, alongside design practice, its members have been involved in a wide range of other creative and educational activities – from urban installations and spatial interventions to curating the Tallinn Architecture Biennale, designing exhibitions, and teaching. They also supervised the RUUP Forest Library project, which received wide recognition. The founding partners – Aet Ader (b. 1985), Karin Tõugu (b. 1986), Mari Hunt (b. 1986), and Kadri Klementi (b. 1984) – all spent periods studying abroad during their education and were active participants in the European Architecture Students Assembly.

Selected works
Kuressaare College Towing Tank Building (2011–2014), Maidla Nature Villa Kaseke (2020), Maidla Nature Villa Käbi (2022).

Selected travels
Finland, France, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Iran, Italy, Kenya, Norway, Turkey, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands, United Kingdom.

Selected bibliography
KIVIRÄHK K. (2023) – "From home sweet home to an object of speculation: Interview with architects Aet Ader, Arvi Anderson and Mari Möldre". A Shade Colder (Summer issue).


1


2


3


4


5


6


7


8



9


10

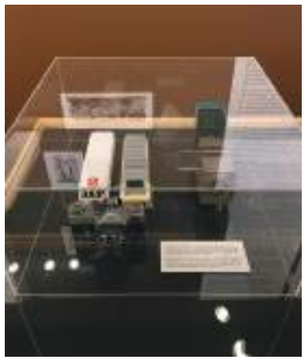

11


12


13


14


15


16


17


18



19


20


21


22


23



24

Wall Atlas

Images and credits

1 Herbert Johanson and Lorenz Johanson-Haljak on an overseas trip, undated. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

2 Erika Nõva on construction practice in Helsinki, 1931. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

3 Erika Nõva, travelogue from a trip to Bulgaria and Romania, 1960. Family archive of Erika Nõva.

4 Erika Nõva, travelogue from a trip to Bulgaria and Romania, 1960. Family archive of Erika Nõva.

5 Programme of the 1960 trip to Bulgaria and Romania. Family archive of Erika Nõva.

6 Erika Nõva, personal files, Estonian Museum of Architecture. Photograph by Gregor Taul, 2024. Courtesy of the artist.

7 Mart Port, photograph of the Atomium, Brussels, EXPO '58. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

8 Mart Port, Stevenage centre, 1965. Drawing from Arhitekti pilguga Inglismaal (In England through the Eyes of an Architect), 1966.

9 Leaflet of the 1968 USSR Trade and Industrial Exhibition at Earls Court, London. Family archive of Vello Asi.

10 Vello Asi, postcard to his father from Prague, 1966. Family archive of Vello Asi.

11 Vello Asi, exhibition designed in Mongolia, 1966. Photograph by Vello Asi. Family archive of Vello Asi.

12 Vello Asi, collection of travel photographs. Family archive of Vello Asi. Photograph by Merilin Tee, 2024.

13 Raine Karp in front of Komazawa Olympic Park Stadium (Murata Masachika Architects, 1964), Japan, 1969. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

14 Raine Karp, slide photograph taken during a trip to the United States, 1973. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

15 Raine Karp, slide photograph taken during a trip to the United States, 1973. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

16 Raine Karp's Zenit camera, projector and slide boxes filled with slides on display at the Estonian Museum of Architecture in 2025. Photograph by Merilin Tee. Courtesy of the artist.

17 Udo Kulterman,Towards an Estonian identity, excerpt from an article on Toomas Rein's buildings, Spazio e Società, no. 19, 1982. Photograph by Gregor Taul.

18 Vilen Künnapu and Ain Padrik, drawing for the Parc de la Villette architecture competition, 1982. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

19 Vilen Künnapu, Ain Padrik and Andres Siim, West Coast Gateway architectural competition, Los Angeles, second prize, 1988. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

20 Vilen Künnapu and Gregor Taul in Künnapu's studio, Tallinn, 2024. Photograph by Merilin Tee. Courtesy of the artist.

21 Gregor Taul looking at the membership cards of Vilen Künnapu and Toomas Rein in the Estonian Association of Architects (photo-collage), Tallinn, 2024. Photograph by Merilin Tee. Courtesy of the artist.

22 Siiri Vallner, travelogue sketch from a trip to Italy. Courtesy of the artist.

23 Margit Argus, Sakura Matsuri festivities, Tokyo, 2025. Courtesy of the artist.

24 Estonian Grand Tourists (from the left)

Architecture and Identity: An Estonian Journey across Time

This tour offers an insight into the four historical periods that have shaped life in the country over the past 120 years: Russian tsarist rule, the interwar independence, Soviet occupation, and the era of restored independence since 1991.

In the early decades of the 20th century, the first professional Estonian architects obtained their education in Riga or in engineering schools in Germany. This was a natural progression, as for centuries intellectual and cultural life in Estonia had been dominated by the German-speaking elite. Consequently, the formative careers of architects such as Herbert Johanson began with study abroad and exposure to broader European perspectives.

Although Johanson designed hundreds of buildings across Tallinn, this route highlights his chapel at Liiva Cemetery (*Kalmistu Road 34, Tallinn*), completed in 1935. The building exemplifies how the principles of Functionalist architecture were harmoniously combined with vernacular traditions, reflecting the search for a distinctly Estonian architectural identity during the 1930s.

Among the 300 graduates of the Tallinn Higher Technical School – founded to provide technical education – were nine women between 1923 and 1936, but only two trained architects: Erika Nõva and Salme Liiver.

In Nõmme, Tallinn, our route takes us to Erika Nõva's self-designed home, completed in 1938 (*Kadaka Boulevard 120, Tallinn*). The building offers a telling insight into how the city has evolved over time. Before the war, this area was still outside Tallinn's official boundaries, and both Nõva and her neighbours were engaged in small-scale farming, growing vegetables and keeping animals. The house remains in the family's ownership, and Nõva's architect grandchild even kept horses here until about a decade ago. Although at first glance the building might appear to be a romantic country house, Nõva – a vocal advocate for women's rights – incorporated several principles of modern architecture into its design, giving it a thoughtful balance between tradition and progress.

In the 1950s, Estonia's Soviet rulers transferred architectural education from the engineering school to the State Art Institute, bringing students into close contact with peers in fine art, design, and craft disciplines – and at times, into the very centre of critical artistic practices. The graduates of this period, and of the generation that followed, were marked by an emphasis on visual sensitivity, a philosophical design culture reminiscent of the Bauhaus, and resistance to the pressures of bureaucratic rationalisation. Architects such as Raine Karp, Toomas Rein, and Vilen Künnapu each embodied these tendencies in markedly different ways. Yet creative freedom remained constrained: the rigid urban planning bureaucracy – led by figures like Mart Port – adhered closely to the ideological line of the Communist Party, keeping more radical impulses in check.

Just a short walk from Erika Nõva's home, we visit several apartment buildings designed by Raine Karp in the early 1970s (*Trummi Street 21a, 21b, 21c, Tallinn*). Although situated in the midst of a neighbourhood of private houses built during the interwar and post-war periods, these modestly proportioned high-rises blend harmoniously into their surroundings. They exemplify the high-quality residential architecture of the period, which was notably influenced by contemporary developments in Finland.

The Kuldne Kodu *(Golden Home)* terraced housing complex on the outskirts of Pärnu can be regarded as the pinnacle of Soviet-era residential design in Estonia (*Kuldse Kodu 1, Pärnu*). Toomas Rein began work on the project in the early 1970s; the first section was completed in 1974, and the second in 1987, while a planned high-rise connecting the two parts remained unbuilt.

Stretching nearly a kilometre in length, the complex offers a striking reflection of the paradoxical nature of the Soviet economic and social system.

On the one hand, the complex symbolised the prosperity of a wealthy collective farm in a resort town – an image far removed from the lived reality of most citizens. On the other hand, Rein succeeded in creating an architectural system that transcended both its time and its immediate context, and which continues to offer a compelling model for communal living and spatial coherence.

Among the buildings designed by Toomas Rein, we will also visit the administrative building of Rapla KEK (*Mahlamäe Street 10, Rapla*). The building is organised around an octagonal form reminiscent of a stepped pyramid. In the manner of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, this geometry is echoed in the staircases and the ponds positioned in front of and behind the building, as well as in the interior layout and custom-designed elements, including doors, light fittings and waste bins.

KEK – the Inter-Collective Farm Construction Office – was a cooperative construction organisation established with the pooled resources of regional collective farms. In Soviet Estonia, this arrangement meant that prosperous farms, permitted to reinvest their profits into their own operations, could at times function in ways analogous to capitalist enterprises, competing with one another through ever-improving production facilities and working conditions. The latter was particularly important in attracting a motivated workforce to rural areas. As a result, some of the most innovative architecture in Soviet Estonia emerged outside the major cities, enabling Toomas Rein to realise his remarkable projects in Pärnu, Rapla and elsewhere in the Estonian countryside.

In contrast to the Golden Home, there are dozens of new “towns” filled with panel buildings designed under the leadership of Mart Port. Our excursion takes us to Lasnamäe, the country’s largest prefabricated housing district. If Lasnamäe were a city in its own right, it would be Estonia’s second largest, after Tallinn, with a population of around 100,000.

Here, we explore the socio-economic dimensions of the district’s planning and construction, examine various solutions developed for both standardised and special projects, and take a broader look at the current state of residential architecture in Estonia – a context in which nearly the entire housing stock has now been privatised.

It is a familiar cliché that during the Cold War the Baltic States were locked behind the Iron Curtain, impenetrable to the outside world. This was indeed the reality for most Soviet citizens. However, members of the cultural and professional elite often enjoyed greater opportunities for travel – and occasionally, for professional collaboration abroad. In 1968, for instance, interior architect Vello Asi spent several weeks in London designing the Estonian section of the USSR Exhibition at Earl’s Court. Meanwhile, figures such as Mart Port and Raine Karp had the privilege of travelling to study pre-Columbian architecture, Japanese Metabolism, and the works of Louis Kahn, himself born in Estonia. Others, however, were limited to what the Soviet Union or its Eastern Bloc allies could offer.

During the Tallinn excursion, we will also visit private houses designed by Vello Asi (*Kõivu Road 12, Tallinn*) and Raine Karp (*Viimsi Road 45, Tallinn*) for their own use in the Merivälja neighbourhood. Originally conceived as a garden city in the 1930s, Merivälja acquired its present character in the 1960s and 1970s, when hundreds of private homes were built by individuals willing to take the considerable risk of constructing their own houses under difficult conditions.

In many respects, Merivälja stands in sharp contrast to both Lasnamäe and Soviet reality more broadly. Its atmosphere was distinctly petty-bourgeois, and residents often succeeded in surrounding themselves with activities and objects that existed at a deliberate remove from everyday Soviet life. It is therefore hardly surprising that the design and construction of private houses – frequently drawing on interwar traditions or foreign architectural models – has been interpreted in Estonian architectural history as a subtle form of resistance to Soviet power.

Today, the eastern districts of Tallinn remain popular and increasingly affluent residential areas. It is here that the so-called Elephant House, designed by Vilen Künnapu and completed in 2013, is located (*Ristikheina Road 1, Maardu*). The street-facing end of this vivid orange villa is crowned by a striking elephant sculpture. In addition to its residential function, the single-family house incorporates commercial spaces, and visitors are welcomed by a stupa positioned beneath a skylight, lending the interior an unexpected spiritual dimension.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and Estonia’s swift reintegration with the West brought an immense influx of information, the rapid erosion and neglect of the Soviet-era built environment, and a strenuous process of adaptation to a free-market economy. A new generation of architects emerged – many with secondary or higher education experiences in Western Europe or the United States. Siiri Vallner, for example, after completing her degree at the Estonian Academy of Arts, continued her studies in Denmark and the United States before establishing her own practice in Tallinn.

During our tour, we will visit the Pärnu City Center Sports Hall in central Pärnu, designed by Siiri Vallner (Kavakava Architects) and completed in 2005 (*Kuninga 29, Pärnu*). The building is set within the park landscape that surrounds Pärnu’s old town, adjacent to a late-19th-century school constructed of red brick. In response to this context, the architect employed brick – a material with deep historical associations in the region – as the primary building material for the new structure. Laid in a relief pattern, the brickwork is punctuated by 365 small openings that lend an unexpected lightness and permeability to the otherwise massive wall.

Among the works by Vallner’s practice, Kavakava Architects, we will also visit an exemplary project of adaptive reuse: a 1950s apartment building in Nõmme converted into social housing and completed in 2012 (*Männiku Road 92, Tallinn*). The tour will conclude with a walk along Vana-Kalamaja Street, redesigned according to Kavakava’s project, offering a clear impression of what an innovative, pedestrian-centred urban space can mean in Tallinn.

Estonia’s accession to the European Union in 2004 marked yet another turning point in the country’s architectural development. During the preceding fifteen years, economic hardship had limited the construction of new public buildings. Improved conditions in the early 2000s, however, led to a renewed wave of public projects – schools, universities, sports halls and community centres – most of them commissioned through open architectural competitions. Many of these were won by the young practice KAOS Architects, founded by Margit Argus and Margit Aule.

Among Margit Argus’s works, we will visit the Energy Discovery Centre in central Tallinn (*Põhja Boulevard 29, Tallinn*). Argus and Aule won the architectural competition for the project in 2010 while still working together at KAOS, and the new museum opened to the public in 2014. The Energy Discovery Centre occupies a former power station complex situated between the sea and Tallinn’s Old Town. The turbine and control building, constructed in the 1920s and 1930s, ceased electricity production in 1979.

In their intervention, the architects have presented the original machinery – boilers, generators and their supporting structures – with restraint and dignity. In order to preserve the turbine hall, the building's most precious space, in its entirety, a new entrance was introduced at a lower level. This floor accommodates the ticket desk, cloakroom, café and sanitary facilities, allowing the historic hall above to remain largely untouched.

Last but no least, b210 – a predominantly female collective comprising Katrin Koov, Mari Möldre, Aet Ader, Mari Hunt, Karin Tõugu, Arvi Anderson, and Nele Šverns – represents the emergence of a new generation. Born mainly in the late 1980s and early 1990s, its members entered architectural education after the implementation of the Bologna Process, taking full advantage of Erasmus exchange programmes and participating actively in the European Architecture Students Assembly (EASA). Since founding their practice, they have pursued architecture as part of a broader cultural field – combining design work with community activism, curating, research, and cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Among the buildings designed by b210, we will visit two nature villas situated at the edge of a bog along the road between Pärnu and Tallinn (*Maidla, Raplamaa*). These compact architectural gems form part of the Maidla Nature Resort, located near the former Maidla Manor complex. Here, enterprising developers are creating an exclusive retreat that preserves multiple layers of historical continuity, while enriching the wider landscape with site-sensitive holiday homes commissioned from a new generation of Estonian architects.

Itinerary:

1 Vilen Künnapu, Tervis Sanatorium extension, Seedri Street 6, Pärnu, designed 1976, completed 1988.

2 Siiri Vallner / Kavakava Architects, Pärnu City Center Sports Hall, Kuninga Street 29, Pärnu, designed 2003-2004, completed 2005.

3 Toomas Rein, Kuldne Kodu (Golden Home) terraced housing complex, Kuldse Kodu 1, Pärnu, designed in 1972, completed 1974 (first section) and 1987 (second section); a planned high-rise connecting the two parts remains unbuilt.

4 Toomas Rein, administrative building of Rapla KEK, Mahlamäe Street 10, Rapla, designed 1971, completed 1977.

5 b210 Architects, Nature Villa KASEKE, Maidla, Raplamaa, 2020.

6 b210 Architects, Nature Villa KÄBI, Maidla, Raplamaa, 2022.

7 Herbert Johanson, Liiva Cemetery Chapel, Kalmistu Road 34, Tallinn, designed 1934, completed 1935.

8 Siiri Vallner / Kavakava Architects, short-term accommodation units, Männiku Street 92, Tallinn, designed 2010-2011, completed 2012.

9 Raine Karp, Trummi Street apartment buildings, Trummi Street 21a-c, Tallinn, designed 1969, completed 1971.

10 Erika Nõva, architect's own house, Kadaka Boulevard 120, Tallinn, designed 1937, completed 1938.

11 Herbert Johanson, residential house (now Kalamaja Museum), Kotzebue Street 16, Tallinn, 1934.

12 Margit Argus / KAOS Architects, Energy Discovery Centre, Põhja Boulevard 29, Tallinn, designed 2010, completed 2014.

13 Raine Karp and Riina Altmäe, Tallinn City Hall, Sadama Street 1, Tallinn, designed 1976, completed 1980.

14 Mart Port, Malle Meelak, Irina Raud, Oleg Žemtšugov (urban planners), Lasnamäe district, Tallinn, designed 1977, completed in the late 1980s.

15 Vilen Künnapu, Elephant House, Ristikheina Road 1, Maardu, 2013.

16 Vilen Künnapu and Ain Padrik, group of houses, Teelehe Street 9, Tallinn, 1997.

17 Raine Karp, architect's own house, Viimsi Road 45, Tallinn, designed 1968, completed 1975.

18 Vello Asi, architect's own house, Kõivu Road 12, Tallinn, designed 1963, completed 1970.


1


2


3


4


5


6


7


8


9


10


11


12


13


14


15


16


17


18


19

Wall Atlas

Images and credits

1 Vilen Künnapu, Tervis Sanatorium extension, Seedri Street 6, Pärnu, designed 1976, completed 1988. Photograph by Peeter Säre, 1996. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

2 Siiri Vallner / Kavakava Architects, Pärnu City Center Sports Hall, Kuninga Street 29, Pärnu, designed 2003-2004, completed 2005. Photograph by Arne Maasik. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

3 Toomas Rein, Kuldne Kodu (Golden Home) terraced housing complex, Kuldse Kodu 1, Pärnu, designed 1972, completed 1974 (first section) and 1987 (second section); a planned high-rise linking the two parts remained unbuilt. Model of the Pärnu KEK residential group and centre plan by Raimund Pritsu, Mait Kuusemets, and Ants Põld, 1972. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

4 Toomas Rein, administrative building of Rapla KEK, Mahlamäe Street 10, Rapla, designed 1971, completed 1977. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

5 b210 Architects, Nature Villa KASEKE, Maidla, Raplamaa, 2020. Photograph by Tõnu Tunnel. Courtesy of the artist and b210 Architects.

6 b210 Architects, Nature Villa KÄBI, Maidla, Raplamaa, 2022. Photograph by Tõnu Tunnel. Courtesy of the artist and b210 Architects.

7 Herbert Johanson, Liiva Cemetery Chapel, Kalmistu Road 34, Tallinn, designed 1934, completed 1935. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

8 Siiri Vallner / Kavakava Architects, short-term accommodation units, Männiku Street 92, Tallinn, designed 2010-2011, completed 2012. Photograph by Paco Ulman. Courtesy of the artist and Kavakava Architects.

9 Raine Karp, Trummi Street apartment buildings, Trummi Street 21a-c, Tallinn, designed 1969, completed 1971. Photograph by Rein Vainküla. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

11 Erika Nõva, architect's own house, Kadaka Boulevard 120, Tallinn, designed 1937, completed 1938. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

11 Herbert Johanson, residential house (now Kalamaja Museum), Kotzebue Street 16, Tallinn, 1934. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

12 Siiri Vallner / Kavakava Architects, Vana-Kalamaja Street, designed 2018-2022, completed 2023. Photograph by Martin Siplane, 2023. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

13 Margit Argus / KAOS Architects, Energy Discovery Centre, Põhja Boulevard 29, Tallinn, designed 2010, completed 2014. Photograph by Martin Siplane. Courtesy of the artist.

14 Raine Karp and Riina Altmäe, Tallinn City Hall, Sadama Street 1, Tallinn, designed 1976, completed 1980. Photograph by Martin Siplane, 2024. Courtesy of the artist.

15 Mart Port, Malle Meelak, Irina Raud, Oleg Žemtšugov (urban planners), Lasnamäe district, Tallinn, designed 1977, completed in the late 1980s. Street under construction and prefabricated apartment buildings. Photograph by Johannes Külmet, undated. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

16 Vilen Künnapu, Elephant House, Ristikheina Road 1, Maardu, 2013. Photographs by Arne Maasik. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

17 Vilen Künnapu and Ain Padrik, group of houses, Teelehe Street 9, Tallinn, 1997. Photograph by Hedi Jaansoo, 2021. Courtesy of the artist.

18 Raine Karp, architect's own house, Viimsi Road 45, Tallinn, 1968-1975. Photograph by Martin Siplane, 2012. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

19 Vello Asi, architect's own house, Kõivu Road 12, Tallinn, project 1963, completed 1970. Photograph by Päär Keedus, 2022. Courtesy of the artist.

Searching Sources: Exemplary Buildings in Three Acts

3 Souvenirs of Exemplary Buildings

ACT 1: A Three-Layered Home Between Rural Roots and the Emancipating City
Architect's Own House, Erika Nõva, 1937-1938

After completing her architectural studies at the Tallinn Higher Technical School in 1931, Nõva undertook a construction internship in Finland. She had, in fact, visited Finland earlier on a study trip.

In 1929, an excursion to Helsinki was organised through the Finnish–Estonian Student Friendship Association, attended by students from the University of Tartu and the Tallinn Higher Technical School. "I will remember those days for the rest of my life", Nõva recalled. "The journey there was arduous: a heavy storm left many of us seasick. Yet, as we approached Helsinki, the magnificent panorama of rocky islands captivated us. Finnish students were there to meet us, and we attended a reception hosted by the President of Finland at the Presidential Palace. The president and his wife shook hands with each of us and delivered a brief welcome speech" (Nõva 2006).

"This trip to Helsinki was my first journey abroad and immensely interesting", Nõva later wrote. Her participation proved especially successful because she already had a fair command of Finnish. When shown the coursework of the Finnish architecture students, she had to admit that their work surpassed her own. Together with fellow student Dora Tõnurist, she requested permission to attend a lecture on architectural history by architect Yrjö Laine. "I felt a sense of pride that I was able to understand it completely", she recalled. The lecture focused on the old wooden architecture of Finland and Karelia, with examples drawn from the wooden churches on Kizhi Island in Eastern Karelia.

Further in her memoirs, Nõva recalls her work at the construction site of the Red Cross Hospital in Töölö:

> As the only woman, I took part in all the men's work. Most of the work involved pouring concrete, which was then transported to the floors in wheelbarrows and tamped down by hand with rammers – my task. Although the work was hard – my arm muscles grew so strong that my blouse sleeves became too tight – it was still quite interesting. Every lunchtime, I went to the office to look at the drawings.

I mainly worked in the evenings, and the work had a romantic quality of its own. From the upper floors, there was a magnificent view of the sea, dotted with islands. Construction was very precise, and the quality was high.

It was in the midst of the economic crisis. I was unable to find an office internship in Finland – architects showed me their empty offices with only a few employees – and I could not gain access to the architecture department of the Technical University, where I had applied as an auditor. The cost of living in Finland was higher than in Estonia, and I could barely get by on my female worker's wage – I think it was sixty pennies an hour. The 100 kroons I had brought from home, earned in a competition in Lithuania with Kusti, went towards buying equipment. With little money, I tried to see everything I could without spending: churches, the zoo, open-air museums, and exhibitions. I was particularly interested in agricultural buildings and their interiors, which provided a wealth of useful information for my future work.

In November, I traveled back to Tallinn at the invitation of Kusti, who needed my help with the Palace of the Soviets competition project he was developing with architect Velbri. During my internship, my sister Hilda once wrote in a letter: "It must be hard for you there. But you will fully understand how useful it is later on." And indeed, it was. Finland has

always been a benchmark for me, both professionally and personally. The summer after my internship, I visited Finland four more times, acting as an interpreter for family and friends. Later, I joined another interesting tour with home economics instructors, mainly in eastern Finland, where I saw the beautiful city of Viipuri, several Finnish farms, and a home economics school, from which I learned a great deal (Nõva 2006).

The experiences Nõva gained in Helsinki had a lasting impact on her and accompanied her throughout her life. One notable aspect was the feminist and emancipatory experience of working in Finland. While architecture remained largely a male domain elsewhere in Europe, by the early 1930s nearly thirty women were already practising as architects in Finland (Lass 2006). Although Nõva still encountered gender discrimination there, she was inspired by the thriving women's movement and the progressive Finnish press, which addressed women's emancipation and the modernisation of society through both theoretical and practical topics.

Upon returning to Estonia, when work opportunities were scarce, Nõva found an outlet in writing, contributing to the magazine *Taluperenaine* [*Farmhouse Lady*]. Her articles and projects reveal a strong social empathy and a desire to make modern, rational homes accessible to all. They were accompanied by detailed drawings and practical instructions, demonstrating how people could achieve similar solutions at home using simple means (Parbus, Ruudi 2014).

When Estonia became an authoritarian state in 1934, and the president launched a nationwide campaign to beautify homes aimed at improving the appearance of cities, towns, and villages, Nõva proposed a shift in focus. She advocated for a "home organisation movement," prioritising the functionality of rooms to simplify the work of housewives. In terms of furniture, she cited Finnish modern designs as exemplary for their simple forms, honest use of materials, and practical spatial harmony (Parbus, Ruudi 2014).

It is unclear to what extent Nõva had encountered the latest architectural innovations in Finland, but she seems to have drawn inspiration both from functionalist principles and from the Finnish approach of combining the simplicity of folk architecture with modern design. Her own practical house designs and minimalist furniture were guided by the principle of "easy to build and easy to use" (Lass 2006).

Nõva worked as a designer at the Settlement Board under the Ministry of Agriculture. This office was responsible for planning and establishing new settlements on state reserve lands, a measure intended to alleviate rising unemployment. Nõva drew up plans for several settlements, as well as numerous village schoolhouses and standard and specialised farm designs.

In 1936, she was tasked with planning the Mustamäe settlement near Tallinn. These were not strictly agricultural buildings but rather urban dwellings, where residents could also keep animals and cultivate vegetable gardens if they wished – a practice encouraged by the state, which had provided loans. Construction began in the spring of 1937 on the first six houses, one of which became the home of Erika Nõva, her artist husband, and their twins, born in 1935.

Nõva's private house is a compelling synthesis of practical farm architecture and modern townhouse design, reflecting several principles she had absorbed in Finland. The building's construction was inspired by Finnish techniques: the walls were built in three layers, leaving an empty outer air gap and filling the inner layer with peat. Concrete blocks the size of bricks were cast on site. During construction, Nõva felt that the house in the valley was too low, so she raised the walls by one and a half metres to create more usable space under the roof – a strategy reminiscent of Finnish practice, signalling the influence of her studies abroad (Parbus, Ruudi 2014).

The house also incorporates several modern architectural features, such as circular and corner windows. While it is difficult to determine whether these elements were directly inspired by Finnish examples or by the broader currents of European modernism, they nonetheless reflect contemporary debates about hygiene, functionality, and the modern home – issues central to architectural discourse at the time.

Bibliography

LASS A. (2006) - "Saateks" [Foreword]. In A. Lass (editor), *Arhitekt Erika Nõva. Minu töö ja elu.* [Architect Erika Nõva. My work and life]. Estonian Museum of Architecture, Tallinn.

NÕVA E. (2006) - "Minu töö ja elu" [My work and life]. In A. Lass (editor), *Arhitekt Erika Nõva. Minu töö ja elu.* [Architect Erika Nõva. My work and life]. Estonian Museum of Architecture, Tallinn.

PARBUS T, Ruudi I. (2014) - "Emancipating architecture. Erika Nõva and the modernist architecture discourse from a gender-critical perspective". In *Proceedings of the Art Museum of Estonia*, 4 (9), pp. 231-254.

ACT 2: Houses Grow into Homes
Architect's Own House, Vello Asi, 1963–1970

A house is nothing in itself, and a room even less.
Home lies elsewhere.
Houses grow into homes gradually.
(Niit 1977)

Chapter 1: Do you know what a pergola is?

This all started with the house being designed on the western side of the plot, as you can see in the plans. In the northeast corner, I placed the garage. Between the wall running along the northern edge of the plot and the garage, a shady courtyard opens up to the south. The terrace of this courtyard, covered with a roof, connects to a rock garden and a pergola. Pergolas had become very fashionable at the time. You know what a pergola is? It came from Germany – a little touch of cozy home, one of those modern memories. Yes, the roofed terrace of the courtyard links directly to the rock garden and pergola, and the design of the garage itself is really subordinated to the pergola motif. The whole garden was conceived as an ornamental space; I deliberately avoided planting productive crops, except for one or two fruit trees. The entrance to the house is from Kõivu Road, while the garage is accessed from the side street. I had to raise the ground level slightly in the northwest part of the plot, and also partially in the courtyard.

This was the first version of the plan which met all the requirements that small houses were expected to fulfill at the time.

When I first designed the house, I worked within the regulations at the time, and I deliberately made it like the famous Volberg and Velbri and Nõva (Asi 2015).

Chapter 2: Anniversary Issue

Earlier I mentioned the year 1967, a major anniversary of the revolution. For this occasion, the magazine *Domov* from Prague sent a correspondent to the Soviet Union to prepare a jubilee issue celebrating the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution. They sent a journalist, Zdena Glavova, to Moscow, and for some reason, she requested to visit the Baltic states as well. There was no objection in Moscow.

At that time, it was the season when snow had partially melted, and I was building something in the garden – a simple fence, the first one. Around midday, while working, a taxi suddenly pulled up to the end of Kõivu Road. A young woman jumped out, wearing a white jacket; spring had just begun. I realised she probably wasn't from Moscow.

She came to see and learn about Estonian architecture and applied arts because she wanted to create a jubilee issue for the Soviet Union. She stayed for a few days. She brought a photographer, but she herself went through all the sites, arranged the articles, and someone had suggested giving her my address at Kõivu tee 12 (Asi 2016a).

Chapter 3: Pallasmaa. Have you heard of him?

When Tuljak opened, strong friendships formed with Helsinki, and Finnish architects came to inaugurate an exhibition at the Kunstihoone hall. Juhani Pallasmaa was one of the initiators, a real driving mind behind it. Toivo Kallas represented our side from the Union of Architects. One evening, Toivo came to find me: "We're coming over with Pallasmaa – are you home?" I said, "Of course, come by."

Pallasmaa and Toivo arrived. The exhibition installers were there, plenty of vodka on hand. We sat around the table; Pallasmaa, a tall man, sat on the couch, knees up, back against the wall. They were lively, curious, and engaging, talking and exploring ideas late into the night. After a while, they asked if the buses were running; I said, "Half an hour more." Then they left.

He played a significant role in the unfolding of modernism – vital, intense, unpredictable. For me, he left a lasting impression. I became the "garage man" for them, preparing the building's foundation (Asi 2016a).

Chapter 4: Until Then, We'll Live in the Garage

In *Domov* No. 5 (1967), Vello's home was presented as a good idea already in use in Estonia: a young man without an apartment builds a single-room dwelling on his plot, which then serves as a garage, workshop, storage, etc. It can be independent or part of a larger building. Three photos were published: the living space in the garage, a plan and perspective view of the temporary dwelling as it evolved over several years, and a vision of the completed house.

I built it in 1957 – not that I owned a car, but I also didn't have a place to live. It was to become, first and foremost, the beginning of my future home. The plot is 10 km from Tallinn's centre, a few hundred meters from the sea, in a block of family houses.

I am glad today that I didn't have money to continue building at the time. There were strict requirements for the region: all houses had to be single-storey, with a specific plinth height and a roof pitch of 48–52°. The goal was to create a unified architectural style expressing national character. To justify "true nationalism," high roofs were used, as seen in Tallinn's oldest districts. Predictably, the result was monotonous and uninspiring, and eventually, these regulations were abandoned.

By 1963, I could design the house as it appears today: a spacious living room with an adjoining studio, open on three sides, featuring a seven-meter southern window, a terrace, and a small garden. The fireplace is freely located in the centre of the room. The other part of the building contains the hallway, bathroom, WC, and kitchen, connected by a corridor. The third section includes the garage and workshop (Asi 1967).

Chapter 5: Sense of Japan and Scandinavia, Not to Forget the Estonian Open Air Museum

From my first encounter with Japanese history, architectural history, and journalism, I learned the characteristics of Japanese houses: what is rationally correct and pleasing to the gods. Immediately, some kind of roof must be above the windows – so you don't look directly at God without a barrier or visor. This creates a protective and ordered space.

This wide-eaves motif is not only Japanese; you can see it in Estonian architecture too, for example during walks in the Estonian Open Air Museum. When we played with village boys in Võru County in summer or winter, this extended eaves motif was practical – you didn't have to rush indoors when it rained.

Here, one can also feel a Scandinavian sensibility: a low roof, concentration of light in a large space, but with an emphasized rhythm, so the façade does not become a powerless wall. I wasted an entire tree between two panes to create window mullions. Fully constructive, yet emphasized, because rhythm is essential: without it, the house and its large space would be meaningless. I aimed to make the house powerful, even in its simplicity; the rhythm is the central element of the space.

I used triple glazing and additional inner window frames, creating substantial thickness and a strong, coherent tone in the room. I sought visual contact with the outdoor silicate wall; the courtyard is framed as a modern layering of rhythms, dominant yet restrained, where only a picture on the wall is needed for decoration (Asi 2015).

Chapter 6: Rhythm

"I know what it is!" she said on the phone one November afternoon. "This was our introduction to Finland; it was television that took us to another level!" When we reached the topic of language learning, she aptly remarked: "You have to hit the rhythm".

Suddenly, everything became clear – rhythm. Villa Mairea in Noormarkku serves as an example: designed by Alvar Aalto for a friend whose father was Finland's largest forest industrialist. Previously, furniture sets were rigid: table, chairs, sideboard. Now, freedom prevailed: large living spaces, furniture chosen according to personal needs. Vello's house reflects this: large, freely furnished, functional, and responsive to the inhabitant (Pärtelpoeg 2020).

Chapter 7: Adaptability

If we take this little house as it is now, with its plan and scheme... It isn't suitable for any family. Although it can be adapted in a very simple way (Asi 2016b).

Chapter 8: Artistic Research on Vello Asi's Home

In the fall semester of 2025, the first-year master's course Artistic Research (supervised by Gregor Taul and Merilin Tee) tasked ten students with exploring Vello Asi's legacy. Five pairs studied specific aspects: his home, graphic design, teaching, artifacts, and interiors/exhibition designs.

Lauri Eltermaa and Maarja Varkki focused on Asi's house at Kõivu tee 12. Their concept emerged from a note on one of Asi's home plans: "a poorer version". This sparked a discussion of what a better, or even ideal, house could be. Their project culminated in an archival folder containing 30+ fictional drawings, photos, expert opinions, and official resolutions, depicting dialogues between Asi and Soviet officials about the ideal design.

Houses take root, and rooms sprout shoots.
Houses also bloom and scatter seeds
once they have grown into homes.
(Niit 1977)

Bibliography

ASI V. (1967) - “Zatím bydlím v garáži” [For now, I live in the garage]. - Domov, 5, pp. 24-25.

ASI V. (2015) - Conversation with Merilin Tee on 9 November. Audio recording in the possession of the author.

ASI V. (2016a) - Conversation with Merilin Tee on 5 February. Audio recording in the possession of the author.

ASI V. (2016b) - Conversation with Merilin Tee on 28 April. Audio recording in the possession of the author.

NIIT E. (1977) - *Vee peal käija. Luuletusi 1970-1975* [Walker on Water. Poems 1970-1975]. Illustrated by Vello Asi. Eesti Raamat, Tallinn.

PÄRTELPOEG L. (2020). Conversations with Merilin Tee on 21 and 24 November. Written notes in the possession of the author.

ACT 3: Alvar Aalto – no question
Pärnu KEK terraced housing complex Kuldne Kodu (Golden Home), Toomas Rein, 1972–1987

When asked about his favourites in world architecture, Toomas Rein has given a strikingly unambiguous answer: “Undoubtedly Alvar Aalto – no question. The most brilliant person. I have studied him so much and thought about him so much. Frank Lloyd Wright as well, and Le Corbusier, Louis Kahn too, but if I have to make a choice, then definitely Aalto” (Kodres 2000).

Rein had the opportunity to experience buildings by Aaltos first-hand, yet, as was common among intellectuals in the Soviet period, he was already deeply familiar with the work of his role models long before encountering their architecture in person. Through Finnish colleagues, Rein had access to architectural literature that reached Estonia despite political restrictions. It can be said that before embarking on his own major works, Rein had thoroughly absorbed the entire canon of modernist architecture and grasped its underlying currents – from strict functionalism to Aaltos’ organicism (Väljas 2010).

At first glance, the KEK row houses in Pärnu may appear difficult to compare directly with Aalto’s work. Yet these influences are likely embedded in the deeper principles guiding the project, such as the building’s sensitive integration with the landscape and the use of light to articulate spatial form. It is admirable how Rein transformed Aalto’s example into his own internal standard for spatial quality within the constraints of the Soviet system and, despite the dictates of an otherwise rigid rationalisation, consistently produced architecture of remarkable quality.

An episode from Rein’s catalogue, in which he recounts the making of a watercolour inspired by Venice, is particularly revealing in this respect. It illustrates both his deep aversion to the absurdities of the Soviet system and his unwavering commitment to his own (architectural) principles:

> Once, deep in the Soviet era, I had the opportunity to travel to Italy with a large all-Union tourist group. For some reason, however, Venice was not included in the itinerary. I declined this unique opportunity for that reason alone, and I am still proud of my youthful radicalism. Because what is Italy without Venice! Later heartfelt encounters with this fantastic city compensated for the disappointment of that time a thousandfold (Rein & Väljas 2010).

Bibliography

KODRES K. (2000) - “Juubelijutt Toomes Reinuga. Interyueerinud Krista Kodres” [Anniversary interview with Rein Toome. Interviewed by Krista Kodres]. Maja, 2 (9).

REIN T. & VÄLJAS M. (editors) (2010) - *Arhitekt Toomas Rein* [Architect Toomas Rein]. Estonian Museum of Architecture, Tallinn.

VÄLJAS M. (2010) - “Modernist Rein” [Rein the Modernist]. In T. Rein & M. Väljas (editors). *Arhitekt Toomas Rein* [Architect Toomas Rein]. Estonian Museum of Architecture, Tallinn, pp. 45-48.

Erika Nõva, architect’s own house, Kadaka Boulevard 120, Tallinn, designed 1937, completed 1938.

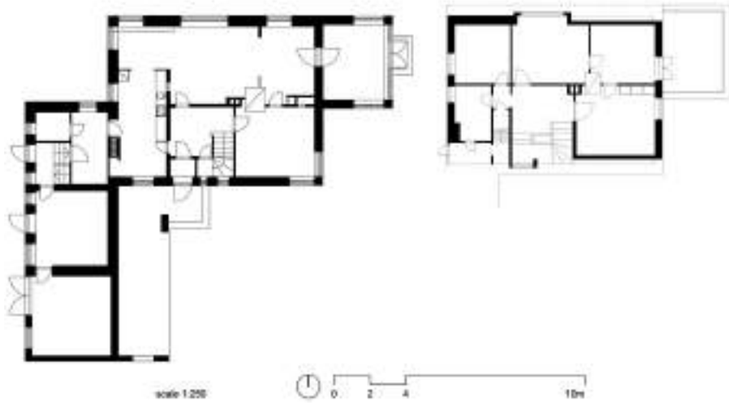
Redrawings

1 Erika Nõva, architect’s own house. Plans redrawn by Viktoria Ugur, 2024.

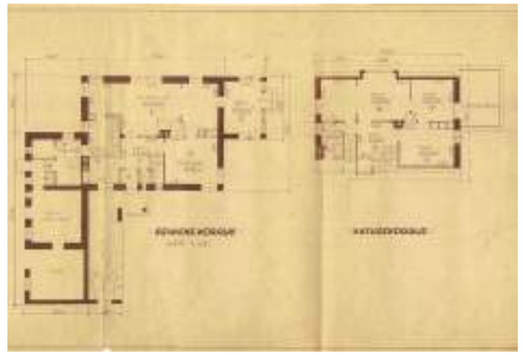
2 Erika Nõva, architect’s own house, floor plans. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

3 Erika Nõva, architect’s own house, views, 1937. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

4 Erika Nõva, architect’s own house, axonometry. Drawing by Viktoria Ugur, 2024.



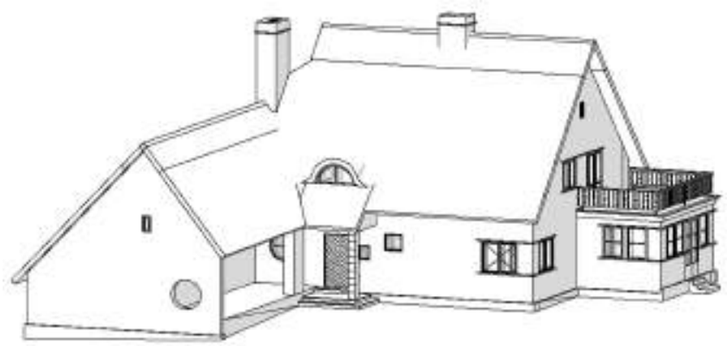
1



2



3



4



5



6



7

In a wooden frame inspired by the facade of Tallinn University's oldest building – originally constructed in 1940 for Tallinn English College and designed by Estonia's first female architect, Erika Nõva (1905–1987), together with Alar Kotli – sits a model of her private house. This residential building, designed by Nõva herself, was a place where her private and professional life intertwined, as she also partially worked there. Her life exemplifies decisive and determined action in a masculine world, where self-assertion demands not only professional skill but also a strong mind and unwavering self-confidence.

In choosing materials for the installation, I drew inspiration from those used in Nõva's private house, yet allowed myself creative freedom in their application. The "Nopsa" walls of her house were built in three layers, using brick-sized concrete stones made on-site with a frame that produced three stones at a time. Two gaps were formed between the rows of stones: the inner filled with a mixture of milled peat and lime, the outer with heather.

The steeply pitched roof, originally planned to be covered with burnt clay tiles, was replaced at the owners' request with reed – a material initially intended for a residential building under construction on Paldiski Road.

The installation also draws on Nõva's personal memories, which inspired, among other things, the use of sound. Our hydram produces a quiet thumping, roughly aligned with the rhythm of a heartbeat, audible both in the garden and inside the house, especially at night. It resonates like the heartbeat of a home.

Reusing materials from an earlier artwork – posters from a previous installation – and giving them a new life generates a nourishing and hopeful outlook for the future through sustainable artistic practice. The collage, composed of cut-out poster fragments, reflects on the personality of Estonia's first female architect, in whom professional dedication, creativity and a closeness to nature are intricately intertwined.
Alex Turro

Erika Nõva, architect's own house, Kadaka Boulevard 120, Tallinn, designed 1937, completed 1938.

Architectural narratives

5 Construction of the ground--floor plinth and concrete floor slab, 1937. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

6 Production of concrete blocks on the construction site, 1937. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

7 Roof installation, front of the house, 1937. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

Erika Nõva, architect's own house, Kadaka Boulevard 120, Tallinn, designed 1937, completed 1938.

Visual interpretations

8 Alex Turro, *Hello! Let's get to know each other. I am Erika Nõva, Estonia's first female architect. What about you?* Reuse of material from previous artwork, collage, coloured pencils, 2023/26.



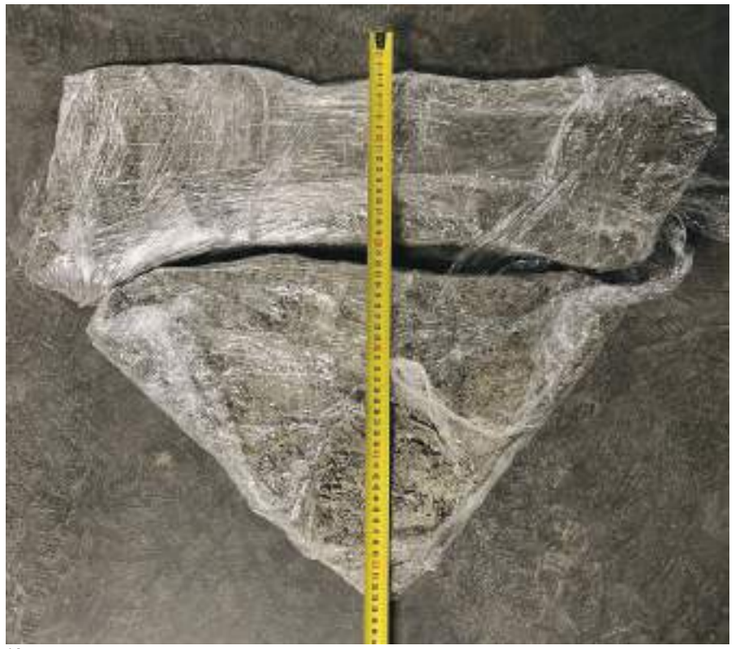


Erika Nõva, architect's own house, Kadaka Boulevard 120, Tallinn, designed 1937, completed 1938.

Models



9



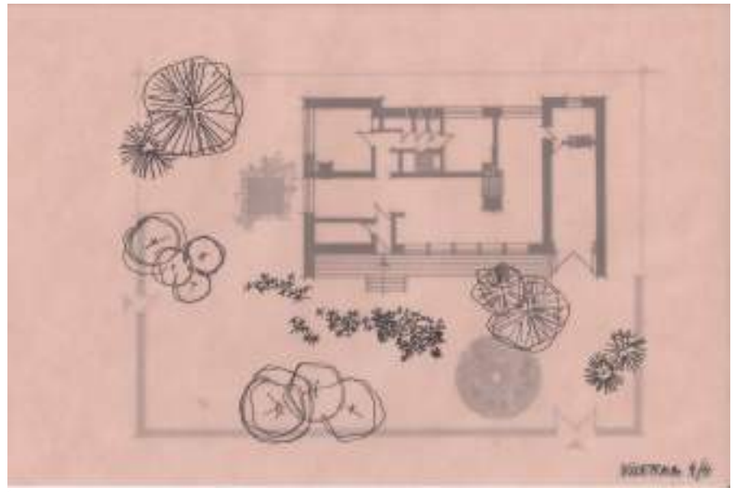
10

9 Alex Turro, *Suddenly I was inspired and eagerly got down to work*, 2021/26. Installation view. Photograph by Martin Buschmann. Courtesy of the artist.

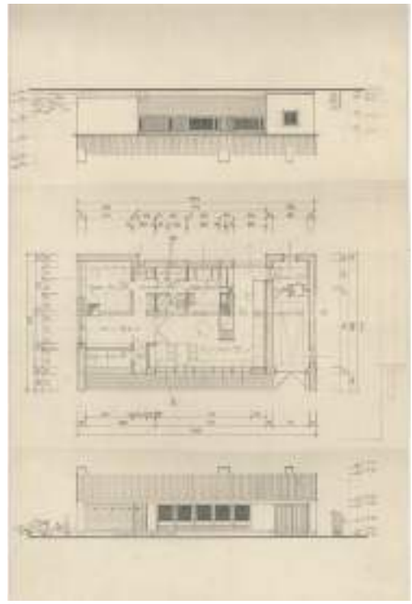
10 Alex Turro, *Suddenly I was inspired and eagerly got down to work*, 2021/26. Detail. Photograph by Alex Turro. Courtesy of the artist.

Vello Asi, architect's own house, Kõivu Road 12, Tallinn, designed 1963, completed 1970.

Redrawings



1



2

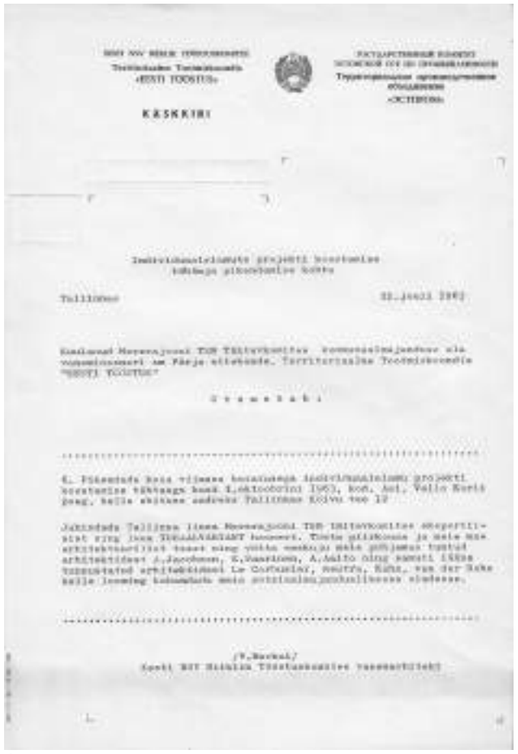


3

1 Lauri Eltermaa and Maarja Varkki, redrawing of Vello Asi house projects' "poorer version," 2025.

2 Vello Asi, individual house project in Merivälja, Kõivu Road 12, "poorer version," early 1960s. Family archive of Vello Asi.

3 Vello Asi, functional diagram, 2016. Private collection of Merilin Tee.



4

Vello Asi, architect's own house, Kõivu Road 12, Tallinn, designed 1963, completed 1970.

Architectural narratives

4 Lauri Eltermaa and Maarja Varkki, resolution of the Estonian SSR State Industry Committee on extending the deadline for the preparation of an individual dwelling project, 2025.

Excerpt from the translation: "Guided by the expertise of the Mererajooni Executive Committee and to create an IDEAL VERSION of the building. The architectural level of the district and our architecture in general should take as examples the well-known Nordic architects A. Jacobsen, E. Saarinen, A. Aalto, as well as the recognized Western architects Le Corbusier, Neutra, Kahn, van der Rohe, whose work should be adapted to our socio-economic conditions."

5-8 Lauri Eltermaa and Maarja Varkki, fictional versions of the house, 2025.



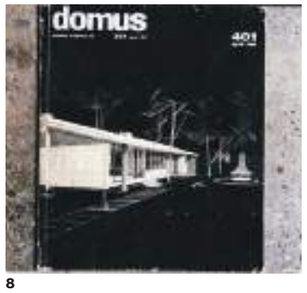
5



6



7



8

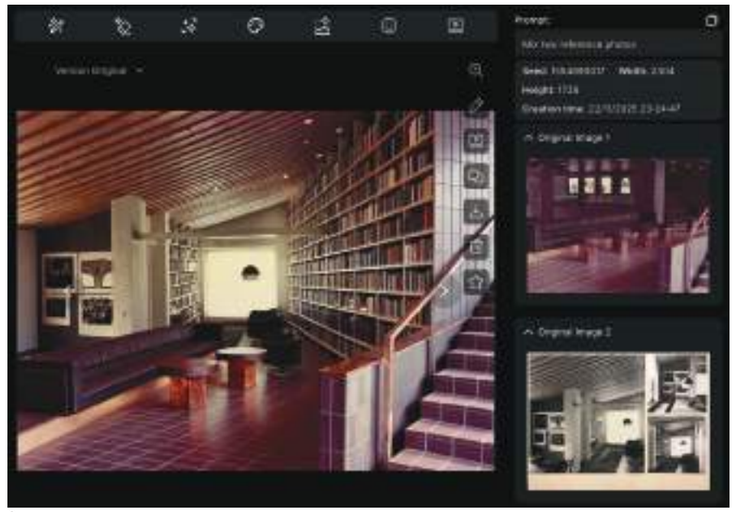
Vello Asi, architect's own house, Kõivu Road 12, Tallinn, designed 1963, completed 1970.

Visual interpretations

9 Lauri Eltermaa and Maarja Varkki, *Version Original* - view of the hallway 2, ideal version of Vello Asi's own house, 2025.

10 Vello Asi, individual house project in Merivälja, Kõivu Road 12, early 1960s. Family archive of Vello Asi.

11 Vello Asi, perspective view of the interior of Hotel Viru, undated. Family archive of Vello Asi.



9



10



11



12

Vello Asi, architect's own house, Kõivu Road 12, Tallinn, designed 1963, completed 1970.

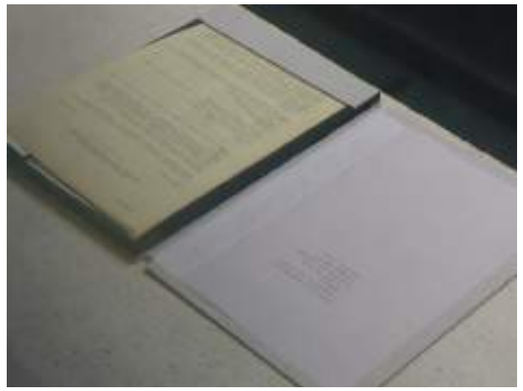
Models

12-14 Lauri Eltermaa and Maarja Varkki, catalogue containing various fictional drawings of the house, expert opinions, sketches of the ideal version, photos of the interior, and an article supposedly published in *Domus*, 2025.

15 Article published in *Domov* (Czechoslovakia, 1967, No. 5) about Vello Asi's initial living space in a garage at Kõivu Road 12. Photograph by Karolina Jakaitė.



13



14



15

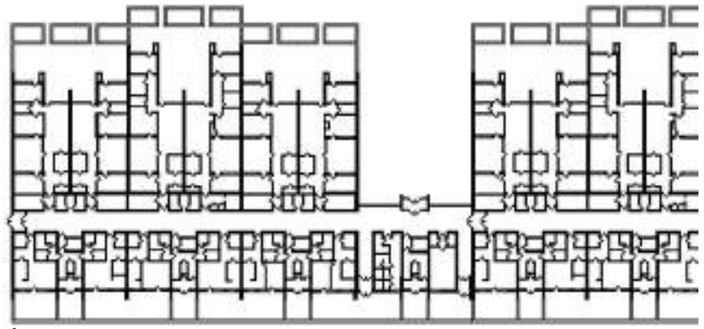
Toomas Rein, Pärnu KEK terraced housing complex Kuldne Kodu (Golden Home), Kuldse Kodu 1, Pärnu, designed in 1972, completed 1974 (first section) and 1987 (second section).

Redrawings

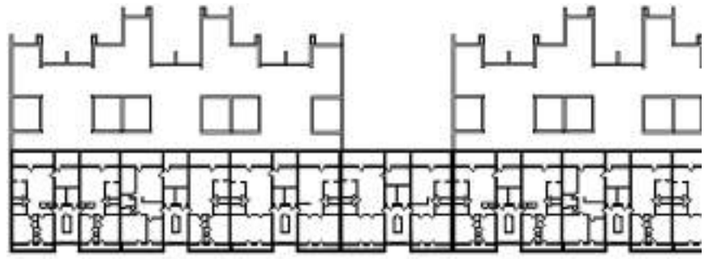
1-2 Toomas Rein, Kuldne Kodu terraced housing complex, first and second floors, plans. Redrawn by Triin Kampus, 2024.

3 Toomas Rein, Kuldne Kodu terraced housing complex, section. Redrawn by Triin Kampus, 2024.

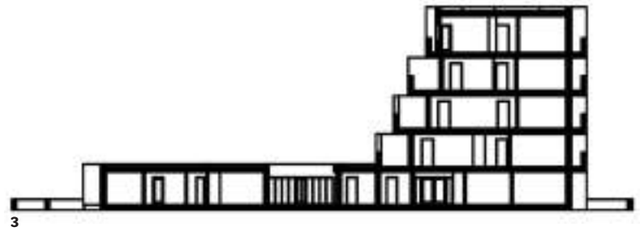
4 Ulvi Tiit, *REWRITING THE VOID: Linking Life, Space and Buildings*, 2024.



1



2



3



4

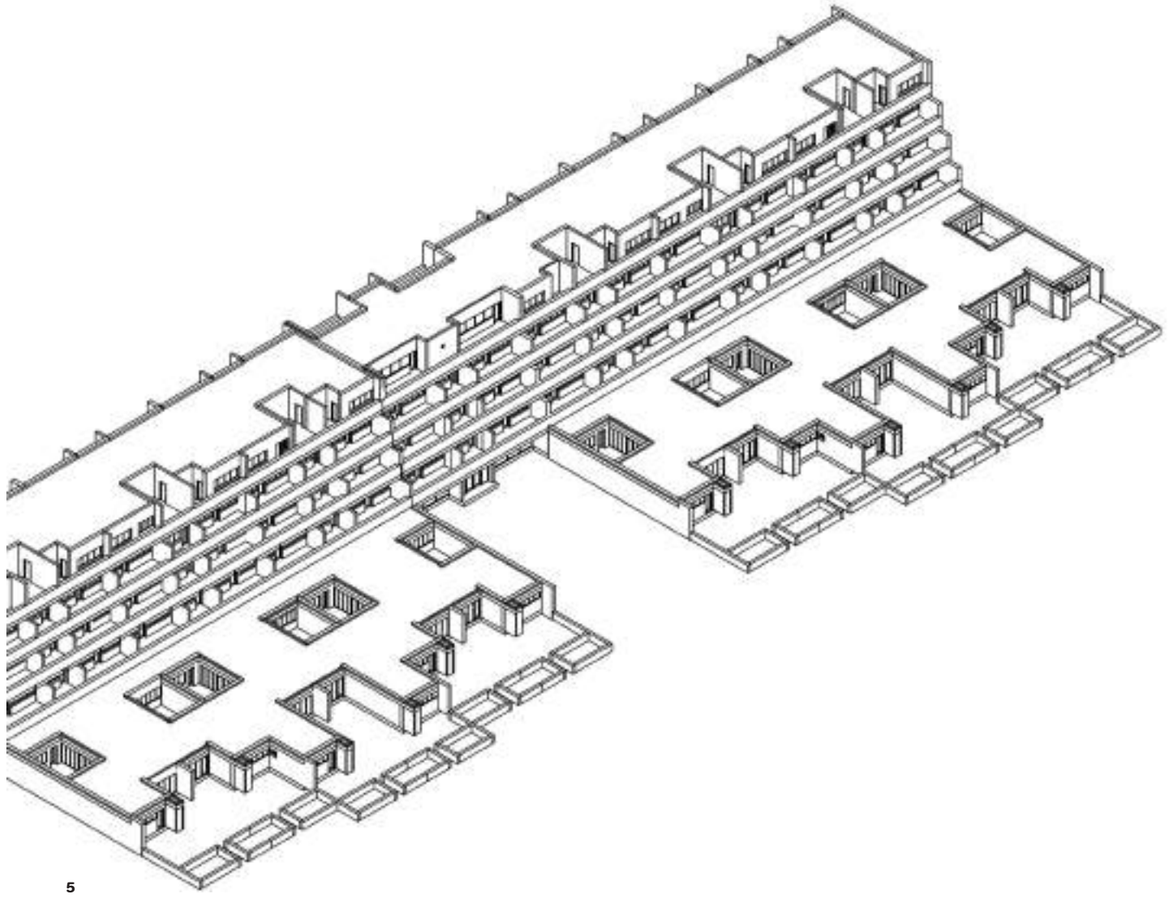
Toomas Rein, Pärnu KEK terraced housing complex Kuldne Kodu (Golden Home), Kuldse Kodu 1, Pärnu, designed in 1972, completed 1974 (first section) and 1987 (second section).

Architectural narratives

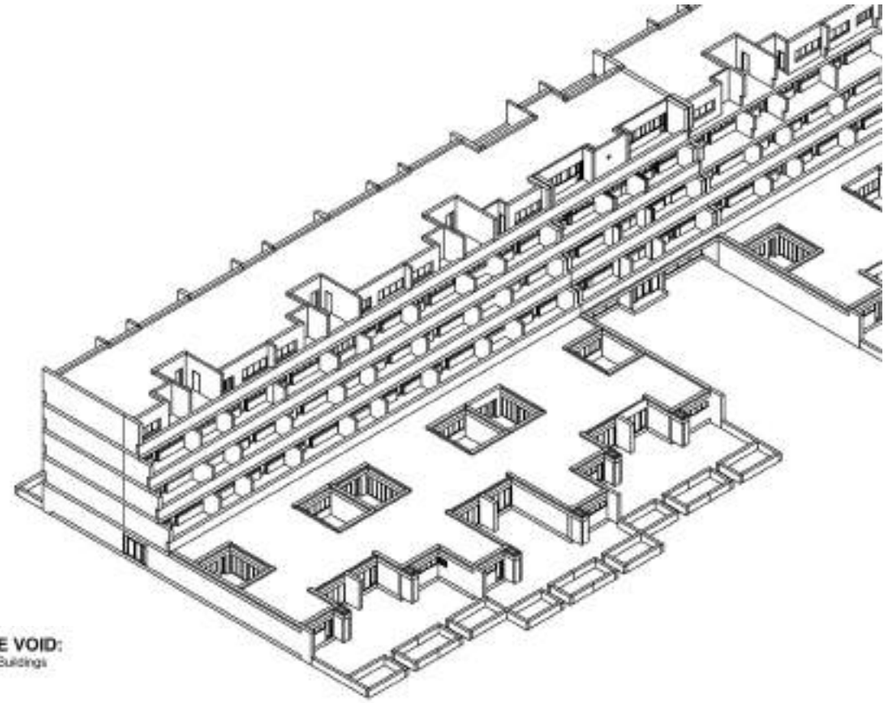
5 Toomas Rein, Kuldne Kodu terraced housing complex, axonometry. Drawing by Triin Kampus, 2024.

6 Toomas Rein, Kuldne Kodu terraced housing complex. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

7 Ulvi Tiit, *REWRITING THE VOID: Linking Life, Space and Buildings*, 2024.



5



The project focuses on the void between the two buildings, viewing it not as an empty space, but as an active, creative, and potential-filled area that gives meaning and serves as a link to something new—the source of all possibilities.
What is the form of the void? How to rewrite the void? To explore this, I combined three key elements: the void, a unique corridor model, and the architectons. By experimenting with the idea of a new corridor, I explored the concept of connecting the two buildings' two corridors, using the architectons model to unlock endless possibilities for variation and transforming the void into a dynamic and multifaceted space.

7



6

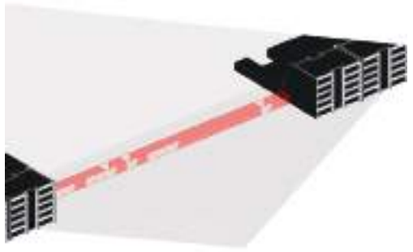
Toomas Rein, Pärnu KEK terraced housing complex Kuldne Kodu (Golden Home), Kuldse Kodu 1, Pärnu, designed in 1972, completed 1974 (first section) and 1987 (second section).

Visual interpretations

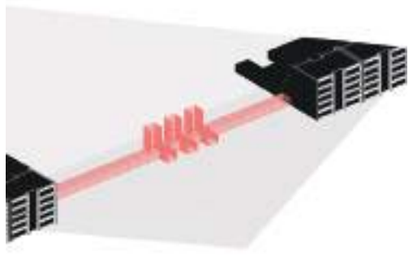
Models



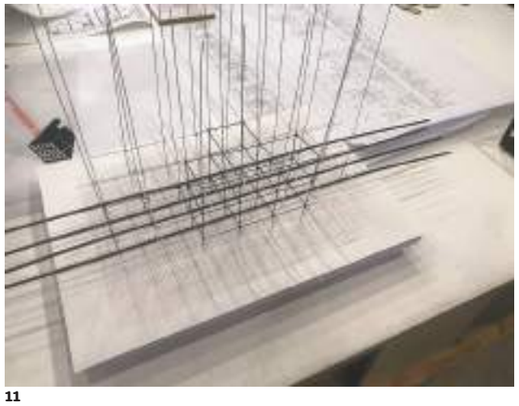
8



9



10



11



12

8-10 Ulvi Tiit, *REWRITING THE VOID: Linking Life, Space and Buildings*, 2024.

11 Ulvi Tiit, *REWRITING THE VOID: Linking Life, Space and Buildings*, 2024. Model.

12 Toomas Rein, Kuldne Kodu terraced housing complex. Courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.

Learning by travel with Vilen Künnapu

4 Learning by travel with...

The interview with Vilen Künnapu (b. 1948) took place in his studio on the top floor of a high-rise in the heart of Tallinn. This area, home to the city's major banks and international hotel chains, is commonly referred to in English as Tallinn City. Fifty years ago, in the 1970s, when Künnapu was a student and beginning his architectural career here, the district was unrecognisable. Its post-apocalyptic atmosphere was so striking that large parts of Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Stalker* (1979) were shot in the heart of Tallinn. At the same time, the Soviet Union's tightly controlled borders created an entirely different environment from the dynamic, globalised bustle that now characterises Tallinn City, with its flow of goods, money, and people.

What makes a conversation with Künnapu so compelling is that his thinking and practice seem largely unconstrained by spatial or temporal limits. Perhaps this global perspective stems from the fact that his mother spent her youth in New York. Yet, despite his cosmopolitan outlook, Künnapu is consistently patriotic: he never disparages his hometown and delights in celebrating the talents of local creatives. His views are matched by his influence – over the past decades, few architects have shaped the appearance of Tallinn's city centre as profoundly as he has.

We publish here the first part of a several-hour conversation, focusing on Künnapu's travels abroad during the Soviet period.

Gregor Taul Your first trip outside the Soviet Union was to Poland in 1968.

Vilen Künnapu Yes, it was a student trip during my second year. It was an extraordinary experience. Poland was a very vibrant place at the time, producing excellent films. We were also captivated by Polish poster art and contemporary visual art, which were remarkably in tune with international trends.

GT Compared with the closed borders of the Soviet Union, it must have felt like an entirely different world. Polish artists exhibited abroad constantly – for instance, in 1968 there was an exhibition of Polish poster art at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Poland was also swept up in the global wave of student protests that year.

VK I was already something of an "antenna" even then. On our first night in Warsaw, we stumbled upon the legendary club of the Academy of Arts. It was a rather exclusive place, but at that moment it was a true hotbed of rebellion. We ended up at the same table as some of the leading figures of the movement – it was, of course, incredibly exciting. There was also a smaller man named Jerzy, a local genius and painter, who was eager to get to know us. Jerzy became a famous artist, though he struggled with alcohol and died young.[1]

We then travelled to Krakow, where we were warmly received. By the time we returned to Warsaw, however, the main movement had already been suppressed, and some of the men we had sat with were imprisoned.

1968 was a remarkable year worldwide. That same spirit of experimentation and rebellion existed in Tallinn, too – through progressive art, absurdist theatre, and other avant-garde movements.

GT Would you say this was primarily a cultural experience for you, or was it more of an "architectural journey"?

VK It's always the same for me. Architecture interests me insofar as it engages with movement and flow. I'm not interested in mainstream trends – these days, for instance, zero-energy houses don't excite me. I want to experience and create things that are interesting, because I see myself as an artist.

GT How much did you travel within the Soviet Union as a student?

VK I had already travelled around the Soviet Union before attending the art institute. As a little boy, I went to the Caucasus several times with my mother, and we also visited the Black Sea with friends. After graduating, I travelled to Kyrgyzstan, as well as to Latvia and Lithuania. That was when a range of opportunities began to open up.

GT In 1969, you were in Hungary. What took you there?

VK I spent a few months in Hungary. This opportunity – like the earlier trip to Poland – was arranged by Lapin, our Komsomol secretary.[2] In Budapest, there were archaeological excavations at the Roman site of Aquincum. I had never been a member of a construction brigade, but this trip was only possible under the Komsomol's Student Construction Brigade programme.[3] At school, we were taught to look down on such institutions. Our professors, such as Edgar Johan Kuusik, would say that an architect is an aristocrat and should not go to these camps.[4]

In the end, I worked alongside Hungarians and Poles on the excavations. Afterwards, some Hungarian colleagues came to Estonia to work with us in return.

GT Your first trip outside the Eastern Bloc was to Finland in 1974.

VK Yes, it was immediately after we graduated from the institute. I had married Liivi, so it was a little like a honeymoon.[5] Officially, it was a tourist trip, but, as always with me, I quickly made contact with some Americans and Estonians living abroad. By the time I went to the United States a few years later, I already had acquaintances there waiting for me.

GT Did close relations with the Finns begin with that first trip to Finland?

VK The close ties between the Estonian and Finnish architectural elite developed gradually. At one point, Finnish architects started coming here more often because they were drawn to the KuKu Club and its vibrant atmosphere – few could believe we had such freedom and energy in the air. Later, Finnish artists also began visiting, particularly those associated with the magazine *Taide*. I developed close contacts with the editors and contributors of the magazine *Arkkitehti*. From there came the Tallinn School, its promotion in Finland, and joint parties and activities. In any case, the Finns later assisted us in all sorts of ways – smuggling books, sending competition briefs, and helping to submit entries to competitions outside the Soviet Union.[6]

GT In 1978, you managed to travel to the United States.

VK I never imagined anyone would actually take me there. I applied to the Union of Architects almost as a joke, and then, out of the blue, I received a call saying they had a reserve position. Eventually, that reserve position became a real one, and I joined the group. It was a stroke of luck for a young man. There were other young people in the group too, for example, a Georgian prodigy with whom I became friends – he went on to build that famous cantilevered house by the river.[7] All in all, they were remarkable people, and the trip was an incredibly powerful experience.

GT Was the trip organised by the Union of Architects of the Soviet Union?

VK The itinerary was arranged in cooperation with the Americans. We were accompanied by a young American architect who showed us all the key sites. Since we were Soviet architects, they wanted to show us the very best, including new landmarks such as John Portman's Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles. Because I got along well with the Moscow architects and the group leader, they allowed me to explore on my own. Estonian cultural figures living abroad would pick me up from the hotel in the morning, and I would return in the evening – no fuss. Some others didn't even dare to leave the hotel alone; the propaganda was so strong that a few genuinely feared they would be killed if they ventured too far.

By then, a new culture was already emerging – postmodernism. Of course, the locals wanted to show us late modernist masterpieces, but I said, *wait, wait, you should show the newer stuff too*. For example, I was taken to Stanley Tigerman's Arby's restaurant in Chicago. It was a tiny place, but incredibly stylish, full of pipes and playful tricks, painted in Mondrian colours and so inventive. After we left, our American guide – the child of Russian emigrants – told me that he knew American architecture well, but then pointed at me and said I knew it even better. I had read all the latest books and magazines on new architecture, brought to me by the Finns.

In Boston, we also visited the MIT School of Architecture. I leafed through the library, where I found Finnish magazines that had published my projects. I could casually show them to our Georgian companion, and his jaw literally dropped – it was as if I had picked up the first magazine and there were my drawings! One of my collages, for example, showed one of my private houses flying over New York.

GT In 1978, you also visited Czechoslovakia and Hungary, and in 1983, you travelled to France.

VK The first foreign competition that Ain Padrik and I took part in was in France – for Parc de la Villette. After the competition ended, a group of architects from across the Soviet Union who had participated travelled there together. We spent most of our time in Paris, where the competition entries were shown as slides at the Pompidou Centre. It was wonderful to socialise with Estonians living abroad and to go to the theatre in Paris, although I must admit that connecting with expat Estonians was never my main aim. Even more stimulating, however, was spending time with Armenian and especially Georgian architects, who represented the elite of Soviet architecture. And of course, there were the so-called "paper architects" from Moscow, like Mikhail Belov and Yuri Avvakumov, with whom I still keep in touch today.

GT Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, you also made it to Norway in 1988?

VK By then, I had gained some recognition – my work was being published in foreign magazines – so I started receiving invitations.[8] We had also organised the Tallinn Ten exhibition, of which I was the main organiser. The architecture magazine *Byggekunst* invited me to Norway. On this trip, I was introduced to Christian Norberg-Schulz, who by then had, of course, become a megastar.[9] We talked about everything – energies and so on.

In Oslo, I visited an exhibition of young architects, where I met the Snøhetta team. They had a gallery called ROM – or "room," right – where they showed their installations. They also invited me to see one of their unfinished private houses, to which Kjetil[10] said, "Now you have seen everything", implying there was nothing else in Oslo worth seeing. There was enough arrogance, but young people have to be a bit cheeky – that's the point!

Before the evening ended, someone mentioned there was a Leonard Cohen concert on an island. We went there and, you know... it was far more interesting than looking at some architect's stuff!

1 Künnapu is probably referring to the late Polish painter Jerzy Ryszard Zieliński (1943–1980), a leading figure in the underground art circles of the 1960s and 1970s.

2 The student construction brigades involved organised work by groups of students on construction sites. Although they were formally part of the Komsomol's activities, like the Komsomol itself they provided a space that was open to, or even conducive to, non-normative behaviour.

3 Leonhard Lapin (1947–2022), an architect by training, was one of the most significant figures in Estonian avant-garde art. He operated on the boundary between what was permitted and what was prohibited, holding the post of Komsomol secretary as a student at the Estonian State Institute of Arts. The Komsomol, a youth organisation in the Soviet Union for individuals aged roughly 14–28, functioned alongside the Communist Party. Its purpose was to educate young people in the spirit of communist ideology, organise social and cultural activities, and prepare them for future party membership. Although the role of Komsomol secretary has sometimes been viewed as a blemish on Lapin's biography, it afforded him the opportunity to work within the official framework to organise activities that, in effect, could subvert Soviet authority.

4 Edgar Johan Kuusik (1888–1974) was an Estonian architect, educator, and designer of furniture and interiors.

5 Architectural historian Liivi Künnapu (b. 1953) and Vilen Künnapu were married in November 1973.

6 For example, in 1982, Vilen Künnapu, together with Ain Padrik (b. 1947), submitted their entry to the Parc de la Villette competition in Paris. International recognition came to Künnapu and Padrik – who were also joined by the writer and future Estonian president Lennart Meri – when they won a special prize at the 1984 Arctic Centre architecture competition in Finland. Their entry was also featured on the cover of the *British Architectural Review*.

7 Künnapu is referring to Zurab Jalaghania (b. 1939), co-author of the Tbilisi Ministry of Transportation building, completed in 1975.

8 In 1988, Vilen Künnapu, Ain Padrik, and Andres Siim were awarded second place in the West Coast Gateway competition in Los Angeles.

9 Christian Norberg-Schulz (1926–2000) was a Norwegian architect and a leading figure in architectural phenomenology.

10 Kjetil Trædal Thorsen (b. 1958) is a Norwegian architect and co-founder of the architectural practice Snøhetta.

A PDF version of this book is available for free in Open Access at up.pt/press/

ISBN 978-989-746-465-2

Publisher

U.PORTO PRESS

Up Gran T

European Commission

POLITECNICO

U.PORTO FACULDADE DE ARQUITETURA UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO

ALMA MATER STUDIORUM UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA DIPARTIMENTO DI ARCHITETTURA

Art Academy of Latvia

ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI

EKA

A PDF version of this book is available
for free in Open Access at
up.pt/press/

ISBN 978-989-746-465-2

Publisher
U.PORTO PRESS

Up
Gran
T

European Commission

POLITECNICO

U.PORTO
FACULDADE DE ARQUITETURA
UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO

ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA
DIPARTIMENTO DI ARCHITETTURA

Art Academy of Latvia

ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI

EKA