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Estonian Academy of Arts
Faculty of Architecture

UpGranT Best Practices
14/2026

Proceedings 14

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

UpGranT Best Practices

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Foreword
Reframing the Grand Tour: 15 Approaches to Travel and Site-Specific Learning

Gregor Taul

Issue 14 of the *Proceedings of the Faculty of Architecture at EKA* reflects upon a three-year research project in which the architecture departments of six European universities examined the significance of the Grand Tour within twentieth-century architectural history and the application of this concept to contemporary spatial education. In addition to this publication, the project yielded three primary outcomes: a comprehensive *Workbook of Affinities* published by the University of Porto Press, an exhibition shown at the School of Architecture at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, illustrating the lives and works of 60 European architects through the prism of travel and conceptual inquiry, and the project's homepage, which functions as a living archive of the collected information. In addition, the universities put these insights into practice within contemporary architectural pedagogy. In this volume, we present 15 different educational programmes developed during the project, testing various approaches to travel and site-specific learning.

The volume is structured into six parts, each presenting courses conducted across various academic levels. The varying length of the chapters corresponds to the academic commitments of the contributing faculty and researchers. Although drawing comparisons between secondary school students and doctoral candidates presents inherent difficulties, a unified matrix was adopted. Course conveners were required to complete

a standardised syllabus detailing essential parameters (general information, objectives, methodology, assessment criteria, etc.) – a format widely established among academic staff and students internationally. These documents are either submitted via institutional online learning platforms or independently produced by tutors. While some faculty members and students pay minimal attention to such syllabi, others attribute considerable importance to their formulation. Ultimately, there is a consensus across universities that a course succeeds primarily through a solid plan – one that considers the students' existing skill level, the course goals, and what can realistically be achieved in the time available. For tutors, universities, and students alike, the syllabus functions as a kind of good-faith agreement and a manual of best practice, helping everyone align their needs and expectations.

Admittedly, in a standardised document format, such an agreement lacks visual appeal, which often prompts educators and students to circumvent this administrative requirement. Conversely, in contexts where academics must actively recruit students for competitive studios, electives, or summer schools, or where new teaching staff seek to establish their credentials, highly specialised, bespoke syllabi emerge, occasionally formatted as standalone publications. For many educators, starting from this baseline is simply a matter of professional courtesy. Moreover, every course design features a built-in feedback loop; each course builds on previous iterations, taking lessons from what worked and what did not. In a similar vein, systematic student evaluation forms an integral part of the planning process.

With this in mind, the texts in this collection have passed through several phases of writing, editing, feedback, and reinterpretation. On the one hand, we have tried to preserve the original character of the texts, as these were documents originally intended for students of various age groups. On the other hand, all course authors were given the opportunity to reflect on their courses retrospectively. With this in mind, a number of project partners incorporated brief introductory essays into their syllabi, thereby providing a wider contextual framework for the courses. Consequently, the texts, presented in this new guise, are specifically tailored to academic staff in architecture, design, and art institutions, who may draw upon the shared best practices when planning similar courses. At the same time, the collection remains accessible and engaging for anyone interested in architectural education more broadly or in curriculum design specifically.

Introduction
Updating the Grand Tour: A Tentative Overview

Cristina Pallini

A logbook lets everyone capture a journey's best moments (Michaels 2026), but only a skilled writer can project personal memories beyond their fleeting immediacy, thereby restoring spatial and contextual depth to places. Likewise, architects have their own forms of storytelling (Nicolin 1991; Buckley and Pollyanna 2011; De Maio and Toson 2022; Pallini and Amistadi 2025). Their finest visual and written narratives, often rich in interpretation, capture "the place" even before the building; that is how architecture functions across diverse landscapes and environments (Belli, Mangone, and Sessa 2024).

Why the Grand Tour, and why now? These questions posed in *Perspecta*'s editorial are crucial, not only due to the lack of a grand narrative and the prevailing "amnesia of endless innovation" (Meredith 2008). At a time of easy, low-cost mobility and cultural globalisation, when it is almost impossible for an architect to experience a building or a place without having visited it virtually, let alone to spend prolonged periods in significant locations (Kalfopoulos 2026, 37), reflecting on the formative value of travel may seem obsolete.

Yet design-led training is also gaining momentum.[1] While problem-centred learning is seen as fundamental to challenging students with open-ended tasks, architectural design is regarded as a cross-disciplinary catalyst, and creativity as an asset in an uncertain future (Aguilera and Ortiz-Revilla 2021, 331).

1
Over the past decade, the definition of core STEM education (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) has been continually debated, raising questions about the extra "A" that marks the shift to STEAM. For some, "A" stands for art in the singular or architecture (Maeda 2013; Mazzeo Ortolani 2025). For others, it refers to artistic and applied arts, including performing, sound, visual, and digital expressions (Chappell, Hetherington et al. 2025).

Recent indications suggest a revival of the Grand Tour. In 2017, the Renzo Piano Foundation launched the World Tour Programme (RPWT), a forty-day study trip for young architects,[2] while in 2022 the Institut Français Italia launched the New Grand Tour, a residency programme for young French talents. The average architecture student, however, keeps moving across countries, hardly engaging in the slow process of understanding that requires studying real buildings *in situ*. This is even more problematic if we accept Carlos Martí Aris's view that architectural knowledge primarily resides in the works themselves (1993). In fact, when faced with a design assignment, students find it difficult to visualise space in its tangible form, even though they inhabit space as part of their daily lives.

Along these lines, fully aware that the classical Grand Tour both complemented and counterpointed formal academic training, the UpGranT project aimed to develop a methodology for travel-related teaching and learning.[3]

While each partner institution developed a slightly different perspective on the project theme, we all kept in mind the following questions:

- What sets apart an individual journey from a collective educational one?
- How can this common practice, widespread among architects from various generations and backgrounds, with differing interests and at different life stages, be made accessible to students?
- If travel is to be incorporated into a teaching module, how should it be prepared so that students can still perceive architecture in an unmediated way, maintaining an "exploratory disposition"?
- What triggers the travelling architect's visionary gaze to shift from passive contemplation to active engagement? Or, in other words, when does the traveller become a proactive, critical thinker?
- How can we map the results?
- Can we make mobility more sustainable by adding value to it?

Updating

The UpGranT consortium included Italy and Greece, traditional destinations; Portugal, Europe's western frontier and a hub for a younger generation of architects; and the Baltic republics of Latvia and Estonia. This brought us into engagement with new geographies and more recent, conflicting pasts, challenging any preset notion of European identity by encompassing the negotiations and conflicts integral to it. We focused on modern and contemporary architecture in the partner institutions' cities: Milan and Northern Italy; Thessaloniki; Porto and Northern Portugal; and Riga and Tallinn.

2
Lettera 22 publishes each year's travel outcomes.

3
The project addresses two of the Erasmus+ Programme's policy priorities: "rewarding excellence in learning, teaching and skills development" and "stimulating innovative learning and teaching practices," and was conceived for different categories of learners – students and academic staff, as well as professionals and people of various age groups with a specific interest in architecture.

We addressed "learning by travelling" in concrete terms, considering ten architects per team and jointly undertaking four Grand Tours. When selecting the ten Grand Tourists, some discrepancies emerged: while the Portuguese, Greek, and Baltic teams had no trouble including practicing architects, the two Italian teams found it more challenging. In any case, the modern myth of the architect's journey, exemplified by the young Le Corbusier, could not withstand the significant differences across contexts, shaped primarily by historical and political factors.[4] A key distinction here is between individual (self-determined) and collective institutionalised educational travel, with the latter generating a collective narrative.

Our Grand Tours began in Italy (January 2024), with a meeting in Bologna, followed by visits to Cesena, Pesaro, Urbino, Modena, Parma, and Milan. We alternated between exemplary buildings and historic towns (Clemente 2026; Pallini and Ferro 2026). After five months (June 2024), the Latvian and Estonian teams guided us in Riga and Tallinn, with a series of intermediate stops to visit a summer house at Saulkrasti, a former kolkhoz, the town of Pärnu, and the Rapla KEK, a famous example of late-Soviet modernism (Jākobsone and Devrient 2026; Taul and Tee 2026). Some of us extended the tour to Finland to visit Alvar Aalto's work in Helsinki, Tampere, Jyväskylä, Säynätsalo, and Muuratsalo (Chizzoniti 2025). In June 2025, we spent ten days in Porto and its region, where we visited the works of the two Pritzker laureates, Álvaro Siza and Eduardo Souto de Moura, as well as those of other architects of the "Porto School" (Casal Ribeiro and Ramos 2026). There, at the Faculty of Architecture designed by Siza, we held the Intensive Programme for Learners with 36 students (Casal Ribeiro and Ramos 2026). Lastly, in June 2026, we were in Thessaloniki, where the local team curated and hosted the Final Exhibition and guided us through the works of their ten Grand Tourists (Vougia 2026).

Each itinerary was conceived by the local team(s) with a different focus: ranging from prioritising an understanding of the urban structure through architecture to emphasising a distinctive approach and line of thought, with the idea of testing something that could be replicated.

When visiting partner institutions, we explored different teaching environments, which, from a pedagogical point of view, provided a far-reaching experience, even after the trips.

Tentative Highlights

Why does London look like Rome? *Perspecta*'s editors rightly remind us that the Grand Tour left a tangible mark on the co-identity inherent in many European townscapes, noting that, in the seventeenth century, the British reinvented their capital based on their travels to Italy: "through equal parts copying, error and interpretation, an entirely new architecture was created" (Brainard, Metha, and Moran 2008).

4
In some cases, such as Greece before the establishment of the School of Architecture at the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) in 1917, and Estonia before the 1920s, travel was unavoidable, as graduating as an architect required studying abroad. From 1926 to 1974, Portugal was under the military dictatorship, which imposed strict cultural and economic restrictions, including travel (Casal Ribeiro and Ramos 2026, 3). Greece faced a similar situation from 1967 to 1974. Some common watersheds, like the Second World War, held very different significance in different countries. In Italy, this coincided with the "coming of age" for the generation born in the early twentieth century, who played a leading role in the reconstruction of Milan (Bonfante and Brighenti 2026). In the Baltic countries, the aftermath of the Second World War meant Soviet domination. As travel within Western Europe became more accessible and popular, the state strictly regulated travel both within the Soviet Union and abroad (Toson 2022; Jākobsone 2025; Taul 2025; Tee and Taul 2025). Things changed radically after 1991.

The UpGrant project confirmed that the traditional destinations of the Grand Tour – Greece and Italy – continued to hold their importance in architectural education well into the early twenty-first century. Athens drew many architects over the years, including Piero Bottoni, who attended the legendary fourth CIAM in 1933. During a break, the delegates sailed to the Cyclades, where they found traditional dwellings whose floor plans and cross-sections matched what they had been imagining for around a decade. The anonymous architecture, with its white, unadorned walls, seemed to embody sound design principles. In Athens, they visited the new schools designed by young Greek architects: asymmetrical compositions inspired by principles of functionality and geometries of pure volumes in harmonious relationship with the landscape.

Travel takes place in space and time and is intertwined with the autobiography of the person who travels (Amistadi 2026), and visiting a specific place at a given time indeed left an even greater mark.[5] In the late 1950s and early 1960s, after the "thaw" following Stalin's death (1953), Moscow drew some prominent Italian architects. While Aldo Rossi travelled to the Soviet Union in 1955, in 1961, a delegation of the Milan Board of Architects, including Gio Ponti, Gae Aulenti, and Guido Canella, visited Russia and the surviving works of Constructivist architecture (Canella 1962; Rossi 1990, 45–46; Bonfante and Brighenti 2025, 96).

A common denominator across generations of architects in the partner countries was (and still is) their strong interest in Alvar Aalto's work, which profoundly influenced Latvians and Estonians, as well as subsequent generations of Western European architects.[6] Álvaro Siza's visits *in situ* confirm his long-lasting legacy and the notion of co-identities associated with it (Casal Ribeiro and Ramos 2026).

Aldo Rossi was also highly relevant in the partner institutions' countries. His built work, known from *Domus*, inspired Juris Poga's large residential projects in Riga (Jākobsone and Devriendt 2026, 15). His written work, translated into Greek, left a lasting imprint on the School of Architecture of Thessaloniki, while also inspiring Eduardo Souto de Moura's Carandá Market in Braga (Casal Ribeiro and Ramos 2026).

Another common trait, deserving further investigation, concerns the negotiations with history and the mutual influences between traditions and modernity, which should be mapped on a case-by-case basis.

Testing Teaching Modules

Complementing other UpGranT outputs, this publication compiles the best practices that emerged during the project for travel-related teaching and learning. The order of the contributions follows the chronological sequence of the curriculum of architectural studies: preparatory courses in architectural studies, BA, internal internships at BA level, BA theses, MA, and PhD.

5
At Politecnico di Milano, for example, travel was institutionalised alongside the country's transformation at the turn of the twentieth century. Italy was then a vast construction site, with tunnels, railway lines, ports, and industrial facilities offering engineers unprecedented opportunities to observe the transformation unfold (Korolija and Pallini 2026).

6
Erika Nõva, the first female architect to earn a degree from the Tallinn College of Engineering in 1931, worked on the site of Paimio Sanatorium. Ignazio Gardella met Aalto in 1938, when he travelled in Finland. Aalto's connections with Italy continue to attract scholars (see the International Seminar *Alvar Aalto and Italy*, jointly organised by Politecnico di Milano and IULM University on 13–14 January 2016, as well as De Felice, 2020).

Teaching modules were organised within each institution's constraints and with some autonomy from mainstream research. This relative freedom extended to the module's duration, the number of participants, the types of activities and methods used, and the selection of case studies, which in some cases coincided with the ten Grand Tourists and the three exemplary buildings, while in others they went beyond those covered by UpGranT.

In some cases, artists were part of the teaching staff. The students included architects at different stages of their training, as well as interior architects and engineers.

Our aim was to train them to produce personal travel narratives by using cognitive tools (sketches, diagrams, photographic images, travel notebooks, models, etc.) to their full potential, not to copy the buildings they visited, but to use them as sources and references for creative interpretation in future design processes, as an intrinsic part of their repertoire of design operations.

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High School Programme

Travel LAB: Learning by Travelling

Helder Casal Ribeiro
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University
Faculty of Architecture – University of Porto

Context
Porto, 2025

Field of Study
Architecture

Degree Level
High school (Summer course)

ECTS Credits
5 days / 30 hours (ECTS credits not applicable)

Faculty
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Students
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Abstract
Travel-LAB (T-LAB) is a five-day, in-person summer course in the field of architecture.

T-LAB is hosted by the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto (FAUP), which is dedicated to higher education in architecture and urban studies. It is set within the Junior University – University of Porto framework, a singular national programme that aims to introduce high school students to the university's academic life, facilities, and courses.

The summer course at FAUP brings together two professors (architects), two

monitors (architecture students) and up to 16 high school students aged 14/15 to 17/18 from across Portugal with diverse academic interests. The course encourages participants to revisit the idea of the Grand Tour as an important cultural and social moment in the education of cultured citizens. In an era of travel trivialisation and declining critical inquiry amid an environmental crisis, the main aim of T-LAB is to underline responsible travel as an opportunity for broad-spectrum learning, centred on the learner, their self-motivation, and autonomy. T-LAB also aims to raise awareness about the value of contemporary architectural heritage, the importance of architecture, and the social relevance of the architect's profession.

The T-LAB 2025 edition is supported by the Abade Pedrosa Municipal Museum, the International Museum of Contemporary Sculpture (MIEC), and the Art Centre and Archive Alberto Carneiro (CAAC) in Santo Tirso.

Objectives

T-LAB aims to go beyond being a leisure-time activity, promoting knowledge in architecture in an enjoyable and, at the same time, rigorous way, through travelling, a theme particularly dear to architects. Travelling is understood here as movement from one place to another, whether near or far, for a certain period of time, involving an integrated set of experiences.

The main objectives of T-LAB are:

- Reassess travel as a learning and pedagogical tool in architecture.
- Improve awareness of artistic practices from northern Portugal and those associated with the Porto School.
- Enhance the learning experience through travel and visits to architects and artists and their built works.
- Stimulate attentive observation, critical thinking, and autonomous discovery through sensorial and sensitive readings.
- Promote active engagement with travel readings through personal creative assessments and (re)applications.
- Raise awareness of architectural and artistic practices and their social relevance and responsibility.
- Promote responsible travel – conscious, critical and sustainable.

Method

T-LAB focuses on combining laboratory-based learning with fieldwork and project-based learning methodologies. It is the opportunity for students to learn from firsthand experience, outside the classroom, through attentive observation of architecture and artworks, as well as through creative, hands-on authorial interpretations.

To create a five-day Grand Tour experience, the summer course is grounded in a one-day tour to a destination in the Porto metropolitan area, bringing together works of contemporary architecture and sculpture that are open and accessible to all. These works share a thematic density, the ability to be broken into diverse design problems and solutions (both universal and authorial), and the potential to represent their authors' extensive body of work and travel references.

Within the spirit of the Grand Tour, this travel implies a preparatory phase, focused on documenting and studying the works and authors to be visited through available bibliography (which includes archive materials among other sources) as well as a post-visit reflection.

More specifically, T-LAB integrates the following activities to be carried out either by a full group of 16 students or in small groups of 4 students (organised according to their personal affinities):

- An "elective affinities map of previous travels" based on the presentation of the notion of the Grand Tour, accompanied by a set of unique journeys undertaken by architects and artists (6 hours, 16 students).
- A "travel board" based on a selected bibliography and a previously presented travel plan and itinerary, accompanied by brief introductions to the authors and the works to be visited (6 hours, 4 groups of 4 students).
- A "group travel experience" consisting of a one-day tour to visit works of architecture and sculpture. The tour is guided and includes time for autonomous observation and discovery (6 hours, 16 students).
- A "souvenir" developed as a new authorial narrative (written and/or drawn, through two-dimensional or three-dimensional objects) that recalls the group travel experience and can be taken home as a remembrance. Its construction follows an introduction to the concept of the souvenir, illustrated with examples in a short presentation (6 hours, 4 groups of 4 students).
- An "atlas for future travels" triggered by the recent travel experience (6 hours, 16 students).

Throughout these activities, students may explore drawing and writing as creative media, using exclusively analogue techniques.

In the 2025 edition, T-LAB travelled to Santo Tirso to visit an ensemble co-authored by Álvaro Siza and Eduardo Souto de Moura, as well as the Art Centre, featuring sculptures and installations by Alberto Carneiro.

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Urtasun A. (2008) *Guia para educadores – Museo Oteiza*. Fundacion Museo Jorge Oteiza, Alzuza

Bolaños C., Huertas O., Rodríguez A., Mendizabal U., Pérez M. (2024) *Education Lab: Ortzi-muga igaroz. Transitando el horizonte*. Museu Chillida Leku, Hernani.

Dipartimento Educativo di PirelliHangarBicocca (2024–2025) *Kids Guide*. Pirelli Hangar Bicocca, Milano.

Tools

T-LAB pursues an active, student-centred, experiential approach, with travel as its main learning tool. Specifically, while travelling, T-LAB encourages students to activate the five senses and to engage thought and intelligence in the construction of clear and unprejudiced readings grounded in attentive observation, silent listening, and critical thinking. These processes may involve mediating tools, such as drawing, photographing, or writing, as a way of looking more attentively.

A principle that runs throughout T-LAB, a course dedicated to deepening architectural culture, is the call to use and apply tools embedded in the architectural practice, which are adapted for and academically relevant to high school students. T-LAB prefers analogue writing and drawing tools, such as white-boards and notebooks of different sizes, to boost memory retention, focus, and creativity, rather than digital tools, thereby minimising digital distractions and screen-induced mental fatigue. With this objective in mind, at the start of the course, T-LAB provides students with a toolkit that includes notebooks, paper of different colours and thicknesses, pens, charcoal and colouring pencils, cutting devices, and glue, all readily available, to enable students to quickly map out ideas individually or brainstorm collaboratively. Students also have access to a print/copy machine during T-LAB. According to the recommendations of Junior University – University of Porto, the use of a personal device or camera is only permitted during the group travel experience.

For final or intermediate presentations, T-LAB promotes short, hands-on performances featuring printed images or physical objects conceived as souvenirs.

Course Materials

During the course, T-LAB provides students with the following materials:

- A selection of archive documents on the selected architects' and artists' travels, organised into short presentation sessions.
- The one-day travel plan draft and a collection of printed materials on the city, buildings, and artworks to be visited. This includes a map for each student to take home, which can be used as a basis for future family visits (Museu Internacional de Escultura Contemporânea. Mapa de esculturas na cidade 1990–2020. Santo Tirso. Câmara Municipal).
- A selection of books from the FAUP library on the architects' and artists' works featured in the group travel experience.

The one-day travel plan draft includes:

- Travel from Porto to Santo Tirso by rented bus.
- Visits to the Abade Pedrosa Municipal Museum and the International Museum of Contemporary Sculpture (MIEC), an architectural work co-designed by Álvaro Siza and Eduardo Souto de Moura, including a guided tour led by a staff member.
- A lunchtime visit to the museum's outdoor sculpture collection (including works of Alberto Carneiro and other national and international contemporary sculptors, such as Pedro Cabrita Reis, Rui Sanches, Carlos Nogueira, Reinhard Klessinger, Jorge du Bon, etc.).
- Travel between the MIEC and the Art Centre and Archive Alberto Carneiro (CAAC).
- A visit to the CAAC and its permanent exhibition of the sculptor's work, including a guided tour led by a staff member.
- Return trip from Santo Tirso to Porto by rented bus.

The book selection includes:

(2022) "Museu internacional de Escultura Contemporánea [MIEC] en Santo Tirso". El croquis, 215/216, pp. 52–65.

(2022) "Museu Municipal Abade Pedrosa [MMAP]". El croquis 218, pp. 30–39.

(2019) "International Museum of Contemporary Sculpture (MIEC) and Abade Pedrosa Municipal Museum (MMAP)". a+u, 582, pp. 108–123.

Siza A., Souto de Moura E. (2016) *Museu Internacional de Escultura Contemporânea, Museu Municipal Abade Pedrosa: Projeto e obra*. Câmara Municipal, Santo Tirso.

Belo D., Carneiro A. (2017) *Alberto Carneiro: natureza dentro*. Câmara Municipal, Vila Nova de Famalicão.

Carneiro, A. (2022) *Alberto Carneiro: a natureza em movimento*. Câmara Municipal, Santo Tirso.

Moreira A. (2025) *Museu Internacional de Escultura Contemporânea. Escultura Pública*. Câmara Municipal, Santo Tirso.Moreira A. (2015) *Museu Internacional de Escultura Contemporânea: 1990–2015.* Câmara Municipal, Santo Tirso.

Ordiales A., Alves A. (1989) *Alberto Carneiro: ainda a memória do corpo sobre a terra: esculturas e desenhos*. Galeria Nasoni, Porto.

Prerequisites

Within the framework of Junior University – University of Porto, T-LAB is aimed at prospective pre-university students who have completed elementary school and are currently enrolled in a Portuguese high school. It is open to students in the 10th, 11th, and 12th years (generally ages 14/15 to 17/18) from all scientific-humanistic courses (Sciences and Technologies, Socioeconomic Sciences, Languages and Humanities, and Visual Arts), whether geared towards higher education/university or technical courses, with or without prior training in arts or architecture.

The opportunity for high school students to dive into the field of architecture at FAUP through T-LAB extends beyond mere exposure to a potential career path. It aims to stimulate among students a cultured perspective on art, architecture, and travel, providing them with tools to explore and better understand the built and cultural environment, strengthen their relationship with their surroundings, and foster their critical thinking and creativity.

Assessment

T-LAB promotes in-person learning, emphasising active participation by students, monitors, and professors in a process of action and reflection, as well as collaboration to identify problems, share knowledge, and co-design solutions.

The assessment of the T-LAB objectives is integrated, continuous, and formative throughout the course, focusing on monitoring students' progress and immediate learning outcomes through active daily participation. The main assessment methods are observation and discussion.

The T-LAB activities are structured on a daily basis, with each day corresponding to a specific activity. Typically, each day begins with a concise presentation of the activity by the teaching staff, followed by short work sessions involving student groups, monitors, and professors around the same worktable in a single workspace (with both interior and exterior environments), movement breaks between work sessions and end-of-day informal presentations. These are trigger moments for participants to share their discoveries and innovative creations, followed by a period of synthesis and reflection in which all participants can have a voice in discussing what they have learned and what they were most enthusiastic about. They also provide opportunities to directly observe skill acquisition and document progress towards the mapped objectives and outcomes, complementing the worktable moments of frequent exchange and rapid feedback, which allow students to confront and review misconceptions in real time.

The course is structured around varied, interactive, and clearly framed activities, short presentations, small-group work sessions with movement breaks, and hands-on tasks developed both in the full group and in small teams. This structure, connected to the real-world scenario of travelling, aims to focus students' attention and maintain their engagement and enthusiasm.

Evaluation

T-LAB is a week-long (5 days) learning-by-doing travel experience designed to enrich high school students' broader understanding of the arts and to highlight the social relevance and cultural role of architecture through complex thought filtered by sensorial and sensitive ways of reading and understanding, with no intermediate or final evaluations and no minimum attendance requirements. According to Junior University – University of Porto, students come together in a safe environment, open to self-discovery and autonomous thinking, which inspires them to go beyond established social premises and their given socio-economic framework.

Deliverables

Considering T-LAB's objectives and activities, the course's main outputs are a collection of deliverables, which include an "elective affinities map of previous travels", a "travel board", a "group travel experience", a "souvenir", and an "atlas for future travels". An additional output may be an "individual travel journal", drawn and/or written, that records and interprets the daily activities.

Specifically, the "souvenir" corresponds to a reinterpretation of the travel experience

through the conception of an authorial narrative, based on active, open, and sensorial *in situ* readings, that goes beyond previously collected information and directly addresses the students' personal interests.

This new point of view may be communicated and further developed through the use of a variety of analogue techniques, including writing, drawing, collaging, or modelling.

Due to the course's premises, digital productions are not considered, and camera use is limited.

Student Feedback

The evaluation of T-LAB's impact includes a follow-up informal evaluation and a post-event individual questionnaire.

During the T-LAB week, informal observations of students' behaviour, interactions, and performance, together with conversations with the monitors, students, and the Junior University – University of Porto staff provide real-time insights and feedback, allowing for immediate adjustments to the T-LAB approach.

An anonymous survey to collect honest feedback on the course experience and further within 24 hours should be concise (limited to 5 to 10 minutes), using a mix of five-point scale ratings (from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) and open-ended questions to provide actionable feedback on planning and communication, activities, and outputs.

Key questions include overall satisfaction, favourite moments, perceived value, and suggestions for improvement.

Quantitative Metrics (Scale of 1 to 5)

Planning and Communication

1 In the application phase, the T-LAB's brief was concise, clear, and appealing.
2 At the T-LAB launch, the teaching staff introduced the course and clearly explained the overall programme (objectives, activities, outputs, and supporting materials).
3 During T-LAB, the teaching staff and monitors were welcoming and approachable, encouraging socialisation and participation.
4 Throughout T-LAB, the teaching staff presented and clearly explained all the daily activities and the provided materials in an enthusiastic manner.

Activities

1 The T-LAB space was agreeable and suitable for the planned activities.
2 The T-LAB workload was adequate for a summer course.
3 The group travel experience was fundamental to T-LAB.
4 The travel preparation phase and the souvenir phase of reflection and discussion were fundamental to a better understanding of the group travel experience.

Outputs

1 T-LAB contributed to the improvement of my skills in observation, critical thinking, autonomous discovery, and communication.
2 T-LAB contributed to the improvement of my knowledge of artists, architects, artistic and architectural practices in North Portugal.
3 Through T-LAB, I developed a more critical and reflective attitude towards the social relevance of art and architecture.
4 Through T-LAB, I developed a more critical and reflective attitude towards the educational value of travelling.

Qualitative Metrics (Open-Text Answers)

1 Did you enjoy the overall T-LAB experience?
2 What was the most important thing you learned about arts, architecture, and travelling?
3 Would you like to participate in the next T-LAB edition, and would you recommend it to a friend?
4 What suggestion would you give for next year's T-LAB edition?

Course Review

During T-LAB, the daily observation of the students' behaviour, interactions and performance, paired with direct feedback from the monitors, allowed for refinements to the devised methodology by:

- Introducing a preliminary rehearsal of the "group travel experience" through a group visit to the Faculty of Architecture, where the summer course took place. Through a guided tour, this provided an opportunity to test different strategies for experiencing architecture *in situ*, using the main senses (vision, hearing, smell, and touch), and to interpret initial atmospheric impressions into design themes and narratives, in order to discover the building's objective, meaning, and purpose. This was also a special moment for high school students to become familiar with FAUP's environment and facilities.
- Replacing the prior supply of didactic material on the studied authors and buildings with an afternoon in the FAUP library, where students identified the library sections, selected books, and engaged with them to build their own personal collection of information.
- Adding an unexpected surprise visit to the "group travel experience" itinerary. At the end of the one-day tour, on the way back from Santo Tirso, the visit to the Alberto Carneiro Sculpture Garden provided a unique occasion to regain the students' attention and keep them focused on the space interpretation. The garden, comprising 435 granite posts on the outskirts of the city of Trofa, enhanced *in situ* reflection on the affinities between architecture and sculpture in moulding spaces and creating atmospheres.





Figs. 1–2. The T-LAB “group travel experience”, preliminary rehearsal, 2025

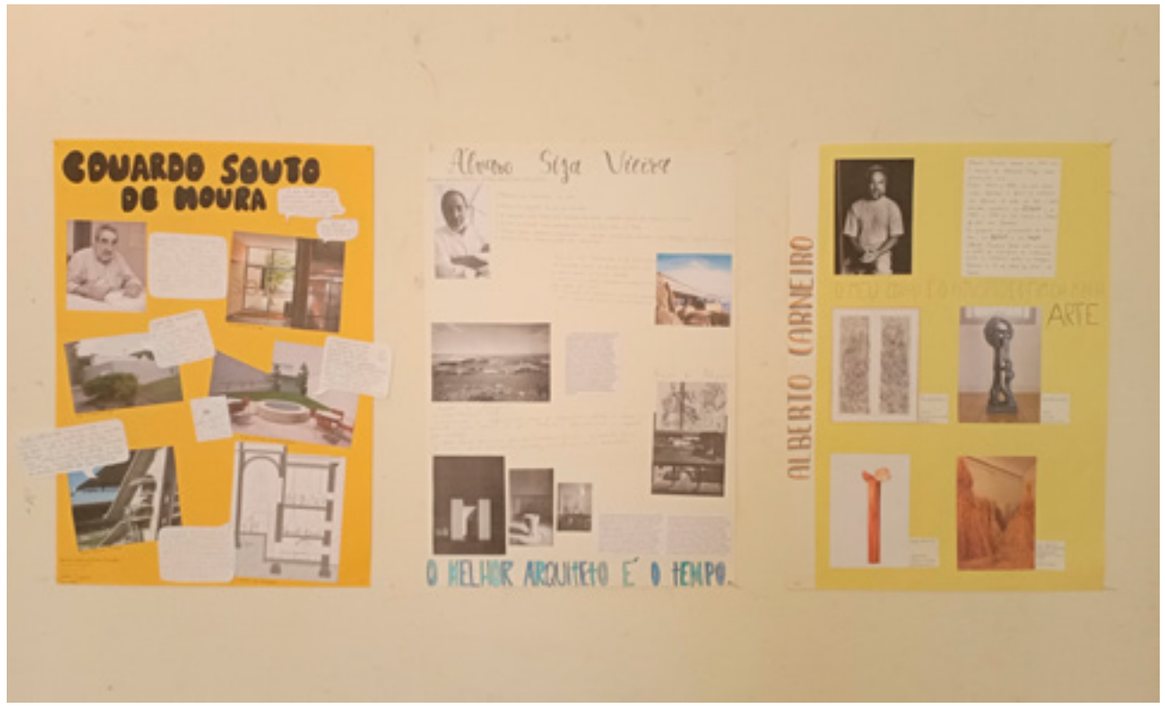

Fig. 3. The T-LAB “travel board”, 2025







Figs. 4–6. The T-LAB “group travel experience”, 2025





Figs. 7–10. The T-LAB “souvenirs”, 2025



Fig. 11. The T-LAB “atlas for future travels”, 2025
All photographs (1–11) by UpGranT FAUP Team. Courtesy of the authors.

Bachelor's Programmes

The Milanese Itinerary: Figure, Form, Language

Tommaso Brighenti

Architectural Design Studio 1

This contribution proposes a critical and self-critical synthesis of the teaching experience developed during the 2024–2025 academic year within the Architectural Design Studio 1 of the Bachelor's Programme in Architectural Design at the School of Architecture, Urban Planning and Construction Engineering of the Politecnico di Milano.

The analysis collects and reorganises a teaching experimentation and its design outcomes, interpreting them not as conclusive results, but as indicators of an educational process grounded in the integration of theoretical knowledge, design practice, and experiential understanding.

The studio articulates the courses of Architectural and Urban Composition (Tommaso Brighenti) and Representation Techniques (Daniele Treccani) in a complementary manner, creating a learning environment in which the instruments of architecture are understood as constitutive and generative components of the project within the constant relationship between the construction of space and its graphic representation.

Positioned within the first year of the degree programme and developed over the entire academic year for a total of 12 ECTS credits, the studio defines an explicit disciplinary hierarchy: Architectural Composition (8 ECTS) assumes the role of the main disciplinary framework, while Representation Techniques (4 ECTS) operates as the operational infrastruc-

ture of the design process. This structure reflects a precise pedagogical approach, which recognises composition as the locus of synthesis for the different dimensions of the project, without however separating it from the tools through which it takes form and becomes communicable.

The teaching framework develops through a sequence structured into two phases corresponding to the academic semesters, progressively organising the learning process.

A first phase is dedicated to the construction of disciplinary foundations through the analysis of case studies and the development of compositional variation exercises. In this phase, attention is focused on the ability to recognise, isolate, and manipulate the elementary principles of spatial organisation, constructing an initial level of critical awareness.

The second phase introduces students to the design-oriented dimension through the development of an architectural-scale artefact defined by a functional programme. Here, the studio is configured as an environment of controlled experimentation, in which the acquired knowledge is tested within a process that implies choices, hierarchies, conflicts, and resolutions. The project is understood as a moment of synthesis, but also as a field of tension between constraints and possibilities, and between intention and form.

Within this framework, the studio adopted three architectural typologies as fields of investigation – the theatre, the museum/exhibition space, and the library – selected for their capacity to activate complex relationships between space, use, and representation. These typologies are not treated as models to be replicated, but as conceptual structures through which to interrogate the foundations of architectural composition. The educational objective does not end with the acquisition of technical skills, but rather aims at the construction of a critical stance toward the project, leading students to confront the plurality of dimensions contributing to the definition of architecture, from structural, contextual, and constructive aspects to expressive and figurative ones, thereby developing a progressive capacity to control the design process, from the formulation of the idea to its formal articulation. Within this perspective, representation assumes an active role: sketches, drawings, and models are not merely instruments of restitution, but essential tools through which the project is explored and verified.

From a pedagogical perspective, the evaluation of the educational path takes place through a public presentation of the design outcomes, conceived as a moment of critical exposition and discursive construction of the project. The final examination does not represent a point of arrival, but rather a threshold through which the process and its internal logics are made explicit.

From an organisational point of view, the studio adopts a hybrid teaching model, alternating lectures, external seminar contributions, moments of collective discussion, and individual reviews. This structure

fosters a dialogical form of learning, in which the exchange between different positions becomes an integral part of the educational process.

Finally, the studio is embedded within a broader system of pedagogical relationships, coordinating with parallel courses such as Typological Characters of Architecture and Fundamentals of Representation, as well as with parallel sections of other architectural design studios taught by other faculty members during the first year. Shared activities, such as joint lectures and seminar days, contribute to the construction of an extended learning environment in which the project becomes both an object of public discussion and an instrument of the collective construction of knowledge.

First Semester

Practices of Analysis and Composition

The first phase of the studio combines the learning of measurement and representation techniques with a series of exercises conceived as an "introduction to architecture." These exercises are not understood as preparatory moments separated from the project, but rather as cognitive practices through which students construct an initial awareness of the theoretical, analytical, and compositional foundations of the discipline. The objective is not the mere acquisition of instrumental skills, but the initiation of a process of internalisation of the logics that govern the formation of architecture, from conception to formal definition.

In coherence with the UPGranT research lines, during this semester students were involved in a systematic programme of interpretative analysis of case studies, conducted through two-dimensional and three-dimensional drawings as well as physical models. This activity is not limited to the representation of the work but is configured as a process of critical transcription: architecture is decomposed, isolated into its constitutive elements, and subsequently recomposed according to new configurations, with the aim of making explicit its internal relationships and latent structures. Analysis thus becomes a productive act, capable of generating knowledge through the manipulation of forms.

This approach is situated within a precise genealogy. On the one hand, it draws upon the experiences developed within the Doctoral Programme in Architectural Composition at IUAV directed by Luciano Semerani, which consolidated an analytical practice grounded in the internal investigation of the architectural text; on the other hand, it is informed by the pedagogical experimentations of the Cooper Union under the direction of John Hejduk, where analysis is conceived as a process of re-creation. Within this perspective, the architectural work is not a stable object, but a field of forces that can be traversed, sectioned, and reorganized. As Colin Rowe suggests, the quality of the text resides in its internal coherence: it is precisely this coherence upon which the investigation focuses.

The itinerary develops from the Milanese context, understood as an "open-air laboratory" for the analysis of twentieth-century architecture, reconsidered through different historical thresholds. Particular attention is devoted to the theme of language and to the expressive characteristics of the so-called School of Milan (Scuola di Milano), investigated through a plurality of instruments (sketches, plans, sections, elevations, axonometrics, and models) which make it possible to understand the work from within through different levels of inquiry.

Through this process, the student is progressively led to enter "inside" architecture, measuring the degree of accessibility of its generative process. Analysis is configured as an anticipation of the project: when the work is dismantled and recomposed, unexpected possibilities emerge, sometimes not even made explicit by the author. The path is structured as a sequence that moves from the concrete to abstraction, only to return to the concrete in the subsequent design phase.

This method directs the student beyond the phenomenological surface of the architectural object toward a deeper and less immediately visible dimension: the structure of language. Architecture is here understood as text, and as such requires being read, interpreted, and rewritten. Analysis therefore becomes an instrument through which to evaluate the internal logic of the work, its coherence, and its tensions.

Within this perspective, the work of the architect cannot be reduced to the mere reproduction of reality. It implies a critical operation of decomposition and reappropriation: dismantling the architectural object to understand its implicit rules and, at the same time, opening up the space of the project, bringing the analytical gesture to coincide with an initial design act.

The sequence of exercises, developed on a weekly basis and reviewed at the drafting table, assumes a central role within the studio. It is not an accessory passage, but an operative instrument that makes it possible to isolate and deepen specific disciplinary issues while simultaneously maintaining an overall vision. Through the exercises, students explore geometric configurations, spatial relationships, and formal structures, constructing a repertoire of conceptual tools that will inform the subsequent design phase.

Within this logic, the exercise may even temporarily replace the design theme itself, configuring itself as a space of pure experimentation. However, this approach clearly distinguishes itself from the practice of the ex tempore, historically debated within schools of architecture, avoiding the reduction of the project to an extemporaneous performance and instead prioritising a slow and reflective process.

Second Semester

The Projects: New Cultural Functions for the Archival Hub of the Municipality of Milan

The second phase of the studio is dedicated to the development of the architectural project, understood as a moment of synthesis of the acquired competencies. The projects developed by the students are configured simultaneously as programmes of activities and as interventions in architectural and urban reconfiguration, inscribing themselves within the tradition of the dialectical relationship between the new and the pre-existing that characterises modern and contemporary Italian architecture, and above all within a certain Milanese tradition of understanding pedagogy in relation to reality.

The field of intervention is identified within the context of the city of Milan, with reference to a peri-urban area of the historical periphery characterized by conditions of urban fragility. Within this scenario, the project is called upon to operate on multiple levels, treating the context not as a simple background, but as active material to be reorganized and reinterpreted.

The design activity develops through a scalar process ranging from urban design (1:1000) to architectural definition (1:200, 1:100), constructing a continuity between territorial structure and building form. The project is understood as a device capable of articulating relationships, rather than as an autonomous object.

The assigned theme concerns the enhancement of the archival heritage of the Municipality of Milan through the integration of new cultural functions within the Archival Hub of the Cittadella degli Archivi on Via Gregorovius. The archive, traditionally conceived as a place of conservation, is here reinterpreted as an active infrastructure for cultural production and for the construction of collective memory.

The design proposals develop hybrid architectural devices capable of integrating different functions, such as exhibition spaces, libraries, and small theatres/auditoriums, either open-air or enclosed, within a single coherent structure. Such hybridisation does not respond to a logic of functional accumulation, but rather to the intention of constructing new forms of interaction between cultural practices and urban space. The interventions treat the project as an instrument for the reactivation of the social fabric, operating on interconnected themes: the proposal of new public functions for the city, the redefinition of public space, the reorganisation of circulation systems, and the construction of places of aggregation.

The principal design opportunities included an exhibition pavilion for temporary exhibitions and artistic activities with an attached archive; a small theatre articulated through indoor and outdoor spaces intended for cultural and performative events; and a neighbourhood library. Each project integrates different functions within a unitary system, challenging traditional typological separations. In this sense, the architectural project is configured as a catalyst capable of triggering new relationships and activating processes of identity recognition.

Organisational Structure of the Studio

The studio activity is organised according to a sequence of progressive phases developed throughout the entire academic year. Each phase does

not constitute an isolated moment, but rather connects with the subsequent one, contributing to the construction of a cumulative process of knowledge and design practice.

Phase 0_Knowledge Questionnaire

The course begins with an introductory day and the completion of a questionnaire addressed to the students, identifying not only their background but also evaluating their capacity for observation, abstraction, and critical thinking rather than traditional technical skills. Through a series of graphic and textual exercises, students are asked to transform images, memories, and texts into spatial representations, always working within a defined field. The exercises range from the translation of a still life into plan form to the elaboration of self-portraits, one figurative and one abstract, through to the manipulation of elements such as the grid and the fragment. Central to the process is the ability to reinterpret personal experiences and literary content in architectural form. The objective of this initial test, which is obviously non-evaluative, is to form groups of students with shared affinities and to inform the assignment of case studies, which takes place during the following week. The questionnaire is returned to the students on the last day of the semester, allowing them to reflect on the growth achieved throughout the course.

Phase 1_Bibliographic Research

The first phase, situated during the second week of activities, coincides with the presentation of the case studies, the formation of working groups, and the assignment of reference materials. The groups, composed of three students, receive a selected case study and a targeted bibliography. The initial activity consists of the development of an autonomous bibliographic research process, conducted through books and specialised journals mainly available in the school library. The outcome of this phase is the construction of a critical dossier on the case study, aimed at collecting and systematising iconographic and textual materials (drawings, plans, sections, and historical documentation) indispensable for the subsequent phases of redrawing and analysis. Research is not understood as a mere collection of information, but as an initial interpretative and critical act.

Phase 2_Milanese Itinerary

Direct experience of the work accompanies indirect knowledge. The second phase therefore includes an outdoor study day organised through a Milanese itinerary that allows students to visit the selected case studies in sequence. Observation *in situ* assumes a central methodological value: architecture is interrogated in its concrete, perceptive, and spatial dimension. During the visit, students are required to produce freehand sketches within their "logbooks," exercising a form of active observation that

establishes a relationship between the eye and the hand. In accordance with the course in representation techniques, drawing from life becomes an instrument of knowledge, capable of selecting, synthesising, and interpreting.

Phase 3_Redrawing

Redrawing constitutes the first moment of active appropriation of the analysed architecture. Through the graphic representation of the case studies, students confront for the first time in a systematic way the instruments of architectural representation. This phase allows them to understand the nature and functioning of the principal devices of drawing (plans, elevations, sections, and shadows) and to acquire awareness of the relationships between two-dimensional representation and the three-dimensional construction of space. Redrawing is not a copy, but a process of translation that implies choices, hierarchies, and interpretations, depending on the selected scale (1:200 or 1:100). The redrawing phase takes place using 2D CAD software to provide students with an initial working knowledge of the programme.

Phase 4_Accurate Model

Starting from the developed drawings, students produce a physical scale model (1:200 or 1:100), understood as a material verification of the completed work. The model allows the translation of graphic information into a tangible three-dimensional artefact, fostering an understanding of spatial and constructive relationships. This phase introduces an initial implicit reflection on "how things are built," while also anticipating compositional questions through direct physical engagement with the architectural object.

Phase 5_Compositional Analysis

Once the measured model has been constructed, the work shifts to an interpretative level. Architecture is subjected to a process of abstraction and critical re-elaboration involving the decomposition and recomposition of its elements. Students are asked to identify and isolate a compositional theme (formal, constructive, or linguistic) and to develop a completely autonomous reading of it. The work is treated as an open text, susceptible to multiple interpretations. At this stage, analysis transforms into a design act: the dissection of architecture leads to the production of a model that is no longer measured, but interpretative, synthesising and radicalising the outcomes of the reading.

Phase 6_Photography of the Process

Photography intervenes as an instrument of narrative construction. Through a sequence of images, students are asked to represent the completed process, constructing a coherent visual narrative. The photograph-

ic image does not perform a documentary function, but rather an interpretative one: it selects, frames, and transfigures the model, producing a synthesis that highlights the emerging design intention. The outcome is an image that maintains a connection with the initial case study while simultaneously exceeding it, opening towards an autonomous dimension. It is not yet a project, but rather its prefiguration.

Phase 7_Construction of the Booklet
During the break between the two semesters, students are asked to reorganise the produced materials within a booklet structured according to a defined layout. The booklet performs a dual function: on the one hand, it represents an instrument of synthesis and critical reordering of the completed work; on the other hand, it constitutes a shared archive which, once returned at the beginning of the second semester, becomes the basis for the beginning of the design phase. Within it, references and interpretations gradually settle into place.

Phase 8_Project Readings
Parallel to this, during the winter break, targeted critical readings are assigned, selected in relation to the individual case studies. The texts, differentiated by author and theme, deepen, at a theoretical level, the issues that emerged during the first semester. Upon the resumption of activities, these readings become the subject of collective discussion, creating a space of comparison in which theory and practice intertwine, contributing to the consolidation of a critical stance towards the project.

Phase 9_The Architectural Project
The beginning of the second semester introduces the definition of the design theme and the intervention context. In this phase, students are required to transfer the acquired knowledge into a real operational field, confronting the constraints and complexities of the site. During the initial stage of project development, the interpretative model once again becomes a support, and students are encouraged to begin their first design reflections from the compositional theme previously identified. Students are free to begin from their own theme but may also draw upon those developed by their peers, provided that the choice is justified.

Phase 10_Formal Embryo / Prototype
This is followed by a phase of preliminary elaboration in which the project takes shape through volumetric studies, trial models, and conceptual diagrams. The "formal embryo" constitutes an initial synthesis between intention and spatial configuration and is represented through a physical model (scale of 1:333) and an axonometric drawing, together with the necessary drawings developed to achieve the synthesis of the prototype.

Phase 11_Final Project
The project is progressively developed at different scales until the definition of a coherent and articulated architectural scheme capable of integrating typological, functional, and formal aspects. Groups are required to elaborate all the drawings necessary for the control of the project, such as plans, sections, elevations, and axonometrics (scales of 1:1000, 1:200, and 1:100), together with the production of a final model (scale 1:100), photographed and exhibited during the examination. The entire design work is collected within a booklet that also includes a brief project report.

Phase 12_Final Examination and Critiques
The process concludes with the public presentation of the projects, involving colleagues and external guests, understood as a moment of verification and critical discussion. The examination takes the form of an open discussion in which the project is presented, argued, and subjected to evaluation, concluding the educational cycle while, at the same time, reopening it towards new possibilities.

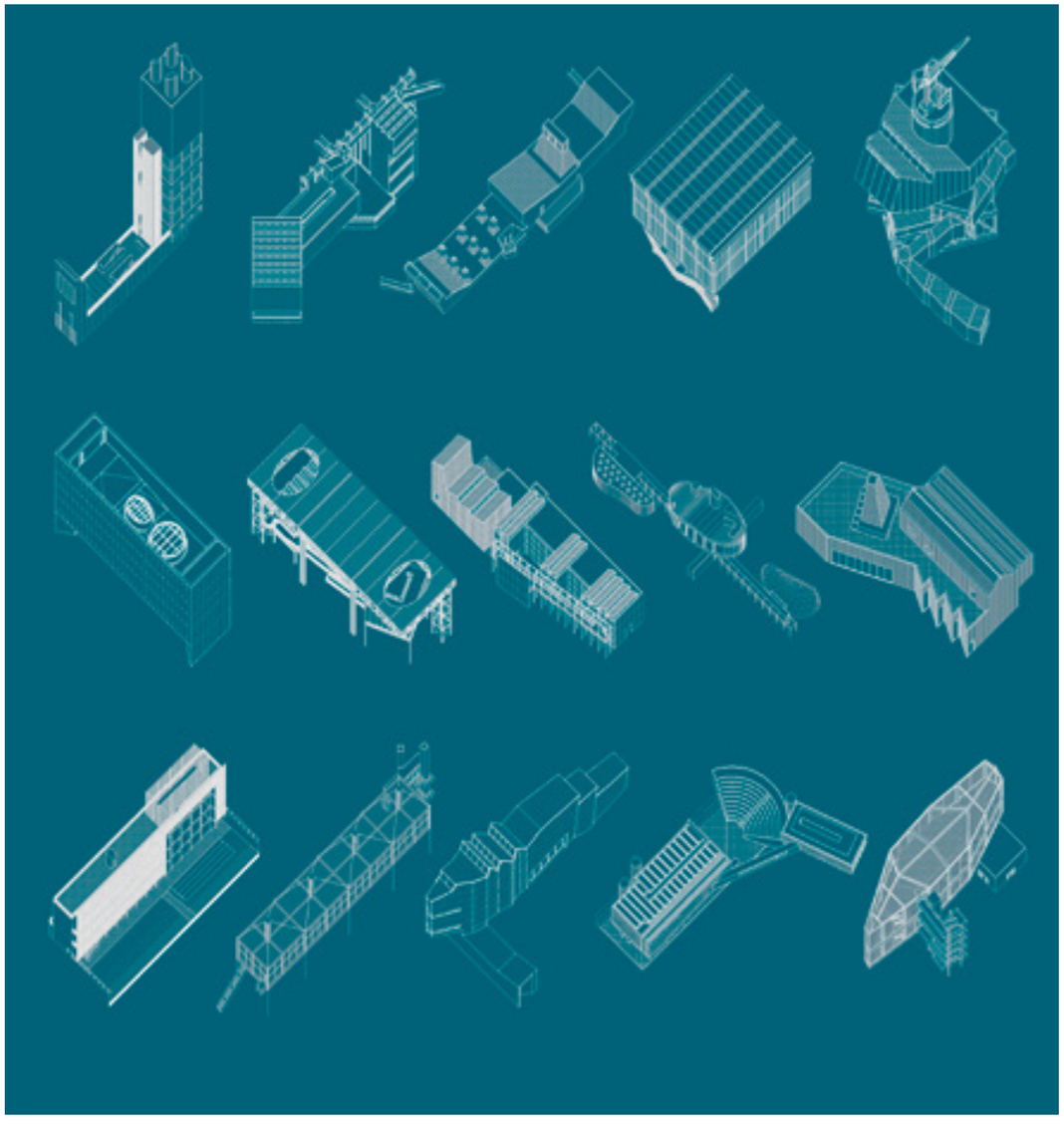

Fig. 1. Axonometric drawings of the students' final projects.

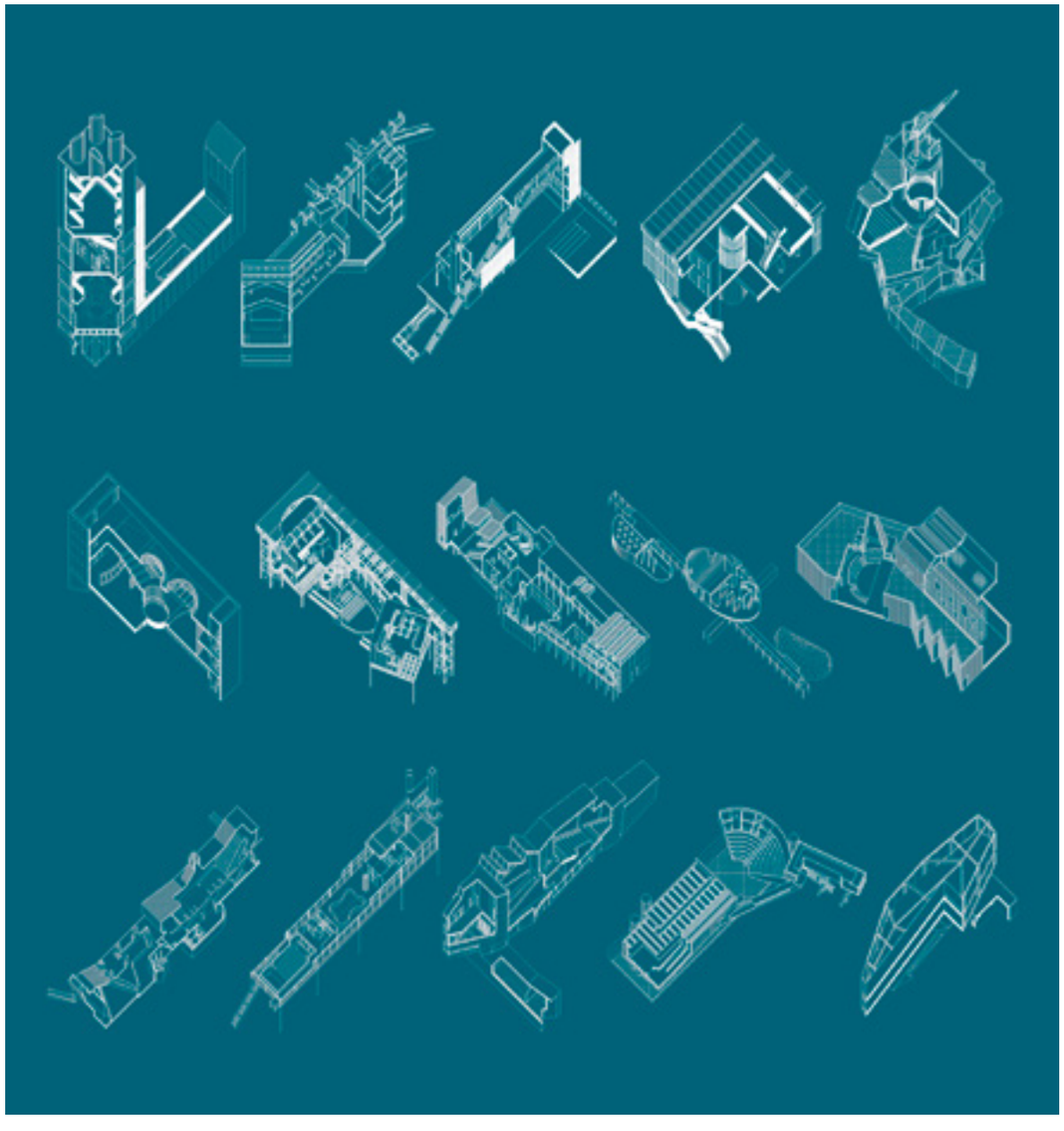

Fig. 2. Exploded axonometric drawings of the students' final projects.



Fig. 3. A selection of posters from the Architectural Design Studio 1.



Fig. 4. Photographs of the students during the “Milanese Itinerary”, 9 October 2024. Top left: in front of the Torre Velasca by BBPR; top right: in front of the former Chase Manhattan Bank offices by BBPR; bottom: inside the Pavilion of Contemporary Art (PAC) by Ignazio Gardella.

Architectural Design Studio 1

Tommaso Brighenti

University
Politecnico di Milano (Polytechnic University of Milan)

Context
Milan, 2024–2025

Field of Study
Architectural Design

Degree Level
Bachelor's (1st year)

ECTS Credits
12

Faculty
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Abstract
The Studio develops an integrated path between analysis and design, aimed at the

acquisition of the fundamental tools of representation and the critical understanding of architectural processes. Through the study of twentieth-century Milanese architecture, with particular attention to the School of Milan, students develop practices of reading and interpretation through drawings, models, and procedures of decomposition and recomposition, investigating the relationships between form, structure, and language. This analytical phase is conceived as the basis for an inventive re-elaboration that anticipates the project. On these premises, the design activity is developed, oriented toward the definition of new cultural functions for the Archival Hub of the Municipality of Milan within a peri-urban context. The project addresses the relationship between the new and the pre-existing through architectural devices capable of integrating exhibition, library, and performative spaces, with the objective of enhancing urban memory and activating processes of social and spatial regeneration.

Objectives

The educational objectives of the studio aim to develop in students an articulated understanding of the architectural project as both a critical and an operative process. At the end of the course, students are able to analyse and interpret architectural works through two-dimensional and three-dimensional representation tools, recognising their compositional principles and internal structures, and, above all, to undertake a cognitive path that addresses the theoretical, analytical, and compositional issues necessary to understand the elements of architecture, from conception to formal definition. Students are also capable of translating such knowledge into a coherent project articulated across different scales, confronting functional, contextual, and formal constraints. The studio promotes a reflective and iterative approach in which drawing, model-making, and analysis become active instruments, fostering design autonomy and the ability to construct relationships between space, functional programme, and language.

Method

The activities carried out during the first and second semesters of Architectural Design Studio 1 involved different modes of learning, including: lecture-based learning (*ex cathedra* lectures); collaborative learning; laboratory-based learning (desk critiques of students' work); and field-based learning.

In particular, the following activities were conducted:

Lectures

- Introductory lecture to the course, 18 September 2024 (6 hours)
- Lecture on the selected case studies and related activities, 25 September 2024 (3 hours)
- Lecture on the formal embryo/prototype, 30 October 2024 (2 hours)
- Lecture on analysis and the physical model, 13 November 2024 (2 hours)
- Introductory lecture to the design phase, 19 February 2025 (2 hours)
- Lecture on design references, 2 April 2025 (2 hours)
- Lecture on project drawings, 23 April 2025 (2 hours)

Site visits with students, field-based learning

- Guided architectural tour of the selected works in Milan, 9 October 2024 (8 hours)
- Site visit to the project area, 28 February 2025 (8 hours)

Cross-disciplinary teaching seminars: Fundamental Instruments of Architectural Composition

- Lecture by Giacomo Calandra di Roccolino (Fachhochschule Potsdam) entitled *Architecture is/as Memory*, 20 November 2024 (2 hours)
- Lecture by Giuseppina Scavuzzo (University of Trieste) entitled *On the Serio Ludere of Architects*, 27 November 2024 (2 hours)
- Lecture by Claretta Mazzonetto (University of Venice) entitled *Architectures as Acropolises*, 4 December 2024 (2 hours)

Internal seminar days on the progress of the projects

- Mid-term seminar, first semester, 13 November 2024 (6 hours)
- Final seminar, first semester, 18 December 2024 (6 hours)
- Mid-term seminar, second Semester, 30 April 2025 (6 hours)
- Final seminar, second semester, with Andrés Garcés, Iván Ivelic, Erick Caro, and Rodrigo Daine (School of Architecture and Design, Universidad Católica de Valparaíso), 28 May 2025 (6 hours)

Desk critiques of students' work

- First-semester critiques, from October to December (36 hours)
- Second-semester 7 feedback sessions, from February to May (36 hours)

Final examination

- Final feedback sessions during the examination with Professors Enrico Prandi (University of Parma), Alessandro Brunelli (University of Ferrara), and Francesco Martelli (Director of the Cittadella degli Archivi, Municipality of Milan), 2 July 2025

Tools

The studio employs an integrated combination of physical and digital tools. The principal instruments include: printed bibliographic materials such as books and historical journals available at the Politecnico di Milano Library; hand drawing (freehand sketches); digital drawing in 2D CAD (plans, elevations, sections, axonometries, exploded axonometries); physical scale models and photography; and basic three-dimensional modelling in REVIT. Manual drawing fosters a direct relationship between observation and interpretation, while CAD and REVIT, provided free of charge to all students through licences supplied by the Politecnico, introduce precision, geometric control, and scale drawing. Physical and digital models allow the concrete three-dimensional verification of spatial relationships. All physical models were produced using recyclable and non-polluting materials (vegetable cardboard). Photography constructs a critical narrative of the process through devices available to students, such as mobile phone cameras or personal photographic equipment already owned by them. The adopted tools are accessible and widely available, based on standard technologies and low-cost materials, to guarantee inclusivity and replicability. Their integration supports an iterative learning process in which representation and design coincide.

Course Materials

At the beginning of the studio, selected case studies, a targeted bibliography (critical texts and specialised journals), and basic iconographic materials (plans, sections, and archival images) were provided. Examples of redrawing and guidelines for graphic elaboration were also made available, intended as initial support for analysis and for the construction of the critical dossier. All lectures and communications were provided to students in PDF format and made available through the course platform. All cross-disciplinary teaching seminars were recorded using the Cisco Webex platform, and the recordings were shared with students.

Prerequisites

The studio, positioned within the first year of the programme, does not require prior

disciplinary knowledge. Its objective is to provide students with an initial command of the tools of design and an introduction to the themes of architecture, form, and space in relation to context. Nevertheless, capacities for observation, an aptitude for abstraction, spatial sensitivity, and a predisposition toward manual and graphic work are considered beneficial, together with an openness to critical discussion and to a progressive and iterative learning process.

Assessment

The assessment of learning is organised as a continuous process, articulated through weekly reviews, intermediate submissions, and public presentations. During the first semester, exercises and analytical phases (redrawing, model-making, compositional analysis) are structured through progressive deadlines and discussed during desk critiques, fostering constant monitoring. During the second semester, the development of the project is accompanied by collective seminar reviews and weekly individual critiques. The final examination takes the form of a public presentation, understood as a critical and discursive moment rather than a merely evaluative one. This structure makes it possible to integrate assessment and learning, promoting a process based on discussion, argumentation, and the progressive construction of design awareness.

Evaluation

The assessment criteria integrate quantitative and qualitative aspects and concern both the process and the outcome. Among the principal criteria are: continuity and participation in the activities; the capacity for analysis and interpretation of the case studies; the quality and coherence of the produced materials (drawings, models, and booklet); the development of the project across different scales; the control of representational devices; and the predisposition toward critical argumentation. Attention is devoted to the ability to transform analysis into a design act and to propose conscious solutions rather than merely reproductive ones. Assessment is progressive, with intermediate evaluations that allow for the monitoring of learning and the orientation of the work, culminating in the final evaluation.

Deliverables

The expected outcomes of the studio include an integrated set of analytical and design-based outputs. In the first phase: a critical dossier on the case study, scale redrawing, physical models, and an interpretative model accompanied by a photographic narrative of the process. In the second phase: the development of a complete architectural project articulated across different scales (urban and architectural), consisting of technical drawings (plans, sections, elevations, and axonometries), a final model, and a brief project report. The studio particularly emphasises critical reinterpretation as a central practice: analysis is not reproductive but generative and converges toward the construction of new design configurations. Equally central is the capacity to construct a coherent architectural narrative in which representation, process, and project are integrated into a unitary discourse.

Student Feedback

Architectural Design Studio 1 presents an overall highly positive framework. The number of collected questionnaires amounts to 44, with a response rate of 89.8%, a figure that ensures the reliability of the sample (data derived from the anonymous Politecnico questionnaire completed upon registration for the examination). The average evaluations are particularly high, ranging approximately between 3.75 and 3.91 on a scale from 1 to 4, placing the course at a level close to excellence. In general, a very strong perception of the quality of the studio emerges, both in terms of organisation and overall effectiveness. A particularly significant element is the high percentage of positive responses: between 75% and more than 90% of students expressed favourable evaluations, confirming a widespread level of satisfaction and a strong internal coherence of the course. This suggests that the teaching structure, delivery methods, and contents are perceived as clear and well-balanced.

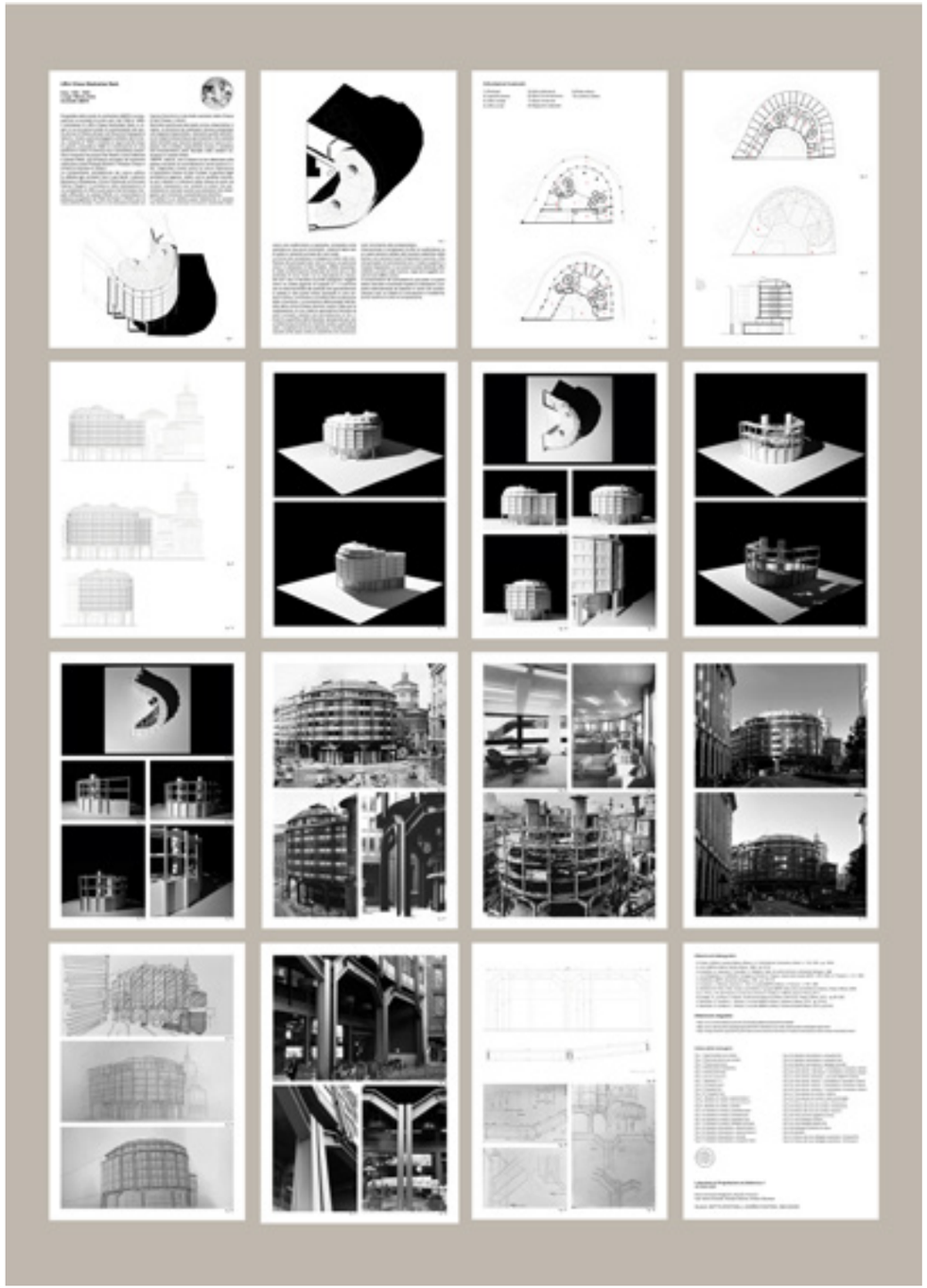

Fig. 1. First-semester redrawing and analysis project based on the case study: BBPR, Chase Manhattan Bank Offices, 1958–1969, Milan. The image brings together pages from the end-of-semester booklet. Students: Mattia Cristinelli, Andrea D'Antona, and Aba Daoud.

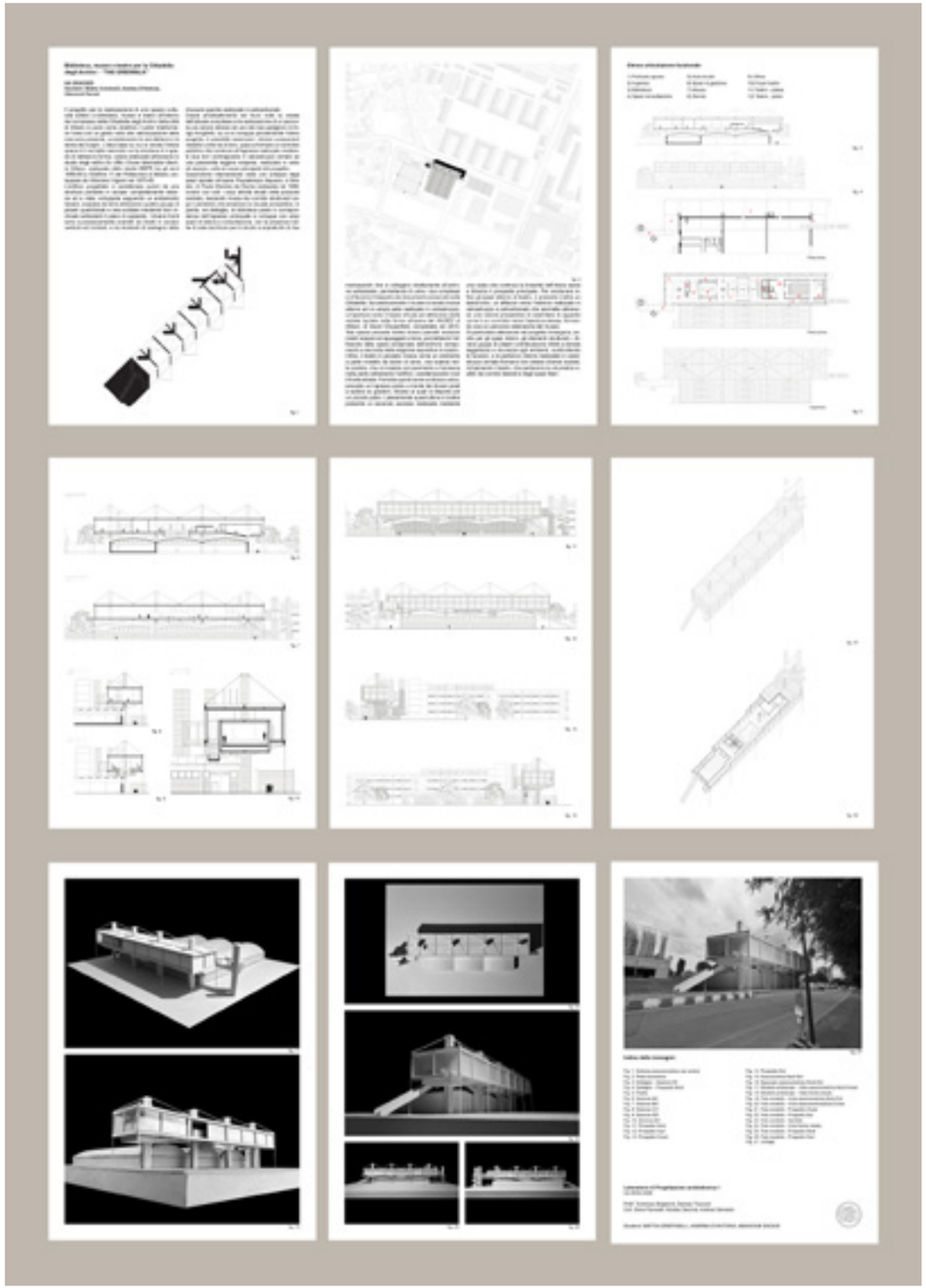

Fig. 2. Second-semester project for a museum, theatre, and library for the Cittadella degli Archivi in Milan. The image brings together pages from the end-of-semester booklet. Students: Mattia Cristinelli, Andrea D'Antona, and Aba Daoud.

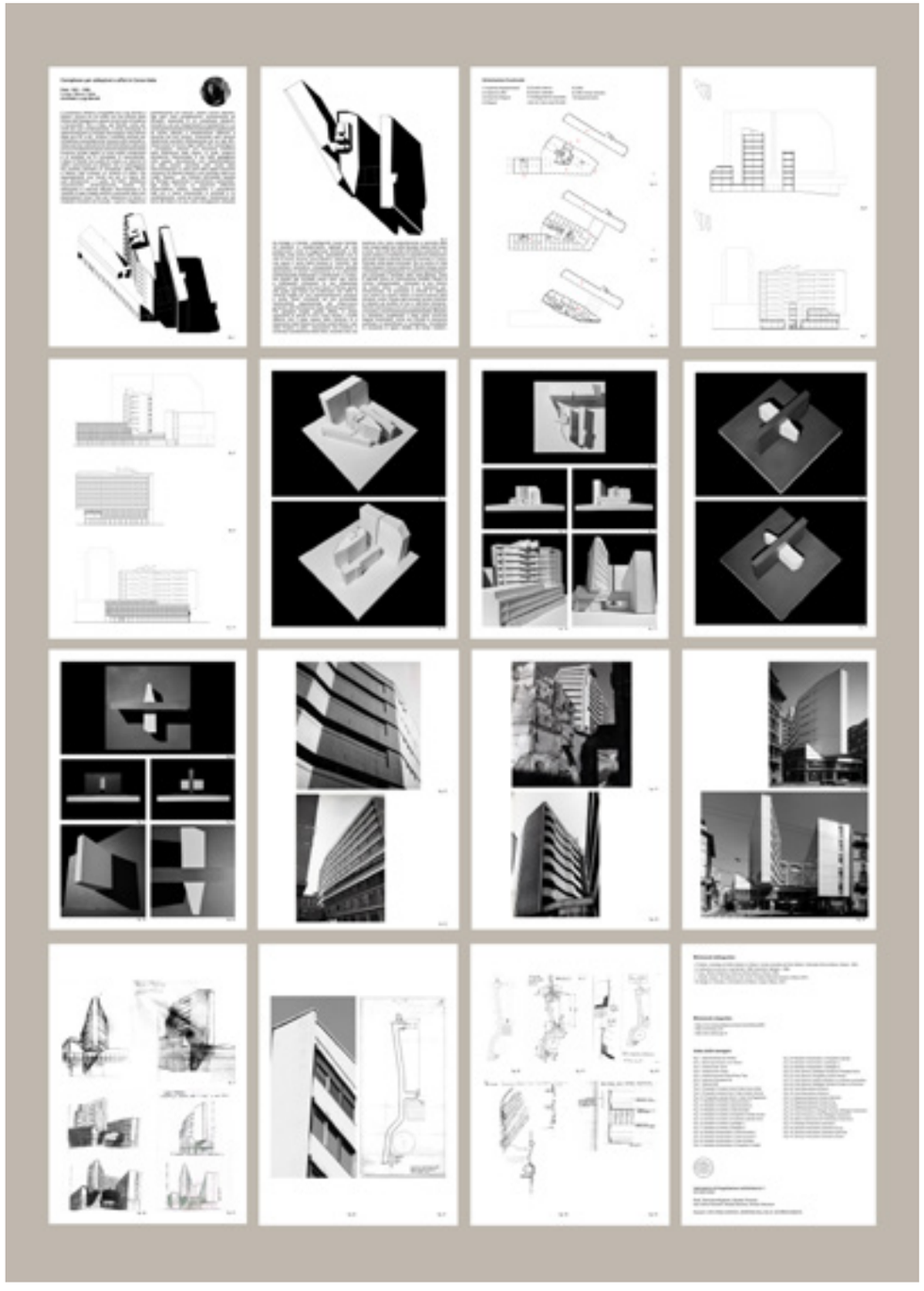

Fig. 3. First-semester redrawing and analysis project based on the case study: Luigi Moretti, Residential and Office Complex in Corso Italia, 1951–1956, Milan. The image brings together pages from the end-of-semester booklet. Students: Ian Cruz Zuniga, Simone Dall'Olio, and Giorgia Dedin.

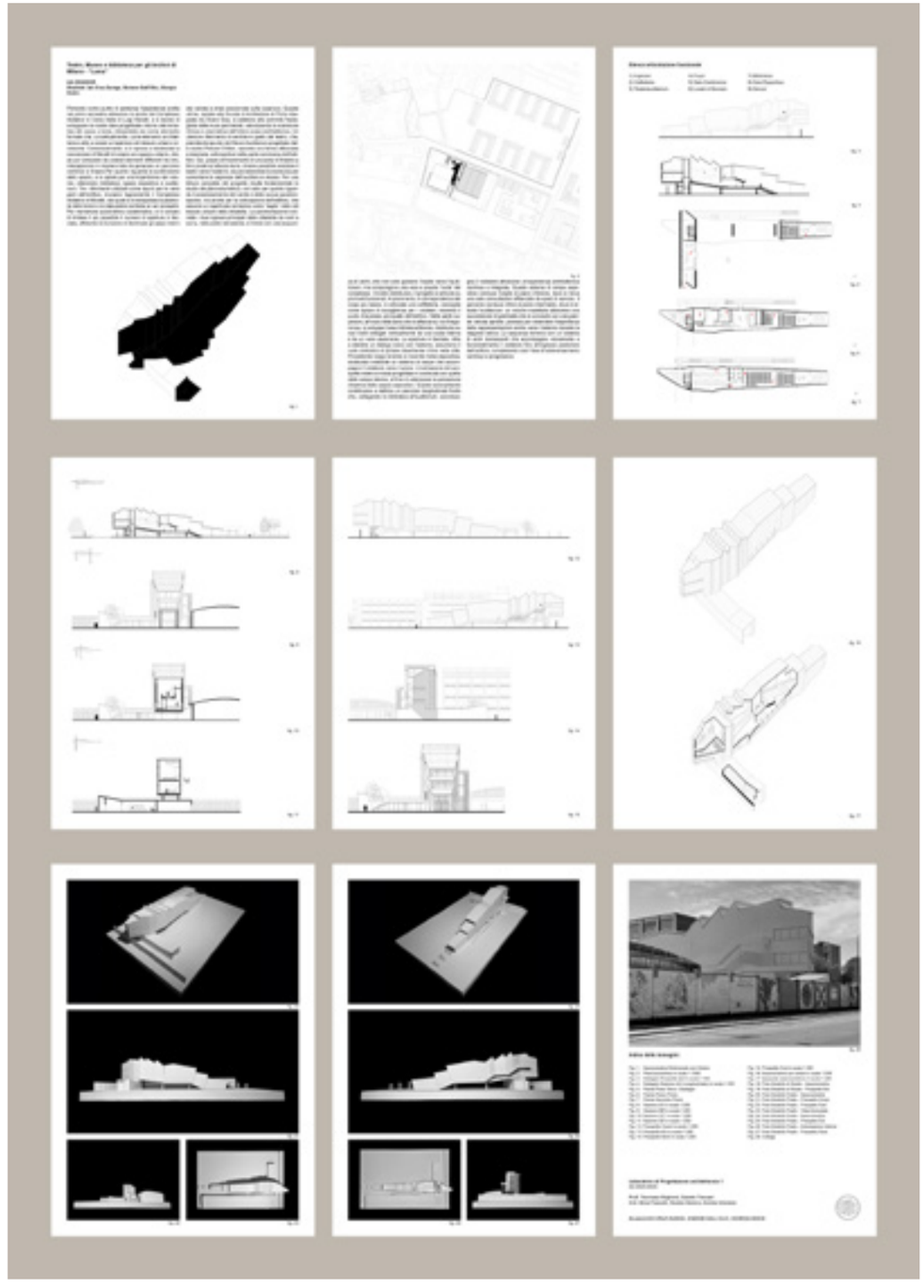

Fig. 4. Second-semester project for a museum, theatre, and library for the Cittadella degli Archivi in Milan. The image brings together pages from the end-of-semester booklet. Students: Ian Cruz Zuniga, Simone Dall'Olio, and Giorgia Dedin.



Fig. 5. First-semester redrawing and analysis project based on the case study: Piero Bottoni, Sesto San Giovanni Town Hall, 1960–1971, Milan. The image brings together pages from the end-of-semester booklet. Students: Erika Currà, Giorgia Dal Maso, and Nadia Delgrossi.

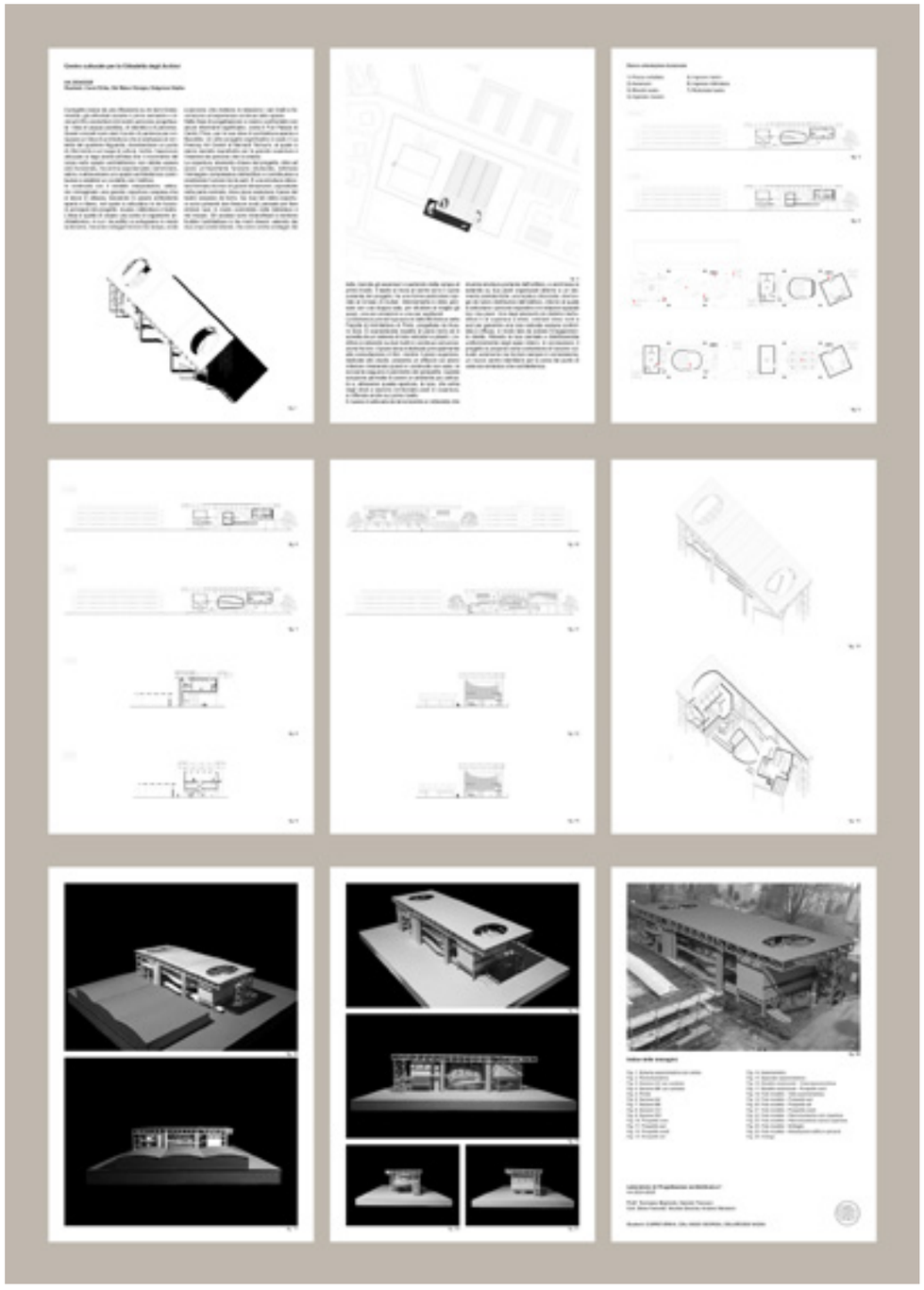

Fig. 6. Second-semester project for a museum, theatre, and library for the Cittadella degli Archivi in Milan. The image brings together pages from the end-of-semester booklet. Students: Erika Currà, Giorgia Dal Maso, and Nadia Delgrossi.

Travel or Transformation? Open Questions from an Architectural Design Studio

Aleksa Korolija

Travel has traditionally held a privileged place in architectural education. It is one of the discipline's most durable myths: students experience architecture firsthand by visiting buildings and cities, gaining insights that complement those offered by drawings, photographs, or lectures. Architectural culture has strengthened this belief through exemplary biographies. Le Corbusier turned his Voyage d'Orient into a founding narrative; Kahn travelled to Italy as did Robert Venturi and Peter Eisenman. More recently, the British architect Peter Wilson has continued this tradition of turning travel into a personal mythology. His travel notebook (2016) belongs to the same genre, enriched with sketches and watercolours, and *counterfactual histories*, as he calls them, which record his reasons for travelling south, ranging from specific buildings and places to purely personal motivations.

Yet the authority of these examples also makes their educational value harder to examine. If travel appears formative only because we remember it through exceptional figures, it cannot simply be transferred to a contemporary teaching module. The question is whether travel can be made pedagogically operative for a broader group of students, including those who need the experience to be framed, slowed down, and connected to a task.

This paper does not ask whether travel works as a teaching method in general. It narrows the question to the studio conditions that might make travel available for architectural learning.

The experiment described here, and presented in detail on the Teaching Module Card, does not isolate travel as an independent variable, nor does it purport to prove its effectiveness by simple comparison. It explores how mobility, structured through a series of activities in the Design Studio, can be used to facilitate observation, abstraction, argumentation and ultimately design judgement.

In the European context, this question has become harder to avoid: studying architecture today often means spending time in another city, another country, and sometimes using another language (ACE 2025). If mobility is already a condition of study rather than an exception, the question of its pedagogical value is crucial, and not merely interesting.

The design studio is a particularly demanding setting in which to test this question.

More specifically, the design studio closely resembles the conditions of professional practice and requires students to transform their observations into projective judgements. As Sanderson and Stone (2022) observe, the design studio represents "the pillar of architectural education" precisely because knowledge there is not stored but used: tested against constraints looser in degree than those of professional practice, though not different in kind.

In the Design Studio, students confront a plurality of problems – historical, cultural, formal, normative, and technical – only to converge, in the end, on a single proposal. Unlike lecture-based courses, where different readings of the same question coexist, the Design Studio asks for decisiveness: every spatial solution adopted also entails the irreversible abandonment of previous alternatives considered during the process. In the Design Studio observation and interpretation are not sequential steps that lead to design; they are part of the same iteration, ongoing and continuous.

Recent reflections on studio teaching describe it as an immersive setting in which knowledge is formed through action, iteration, and judgement rather than conveyed through thematic exposition (Leveratto and Brighenti 2024) – a space in which the "implicit protocols" of a pedagogical community become legible (Amirante 2024, 60). This distinction has been reinforced by the international debate on architectural education, which has defined the studio as a socially situated environment of exchange, dialogue, and co-production, rather than as a course organised around the linear and hierarchical delivery of content (Delsante et al. 2025, 78–79) and then a test.

One recent account of architectural pedagogy describes a comparable shift from knowledge acquisition to the ability to source, interpret, and use knowledge on a "need to know" or "need to use" basis (Emerging Practices in Architectural Pedagogy, xiii). This is particularly relevant for this Teaching Module, since what travel adds to the studio is not just more information but situated knowledge, which is only useful when students have to make their design decisions.

Travel provides direct encounter, which is not the same as unmediated knowledge: within the design studio, students experience the built environment through itineraries, instructions, disciplinary expectations, prior knowledge, group work, exercises, and the authority of the teacher.

The pedagogical value of travel lies not in immediacy itself but in the intensification provided by the studio work; it is the juxtaposition between bodily encounter and the interpretative frames that the Design Studio later asks students to test.

Referring to pedagogical communities, within the American tradition of architectural education, the study trip has often been regarded as "foundational and fundamental" to the design studio, to the point that "this type of experience changes the nature of the studio itself" (Ockman 2024, 111). But "foundational" does not mean sufficient. Writing about the Roman sojourn of American students, Volpe identifies its limit: "travel as an experience alone does not foster insights, create new ideas or reveal hidden potential"; what matters instead is "the act of internalization, of reflection and of the internal mental mapping of a travel experience" (Volpe 2021, 115).

The canonical journeys of Le Corbusier, Kahn, Venturi, and others are not sufficient to demonstrate that travel educates by itself. These examples show that architectural culture has often recognised travel's value only retrospectively, through exceptional figures able to turn a personal experience into architectural knowledge. Therefore, a teaching module cannot rely on spontaneous transformation; it should instead support certain acts through which architectural knowledge can be constructed.

Peter Eisenman's famous account of his trip to Italy with Colin Rowe (Eisenman and Rowe 2008) makes clear what made it formative: not the number of buildings visited, nor the quality of the documentation examined. Rowe's claim that learning to see required something other than slides or drawings placed responsibility on the act of observation itself (Eisenman 2008, 133). The instruction Rowe gave him in front of a Palladian villa – namely, to sit until he could identify something implied rather than visible – was not a technique for recording architecture but a way of making the student responsible for his own act of observation. Later, he went on to theorise about this, articulating a discourse on architectural diagrams as both interpretative and creative tools. (Eisenman 1999)

A contemporary teaching module structured around mobility as a way "to see" before "to know" should seek to translate this logic into a group setting, even though the conditions of Eisenman's encounter cannot be replicated. What a teaching module can replicate is the logic of that encounter, rather than its intensity, provided that master-and-pupil experiences are anachronistic in a contemporary higher education pedagogy.

General claims about the benefits of travel are insufficient for teaching purposes. To be effective, a teaching module should clearly outline the intended learning outcomes, specify which activities or experiences

should be repeated, determine their timing, and clarify how evidence of these experiences can be recognised later on (Donnelly and Fitzmaurice 2005, 4). In the experiment discussed here, the five acts that structured the sequence – preparation, observation, comparison, transformation, and transfer – functioned as scaffolding, meant to be internalised as a process, so that students could reconstruct the sequence independently in different circumstances.

Pedagogical Experimentation in Three Modes: Distance, Familiarity, Autonomy

Of all teaching formats, the design studio most closely resembles professional practice, yet it offers something rare in the real world: the freedom to fail without serious repercussions (Nawratek 2022, 3). In this context, the following paragraphs should be understood as a structured observation, not a report of a controlled experiment.

The experiment took shape within a year-long second-year undergraduate design studio focused on a high-rise building in the Piazza Duomo area of Milan, where the brief asked students to complete the unrealised bell tower on one of the city's most historically layered sites – a challenge on two fronts: the complexity of the site itself and whether spatial observations gathered through travel could find their way into a design proposal.

I organised the 46 students into three deliberately asymmetric formats: an optional trip to Basel, a required walking tour of the Milan site, and self-directed travel for a small group that chose its own destination rather than creating a standardised experience.

The asymmetrical approach was intentional, designed to reveal how different travel conditions produce different outcomes. In Basel, students encountered high-rise buildings that were unusually legible, both up close and from across the river. Milan, however, was a familiar place. While Basel provided the surprise of unknown territory, Milan required a different approach: not discovery, but a project-oriented perspective that became sharper only when there is something to design, demanding a critical understanding of the context.

The self-directed group, meanwhile, drew inspiration exclusively from the writings and journeys of Le Corbusier and Eisenman.

All students, regardless of their destination, were given two weeks to produce an individual paper souvenir, cut and folded from printed matter collected on site, related to a tower or an urban condition that had struck them. The common output made it possible to isolate the variable of destination, with the sequence of activities remaining constant. Free printed matter already carries traces of how a city describes itself, so a souvenir constructed from it is never neutral. Cutting and folding adapted a method already practised in the first semester in the Studio toward observation rather than structure.

The three formats yielded visibly different results (see the Teaching Module Sheet). Students travelling to Basel returned with enhanced shared memories, able to draw on common *topoi* in studio conversations. Some souvenirs focused on architectural detail, others to volumetric proportion and skyline rhythm: a divergence worth reading as honesty rather than inconsistency, since detail is often the point where direct encounter leaves its most legible mark before more complex design habits blur it away.

During the Milan tour, the 46 students tended to observe more selectively, drawn toward what they already knew from history rather than what genuinely surprised them.

Among those who chose their own destinations, two souvenirs illustrate opposite directions of transfer: one isolated a single architectural detail and reinterpreted it as a study of solids and shadow; another worked from an entire urban configuration, using it as an analogy for a different design problem. These two cases are illustrative, not representative; they do not prove the general effect of self-directed travel, but they do show that transfer can operate in either direction, from detail to principle or from configuration to analogy. In both cases, Josef Albers's insight about creative work applies: we should not imitate what we have seen, but instead "seek on our own and learn how to find independently" (Albers 1928). Here, the act of doing precedes any explanation of its purpose.

The experiment showed that travel is only pedagogically useful if it continues to work after the trip; otherwise, it is just another isolated exercise. The souvenir mattered because it held together acts that did not occur at the same time: observation and collecting happened *in situ*, while interpretation and transfer came later, in the interval between returning and the moment when a design problem called that experience back into use. As has been observed, "the physical object as 'souvenir' makes little sense in the absence of a tension between a person and a place" (Leon 2017, 4). The printed matter became an abstraction of what had been seen after it was cut and refolded; it was traceable to its origin but no longer identical to it. This was precisely the displacement that kept the tension alive between person and place beyond the journey itself.

What students brought back from Basel was therefore not a chain of isolated snapshots, but an attentive method for identifying selected relations within the built environment. The souvenir was a provisional diagram rather than an object of memory. It was not a retrospective description of architecture but a device for its subsequent transformation, close to Eisenman's understanding of the diagram as an interpretative and project-oriented device (Eisenman 1999). In some cases, this transfer into the Milan project was visible; in others, the souvenir remained unrelated to the design process, which did not necessarily mean the project was weaker. I believe it is precisely this dichotomy that makes the experiment most interesting, and also most unresolved.

Legibility or Depth: A Problem of Assessment

Assessment is perhaps the most challenging aspect of this experiment. If a travel module is not carefully designed, it can reward superficial achievements such as mere descriptions, the accumulation of facts, imitation, or, worse, theoretical commentary that substitutes for genuine spatial understanding. Hence, evaluation should concentrate on the process that led to the conception of the souvenir rather than on the object itself. The critical actions – observing, selecting, interpreting, sharing, and justifying each choice – deserve primary attention. At its most effective, travel encourages students to notice, for example, how a tower shapes the skyline from afar, how a threshold alters the atmosphere of a street, or how the character of a material changes when held in the hand rather than viewed on a façade. The criteria for grading this exercise, along with other forms of assessment, are outlined in the Teaching Module Card.

Should the value of the souvenir be judged only by how visibly it appears in the final project? This is a reasonable question, but it highlights a disconnect between what assessment can readily measure and what the exercise is intended to achieve.

Legibility and depth are not the same thing: a souvenir that displays every step of the method is not proof that the student has understood how to carry that method into the project; in fact, it is depth that validates the method and its potential to be used again for a different problem later. As Toohey (1999, 14) notes, assessment systems often shape student behaviour more than stated learning objectives, especially when they privilege what is already known or easily made visible. If only the visible presence of the souvenir is rewarded, students may feel an urge to integrate it into their designs, even if it feels forced or out of place, simply because that is what will earn them a better grade.

For this programme, travel was considered pedagogically weak when the souvenir remained merely a memento, when a student could not explain why they had chosen one fragment over another, or when no relation could be traced between observation, abstraction, and design judgement – which does not mean that nothing was learnt, only that the module has no way of responsibly claiming that anything was. Legibility, that is, what can be seen in the final design outputs, is assessed by looking at the project. Depth, on the other hand, is less immediately visible and is revealed by students' explanations: by asking why a student selected one fragment over another, what they chose to leave out, or how their understanding of scale, thresholds, or urban sequences has shifted, even if these changes are not directly represented in their drawings. A souvenir that merely replicates what was seen falls short of this ambition; conversely, a souvenir that does not appear in the final project can still be meaningful, provided the student can give a convincing account of its influence. The real difficulty lies in the fact that depth resists quantitative measurement; a short explanation by the students can bring it to light, but a number on a grading scale tends to flatten exactly what made it worth assessing.

Travel unfolds according to a temporality that does not coincide with that of the curriculum. The impact of a travel experience is rarely clear while it is still unfolding and often remains unclear even at the moment of return. Only later, when a new design problem brings that experience back into use, does the journey start to become legible (Liang, Caton and Hill 2015, 233, 236). The distance between experience and evaluation is therefore not incidental; it is structural. Assessment only ends a process. Travel, by definition, leaves one open to the possibility that it may continue to matter well beyond the studio, in ways this experiment cannot verify. The exercise is designed to cultivate a particular way of thinking: to extract a principle from a single encounter, generalise it enough to be useful elsewhere, and then adapt it to a new problem. Le Corbusier's notebooks from the *Voyage d'Orient* offer a historical precedent: the buildings themselves were not constructed during the trip, but the journey informed his later work, often years afterward. The same is true, on a different scale, for second-year students: what they take away from the travel experience may not be immediately clear, and it may only become visible over time. Teachers can only evaluate the first signs of this process, while students often struggle to articulate what, exactly, they have learned, since those lessons tend to reveal themselves only later, and often in entirely different circumstances.

Seen from the point of view of assessment, the Design Studio has one advantage over other teaching formats: it puts teacher and student in front of the same, repeated judgement, asking not whether a souvenir or a destination is appealing but whether and how it belongs in the project. This repetition subjects the transfer to the same level of scrutiny as the design process. On the other hand, a module that has decided in advance what learning will look like takes a different shape: a curriculum that grants autonomy on a fixed schedule, makes each phase slightly harder because the programme says it should, and closes exactly the cycle it opened. But a method that has never failed has not yet demonstrated that it works; it was never tested against the possibility of failing. This experiment could not provide the same kind of certainty.

About Conditions, Not Conclusions

Travel generates more than any single project can absorb. The Piazza Duomo assignment was limited in what it could test, whereas the trip to Basel produced observations about thresholds, materials, sequences, and distances that found no direct outlet in the final proposal. The alternative is not more projects but different occasions. By this, I mean moments in the studio where students are asked not to design but to speak, to say, even tentatively, what the journey has begun to do to their way of seeing. The irony is that the time gap that the teacher already sees from the outside is often invisible to the student from their own perspective.

This experiment has served to clarify the conditions necessary for such learning, rather than providing any definitive conclusions. In fact, the questions it has raised are perhaps as valuable as the module itself. Three issues, in particular, remain unresolved, and any future adaptation of this module will need to address them.

The first is timing: when do we incorporate travel into a student's educational trajectory? The second year offers a particular window: students have enough technical vocabulary to observe with precision, but not yet enough design habits to resist what they encounter. The tools of observation are still being formed earlier; later, those habits may already be too settled to be disturbed. This experiment cannot answer whether the second year is actually the right time, but the question is worth posing, if only to provide something to test against in future work.

The second concerns evaluation: can it be rigorous when the exercise demands highly personal answers and allows for non-linear transfer? The same openness that makes the souvenir useful also makes it difficult to grade, because a mark reflects the artefact's current state rather than its potential future use in another project.

The third question arises from the distinction between legibility and depth: to what extent should the worth of a travel experience be judged by its immediate, visible effect on the final design? While the impact of travel can be significant, it is often uneven and may extend beyond what is immediately apparent in a single project. The projects were not necessarily worse when the souvenir was excluded from the design process; they simply drew from other places and references. The project, therefore, cannot be the sole measure of what travel has taught, not because it is the wrong test, but because it is being asked to answer before the experience has been completed.

This experiment has shown me that the relevant measure is not how long an impression takes to return, but what it can become in architecture. A Basel threshold, window, or urban structure does not exhaust its potential by becoming one souvenir or one project. Its value as a formative tool might be measured by the range of inflections it can still generate – spatially, formally, and culturally – even years apart and in different hands. This experiment was not designed to test that claim and cannot answer it. But it is, perhaps, the question that a teaching module built on travel should now be designed to ask.

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Fig. 1. Map of Basel with superimposed historical axes, from Jean-François Chevrier (ed.), From Basel: Herzog & de Meuron (2016). The diagram overlays Celtic and Roman road networks, solar alignments at the summer solstice, and the positions of the Minster and its dependent chapels. This reading of the city is not as accumulated layers of separate histories, but as a field of persisting geometries that continue to organise urban space. Introduced to students before the Basel trip, the book invited them to approach the city through the eyes of architects who had already built there: not as tourists observing what exists, but as designers.

From Experience To Design

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Context
Italy and Switzerland, 2026

Field of Study
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Degree Level
Bachelor's (2nd year)

ECTS Credits
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Abstract
This module tests travel as a pedagogical device within the Architectural Design Studio, treating the study trip not as a supplementary or documentary activity but as a source of spatial knowledge to be transferred into design. Developed within a year-long, second-year Bachelor's Design Studio focused on a high-rise building in Milan, it combined a three-day guided trip to Basel, a compulsory one-day walking tour of Milan, and self-directed travel undertaken by a minority of students – three intentionally asymmetric conditions designed to observe what shifts when the terms of travel shift.

All students, regardless of destination, produced a paper souvenir constructed from printed matter gathered on site, which functioned as an intermediate artefact between observation and design. The module also tested a specific assessment problem: how to evaluate an exercise whose most meaningful effects may not be visible within the timeframe of the course itself.

The programme was embedded in a year-long second-year Bachelor's Design Studio, and it began on 6 March, at the start of the second semester. Three modes of travel were deliberately selected for comparison and the module was organised around them. 24 of the 46 students joined a voluntary three-day study trip to Basel, Switzerland. The following Tuesday, the entire studio took part in a compulsory walking tour in Milan, focused on the project area around Piazza Duomo. A third group, consisting of two students, worked on self-directed destinations of their own choosing.

All the students undertook the same sequence of activities: preparation, observation, gathering materials, paper-making, discussion and, ultimately, produced a comparable type of output – a paper souvenir made from city maps and promotional printed material gathered on site. This standardised output allowed for direct comparison by controlling for destination, travel mode, and task sequence, thereby ensuring that differences in learning could be attributed to these variables.

The use of paper was intentional. Much of the Design Studio was organised around the concept that learning to give form and define space by folding is a fundamental design tool. Folding was associated with the structural engineering module taught by engineer Nicola Longarini, which introduced folded-plate structures as a design and construction principle. Cutting and folding were, therefore, not isolated craft exercises but a continuation of a method in which students had already been trained during the first semester.

The choice of free printed material as the primary medium was also a pedagogical and ethical decision. Printed materials collected in a city unintentionally create a kind of portrait of that location; museum leaflets, theatre programmes, tourist maps, and exhibition brochures are specifically designed and dated for that place and that particular week, and are likely to be discarded. Using these materials extends the life cycle of resources that would otherwise become waste. It also implies that every souvenir is unrepeatable: the paper collected in Basel during the study trip is not what will be found there next year, or in Milan, or in any other city. The exercise is simultaneously sustainable, site-specific, and infinitely variable. A student in another city, at another level of the curriculum, with a different brief, can perform the same sequence of activities and produce something entirely different, as demonstrated by the self-directed students. Ultimately, the focus was on method, not on the material itself.

For comparison, the module's time commitment can be summarised as follows.

Contact hours: 22 hours in total

- 16 hours of fieldwork (Basel and Milan)
- 4 hours of group work on site
- 2 hours of collective discussion
- In addition, an open-ended period of independent project work extended from the students' return to until the submission of the final proposal.

The self-directed group followed the same two hours of collective discussion, but undertook no guided fieldwork: travel, observation, and material collection were entirely independent.

All three groups shared the same open-ended period of independent project work, from return to the final proposal.

This teaching module was delivered entirely within an existing, mandatory Architectural Design Studio, requiring no additional curricular time or resources.

Objectives
By the end of the module, students should be able to read a high-rise building not as an isolated object but as an urban presence shaped by context, movement, visibility, and spatial sequence. They should be able to select and transform a direct observation into an intermediate artefact, to re-activate this artefact critically within a design proposal, and to argue how travel experiences have entered the design process, even partially or indirectly. The goals are deliberately methodical: what the module asks students to learn is not information about Basel or Milan, but a series of actions – preparing, observing, selecting, transforming, and transferring – that mirror the iterative logic of the studio itself, in the hope that students will eventually learn to travel this way on their own.

Method
Fieldwork learning (16 hours in total: 12 in Basel and 4 in Milan)
Fieldwork was the foundation of the module. The Basel itinerary reworked a route I had first walked as a second-year student in 2010, with new stops added to include high-rise buildings and their urban context. The students were divided into small groups on the first day, each of which was assigned one of four towers: the Roche Towers by Herzog and de Meuron, the Bank für Internationalen Zahlungsausgleich by Martin Burckhardt, the Basler Messeturm by Morger and Degelo, and the Meret Oppenheim Hochhaus by Herzog and de Meuron. Each group observed, measured, and prepared a short spatial reading of its assigned building, before comparing it with the work of the other three groups.

The second day consisted of a guided walking tour of about eight kilometres, from Basel's Badischer Bahnhof to the Messeturm, passing Hans Bernoulli's Im Vogelsang housing, the Birsfelden powerhouse by Hans Hofmann, and the Museum Tinguely by Mario Botta. Plans and sections were shared via WhatsApp as the group walked, at no cost and with no special software required.

The third morning featured a lecture on the urban history of Basel, followed by a walking tour that stopped at the sites singled out in *From Basel: Herzog & de Meuron* (see Tools), edited by Jean-François Chevrier and based on the architects' own account of the places that shaped their practice. The book examines these locations through the lens of architects who later altered some of them, turning historical observations into modern designs, mirroring the same transformation that the souvenir assignment challenged students to achieve. The sites, visited after the study of the towers, allowed students to contrast two interpretations of the same city: one by architects who modified portions of it and one by students who transformed selected fragments into their own projects.

Project-oriented learning (ongoing, from return to the final proposal, largely self-directed)
The four-hour tour of Milan was divided into two parts: first, open observation, then group brainstorming on possible locations for the

high-rise. Project-based learning informed the module from the very start, and the travel exercise was directly linked to the year-long studio. The impact of this approach was most evident in Milan, where observation seamlessly transitioned into brainstorming. In contrast, the experience in Basel was more gradual; some insights gained there resurfaced later when the studio's design problem became specific enough to benefit from revisiting.

Interactive, collaborative learning (4 hours of group fieldwork and 2 hours of collective discussion)

Interaction took on various forms each day. On the first day, there was an assigned task involving one tower and a specific case to defend. The second day featured open, non-assessed observation. Finally, on the third day, students engaged in a shared comparison of how the same sites were perceived once evaluated against the architects' own accounts of them.

At the end of the year, all 46 students took part in a retrospective session, describing one thing seen during the trip that had returned in their design work. The session was not assessed; its purpose was to make visible a gap that formal assessment misses.

Tools

During the walking tours, digital tools served a supporting role, while direct observation and manual making remained at the core of the learning process.

As the group progressed through the city, essential spatial information – such as plans, sections, typologies, and architectural details – was shared via a WhatsApp chat. This digital exchange allowed students to access and reference key materials on their phones as they encountered each site, without the need for printed materials.

Despite this technological support, the module intentionally encouraged students to rely on their own powers of observation rather than simply documenting the experience with smartphones or cameras. While a photograph offers an objective record of what is present, it does not require critical judgement; by contrast, searching for details by eye requires the students to decide what is meaningful and why. This pedagogical emphasis extended into the souvenir-making phase, where students shifted from digital devices to hands-on engagement, using paper and a cutter to reinterpret their experiences. The process was deliberately kept independent from technology: whether observing, collecting printed matter, or cutting and folding, these acts fostered a direct, tactile relationship with the context. A number of students followed the shared route afterwards to retrace sections of the route after the group had moved on.

Course Materials

Before the trip, students were introduced to *From Basel: Herzog & de Meuron*, edited by Jean-François Chevrier and built around the two architects' own account of the city where their practice began, illustrated with photographs taken for the volume. The book is particularly valuable because it is not a neutral history; instead, it presents Basel from the perspective of architects who have transformed parts of the city, creating an urban history that focuses on design rather than solely on historical documentation. Students were therefore given the first framework against which they would later test against their observations by reading the book before the journey rather than during their stay in Basel. The visual dossier introducing the main urban areas relevant to the exercise was built from my own research on the selected buildings, integrated with material drawn from Basler Bauten (basler-bauten.ch), an online archive of Basel architecture that students could consult both during the trip and afterwards.

Prerequisites

The students were already familiar with the high-rise building as a design theme because the module was integrated into an ongoing Design Studio. They also had received early training in paper folding as a design tool: the method had been introduced earlier in the year in the module on folded-plate construction, taught by engineer Nicola Longarini, and so the souvenir exercise did not remain an isolated craft activity but instead represented a change of focus from structure to observation, using a method already familiar to the students. None of the students had ever been to Basel, but all of them knew Piazza Duomo. The module did not require any previous knowledge of Basel, as the asymmetry between the unfamiliar destination and the familiar site was a key aspect of the comparison that the module aimed to explore.

Assessment

The assessment process was intentionally structured as a series of stages, rather than a single, final judgement. This sequential approach was designed to ensure that learning took place throughout the module, not just at its conclusion:

- Before travel, a preparatory discussion took place to verify students' understanding of the task and to guide their selection of case studies.
- During fieldwork, observation and comparison were encouraged through discussion and group exchange. These activities were formative and were not assigned a grade, fostering collaborative exploration.
- Two weeks after returning, students were required to submit their souvenir. This submission was evaluated.
- Several months later, the souvenir was discussed again in relation to the Milan project. The objective was not to check for the direct incorporation of the souvenir into the design, but rather to prompt students to articulate how this earlier experience had influenced their approach to reading the site.

This structure was chosen because the module does not generate knowledge only through a final object. Its value lies in the sequence itself – preparing, observing, collecting, selecting, transforming, and transferring – and in giving students practice in putting into words what a journey can do for a project months later. The module also acknowledged a structural limit: the formal assessment moment often arrives before the full effect of travel has had time to emerge.

Evaluation

Five criteria were used to evaluate the exercise, each corresponding to a step in the process:

- The attentiveness with which the student observed;
- The relevance of the chosen case;
- The degree to which the gathered material was transformed into something new, rather than merely rearranged;
- The clarity with which the student explained their choices;
- The extent to which insights from the trip informed an actual design decision.

Notably, the criteria do not consider whether the souvenir is explicitly visible in the final project. This exclusion is intentional. The core challenge lies in assessing depth, which resists quantitative indicators. Depth can be recognised through dialogue and reflection but is easily lost if reduced to a grading metric. If visible incorporation became the main standard, students might prioritise appearance over genuine engagement, undermining the exercise's aims. This risk is not unique to this module; it is inherent in any situation where

slow, personal development is measured against deadlines.

The module therefore distinguishes between:

- Legibility: the visible trace of travel in the project;
- Depth: the student's capacity to internalise and reapply the method to future problems.

Legibility is judged by examining the project output, while depth is assessed through the student's explanations: why certain fragments were chosen, what was omitted, and how their understanding of spatial aspects evolved. A souvenir may be visually compelling and yet only demonstrate legibility if the student cannot articulate its significance. Conversely, a souvenir absent from the final project may still indicate depth, provided the student's account withstands thoughtful questioning.

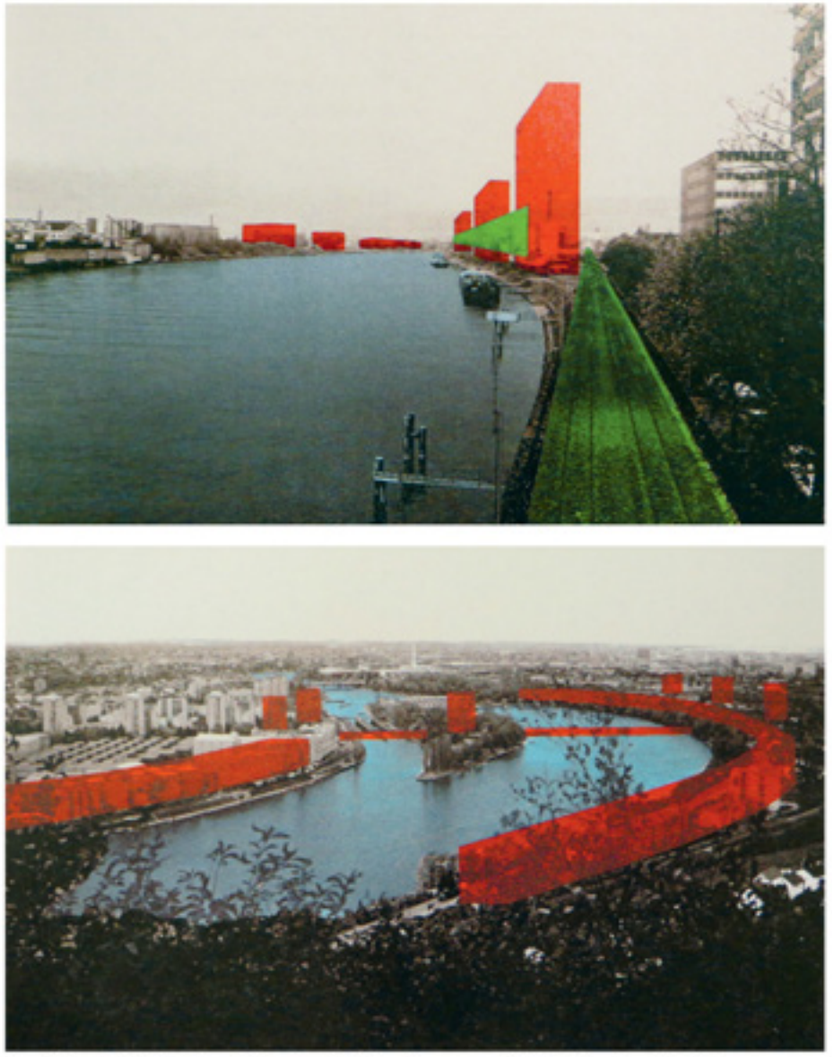
Ultimately, depth, rather than legibility, was the primary focus of assessment for this module.

Deliverables

Expected outputs included:

- A documented observation of selected towers or urban conditions;
- A paper-based souvenir produced through cutting and folding;
- An initial transfer of this artefact into the ongoing design project in Milan, often visible as a diagram (in Eisenman's sense of the term) applied first to the observed object, then reapplied, unchanged or modified, to the project itself.

Depending on the student or group, outputs could include sketches, maps, collected printed matter, montages, tactile objects, and short explanatory texts. The output was expected to demonstrate observation, selection, transformation, and transfer rather than simple recording.



Herzog & de Meuron in collaboration with Rémy Zaugg, proposals for building along the Rhine; two plates from the urban study *Basel: A Nascent City?*, commissioned by the Gewerbeverband Basel-Stadt, 1991–1992 125

Fig. 1. Modified photograph of the Rhine bend at Basel with volumetric projections by Herzog & de Meuron, from Jean-François Chevrier (ed.), From Basel: Herzog & de Meuron (2016). The image makes a precise argument: Basel's urban form is inseparable from the geometry of the Rhine, whose curve both generates and interrupts the city's coherence. The architecture of the city becomes a geometric expression of a natural form. Students were asked to verify this reading from across the river, testing whether the spatial argument the architects describe was still legible in the contemporary skyline. The photograph prepared that question before the journey began.

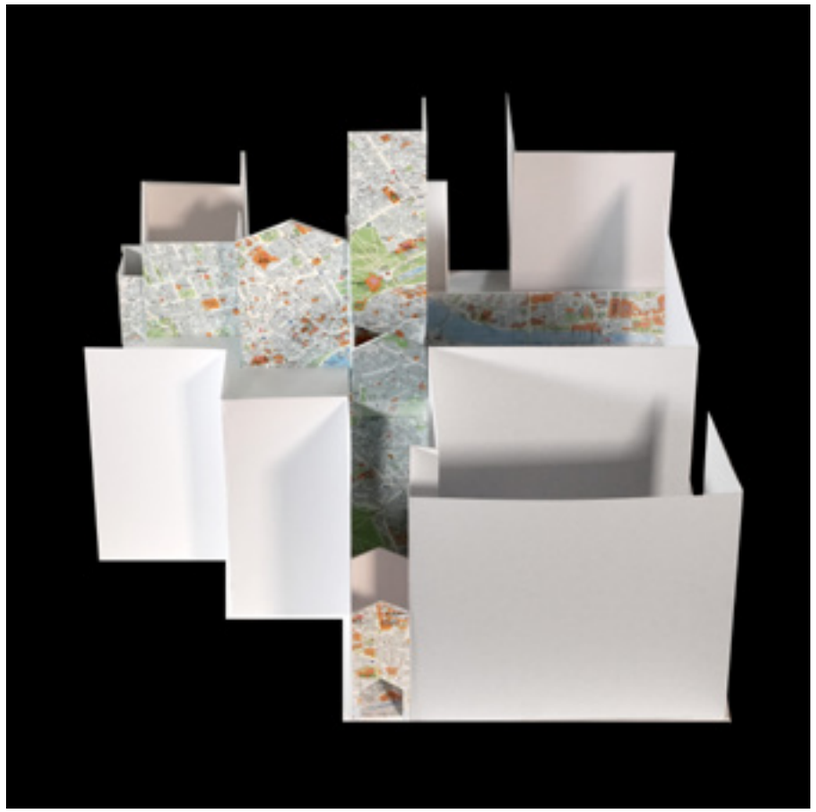


Fig. 2. Souvenir produced from a printed map of London gathered on site. The student built a cardboard model of the micro-urban configuration around St Bartholomew's Priory in Smithfield, then wrapped it in the map itself — turning a planimetric document into the skin of a volume. The site was chosen as an analogy for the Milan project: the vertical presence of a bell tower read through the compressed urban fabric surrounding it.



Fig. 3. Souvenir produced from a leaflet gathered at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. The student cut and folded the printed sheet to isolate and enlarge the geometric pattern of the Ottoman mashrabiyya — a lattice screen whose formal logic depends entirely on the relation between solid and void. Held against light, the souvenir casts a shadow through its perforations; seen directly, it is the holes that read. The exercise did not reproduce the detail: it extracted a spatial principle from it, reinterpreting the mashrabiyya as a device for studying how light, projection, and surface organise architectural space.

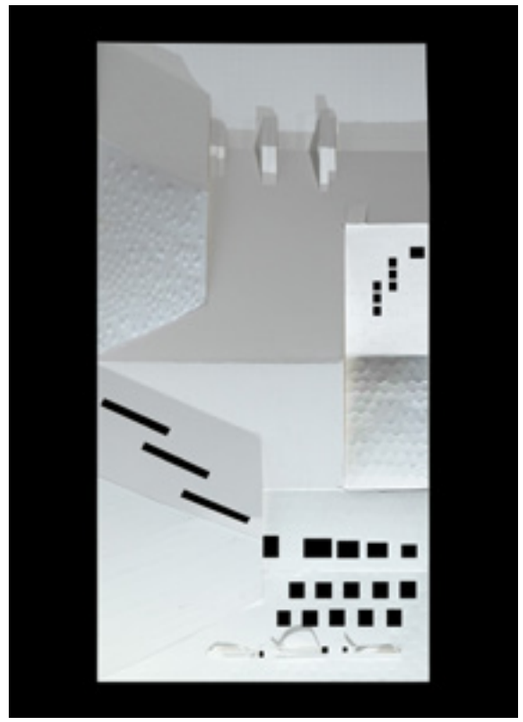


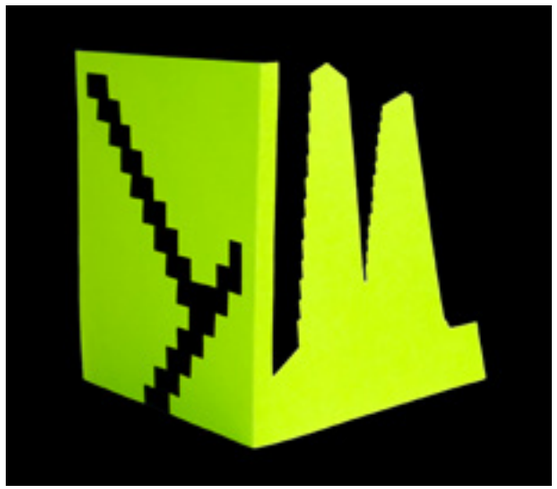
Fig. 4. Souvenir produced from white cardboard gathered on site. The student divided the sheet into areas through folding, then worked each surface differently — incising, cutting, or abrading the cardboard to produce distinct textures. The object does not represent Basel's buildings: it translates their surfaces into a tactile catalogue, based on the conviction that the city can be visited by touch as much as by sight. The souvenir extends the argument of direct encounter to its most radical form — one that does not require vision, only attention.



Fig. 5. Herzog & de Meuron, Roche Towers, Basel, 2015 and 2022. Photograph by William Deng.







Figs. 6–8. Two paper souvenirs produced from printed matter gathered on site. 'Crossing the street beneath Herzog & de Meuron's Roche towers feels like stepping into the floor of a canyon. Their terraced rise becomes a kind of enchanted beanstalk, climbing toward a celestial register and lifting the surrounding blocks and buildings into a far larger scale: that of the territory, the Rhine, the Alps.' The two souvenirs translate the same experience into different spatial arguments — one attending to the tower's relation to the ground, the other to its silhouette against the sky. Neither reproduces what the photograph shows; each extracts a principle from what standing beneath it felt like.

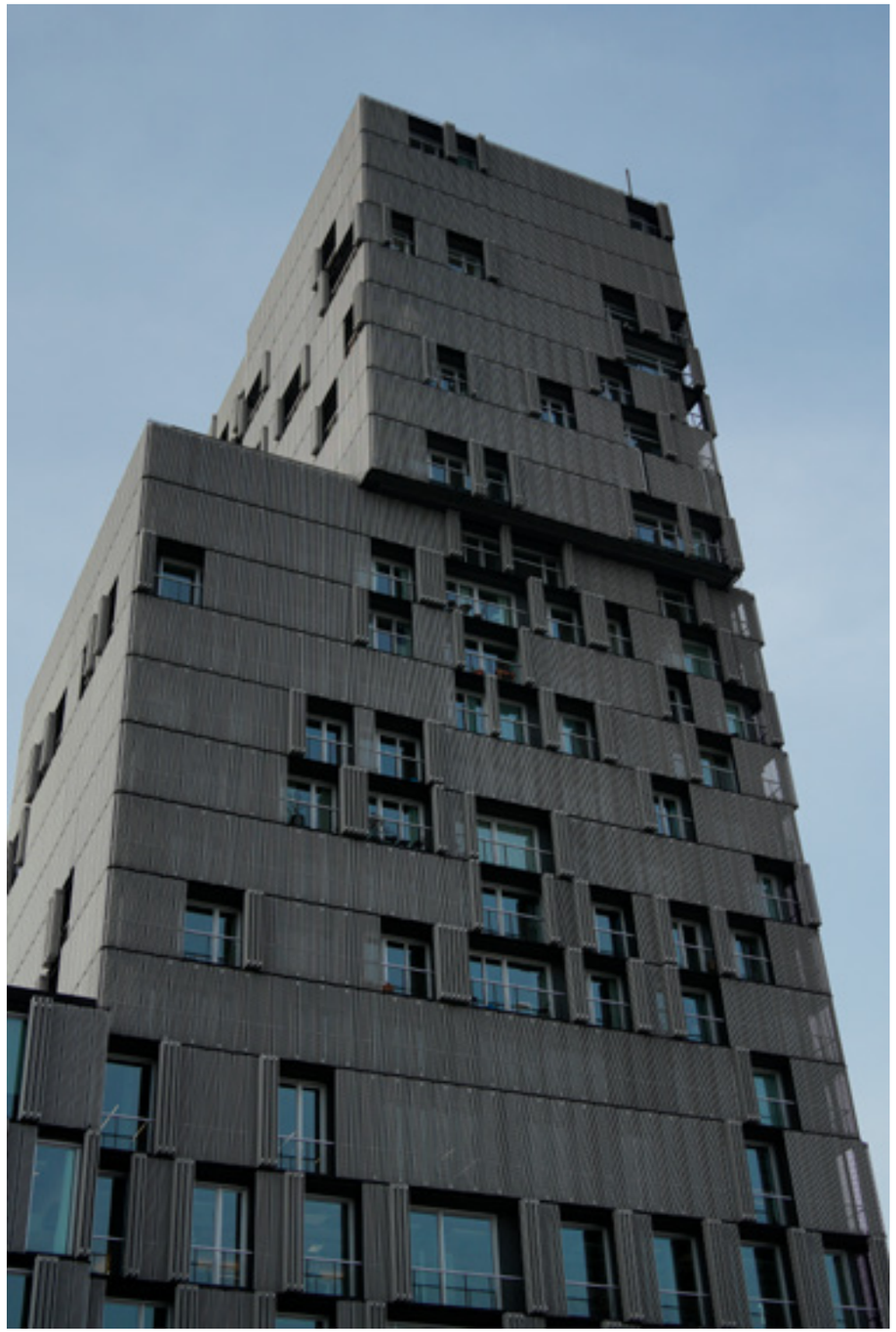
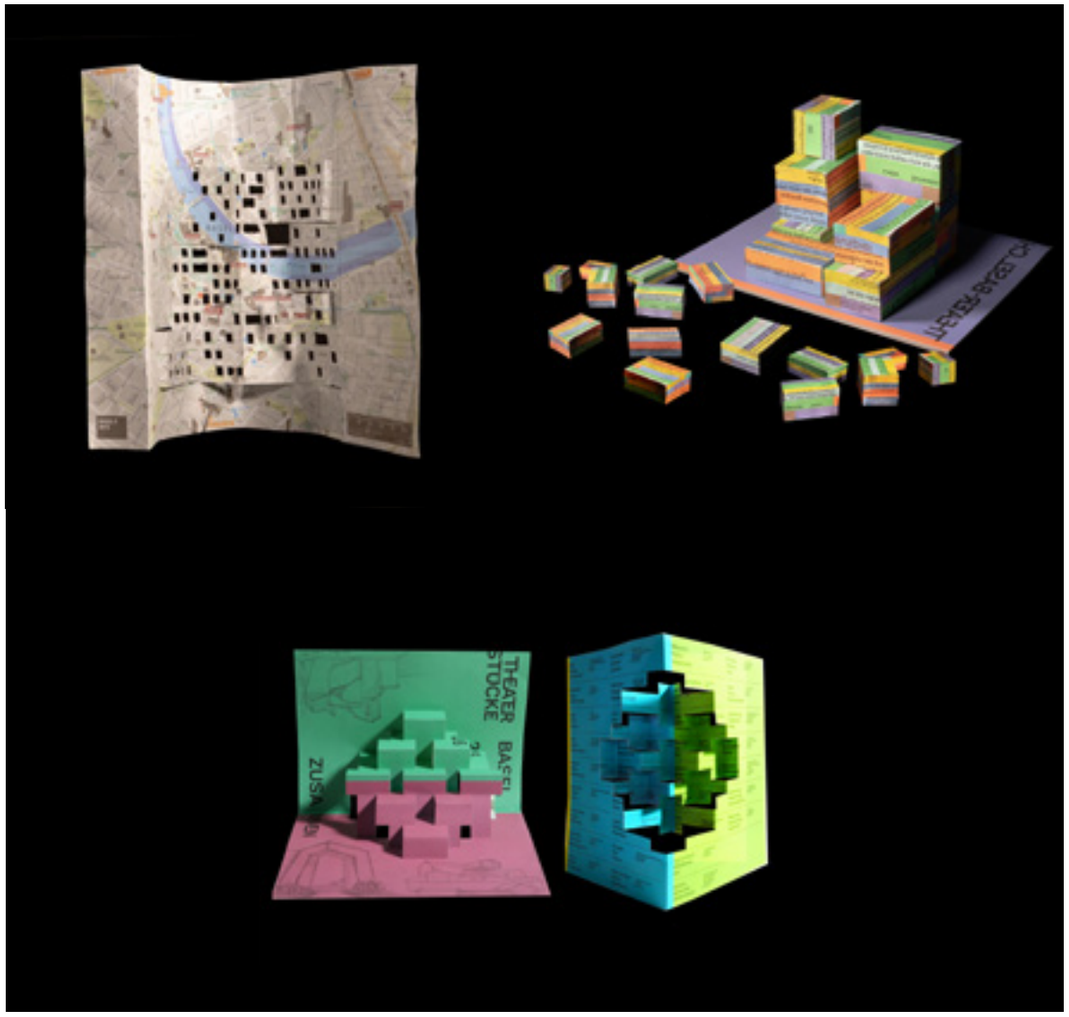


Fig. 9. Herzog & de Meuron, Meret Oppenheim Hochhaus (MOH), Basel, 2020. Photograph by William Deng.



Figs. 10–12. Three paper souvenirs produced from printed matter gathered on site. The same building, read three ways: the first uses a folded tourist map to isolate the tower's volumetric composition and the rhythm of its perforations; the second reconstructs the horizontal stratification of its floors through strips of coloured paper cut from theatre programmes, using colour to argue for layering rather than to describe surface; the third folds a theatre programme into a three-dimensional card — opened, one face shows the volumetric projection, the other its concave inverse, testing the same form from both sides simultaneously. None of the three reproduces the building. Each extracts a different spatial principle from the same act of looking.

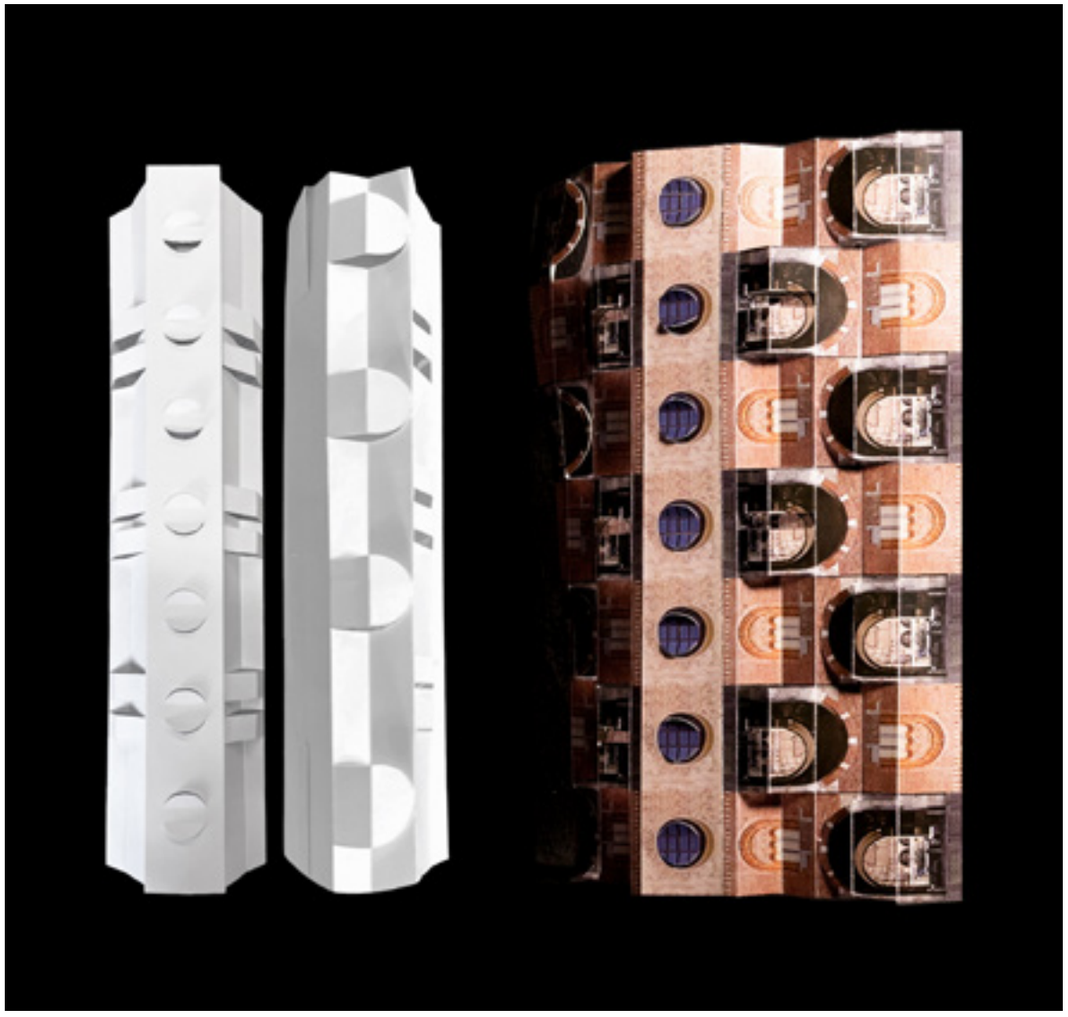


Fig. 13. Souvenir produced from paper as part of the Milan walking tour. The student began with the reading of façade of the Palazzo della Ragione, a medieval building at the edge of Piazza Duomo. The reading started by identifying its surface as a geometric field rather than a historical document. One face of the paper-sheet records the façade; the other translates it into an abstract geometry, which then becomes the structural logic for a cut-and-fold paper sculpture. The object bridges two demands the module placed simultaneously: the exercise of pure abstraction and the first attempt to think vertically, toward a high-rise building in the same square

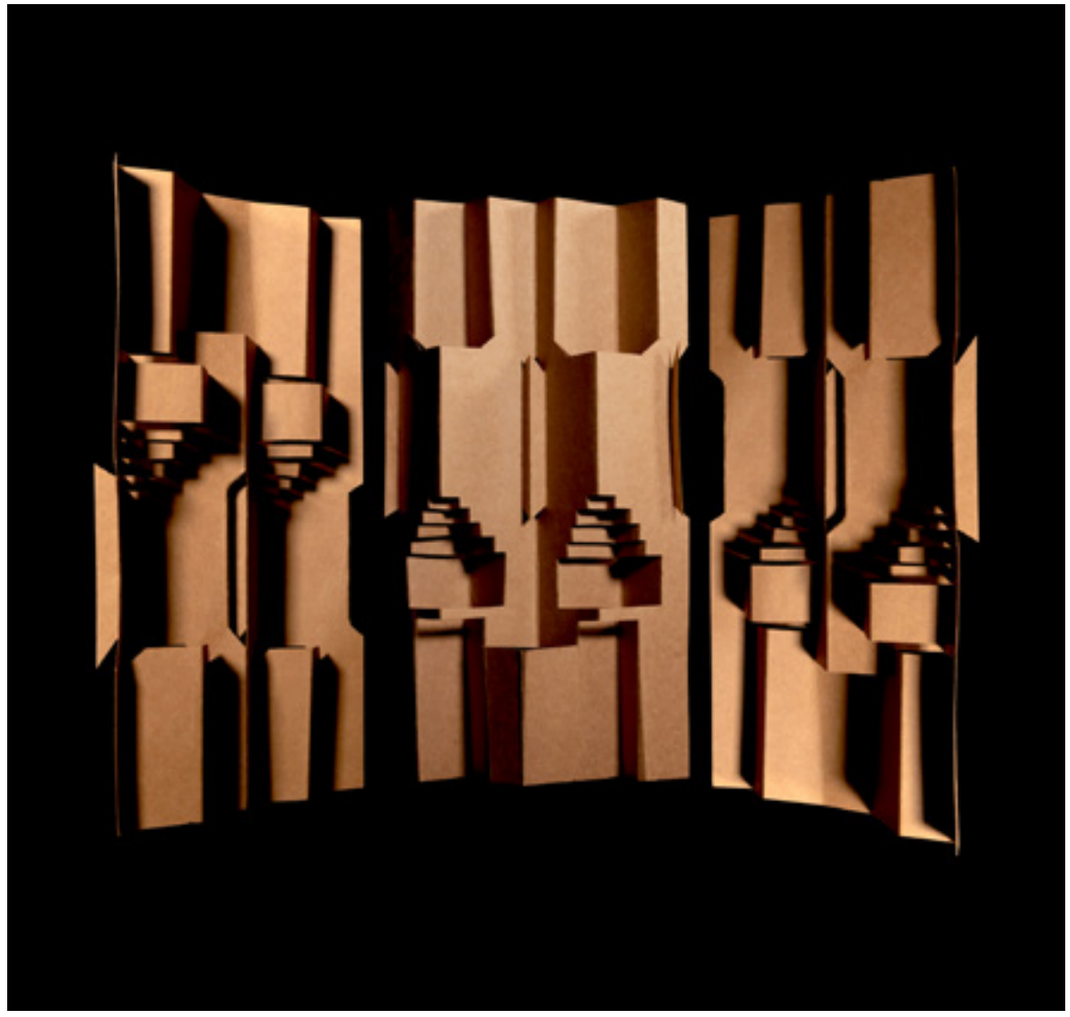


Fig. 14. Souvenir produced from recycled cardboard, Milan walking tour. The student selected a single decorative element from the Duomo's facade and enlarged it, using cut and fold to rebuild it in three dimensions. The technique itself imposed the abstraction: cardboard cannot replicate ornament, so the student was forced to identify what lies beneath the decoration — projections, recesses, the spatial logic of solid and void. What the souvenir retains is not the Gothic detail but the compositional principle it contains, extracted in a form that could re-enter the high-rise project as a spatial argument rather than a stylistic quotation



Fig. 15. "Souvenir produced from a tourist map of Basel, with detail of the portal section from Karl Moser's St. Antoniuskirche, 1927. The section (above) documents the spatial device the student selected: a sequence of receding frames that compresses toward the threshold, generating a perspective illusion through purely constructive means. Cut and folded from a single sheet, the souvenir (below) reconstructs the portal's spatial logic rather than its surface — the austerity of Moser's reinforced concrete made the operation possible, since the building's geometry is already close to what paper can hold. The student then reversed the object, turning the portal inward to test the opposite condition: compression becoming expansion, entrance becoming exit. The same form, read from both directions.

Re-Representation: Collage and Diorama

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Context
Riga, 2023

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Degree Level
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Abstract

This course was taught to third-year bachelor's students in Interior Design. Within the course, various presentation techniques were explored and tested, using the typology of the school building as a point of departure. Students analysed and represented their own learning environment by exploring the different school buildings they attended and investigating them through figurative painting. The course will later be integrated into the New School of Architecture programme at the Art Academy of Latvia.

Architecture is the process of analysing and synthesising ideas and materialities from different historical periods and theoretical frameworks. The study of diverse time periods and techniques often results in the development of more complex architectural forms. One of the key benefits of studying architecture is the development of an awareness of material

reuse and the use of space. The Grand Tour, a term coined in the seventeenth century, has long served as a significant method for exploring architecture and studying forms of assemblage. It draws upon the perspective technique that has been utilised in the visual arts for centuries. Drawing inspiration from renowned artists and scholars such as Leon Battista Alberti and Piero della Francesca, Dürer pioneered the incorporation of the "secret art of perspective" into his own works, thereby establishing a foundation for the evolution of architectural visualisation.

In this regard, students are encouraged to apply creative thinking to the imagery they capture during their Grand Tour, fostering a sense of innovation and originality. Furthermore, they are guided to develop their analytical and critical thinking skills, empowering them to interpret and evaluate architectural visualisations with a discerning eye. The use of architectural instruments to analyse and critique buildings and spaces is emphasised, with the objective of reconceptualising them in novel forms, such as collages or dioramas.

Objectives

- Analyse and synthesise material from different eras.
- Transform travel material into tools that can be redeployed in architectural thinking..
- Develop an understanding of architectural principles and ways of thinking.
- Stimulate critical thinking and cultivate an analytical mind.
- Encourage travel as a means of discovering other design methodologies.

Method

The course programme was organised as a sequence of lectures, studio sessions, group work, and presentations, structured as follows:

- Lecture-based learning – 12 hours
- Interactive, collaborative learning – 12 hours
- Laboratory-based learning – 30 hours
- Project-based learning – 60 hours
- Presentation-based learning – 6 hours

1. Introductory lecture on making architecture exhibitions
2. Group work: collecting and presentation
3. Collage studio: selecting
4. Collage studio: assembling
5. Collage studio: narrating
6. Intermediate presentation
7. 3D collage studio: re-use
8. 3D collage studio: cutting
9. Lecture: travelling
10. 3D collage studio: assembling
11. 3D collage: narrating and group presentation
12. Exhibition diorama

The course combines fieldwork and studio-based design activities, which may be undertaken either individually or in groups. The objective is for students to produce creative interpretations based on observation and the collection of first-hand information. Students are encouraged to become aware of what they choose or choose not to explore and how they record their observations for later processing. It resembles the creation of a travel log, in which each student uses their own way of recording information.

When producing the 2D or 3D interpretation, the following steps are followed:

- Within the framework of the Grand Tour and its unique material derived from the journeys of architects and artists, the student searches for their own interpretative approach, choosing the material with which to work.
- A travel report outlining a possible narrative is drawn up.
- The student undertakes a similar journey and collects material according to the chosen narrative.
- The souvenir reinterpretates the collected material under a new two-dimensional or three-dimensional representation.
- The student analyses and discusses the work in order to explore new, more focused approaches for subsequent journeys.

Tools

The tools students can use are diverse but should be primarily graphic. These can include photographs, sketches, archive material, texts, or other visual material. Students are free to use the technical possibilities at their disposal. This can range from a mobile phone to a professional camera, provided that the student is familiar with the device; the possibilities are unlimited. However, it is recommended that students use tools with which they are already familiar before undertaking the trip. The more widely accessible the tools are, the better.

Course Materials

During the course, students are provided with a selection of material collected during the architects' travels, a selection of literature and examples of collages and dioramas, and a selection of buildings to be visited.

At the beginning of the trip, students, working in groups, create a logbook that is discussed before the trip. They have access to all the university's technical classrooms. Working materials are provided in accordance with the university's terms and conditions.

Assessment

The course combines studio design work with regular presentations during which students present their concepts to a group of peers. The class consists of a maximum of seven students and one professor who may invite experts to participate in presentation sessions.

The work is evaluated and discussed weekly. Students must work at the university and be able to present their work-in-progress on a regular basis. All activities are monitored by the professor and the material is shared among the students. The course culminates in an exhibition that the students design themselves.

Evaluation

The evaluation is conducted according to the university's criteria and takes the form of a public presentation to which experts are invited. Students are evaluated based on attendance (20%), the design process (30%) and the final presentation (50%).

Deliverables

The main outcome of this course is that students develop the ability to travel critically and collect relevant materials. They will develop skills in planning a trip and creating a logbook. This document can be visual or written.

The souvenir is an exercise in reinterpreting a design method or approach through the creation of a collage or diorama.

Students will learn to synthesise concepts and translate them into three-dimensional representations using analogue techniques. Analysing and combining travel material and then presenting it in the form of an exhibition provides an important way to convey architectural narratives to future clients.

The course aims to foster a more representational approach to architectural education at the bachelor's level. It is very important to include the many trips students take in the curriculum and make them more aware of travelling as it was explored within the Grand Tour research program. Students should be made aware of the knowledge that can be gained from travelling while also reflecting on its environmental impact, because travelling leaves a

significant imprint on the environment.

All the archives and institutions that are part of the Grand Tour Riga network offer students the opportunity to further develop their material and are committed to helping them access and engage with the many archival materials that have not yet been researched.

Course Review

A critical aspect of the applied teaching method lies in the structured organisation of the course. This clear framework ensured that students remained continuously aware of the expected deliverables. Working within the studio environment allowed for close monitoring and evaluation of their progress. Each session was structured around collective discussion at both the beginning and the end, fostering reflection and alignment throughout the process.

Based on feedback from students and external jury members, several areas for improvement have been identified, particularly if this methodology is to be applied within the context of the Grand Tour:

- Clear guidelines should be established regarding the type of material to be collected and the methods of documentation prior to departure. A dedicated preparatory session with a photographer is recommended, along with clearly defined limits on the amount and type of material to be gathered.
- Different strategies for experiencing and interpreting architecture should be introduced before the trip. Students should be familiarised with examples of narratives, collages, and totems in advance. While the course is ideally offered at the beginning of the master curriculum, it would benefit from a short introductory phase to align students with the course objectives and better understand their individual working methods.
- While focus is essential, a certain degree of openness and receptiveness to unexpected experiences during the trip is important to encourage unexpected discoveries. At the same time, the course should remain clearly defined in terms of its duration to maintain its intensity and clarity.



Fig. 1. Melisa Briža. Diorama school. Courtesy of the artists and the Art Academy of Latvia.

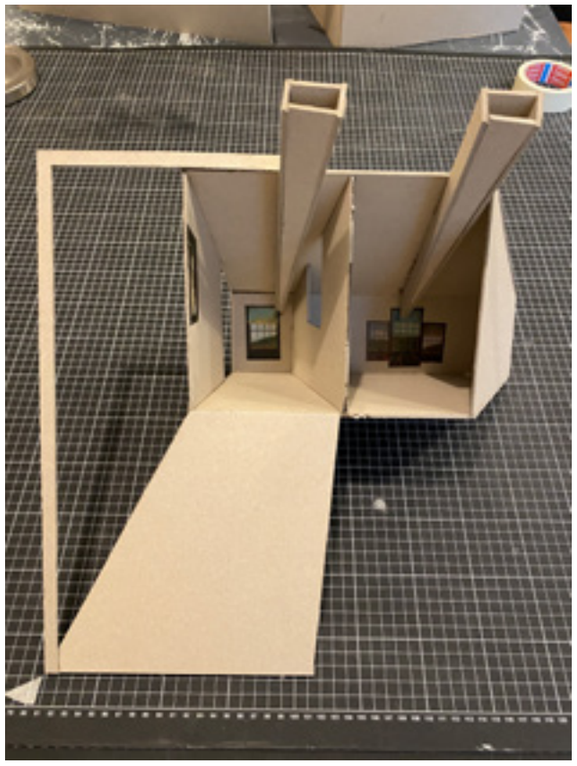

Fig. 2. Rebeka Damberga. Diorama school. Courtesy of the artists and the Art Academy of Latvia.



Fig. 3. Signe Streipa. Final presentation. Courtesy of the artists and the Art Academy of Latvia.





Fig. 4. Signe Streipa. Collage. Courtesy of the artists and the Art Academy of Latvia.
Fig. 5. Signe Streipa. Working collage with narrative. Courtesy of the artists and the Art Academy of Latvia.



Fig. 6. Simona Helmane. Collage. Courtesy of the artists and the Art Academy of Latvia.



Fig. 7. Tīna Elīza Duka. Diorama school. Courtesy of the artists and the Art Academy of Latvia.

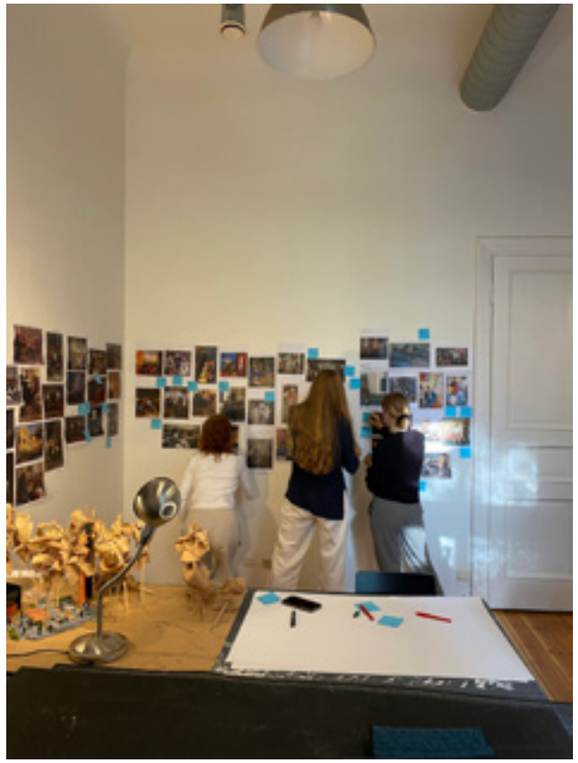

Fig. 8. Mid-term exhibition. Courtesy of the Art Academy of Latvia.



Fig. 9. Workshop “Keywords and narratives”. Courtesy of the Art Academy of Latvia.



Fig. 10. Closing exhibition. Courtesy of the Art Academy of Latvia.



Fig. 11. Workshop “Making Collages”. Courtesy of the Art Academy of Latvia.

On Travel, Play, and Architectural Learning: Experimental Practices for Updating a Travel-Based Pedagogy

Emanuela Margione

The UpGranT Internship Programme, developed within the broader scope of the UpGranT Erasmus+ research project, was structured as an internal academic activity through which bachelor's students completed their compulsory internship in the Department of Architecture, Built Environment and Construction Engineering (DABC) at Politecnico di Milano by participating in research-related activities. The internship programme unfolded across two editions, the first running alongside the initial phase of the research project and the second taking place at a more advanced stage of its development, to investigate the formative potential of travel in contemporary architectural education.

Travel has long occupied a central place in architectural knowledge and education. In the European tradition, the Grand Tour consolidated itself as one of the most durable models of architectural education, cultivating personal judgement and critical design thinking through direct engagement with buildings, cities, and cultural landscapes (Traganou 2009, 5). In the twentieth century, modern architecture challenged this pedagogical tradition on structural grounds. Grounded in ideals of universality and reproducibility, it appeared to weaken the idea that architectural knowledge depended on first-hand experience across different contexts (Costanzo 2008). At the same time, the growing circulation of architectural images transformed the conditions of architectural learning. Where

once the architect travelled to architecture, it was now architecture that travelled to the architect, mediated through images and reproductions (Alcolea, Tárrago 2011, 8–9).

However, this same tension helped reinvent the pedagogical role of the Grand Tour. This trajectory runs from Le Corbusier's reflections on Rome as a city for "wise men", able to move beyond architectural language and grasp architecture as a "plastic thing" (Le Corbusier 1986, 151, 158–159), to the later experiences of postmodern architects who travelled to Italy on American Academy in Rome fellowships, among them Louis Kahn, Michael Graves, Eero Saarinen, Robert Venturi, and, in a different register, Peter Eisenman and Colin Rowe. In particular, Postmodernism marked a significant moment in the reinvention of the Grand Tour, as architects redefined their way of seeing architecture and came to approach history as a field to be read and interpreted within the design process, rather than as a repertoire of forms to be imitated across contexts (Costanzo 2008).

One of the clearest pedagogical expressions of this approach emerged in the *Learning from Las Vegas* (LLV) studio, conducted by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown at Yale in the late 1960s, which grew out of their own experience of the Grand Tour in Italy, as suggested by Venturi's own words: "Las Vegas, which I learned from via the perspective of Rome and through the eyes of Denise Scott Brown" (Venturi 1991). The LLV studio also owed much to Scott Brown's own educational trajectory, which took her from South Africa to Great Britain, and from Europe to America, shaping her enduring curiosity about unfamiliar contexts (Grahn 2022).

The LLV experience gave rise to a new pedagogical tradition, later revisited through a range of *Learning from...* formats, which helped recast the Grand Tour as a contemporary educational model (Colomina 2020, 213–217). Over time, however, these formats became a familiar feature of architectural education, so much so that, as Stanislaus von Moos (2013) observes, they came to function as a new rite of passage for both students and teachers. Schools of architecture now regularly organise journeys across distant contexts, often turning teachers into travel agents and students into itinerant, sometimes passive, observers moving through places already filtered by the intercultural curiosity of earlier architects. In this setting, architectural travel risks slipping into tourism, driven by the collection of data and impressions, and too often reproducing established viewpoints rather than cultivating critical interpretation and a more personal way of seeing (von Moos 2013, 30–31).

The case of Venturi and Scott Brown, however, continues to offer a significant point of departure for considering how travel might reclaim a productive role in contemporary architectural education. By treating travel as a preliminary instrument of design, the LLV studio demonstrates how, in the architect's journey, the question of how to see is inextricably interwoven with that of how to build.

At the heart of the UpGranT Internship Programme, therefore, lay two questions: whether direct spatial experience could still operate as a genuine learning tool, and whether its productive potential might be recovered through the capacity of travel to generate design thinking. More specifically, the programme was structured as an attempt to explore this question in practice, testing whether a carefully designed encounter with built architecture might produce forms of knowledge that feed directly into the design process.

Two theoretical coordinates inform the programme. The first concerns what Juhani Pallasmaa describes as the "tacit understanding of the body in the making of architecture" (Pallasmaa 2009, 15), that is, the body's conscious capacity to understand and measure the structure of the built environment and to translate this understanding into design ideas (Pallasmaa 2009, 22).

The second concerns what Joan Ockman (2005) calls *the architect's gaze*: a culturally structured form of expert observation shaped by the architect's specific disciplinary position. Drawing on John Urry's notion of the tourist gaze, Ockman argues that the architect occupies a distinct position within the category of the tourist, functioning as a particular kind of expert observer:

> "[architects] see the world, think about it, and translate their experience into built form […] in their capacity as experts and intellectuals, they are engaged in reflecting and speculating upon, or theorising, their surroundings. […] But most distinctively, architects are also aesthetic producers. They are not just engaged in mastering what they see by means of theorising it (like social scientists, for example), but ultimately in remastering it as new architecture and planning. They thus differ from their fellow travellers by being active rather than passive spectators" (Ockman 2005, 160–161).

The programme's response to this condition was grounded in an attempt to restore travel to a genuine pedagogical role, testing, through a carefully designed encounter with built architecture, whether spatial experience might serve as a starting point for design thinking. This response took shape in a single core activity, the *fieldwork* itinerary, understood as a process unfolding across three connected phases: *preparation*, the *journey* itself, and *post-production*.

The fieldwork component was organised around three main itineraries: the Milan itinerary, developed in both the first and second editions of the programme; the Milan hinterland itinerary, introduced in the second edition; and the Canton Ticino itinerary, also introduced in the second edition, which had already been designated as an area of investigation within the original UpGranT project on account of the historical and cultural ties between the Ticinese and Milanese architectural traditions.

In its first edition (2023–2024), launched at the outset of the UpGranT research project, the programme organised its fieldwork component in direct relation to the first UpGranT Grand Tour in Milan (GT1). The preparatory phase involved the production of concise architectural descriptions in English for each case study, highlighting key historical information, the architects' formal and technical choices, the structural composition of the buildings, and their relationship to the surrounding context. Each student selected one building and presented it to both their peers and the wider group of GT1 participants – including members of the UpGranT consortium, professors from Politecnico di Milano, and teachers and students from the Liceo Artistico Statale di Brera high school – engaging in ongoing exchanges, responding to questions, and contributing to critical discussion of the buildings visited.

In the second edition (2024–2025), the preparatory phase of the fieldwork activity engaged students alongside the teaching staff in archival and bibliographic research examining the influence of travel on the education of ten Italian architects from the Milanese School (Work Package (WP) 2.1). During this phase, undergraduate students had, for the first time, the opportunity to work directly with archival sources and to accompany teachers and researchers to several archives, including the Archivio Gae Aulenti and the Archivio Piero Bottoni. To support the interconnection of these materials, students were also introduced to the Obsidian knowledge management application, which was used to map biographical data, travel information, archival materials, and bibliographic references across the ten architects, thereby rendering visible the non-linear and associative structure of the research process. At the conclusion of this phase, students were asked to produce a visual synthesis of the material in the form of a Leporello (accordion booklet), bringing together the main information gathered during the initial stage of the programme.

In this edition, the actual fieldwork component was organised around three itineraries designed to progressively increase students' autonomy. The first two took place in the historic centre of Milan and in the Milanese hinterland. Both were intended to test the reproducibility and possible extension of GT1, and to assess whether its pedagogical framework could be sustained across different cohorts and editions.

During the first itinerary, at each stop, the teaching staff briefly introduced the project and its historical context before turning to questions of architectural and urban composition, with particular attention to the relationship between the building and its urban setting, as well as the design strategies adopted by the architects. Students then moved through the spaces independently, sketching, photographing, and recording their own spatial responses.

The second itinerary extended the programme beyond the city centre into the Milanese hinterland, with visits to Paderno Dugnano, Baranzate, and Gallarate. Here, the tour was led by invited experts and practising architects. Students also had the opportunity to meet and speak with the architect Carlo Moretti, discussing both his work, which they visited during the tour of Gallarate, and the role of travel in learning and professional development. The visit to Gallarate also enabled students to undertake one of the central activities of the UpGranT research project, namely conducting an interview with an architect.

The third and final itinerary introduced a more deliberate reversal of pedagogical roles, as the entire two-day tour was organised by the students themselves. Building on what they had learned during the previous tours, students developed the itinerary independently, carrying out their own research and organising the selected works into thematic or monographic routes. The first day was devoted to Bellinzona, while the second was spent in Lugano. Over the two days, students presented the buildings to their peers and tutors, discussing their historical context, formal and compositional qualities, and the design strategies adopted by the architects, alongside a more personal, perceptive reading of space.

This progressive structure, moving from teacher-led to expert-guided and finally to student-led itineraries, was accompanied by a deliberate withdrawal of the teaching staff from the role of authoritative interpreter. In doing so, it enabled students to develop their own critical gaze and to assume greater ownership of the discourse generated through the travel experience. As they shifted from passive recipients to active producers of architectural knowledge, their engagement with the works they presented deepened, and their relationship to architectural references became more critical and less deferential. The collaborative discussions that shaped the Lugano visit further extended this dynamic. After each presentation, the group engaged in collective critical analysis, considering the relationship between the designer's stated intentions and the built outcome, and using that discussion to test possible alternative solutions. In doing so, the fieldwork component enabled students to move beyond direct observation and to translate the cultural knowledge and disciplinary awareness gained through spatial experience into design thinking.

The itinerary phase concluded with a final exercise. Students produced final maps of the three itineraries, creating cartographic representations that would allow other architecture students, as well as the wider public, to retrace the routes. These maps highlighted the paths followed, the buildings visited, and additional significant works identified along the way that could support the further development of the itineraries.

The third and final phase, linked to the post-production activities of WP4 (Itineraries post-production) and WP3 (Souvenir), tested whether the experience accumulated through the fieldwork itineraries could find expression in a design act, however preliminary. In the first edition of the internship (2023–2024), students developed their own visual reinterpretations of the buildings observed and presented during GT1 (WP3.2). These

took the form of a visual compendium, in which exemplary buildings from the Milan itinerary were presented for comparison using representational techniques that made the case studies directly comparable. This method encouraged students to isolate key compositional features, including proportional relationships, spatial organisation, and the rhythmic composition of the façades. They also produced orthographic drawings in DWG format (WP3.1) and an illustrated guide for future editions of GT1.

In the second edition of the teaching module (2024–2025), when several UpGranT outputs had already reached a greater degree of definition within the consortium (Pallini, Amistadi 2025), students were involved in the design of the so-called souvenirs. At this stage, the souvenir became the object through which the experience of the itineraries could be condensed, reworked, and translated into design. Understood in these terms, it extended beyond its conventional meaning as a miniature keepsake and, as Susan Stewart (1993) suggests, became a manipulable object capable of carrying memory while opening it to reinterpretation. Through sensory manipulation, it could thus function as a device, activating compositional strategies and generating new design ideas (Korolija, Margione 2025).

This understanding of the souvenir gave the post-production phase of the second edition a distinctive pedagogical character. Students were asked to conceive and design the souvenir as a foldable, dismountable interpretative architectural toy, guided by two main aims. The first was to move beyond a merely representational depiction of space and focus instead on the key compositional aspects identified during the visits, condensing them into a formally synthesised object. The second was to design each element so that it could be assembled in different configurations, allowing the object to function as an epistemic tool.

This approach drew on the theories of Jean Piaget and Eugen Fink. For Piaget, play is a process of assimilation through which reality is reworked and reinterpreted. What has been observed and experienced is taken up again, varied, and at times even distorted, so that something new can emerge from it (Piaget 1962, 162–173). From this perspective, model-making becomes a process of active manipulation through which students re-elaborate spatial experience by giving it another form. Where Piaget describes how play transforms what has been experienced, Fink shifts attention to the ontological dimension of that transformation. For Fink, play is a world-disclosing activity operating within the dimension of the "as-if" (Fink 2016, 87). Play suspends reality and opens a space in which objects acquire a different ontological status. Within this play-world, the toy serves as a mediator through which alternative meanings and relationships emerge. In this sense, the play object acts as a real metaphor, interrupting ordinary experience while activating a creative manipulation of reality and allowing new significations to surface (Fink 2016, 90, 239–240).

Applied to the architectural souvenir-toy, this framework oriented the design process towards an object to be handled, transformed, and tested through use. What mattered, in this sense, was the possibility of cutting, folding, assembling, and reassembling, since these operations allowed students to explore spatial relationships through making. The choice of materials followed directly from this logic. The souvenir-toys were made using intentionally light media, such as coloured paper and other foldable, non-rigid materials, whose flexibility made variation, reversibility, and reconfiguration possible.

Through this pedagogical approach, the UpGranT Internship Programme reflects on how travel may open up a different way of observing architecture and, in doing so, support students in the development of a personal design method. Across the two editions of the programme, a trajectory takes shape from perception to cognition to design, moving from the cultivation of an informed gaze through archival research, to the activation of embodied spatial knowledge through progressively autonomous fieldwork, and finally to the translation of observation into design thinking through the practice of making. This trajectory recalls the two constitutive dimensions of the architect's journey, the impulse to travel and the impulse to build, as inseparable aspects of the same cultural process. From this perspective, the pedagogical value of travel today may be recognised in the capacity of teachers and students to move beyond observation and engage critically with the built environment, so that creative design processes can emerge from direct experience.

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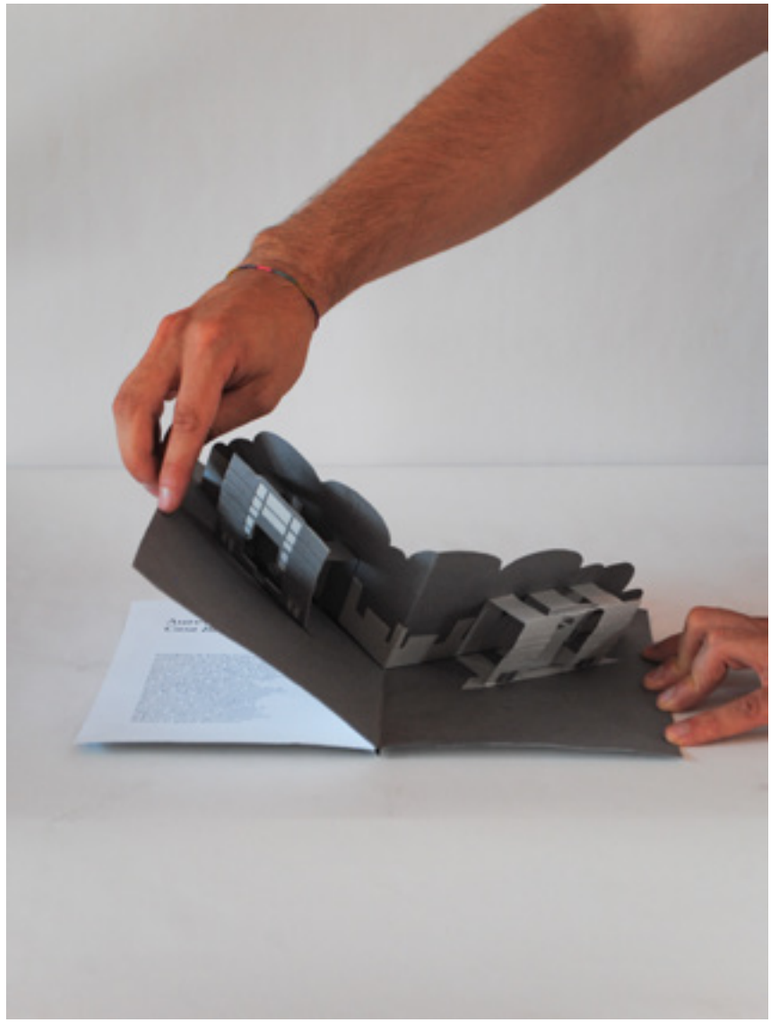

Fig. 1. Aurelio Galfetti, 1984–1986. Casa Bianca and Casa Nera, Bellinzona. Souvenir by Carlotta Agostinoni and Antonio Grieci.

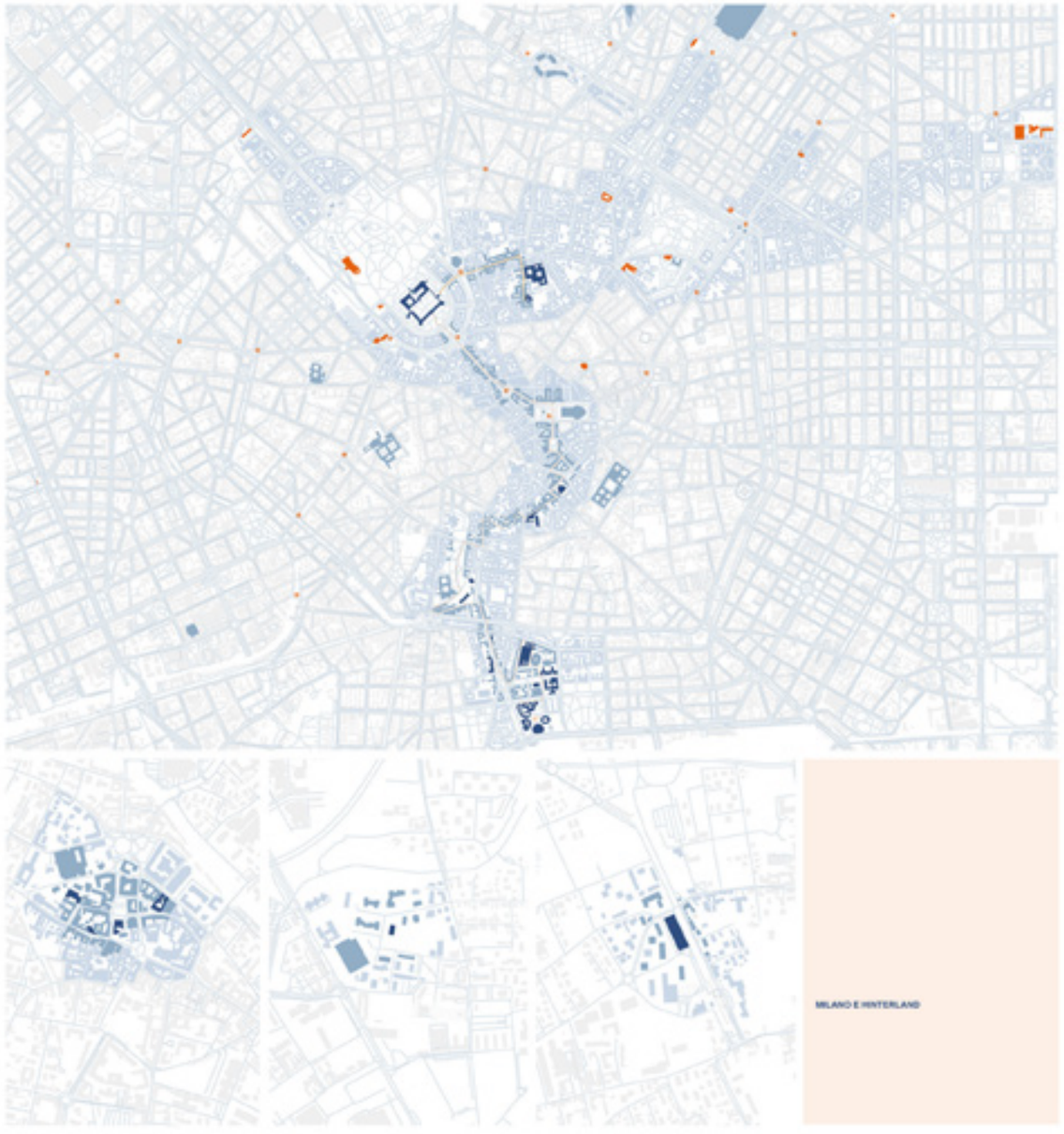

Fig. 2. Map of the Milan–Milanese hinterland itineraries. The Milan itinerary included the Università Bocconi Campus, with reference to projects by Giuseppe Pagano (1937–1941), Grafton Architects (2008) and SANAA (2019), Ignazio Gardella's extension Velodromo (1990–2001), and Giovanni Muzio's student residence and canteen (1962–1966). While walking near the campus, the itinerary included the Church of San Ferdinando by Ferdinando Reggiori (1961–1962), Aparto Milan Giovenale by Carmody Groarke (2020–2021), and the residential complex in Via Col Moschin by Asnago e Vender (1939). The first itinerary continued with a visit to the Parco delle Basiliche, where students visited the Convent and Institute of the Beata Vergine Addolorata by Luigi Caccia Dominioni (1946–1955) and the nursery school by Arrigo Arrighetti (1957–1961). As the group approached Milan's main square, Piazza del Duomo, students visited the multipurpose building in Corso Italia by Luigi Moretti (1949–1955) and the Torre Velasca by BBPR (1950–1955). The itinerary continued with a visit to Sforza Castle, where students explored the museum display and renovation by BBPR (1948–1963), and to the Pinacoteca di Brera, where they first visited the historic museum within the Jesuit building that also accommodates the renowned Accademia di Belle Arti, and later its extension designed by Mario Cuccinella Architects in Palazzo Citterio (2024).

The Milanese hinterland itinerary included, in Paderno Dugnano, Tilane Library, designed by Gae Aulenti (2009); in Baranzate, the Church of Nostra Signora della Misericordia (1956–1957) by Angelo Mangiarotti, Bruno Morassutti, and Aldo Favini; in Gallarate, Palazzo Minoletti (formerly Casa del Fascio), designed by Giulio Minoletti (1939), and a residential complex by Álvaro Siza. Students: Carlotta Agostinoni, Matilde Cicoli, Silvia Gechele, Antonio Grieci, Bianca Lanzarotti, Luca Lorizzo, Ludovica Manfren, Ilaria Ponzoni, Arianna Puddu, Francesco Quaini, Leonardo Redaelli, Filippo Riva, Laura Riva, Daniele Ravanelli, and Simone Rizzini.

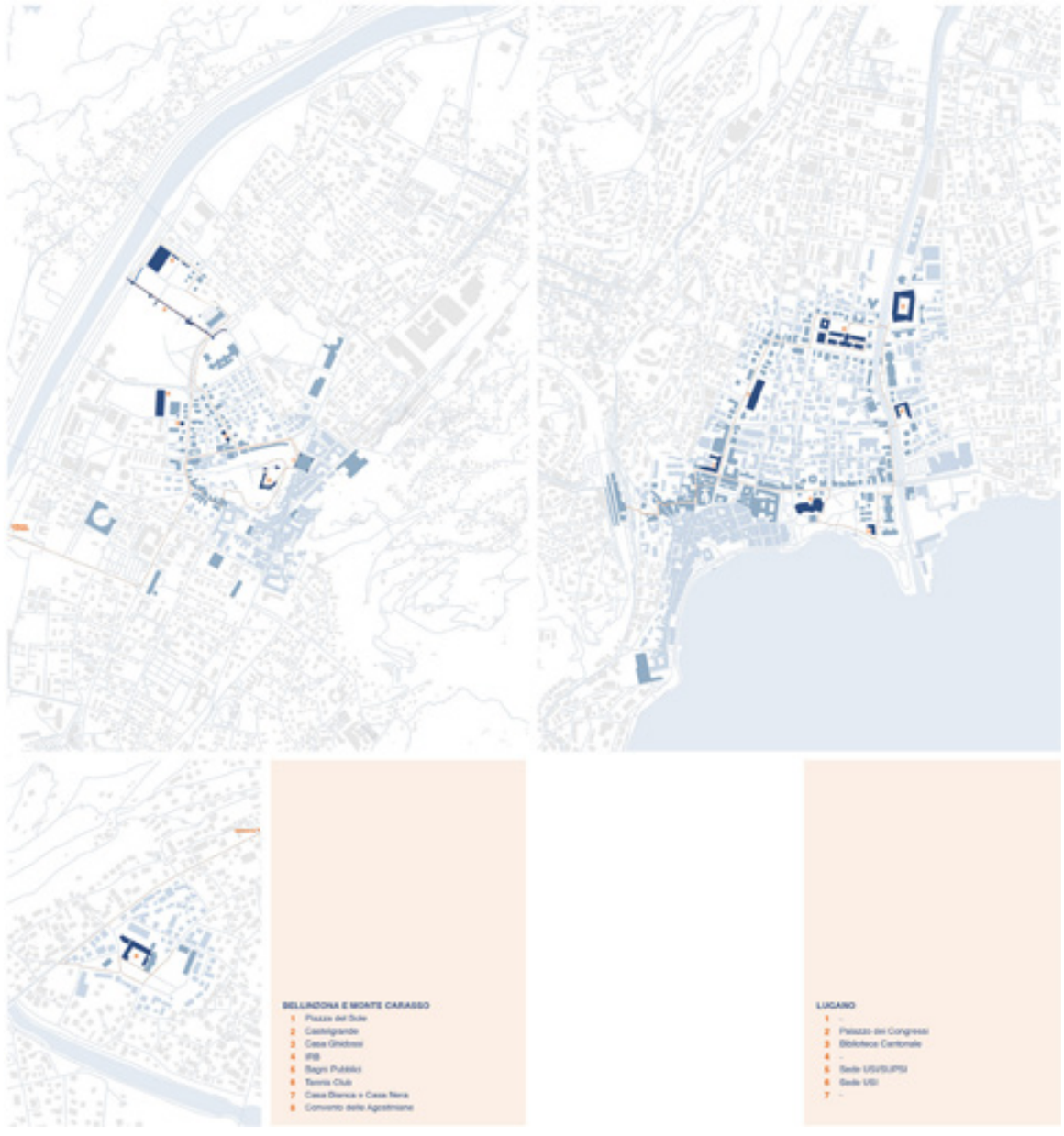

Fig. 3. Map of the Canton Ticino (Bellinzona, Lugano) itineraries. The Canton Ticino itinerary included, in Bellinzona, Castelgrande (1981–1991), together with Livio Vacchini's Piazza del Sole (1966–1999), the Ghidossi House (1990–1995), the IRB building (2015–2021), the public swimming pool (1967–1970) with the Tennis Club (1982–1985), and Casa Bianca and Casa Nera (1984–1986). Students also independently examined Luigi Snozzi's Monte Carasso project. In Lugano, the itinerary included the Palazzo dei Congressi by Otto e Associati (1975), the Biblioteca Cantonale by Carlo and Rino Tami (1939–1941), the USI and USI/SUPSI East Campus by Simone Tocchetti and Luca Pessina (2021), and the Gottardo Bank by Mario Botta (1982–1988). Students: Carlotta Agostinoni, Matilde Cicoli, Silvia Gechele, Antonio Grieci, Bianca Lanzarotti, Luca Lorizzo, Ludovica Manfren, Ilaria Ponzoni, Arianna Puddu, Francesco Quaini, Leonardo Redaelli, Filippo Riva, Laura Riva, Daniele Ravanelli, and Simone Rizzini.

UpGranT Internship Programme: First Edition

Emanuela Margione

University
Politecnico di Milano (Polytechnic University of Milan)

Context
Milan, 2023–2024

Field of Study
Architectural Design

Degree Level
Bachelor's (3rd year)

ECTS Credits
4

Faculty
Aleksa Korolija, Emanuela Margione
Cristina Pallini as academic tutor and UpGranT project leader

Students
Mariapaola Fasulo, Andrea Franzetti, Francesca Galli, Giorgia Gambardella, Matteo Gatta, Michelle Pierri, Alice Premoli

Abstract
The first edition of the programme developed by Politecnico di Milano as part of the UpGranT research project took the form of a 100-hour experimental internship undertaken by a group of third-year undergraduate students.

Initiated at an early stage of the research project, the programme is grounded in the conviction that travel constitutes an irreplaceable instrument in the formation of architects. At the same time, it adopts a critical position towards models of pedagogical travel, in which the Grand Tour is reduced to cultural tourism and site visits are treated as passive consumption of images. In contrast, the UpGranT Internship Programme proposes a

structured and methodologically grounded engagement with direct spatial experience, understood as a form of active knowledge production.

For these reasons, the 2023–2024 internship was organised into three consecutive, deeply interconnected phases, each representing a different way of engaging with the research theme. In the first phase, *Approaching the Research*, activities focused on familiarising students with the research context and equipping them with the analytical and bibliographic tools needed for effective engagement with the research topic. These activities included introductory seminars on the history of the Grand Tour and its importance for modern architectural education, group sessions dedicated to analysing and systematising bibliographic and archival materials – which informed the development of the UpGranT repository structure (WP2.2) – and the compilation of the 10 Architects Grand Tourists Matrix Template (WP2.1). Students worked both individually and in pairs, with each person responsible for a specific subset of the ten Grand Tourists.

The second phase, *Itinerary GT1*, focused on the first Grand Tour itinerary, a curated visit to significant works of twentieth-century Milanese architecture. This phase was divided into three distinct stages – preparation, fieldwork, and post-production – each requiring a qualitatively different form of student engagement. The preparatory stage involved students moving from bibliographic research to the production of, for each case study, concise English-language architectural descriptions that highlighted key historical information, the innovative solutions adopted by the architects, the structural composition of the buildings, and their relationship to the surrounding context. Each student chose a building and was responsible for presenting it to their peers and to other GT1 participants, including the UpGranT consortium partners, professors from Politecnico di Milano, and professors and students from the Liceo Artistico Statale di Brera high school. Students also participated in ongoing exchanges with the Grand Tour attendees, responding to questions and fostering critical, constructive discussion about the buildings visited. Moreover, they were asked to produce on-site sketches recording their direct spatial observation and to compile a photographic archive of the tour. A preliminary post-production activity concluded the itinerary phase, with students compiling all the materials gathered during the GT1 into a preliminary presentation, serving as preparation for the third phase of the UpGranT Internship Programme devoted to implementing *Visual Interpretation* (WP3.2).

The third and final phase, *Interpretation*, is devoted to producing the primary analytical and design outputs of the UpGranT Internship Programme and informs the implementation of the Souvenir work package of the UpGranT research project. Working from the photographic documentation and the on-site sketches gathered during the Grand Tour, students produced orthographic drawings in DWG format (implementing WP3.1: *Building a Starting Point*) and a series of comparable interpretative schemes exploring themes such as volumetric hierarchy, compositional rules, and relationships with the context (implementing WP3.2: *Visual Interpretation*). By the end of the internship, students were required to consolidate their work through a final slide presentation, designed as an illustrated guide for future editions of the GT1. This was accompanied by a comparative matrix compiling all the interpretative drawings, enabling a critical comparison of the visited buildings.

Objectives

The module aims to foster a critical understanding among undergraduate students of the relationship between travel, direct spatial observation, and the creation of architectural knowledge, with a special focus on the legacy of the traditional Grand Tour and its significance for the education of young architects today.

To this end, the programme pursues two specific learning objectives. The first aims to develop students' ability to conduct bibliographic and archival research on selected case studies within a structured methodological framework and using structured templates. Particular emphasis is placed on the capacity to identify, evaluate, and organise primary and secondary sources, to engage critically with both the historical tradition of the Grand Tour and its later interpretations, and to situate architectural works within their broader historical and critical context.

The principal pedagogical aim of this phase is to introduce undergraduate students to a research-oriented approach, cultivating a preliminary disposition towards research by developing their ability to locate, evaluate, and organise primary and secondary sources, to work within the conventions of a shared documentary framework, and to situate individual architectural works within their broader historical and critical context.

The second objective focuses on strengthening students' ability to translate their interpretative analysis into visual outputs. Students are expected to translate their on-site experience into coherent visual representations that demonstrate the spatial and compositional relationships perceived during the visit.

Method

Teaching Methodology	Hours	Notes
Lecture-based learning	2	Introductory seminars on the Grand Tour tradition and its contemporary reinterpretation, the UpGranT research framework, and theoretical grounding in travel, memory, and interpretation
Fieldwork learning	10	Participation in GT1-Milan
Research-based learning	40	Guided bibliographic research aimed at collecting sources on the Grand Tour and its contemporary reinterpretation, together with the collection of materials related to the journeys of the ten Italian architects (Grand Tourists)
Laboratory-based learning	40	Post-production and visual interpretation of the buildings visited during GT1-Milan

Table 1

Tools

The module employed a combination of digital and physical tools, selected for their pedagogical appropriateness and accessibility to all participating students. Software licences were made available to students through the existing institutional agreement between Politecnico di Milano and the software providers.

AutoCAD was used to produce orthographic drawings in DWG format, while standard Adobe and Microsoft Office software were used for both the research-based learning activities and the post-production phase.

During the itinerary, students were free to use their preferred tools to document the on-site visit. They could work with both professional cameras and mobile devices, as well as with sketching tools for on-site observation.

Course Materials

At the outset of the teaching module, students received a set of materials to orient them within the research context of the

UpGranT research project. These materials included a short text summarising the main topics and objectives of the project. Students also received the preliminary research template developed by the consortium for producing the 10 Grand Tourists Matrix and the 3×6 Exemplary Buildings.

No bibliographic sources on the Grand Tour or the ten selected architects were initially provided, in order to fully engage students in the bibliographic research process and encourage a sense of responsibility for their own work. Students were asked to independently identify key sources and, through subsequent discussions with the teaching staff, develop their ability to critically select relevant material.

Prerequisites

As a teaching module developed within an undergraduate programme, the internship requires the competencies and knowledge typically acquired during the first two years of study. These include proficiency in AutoCAD for producing two-dimensional orthographic drawings, as well as familiarity with Adobe software for developing interpretative schemes and the final tour guide presentation, *Icone del Novecento*.

As this was the first edition of the internship and it was introduced at an early stage of the UpGranT research project, no prior experience with travel-based pedagogy was required. However, a degree of intellectual curiosity, openness to experimental teaching approaches, and the willingness to take on an increasingly autonomous role as the module progressed were expected, although not formally defined as prerequisites.

Assessment

Under the regulations of the Politecnico di Milano bachelor's programme, the internship activity is not graded, but academic credits are awarded upon successful completion of the required activities. To assess both the effectiveness of the experience and the extent to which its objectives were achieved, evaluation was organised across two complementary levels: ongoing formative evaluation through tutorials and discussion sessions integrated into the fieldwork and visual interpretation phases, and a final summative evaluation of the outputs at the end of the module.

Evaluation

The evaluation framework integrated both quantitative and qualitative criteria, reflecting the range of competencies addressed by the module. Quantitative assessment considered the depth and organisation of bibliographic sources, the technical accuracy and completeness of graphic outputs (including orthographic drawings in DWG format and visual interpretation schemes), regular attendance, and active participation in all scheduled activities (including laboratory sessions, group discussions, tutorials, and the Grand Tour (GT1) itinerary), as well as the prompt submission of intermediate deliverables.

Qualitative assessment concentrated on aspects of the work that extend beyond technical correctness. This included the students' ability to identify and articulate the underlying compositional logic of the case studies visited during the itinerary phase, along with the analytical depth, critical rigour, conceptual coherence, and inventiveness demonstrated in their visual interpretations, particularly through their ability to translate architectural perception into a clear and communicative visual form.

Finally, attention was given to the students' overall intellectual development throughout the programme, including their capacity to learn, to refine their work through self-correction, and to deepen their understanding of both research practices and the role of travel in architectural education.

Deliverables

As it was implemented during the first semester of the research programme, the Internship Programme activities were structured so that their outputs could directly contribute to the development of WP2 and WP3. In particular, the expected outputs were:

- The finalised 10 Grand Tourists Matrix (WP2.1).
- A thematic database of bibliographic and archival sources to inform the structure of the UpGranT Repository (WP2.2 and WP2.3).
- A catalogue of collected documentation during the itinerary to test the replicability of the GT1 experience.
- A set of orthographic drawings contributing to the *Building a Starting Point* (WP3.1) database required by the UpGranT research project.
- A set of interpretative drawings contributing to the testing of *Visual Interpretation* (WP3.2).

Student Feedback

At the end of the first edition of the UpGranT Internship Programme, the questionnaire primarily focused on the impact of the itinerary phase on the learning process within the teaching module. The questions were therefore more closely related to the GT1 participation activities. The results can be summarised as follows: (Table 2)

Questions	Score (1–5)
My expectations before the GT were confirmed	4.33
The tour changed my perspective on the visited buildings	4.33
The guide altered my perception of the buildings	4.17
The time allocated was sufficient to visit all locations	3.67
The itinerary included buildings I had not come across before	4.00
All buildings are accessible (including for people with disabilities)	3.33
I found it easy to follow the peer-to-peer on-site presentations	4.50
The GT should be included in the architectural curricula	3.83
The itinerary can be undertaken by students, teachers, and the broader public	4.50
All buildings can be included in future itineraries	4.00
I would replicate the GT with another itinerary	3.83
My overall interest in UpGranT as a learning experience	4.50

Table 2

The results indicate a consistently positive overall evaluation. In particular, the results show that peer-to-peer on-site building presentations were highly effective in engaging students and supporting their learning during the travel experience.

Of particular relevance to the broader objectives of the UpGranT research project, the questionnaire results demonstrate that direct visits to architectural works can significantly reshape students' perceptions of the built environment and introduce them to projects they had not previously encountered.

More generally, although the question about integrating the Grand Tour into the curriculum received a more moderate average score, students found the travel experience especially valuable for their education and for developing a more critical and attentive architectural gaze. This suggests that it is possible to move beyond the risk of students remaining passive observers during academic study tours.

Course Review

At the end of the module, the teaching staff organised a discussion session with the students, during which feedback on the activities was collected. Students were invited to express their views and, above all, to reflect critically on their experience.

What follows is a set of observations recorded by the teaching staff in note form, based on the issues raised by the students.

The most significant structural challenge concerned the sequencing of analytical and

creative activities. The module, as delivered in 2023–2024, followed a broadly linear progression from research and documentation through design and fabrication, with each phase conceived as preparatory to the next. Whilst this structure has an evident internal logic, in practice, the transitions between phases were not always experienced as smooth by students. In particular, the bibliographic and archival research, though recognised in retrospect as foundational, was at times felt to be insufficiently connected to the subsequent design activities, creating a motivational gap that required active effort from the teaching staff to bridge. Future iterations might benefit from a more explicitly spiral structure, in which analytical, experiential, and creative tasks are interleaved and mutually reinforcing from the outset, rather than being staged as successive and relatively self-contained phases.

A second critical observation concerns the role of the Grand Tour within the pedagogical economy of the module. The carefully designed itinerary proved well-suited to the learning objectives and was well-received by students. However, the intensive preparation required before the visit, combined with the responsibility of delivering in-person presentations during the tour, placed a significant and not always evenly distributed cognitive load on participants. Clearer scaffolding of the preparation process, including more structured intermediate checkpoints and a more explicit demonstration of what constitutes an effective *in situ* architectural presentation, would help to ensure, in future editions, that all students are able to approach the fieldwork experience with comparable levels of readiness.

Outcomes

The seven bachelor's students who took part in the 2023–2024 UpGranT internship produced a substantial and varied body of work across the different phases of the module, each corresponding to a specific UpGranT Work Package. What follows is a structured account of the outputs achieved.

- 10 Architects Grand Tourist Matrix Template (WP2.1)
- Structured database of bibliographic and archival sources to inform the structure of the UpGranT Repository (WP2.2)
- Database with sources dedicated to exemplary works authored by the ten selected Grand Tourists, supporting the implementation of the 3×6 Exemplary Buildings Matrix Template.
- 10 CAD files containing redrawings (plan, elevations, and 3D volumetric models) of the exemplary buildings visited during the GT1.

The full list included:

- Casa al Parco by Ignazio Gardella
- Casa Rustici by Giuseppe Terragni
- Castello Sforzesco by BBPR
- City Life Square by One Works
- Multipurpose Building in Corso Italia by Luigi Moretti
- Cadorna Square by Gae Aulenti
- Velasca Tower by BBPR
- Triennale Milano (Palace of the Arts) by Giovanni Muzio
- Segrate Townhall by Guido Canella
- INA residential building in Corso Sempione by Piero Bottoni

Additional outputs included:

- A set of interpretative drawings and compositional schemes for each of the above buildings.
- A general comparative matrix allowing comparison across all the interpretative drawings.
- A final slide presentation entitled *Icone del Novecento,* designed as a tour guide for future editions of the GT.

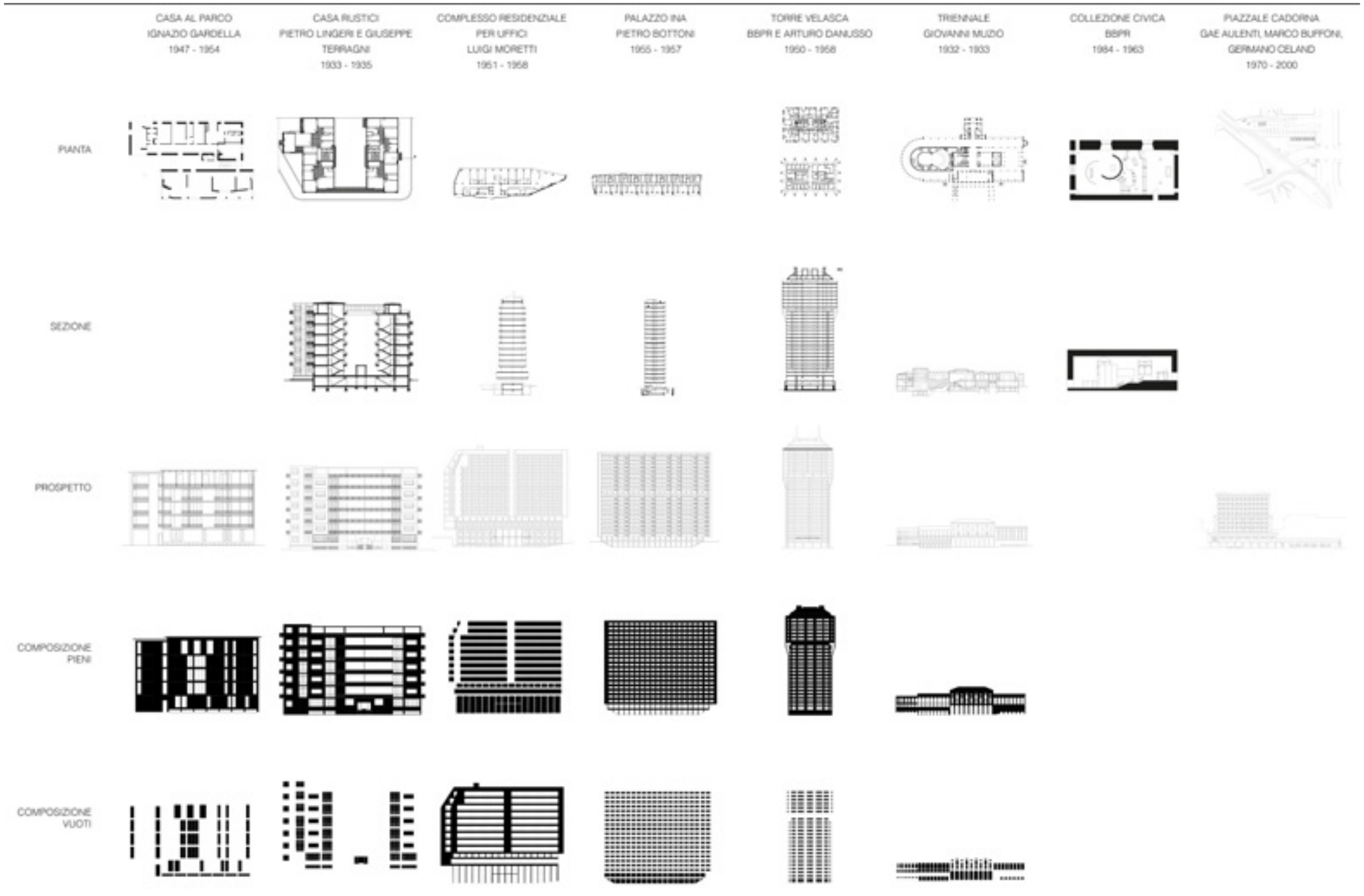

Fig. 1. Comparative matrix of visual interpretations of the buildings visited during the GT1 Milan itinerary.
Students: Mariapaola Fasulo, Andrea Franzetti, Francesca Galli, Giorgia Gambardella, Matteo Gatta, Michelle Pierri, and Alice Premoli.

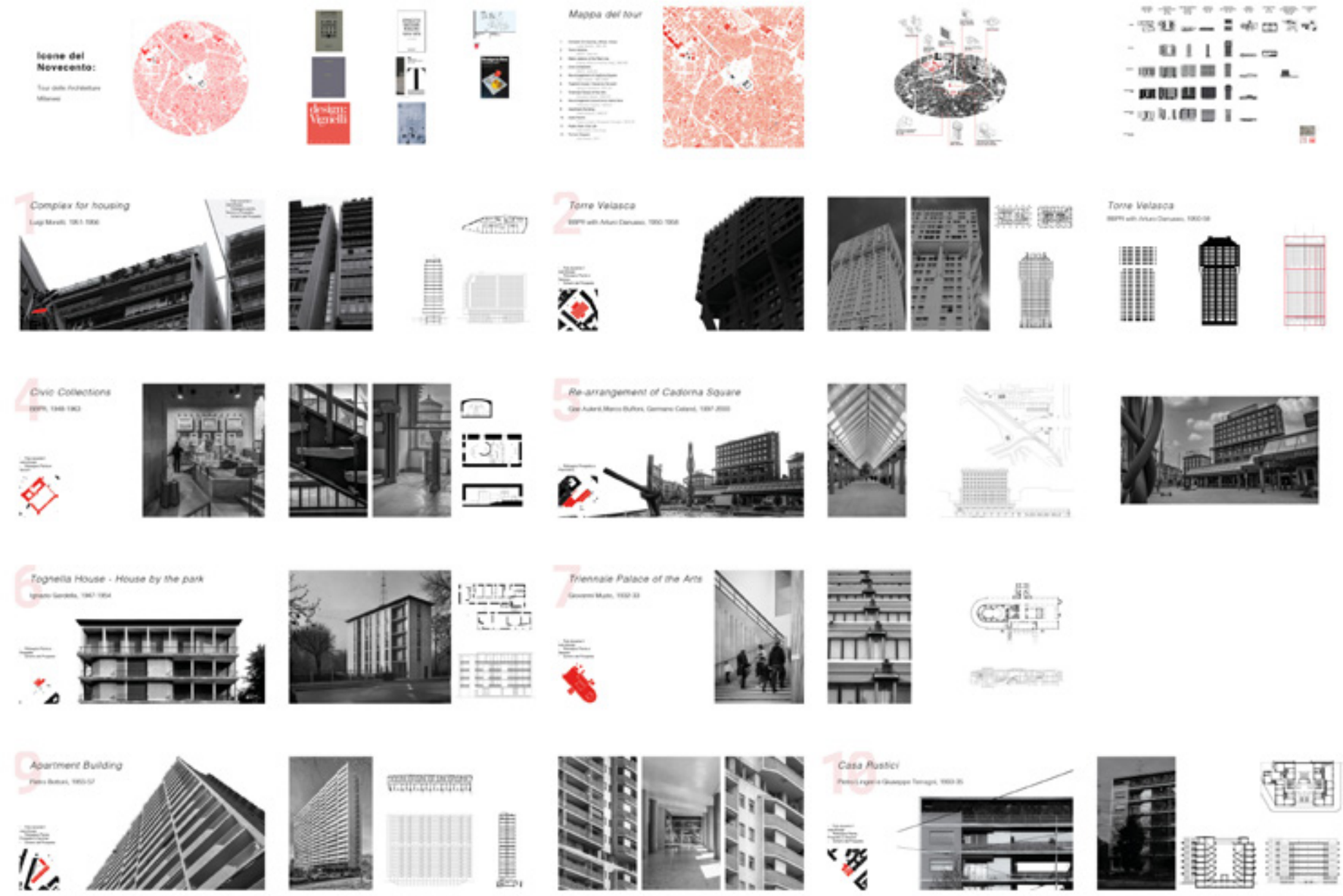

Fig. 2. Slides from the GT1 Guide Tour *Icone del Novecento*. 1–4: Itinerary. 5: Abaco. 6–7: Luigi Moretti, Multipurpose Buildings. 8–10: BBPR, Torre Velasca. 11–12: BBPR, Castello Sforzesco. 13–15: Gae Aulenti, Cadorna Square. 16–17: Ignazio Gardella, Tognella House. 18–19: Giovanni Muzio, Palace of the Arts (Triennale). 21–23: Piero Bottoni, Apartment Building. 24–25: Ignazio Gardella, Casa Rustici. Students: Mariapaola Fasulo, Andrea Franzetti, Francesca Galli, Giorgia Gambardella, Matteo Gatta, Michelle Pierri, and Alice Premoli.

UpGranT Internship Programme: Second Edition

Emanuela Margione

University
Politecnico di Milano (Polytechnic University of Milan)

Context
Milan, 2024–2025

Field of Study
Architectural Design

Degree Level
Bachelor's (3rd year)

ECTS Credits
4

Faculty
Aleksa Korolija, Emanuela Margione Cristina Pallini as academic tutor and UpGranT project leader

Students
Carlotta Agostinoni, Matilde Cicoli, Silvia Gechele, Antonio Grieci, Bianca Lanzarotti, Luca Lorizzo, Ludovica Manfren, Ilaria Ponzoni, Arianna Puddu, Francesco Quaini, Daniele Ravanelli, Leonardo Redaelli, Filippo Riva, Laura Riva, Simone Rizzini

Abstract
This teaching module takes the form of a bachelor's internship carried out at the Department of Architecture, Built Environment and Construction Engineering (ABC) at Politecnico di Milano, within the UpGranT research project (WP3.4 Teaching Module). The internship is a compulsory component of the bachelor's programme and lasts 100 hours. Starting from the general objectives of the UpGranT Erasmus+ project, this teaching module explores the role of travel as a formative instrument in architectural education by

revisiting the intellectual tradition of the Grand Tour within a contemporary pedagogical framework.

To test this possibility, in the second semester of the 2024–2025 academic year, 16 bachelor's students took part in a programme that combined direct spatial experience with the critical reading of architectural features, translating this reflection into three-dimensional souvenir models conceived as devices for disseminating selected interpretative concepts.

The programme unfolded through three complementary phases, each comprising several interconnected strands of activity aligned with specific objectives of the UpGranT work packages and engaging students through distinct yet complementary forms of intellectual work.

The first strand, linked to WP2.2 (Repository), was intentionally placed at the start of the programme and involved students in archival and bibliographic research to introduce them to the research theme and to enhance their understanding of the influence of travel on the education of ten Italian architects from the Milanese School (WP2.1). Students were required to compile a dedicated dossier for each architect, gathering, with the support of the teaching staff, a variety of archival and bibliographic materials, including portraits; selected texts by the architects documenting their journeys, or by scholars analysing the architects' formative travel experiences, and documentation of key projects chosen for their representativeness. To enhance this activity, students also visited various archives with the teaching staff, including the Archivio Gae Aulenti and the Archivio Piero Bottoni. This experience provided them with direct access to primary sources – original drawings, correspondence, photographs, and project documents – that substantially enriched the repository contributions and deepened their understanding of the architects' working processes. To conclude the research phase, students were asked to create a visual summary of this material through a Leporello (accordion booklet), bringing together the main information gathered during this initial phase.

This research activity also informed the second phase of the module. This phase was centred on travel and fieldwork and was characterised by three pedagogically designed itineraries intended to gradually increase students' autonomy.

The first itinerary took place in the historic centre of Milan and was designed and led by the teaching staff, who selected the buildings to be visited and framed the key design features to be addressed during the visit. The route traced and expanded upon the previous experience of the GT1, focusing on exemplary works of the twentieth-century and contemporary Milanese architecture, with particular attention to buildings associated with the ten selected Grand Tourists. The second itinerary extended the travel programme beyond the city centre to the Milanese hinterland, with visits to Paderno Dugnano, Baranzate and Gallarate. In this case, the tour was not led by the teaching staff but by invited experts and practising architects. One of them, Carlo Moretti, also opened his studio to students, who had the opportunity to interview him about his work and the role of travel in his education and professional practice. The third and final itinerary introduced a deliberate inversion of pedagogical roles, with the entire two-day tour organised by the students in Canton Ticino.

The final phase of the module was linked to the post-production activities for WP4 (Itineraries post-production) and WP3 (Souvenir). During this phase, students first finalised the maps of the three itineraries, producing cartographic representations that allow other architecture students and the wider public to replicate the routes.

Moreover, students were asked to produce a souvenir: a small interpretative architectural model, designed as an educational toy, representing one of the buildings they had visited.

The programme concluded with a photo session in which all the models were photographed to create a time-lapse video documenting the assembly process, which will be included in the dissemination activities for the final exhibition (WP5).

Objectives

This teaching module engaged bachelor's students in a structured exploration of travel as a formative component of architectural education. It rests on the premise that direct encounters with built space, through guided and self-directed itineraries, provide an essential means of acquiring architectural knowledge, while also initiating design processes that engage with the questions of contemporary architecture. Building on these premises and the experimental aims of the teaching module, the second edition pursued three main learning objectives.

The first objective was to develop students' ability to interpret the latent dimension of architecture through direct interaction with built space, focusing their observation on proportion, spatial atmospheres, the effects of light, compositional qualities and the relationship between structure and form alongside more conventional aspects such as historical information and dimensional data.

The second learning objective was to develop students' ability to translate spatial experience into forms of visual interpretation, strengthening their capacity to organise and re-elaborate the knowledge acquired during the itineraries. More specifically, it sought to involve students in a process of critical selection and synthesis of spatial and compositional principles, later articulated in the souvenir model.

The third and final objective was to explore model-making as a form of design thinking by strengthening students' ability to use models as tools for testing and reconfiguring spatial and compositional relationships. In this context, the souvenir model was conceived as an operational and heuristic micro-projective device through which design hypotheses could be explored, adjusted, and reworked, supporting an open-ended learning process and the development of creative thinking.

Taken together, the three learning objectives of this experimental teaching module show how travel informs architectural education, both in the immediacy of experience and over time, as what is encountered is gradually absorbed into memory and creatively reworked, thereby activating design thinking.

Method

The programme adopts a pluralist pedagogical approach, combining several distinct teaching methodologies drawn from the established tradition of travel-based pedagogies and shaped by the specific cognitive demands of each learning objective. These methodologies, together with their respective allocation of hours, are outlined below.

Teaching Methodology	Hours	Notes
Lecture-based learning	2	Introductory seminars on the Grand Tour tradition and its contemporary reinterpretation, the UpGranT research framework, and theoretical grounding in travel, memory, and the souvenir
Fieldwork learning	40	Three guided itineraries: Milan, the Milanese hinterland (Gallarate, Baranzate, Paderno Dugnano), and Canton Ticino (Bellinzona, Monte Carasso, Lugano)
Project-based learning	40	Production of architectural souvenir models, itinerary maps based on previous pedagogical experiences and a Leporello publication
Interactive, collaborative learning	10	Obsidian training session, group discussions, peer presentations, and critical exchange sessions
Laboratory-based learning	8	Archival research at Archivio Gae Aulenti and Archivio Piero Bottoni, and bibliographic research for the UpGranT Repository

Table 3

Starting from the main pedagogical objectives of the module, the itinerary activity, in its two components – fieldwork and post-production (40 + 40 hours) – was conceived as the epistemological core of the module and the primary site of knowledge production.

A further key methodological choice concerned the gradual increase in students' autonomy across the three itineraries. In the first Milan-based visit, the teaching staff guided the direct reading of the buildings, whereas in the final itineraries in Switzerland this role was progressively transferred to the students. This transition was accompanied by a deliberate step back by the teaching staff from their traditional role as authoritative interpreters, allowing students to develop their own critical gaze and take ownership of the critical discourse developed during the travel experience. This teaching approach had the ultimate aim of enabling students to take responsibility for selecting case studies, designing the itinerary, and, during fieldwork, presenting the buildings to their peers and teachers.

As a final step, the post-production phase of model-making was grounded in a methodological reflection on the relationship between travel, play and architectural learning. Particular emphasis was therefore placed on the production of the Souvenir (WP3), conceived as an operative and epistemic toy rather than a simple mnemonic object. Through the act of play, these souvenir-toys aimed to stimulate both architectural knowledge and creative design thinking. The programme also adopted a deliberate restriction to the non-digital fabrication of the souvenir-toys. This choice was pedagogically motivated, as handling physical materials foregrounds the haptic and tectonic dimensions of architecture that digital modelling tends to abstract.

Tools

The programme employed both digital and physical tools, selected to match the specific cognitive demands of each activity and ensure equitable access across the student cohort (all software was either provided by the Faculty of Architecture, Urban Planning and Construction Engineering at Politecnico di Milano or made freely available).

For the archival and bibliographic research phases, students worked with standard digital library tools, online archive databases, and the Obsidian knowledge management application. Obsidian was introduced to students as a tool for interconnecting information gathered during the research phase, linking biographical data, travel information, archival materials, and bibliographic references across the ten Grand Tourists. This choice reflects a pedagogical interest in making visible to undergraduate students the non-linear, associative structure of a research process.

The souvenir-toys were produced using intentionally light materials, such as coloured paper and other foldable, non-rigid media. The choice of foldable materials also met the brief requirement that the models be portable and reconfigurable, reinforcing their character as educational toys for exploration rather than as fixed, displayable artefacts. In this phase, students used conventional tools and techniques associated with architectural model-making.

During the itineraries, students were given complete freedom to document the buildings they observed using the tools and media of their choice. This approach enabled them to select the means that best captured their individual travel experiences and to reflect on the effectiveness of their tool choices during the post-production phase. Many students favoured using personal cameras, while others complemented photographic documentation with on-site sketches.

Course Materials

At the outset of the module, students were provided with a curated set of materials. These included an introductory dossier on the UpGranT project, its research aims, and the WP structure; a selection of archival materials relating to the ten Grand Tourists; the structure of the WP2 repository; and a concise bibliography addressing the history and theory of the Grand Tour in architectural education, the epistemology of travel as a form of knowledge production, and the theoretical literature on the souvenir.

Prerequisites

The module presupposes a foundational literacy in architectural history and theory at the second or third-year level of the bachelor's programme, including familiarity with the canonical monuments of European modern and contemporary architecture. At the outset of the internship programme, students are expected to be able to read and produce standard architectural drawings (plans, sections, elevations) and to possess basic proficiency in CAD and Adobe software.

No specific prior knowledge of travel, archival research, or model-making was required, as these skills were developed incrementally through the activities of the module.

Assessment

Under the regulations of the bachelor's programme, the internship activity is not graded, but academic credits are awarded upon successful completion of the required activities. To assess both the effectiveness of the experience and the extent to which its objectives were achieved, evaluation was organised across two complementary components: ongoing formative evaluation through tutorials and discussion sessions integrated into the fieldwork and souvenir production phases, and a summative evaluation of the final outputs at the conclusion of the programme.

Intermediate tutorials were primarily conducted during the post-production phase. These sessions were designed to guide students' reflection on the relationship between their direct spatial experience and the emerging formal choices embodied in the souvenir models. Feedback was delivered collectively, enabling peer learning and the exchange of interpretative approaches.

A dedicated intermediate presentation was scheduled following the completion of the Swiss itinerary, at which point students presented their self-directed research and itinerary proposals to the teaching staff and to their peers. This session served simultaneously as an assessment and as a pedagogical tool for deepening engagement with the case studies.

Evaluation

Evaluation criteria were defined to reflect both the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of the students' work, and to account for the heterogeneous nature of the outputs required by the module.

Quantitative criteria included the completion and accuracy of archival and bibliographic research contributions to the WP2 Repository, participation in all three itineraries and scheduled discussion sessions, and the submission of all required deliverables within the agreed deadlines.

Qualitative criteria focused on the capacity for critical architectural reading demonstrated through building presentations, and model-making activities. Specifically, the evaluation addressed: the ability to identify and articulate the most significant spatial, compositional, and tectonic characteristics of the visited buildings; the coherence and intellectual ambition of the translation of observed architectural qualities into formal choices embodied in the souvenir model; and the originality and communicative effectiveness of the souvenir-model.

During the Swiss itineraries, additional weight was given to the quality of students' autonomous research and their ability to organise thematically coherent presentations.

Particular evaluative emphasis was placed on the students' ability to move across different scales and registers of architectural thinking, from the direct embodied experience of space to its critical verbal articulation, and finally to its re-materialisation in a constructed object. This triangulation – experience, language, and making – was understood as the core intellectual competence that the second edition of the UpGranT Internship Programme sought to develop.

Deliverables

The programme was designed to produce a range of outputs corresponding to the research objectives of WP3, WP4 and WP5 of the UpGranT project, as well as to the pedagogical objectives of the internship programme. The expected outputs were:

- Production of architectural souvenir models (toy models), each conceived as a critical reinterpretation of a selected visited building, produced from foldable, non-rigid materials and designed to be dismountable and transportable.
- Three itinerary maps documenting the routes followed during the Milan, Milanese hinterland, and Canton Ticino tours, with graphical notation of the visited buildings and their relationships to adjacent significant works (WP4 GT Post-production)
- Contributions to the finalisation of the WP2 Repository, including the finalisation of archival dossiers for the ten Grand Tourists, organised according to the established categories (Portraits, Selected Texts, Works, Original Drawings, Processed Drawings, Pictures, References, Models, Travels).
- A visual board (Leporello) synthesising research on the travel itineraries of the ten Grand Tourists, with a selection of archival souvenirs, accompanied by individual profile cards.
- Time-lapse video documentation of the model assembly process, for use in the final exhibition (WP5 dissemination activities).

Student Feedback

The Learner Evaluation Questionnaire was developed as the primary assessment instrument to measure the educational impact and perceived learning outcomes of the UpGranT Internship Programme (Second Edition). Shared with students at the end of the programme, the questionnaire was designed to reflect the experimental nature of the teaching activities. It combined Likert-scale items (scored 1–5) with open-ended questions, allowing for both quantitative data aggregation and qualitative depth of analysis. The questionnaire comprised seven thematic modules, each designed to evaluate a specific phase of the internship experience:

- Introductory and preparatory phase: questions investigating the clarity of the presentation of the internship activities, the usefulness of preparatory materials, and the students' confidence in approaching the activities.
- Data collection and repository activities: items evaluating the effectiveness of bibliographic and archival research tasks, the use of digital tools such as Obsidian and Adobe software, and the perceived development of research skills.
- Preparatory phase for the student-led itinerary: items focused on the challenge and effectiveness of autonomous case study selection and presentation preparation for the Canton Ticino tour.
- On-site activities: evaluation of expectation alignment, the role of professors and external guides, documentation practices, and the use of different recording tools during the tours.
- Impact of the itineraries: questions exploring the formative value of the three itineraries (Milan, Milanese hinterland, and Canton Ticino), assessing on-site learning, the role of expert guidance, and the influence of direct architectural observation.
- Post-production phase: assessment of the Leporello and itinerary map production activities, with a detailed skill matrix covering graphic software use, visual communication, data synthesis, and critical awareness.
- Souvenir design and production: a dedicated section exploring the pedagogical clarity of the souvenir concept, the design process, its role as a creative and analytical tool, and its potential as a communication device for non-expert audiences.

The results of the questionnaire across the seven thematic sections are summarised below (the tables present the main findings relating to the three phases of the internship and do not provide an exhaustive account of the questionnaire structure).

<u>Preliminary Phase and Research Activities (Repository)</u>

Questions	Score (1–5)
Clarity of the UpGranT project presentation	3.91
Usefulness of preparatory materials	4.27
Student confidence before starting	4.00
Clarity of the Repository structure presentation	4.36
Effectiveness of the Repository as a learning tool	4.09
Value of bibliographic and archival research	4.36
Value of archival visits	4.45
Effectiveness of digital tools (Obsidian, Adobe)	4.09
Usefulness for future bibliographic skills	4.55

Table 4

The introductory phase of the programme received generally positive evaluations, with activities related to the Repository and the development of bibliographic skills receiving the highest ratings. In particular, bibliographic and archival research was highly rated for its contribution to understanding the relationship between travel and architectural education. Notably, visits to the archives of Gae Aulenti and Piero Bottoni also received high ratings, indicating that even undergraduate students recognised the value of direct engagement with primary sources. Overall, 72.7% of respondents reported that data collection and processing activities helped them develop new competencies. The skills identified by students included conducting structured bibliographic research, systematically organising archival materials, and using Obsidian for data management. However, 63.5% of students identified challenges during this phase of the programme, particularly in locating and selecting relevant material on the ten selected Grand Tourists, suggesting an initial difficulty in efficiently navigating archival and bibliographic sources.

<u>Itinerary Impact (Fieldwork Activities)</u>

Itinerary	Expectation Alignment Score (1–5)	% Choosing It as the Most Effective
Milan – professor-led	3.73	18.2%
Hinterland – external guides	4.09	18.2%
Canton Ticino – student-led	4.55	63.6%

Table 5

The three itineraries constituted the experiential core of the programme and received the highest satisfaction scores overall, highlighting students' interest in the role of travel in architectural education. The formative value of the combined itinerary experience received the highest score across all quantitative items, confirming that direct architectural observation

On-site and Impact Dimension	Mean Score (1–5)
Overall formative value of the itineraries	4.73
Willingness to repeat this type of experience	4.45
Professors' presentations and expertise (Milan)	4.09
Guides'/architects' presentations (Hinterland)	3.82
Ease of following the building descriptions on site	4.36
Usefulness of open discussions with professors	4.27
Preparatory phase: clarity of instructions for the itineraries	3.91
Preparatory phase: connecting theory with field experience	4.45
Student collaboration in preparing the Canton Ticino tour	4.55
Extent to which the itineraries included previously unknown buildings	3.45
Time allocated for the tours (adequacy)	3.64
Balance between guided and student-led activities	4.09
Number of itineraries was sufficient to grasp the role of travel in education	4.00

Table 6

remains a uniquely powerful pedagogical tool. Indeed, the willingness to repeat this kind of experience in the future scored 4.45/5, with 54.5% of students giving the maximum score of 5.

It is also worth noting that the scores across the three itineraries showed a clear progression, indicating that the itinerary requiring the greatest degree of student autonomy and preparation achieved the highest levels of satisfaction. This suggests that active learning and ownership of the experience strongly enhance the perceived value of the learning activities. Indeed, 63.6% of the participants selected the Canton Ticino student-led tour as the most effective itinerary for learning, citing the autonomy in case selection, the challenge of presenting the visited buildings to peers and teachers, and the emotional impact of encountering architectural works discovered through personal research.

Responses relating to tools and methods showed that photography was the predominant means of documentation, used by 90.9% of students, with only one student combining photography with sketching. Only a minority of students reported collecting physical tourist souvenirs during the tours (such as postcards, leaflets, or fragments), which may reflect a growing ecological awareness and a reduced inclination among younger generations towards the consumption of commercial products.

Post-Production Activities: Development of Itinerary Maps and Visual Implementation of Repository Data

Skill	Substantial Improvement	Moderate Improvement	No Improvement
Structuring data for visual communication	82%	9%	9%
Selecting and systematising visual/textual materials	73%	18%	9%
Designing a coherent visual presentation	73%	27%	0%
Translating field experience into analytical/creative outputs	73%	27%	0%
Developing critical awareness of visual tools	73%	27%	0%
Synthesising information into clear visual outputs	64%	36%	0%
Graphic design software	25%	75%	0%
Data-analysis software	29%	57%	14%

Table 7

The post-production phase analysed in this section of the questionnaire, focused on the production of itinerary maps and the visual presentation of the data collected for the UpGranT Repository. These activities received a moderately positive evaluation for their contribution to soft-skills development. The structuring of collected data and materials for visual communication recorded the highest level of substantial improvement, reported by 82% of students. Competencies related to the design of coherent visual presentations, the translation of field experience into analytical maps, and the development of a critical awareness of the importance of graphic design tools – 73% of students reported substantial improvement.

Souvenir Design and Production

Souvenir Dimension	Mean Score (1–5)
Clarity of the explanation of the souvenir concept (pedagogical role)	4.18
Clarity of the souvenir as a micro-design machine / architectural toy	4.27
Effectiveness for developing creativity	3.91
Effectiveness as a tool for visual interpretation and learning	3.91
Contribution to the spatial understanding of the project	3.82
Usefulness as a communicative tool for non-expert audiences	4.09
Peer feedback / teamwork contribution to souvenir refinement	4.18
Usefulness for reflecting on architecture, travel, and representation	3.45
Contribution to understanding travel in architectural education	3.45
Inclusivity considered during design	3.00
Souvenir accessible to people with disabilities	3.64
Likelihood of reusing this technique in future projects	3.64

Table 8

The section of the questionnaire addressing the design and production of the souvenirs yielded the most nuanced and varied results. The effectiveness of the souvenir in supporting reflection on the relationship between architecture, travel, and representation was rated only moderately high. By contrast, its potential for spatial learning and its effectiveness in fostering design creativity were rated somewhat more positively. According to 80% of students, the souvenir could actually be considered a genuine design tool. Students described its value in terms of its ability to extract and communicate the essential spatial and compositional qualities of a building.

Above all, students consistently valued the conceptual challenge of selecting which architectural principles to represent and how to materialise them using foldable paper. Several students reported initial frustration with the constraints of the material before arriving at solutions they found satisfactory, a process that itself provides clear pedagogical evidence of learning through making.

The requirement to design for tactile accessibility, ensuring that the models could be meaningful to visually impaired users, was widely identified as one of the most intellectually demanding aspects of the exercise. The principal concern emerging from the questionnaire, however, related to inclusivity. Only 36.4% of students reported that their souvenir was accessible to people with disabilities.

Overall Assessment

Overall Impact Dimension	Score (1–5)
Critical and reflective attitude towards architecture	4.64
Change in perception of direct observation/travel	4.64
Usefulness for future academic/professional path	4.55
Willingness to repeat this kind of experience	4.45
Interdisciplinary/international enrichment	4.45
Formative value of itineraries (overall)	4.73
Overall programme satisfaction	4.18
Understanding of the structure of a European research project	3.91
Adequacy of time allocated for the internship	3.91

Table 9

The broader impact of the programme on students' professional development was evaluated very positively. The development of a more critical and reflective attitude towards architecture reached 92.8%, one of the high-

est scores recorded, matched by responses indicating a shift in the perceived role of direct observation in design thinking (92.8%). The perceived usefulness of the internship for future academic or professional pathways was 91%, indicating a strong sense of transferability of the skills and knowledge developed through the programme.

The interdisciplinarity and international dimensions of the UpGranT project were also positively evaluated (89%), and 72.7% of students indicated that this type of activity should be more fully integrated into architectural curricula. Several respondents also reported an increased interest in architectural research following the internship experience, suggesting a broadly positive disposition towards research-integrated education, even at the undergraduate level.

Based on the results of this questionnaire, it appears that the pedagogical approach used in this programme is both intellectually grounded and operationally viable within a structured academic curriculum. The quality and diversity of the students' outputs indicate that engagement with architecture through travel, combined with the practice of souvenir-making, can constitute a genuinely formative experience.

Moreover, the tangible and intangible outputs of the programme offer an initial yet meaningful contribution to ongoing efforts to re-engage with the embodied and experiential dimensions of architectural education, which is increasingly shaped by digital modes of knowledge production.

Overall, the main pedagogical assessment of this teaching module can be summarised as follows: (Table 10)

Area	Mean Score	Assessment
Formative value of itineraries	4.73 / 5	Excellent
Critical/reflective attitude development	4.64 / 5	Excellent
Perception of direct observation and travel	4.64 / 5	Excellent
Utility for future academic/professional path	4.55 / 5	Excellent
Preparatory/bibliographic phase (overall)	4.30 / 5	Very good
On-site activities and expert guidance	4.10 / 5	Good
Post-production skills development	3.82 / 5	Good
Souvenir as a reflective learning tool	3.45 / 5	Moderate
Accessibility of buildings and souvenirs	3.15 / 5	Needs improvement
Inclusivity in souvenir design	3.00 / 5	Critical area

Table 10

Course Review

While the overall evaluation of the second edition of the UpGranT Internship Programme may be considered positive, a closer reading of the quantitative and qualitative data reveals several methodological challenges that warrant careful attention when designing future teaching activities.

The most significant structural limitation identified by students concerns the balance between the breadth of the itineraries and the depth of engagement with individual case studies. The ambition to cover a wide range of buildings meant that each was afforded only limited time, constraining the attentive encounter with architecture that the pedagogical approach of the module seeks to foster. Future iterations of the module might therefore reduce the number of visits in favour of longer engagement with fewer case studies, allowing more time for documentation through photography and drawing, more sustained discussion, as observed during the Lugano itinerary, and greater scope for individual on-site exploration.

The clear preference for the student-led itinerary in Canton Ticino over professor-led or externally guided formats also raised important questions regarding the appropriate degree of student autonomy in experiential learning. The itinerary that required the highest level of independent preparation, and therefore the greatest cognitive investment, generated the highest levels of satisfaction. This suggests that forms of active engagement are perceived by students as more meaningful. However, some responses indicate that students found it challenging to move directly from fully guided to fully autonomous formats. This points to the need for a more gradual progression. A structured model could be introduced in the future, moving from guided to partially autonomous and finally to fully autonomous itineraries, with each stage building explicitly on the skills developed in the previous one. The suggestion of a mixed-lead itinerary, proposed in one of the anonymous answers, also merits further consideration. A hybrid format, in which students and the teaching staff share responsibility for leading the visits, could combine the strengths of both approaches. This might be supported by intermediate debriefing sessions after each visit, allowing students to compare perspectives and consolidate their learning.

The souvenir-making component also revealed a number of conceptual challenges. Although 81.8% of students considered the souvenir a design tool, the corresponding Likert score (3.45/5) indicates some difficulty using it to reflect critically on the relationship among architecture, travel, and representation. This discrepancy suggests that, while students grasped the theoretical premise of the souvenir as a micro-scale design device mediating between experience and design, they encountered challenges in translating this understanding into a coherent physical object.

Future developments of the module could therefore include dedicated workshops or tutorial sessions during both the itinerary and souvenir-making phases, explicitly supporting students in the process of translating spatial experience into a tangible artefact, with particular attention to spatial, material, and compositional qualities. It may also be beneficial to provide a curated set of reference examples, including outputs from previous editions or similar experimentations where available, to guide students in this process. In addition, introducing alternative formats alongside the current pop-up and box models could provide greater flexibility, enabling students to define their own interpretation of the souvenir and represent conceptual themes more effectively.

Outcomes

The results achieved in the second edition of the UpGranT Internship Programme were accordingly diverse and at times surprising, demonstrating how constraints, such as the use of paper materials and the emphasis on tactile, manual model production, can prove more generative than restrictive.

The outcomes of this module were both tangible and intangible. The shift to student autonomy appeared to catalyse a qualitative change in the depth of critical engagement. The Canton Ticino itinerary, in which students assumed full responsibility for research, selection, and the presentation of the selected projects, generated particularly notable intangible results. The critical reading of Aurelio Galfetti's intervention at Castelgrande in Bellinzona (1981–1991) – which addressed the complex relationships among contemporary architectural language, historical context, and topographic intervention – demonstrated a level of analytical sophistication that surpassed that observed in earlier, teacher-led itinerary discussions.

Additionally, the tangible outputs included:

- Seven toy-like souvenir models of the following visited buildings:
  - Corso Italia Multipurpose Building, Milan (Luigi Moretti) – dismountable box model. Souvenir model by Ilaria Ponzoni and Laura Riva.

• Sforzesco Castle exhibition hall, Milan (BBPR) – dismountable box model. Souvenir model by Arianna Puddu.
• Tilane Library, Paderno Dugnano (Gae Aulenti) – pop-up box model. Souvenir model by Daniele Ravanelli and Simone Rizzini.
• Contemporary Art Pavillion (PAC), Milan (Ignazio Gardella) – 360° openable model. Souvenir model by Silvia Gechele and Ludovica Manfren.
• Nostra Signora della Misericordia Church, Baranzate (Mangiarotti, Morassutti, Favino) – pop-up model. Souvenir model by Leonardo Redaelli and Filippo Riva.
• Casa Bianca and Casa Nera, Bellinzona (Aurelio Galfetti) – pop-up model. Souvenir model by Carlotta Agostinoni and Antonio Grieci.
• Public Swimming Pool, Bellinzona (Aurelio Galfetti) – pop-up model. Souvenir model by Matilde Cicoli and Luca Lorizzo.

- Two maps documenting the replicable itineraries in Milan, the Milanese hinterland and Canton Ticino. The maps were developed using a specific graphic language to highlight both the itinerary and the buildings visited in relation to the morphology of the city.
- A visual board (Leporello) reflecting the material collected within the Polimi Repository about the Ten Grand Tourists. The Leporello publication, conceived as an additional output beyond the original objectives of the project, represented a significant collective achievement. This document is a visually and intellectually coherent synthesis of the research conducted during the internship, serving as both a scholarly reference and a dissemination tool accessible to broader audiences.

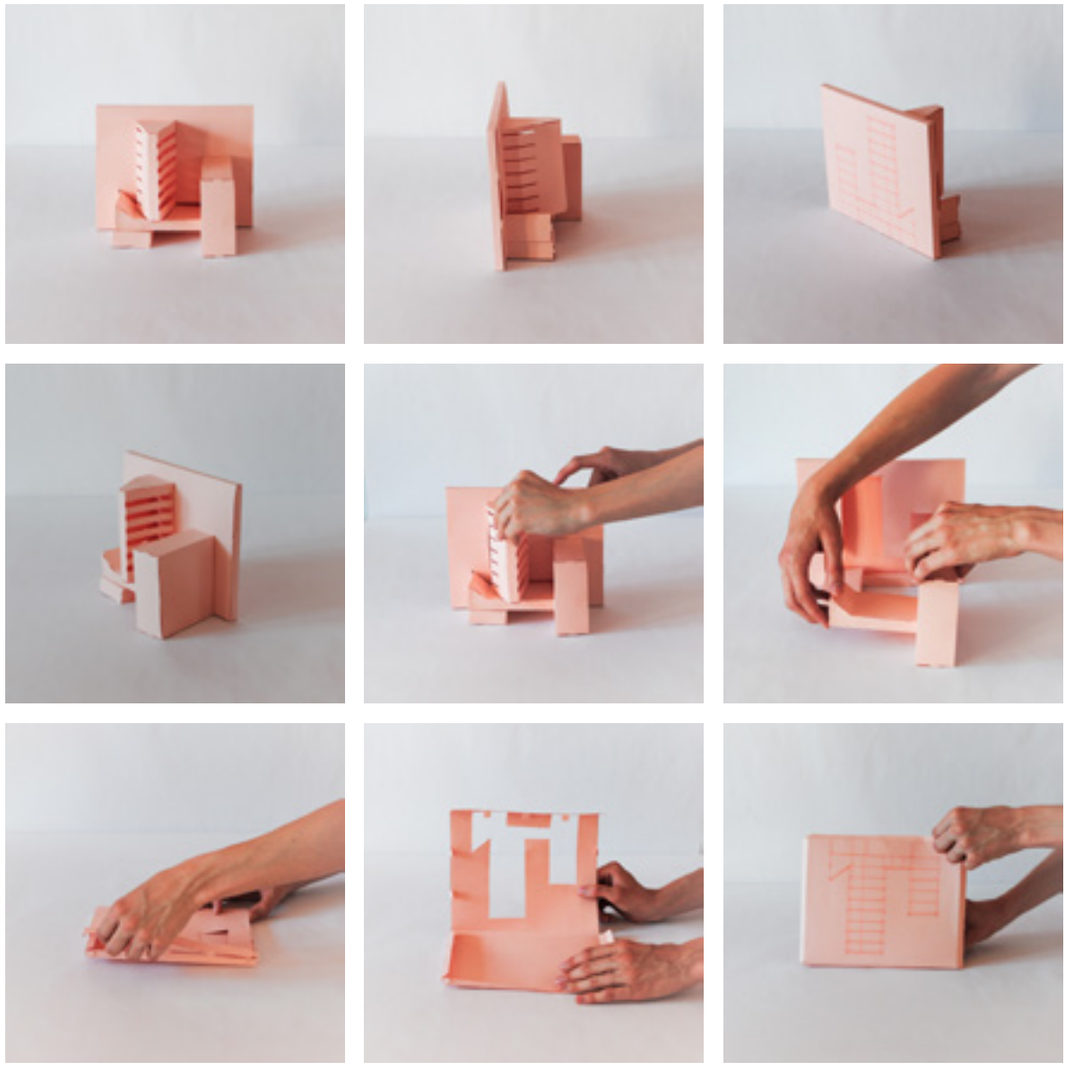

Fig. 1. Luigi Moretti, 1951–1956. Multipurpose Building, Milan. Souvenir by Ilaria Ponzoni and Laura Riva.

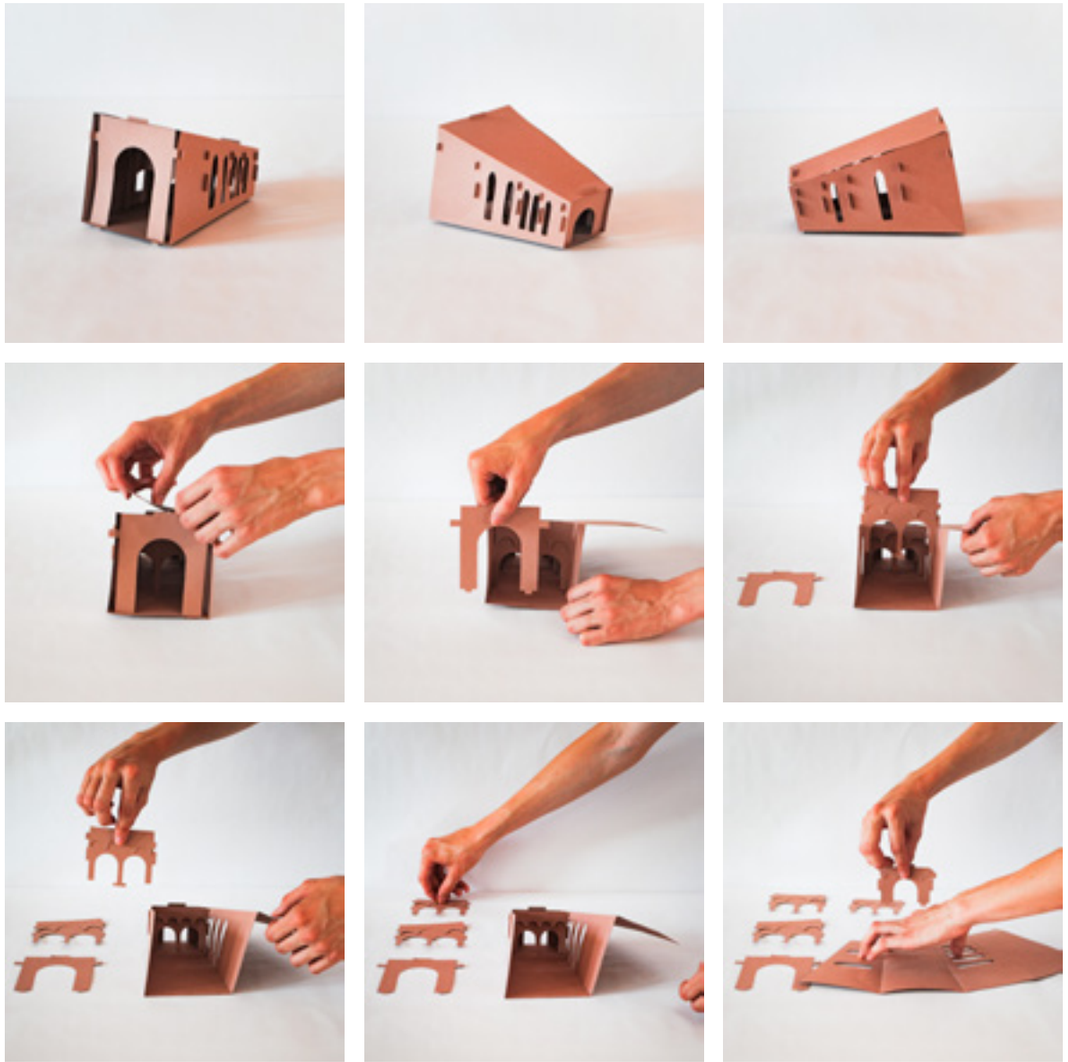

Fig. 2. BBPR, 1948–1963. Sforzesco Castle exhibition hall, Milan. Souvenir by Arianna Puddu.



Fig. 3. Gae Aulenti, 2009. Tilane Library, Paderno Dugnano (Milan). Souvenir by Daniele Ravanelli and Simone Rizzini.



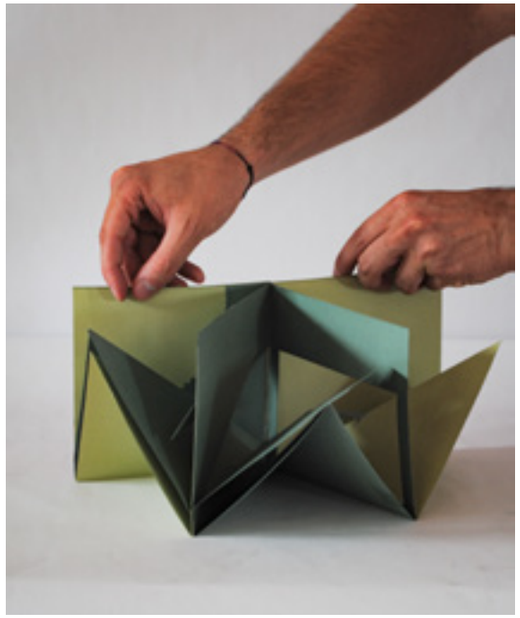

Fig. 4. Ignazio Gardella, 1947–1954. Contemporary Art Pavillion (PAC), Milan. Souvenir by Silvia Gechele and Ludovica Manfren.

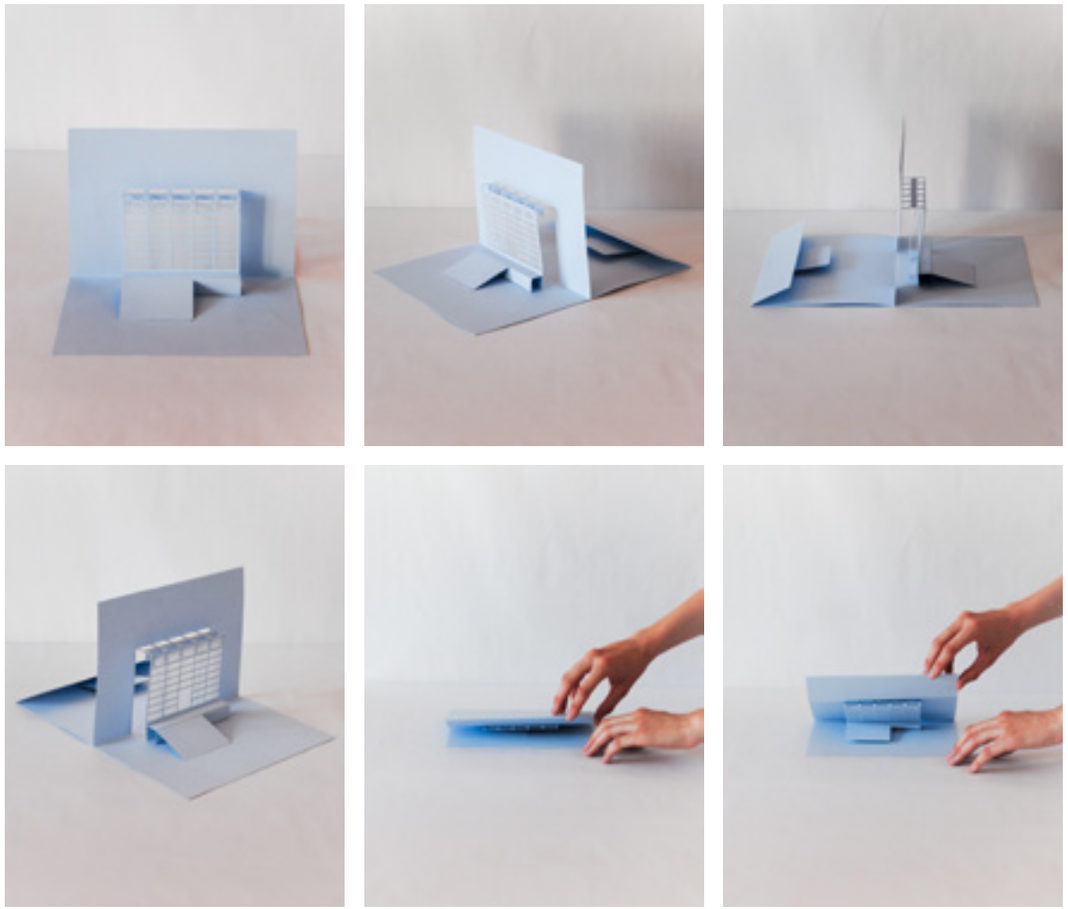

Fig. 5. Morassutti Bruno, Angelo Mangiarotti, Aldo Favini, 1956–1957. Nostra Signora della Misericordia Church, Baranzate (Milan). Souvenir by Leonardo Redaelli and Filippo Riva.



Fig. 6. Aurelio Galfetti, 1967–1970. Public Swimming Pool, Bellinzona. Souvenir by Matilde Cicoli and Luca Lorizzo.

They Travel. They Learn. They Design. On the Persistence of the Formative Voyage

Emanuela Margione

Introduction

The UpGranT Thesis Programme constitutes the second phase of a broader pedagogical inquiry conducted within the framework of the UpGranT project. Building on the experience of the Internship Programme, it sought to bring scholarly research on educational journeys into productive tension with the lived experience of travel, and to use that experience as a lens through which specific architectural themes might be investigated.

Third-year students from the AUIC School at Politecnico di Milano were therefore invited to conclude their bachelor's studies by producing a critical essay on the place that travel might continue to occupy in contemporary architectural education.

The programme resulted in 12 bachelor's theses by 13 students, 6 of whom had also participated in the activities of the internship programme. The theses were organised around two thematic categories, *Tales* and *Itineraries,* each reflecting a distinct approach to travel as an instrument of knowledge and design thinking. The *Itineraries* thesis category grew out of a deceptively simple premise: students were asked to design and undertake their own journey in order to investigate a specific field of inquiry. Each student, therefore, chose a theme, traced a route around it, and documented what they encountered through narrative and representational means suited to their inquiry. The underlying ambition was to test whether sustained

physical engagement with a subject could yield a form of architectural knowledge that archival research alone could not.

The *Tales* theses, by contrast, reconstruct the formative travels of different architects, tracing how direct experience of place shaped their design or teaching methods. The case studies span a wide chronological and geographical range, from Sir John Soane to Frank Lloyd Wright; from Lina Bo Bardi and Gae Aulenti to Álvaro Siza and John Hejduk; from the shared trajectories of Aino Marsio and Alvar Aalto, and Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, to more collective and institutional experiences such as those of the Soviet delegations and the case of the Estonian architect Raine Karp. Several students in this category also undertook field trips, extending their research beyond archival and bibliographical sources.

Two interrelated questions informed the design of this module. The first concerns whether the formative journey of architects effectively culminated in the twentieth century, as the canonical status attributed to Le Corbusier's *Voyage d'Orient* has often been taken to imply. The canonisation of that journey as the paradigmatic architect's voyage has generated a persistent assumption that the mechanisms of architectural travel – the encounter with unfamiliar spatial conditions, the discipline of recording, and the gradual transposition of observed forms into design – reached their apex in the early twentieth century and have since been diluted within the routines of globalised mobility (von Moos 2009).

The second question, in turn, echoed the one that had already underpinned the Internship Programme, namely whether and how travel might recover its educational value in a context where it has lost its exceptional character and is increasingly mediated by the widespread circulation of images. In her doctoral thesis, Adriana Bernieri (2017) describes this shift through the notion of *sottinteso*, arguing that travel today no longer carries the sense of exceptionality and surprise it once held during the age of the Grand Tour, when travellers first encountered places they had previously known only through prints, engravings, or the accounts of others. Instead, it has become an implicit condition absorbed into the background of professional practice (Bernieri 2017, 12–13).

As the UpGranT research progressed, it became increasingly clear that these two interrelated questions could be addressed by returning to what arguably remains at the centre of the architect's work: the act of designing. If architectural practice ultimately converges in the design project, the issue shifts from whether travel still matters to *how* it matters and whether its role can be rediscovered when understood as a *projective device* within the design process.

What is at stake, and what the UpGranT Thesis Programme set out to explore, is therefore not the persistence of travel as an all-encompassing cultural experience, but the possible forms of its translation into critical design thinking. Gresleri's (1991) analysis of Le Corbusier's passage from diary to project remains, in this respect, a foundational reference, establishing the

Voyage d'Orient as a still-unsurpassed model of how travel might produce architecture. Moreover, there are, perhaps, no better words for explaining this concept than those Aldo Rossi offers in his famous *Scientific Autobiography*:

> "Perhaps the observation of things has remained my most important formal education, for observation later becomes transformed into memory. Now I seem to see all the things I have observed arranged like tools in a neat row; they are aligned as in a botanical chart, or a catalogue, or a dictionary. But this catalogue, lying somewhere between imagination and memory, is not neutral; it always reappears in several objects and constitutes their deformation and, in some way, their evolution" (Rossi 1981, 23).

This premise informed the structure of the programme, grounded in the hypothesis that the formative journey may be disaggregated into three distinct yet interrelated operations, each corresponding to a domain of architectural competence: how to prepare for and undertake travel, how to learn through spatial experience, and how to transpose that experience into creative design thinking. These three operations shaped the development of all 12 theses. Students working within the *Tales* category were asked to reconstruct the historical itineraries of the architects they studied and, above all, to examine each case through the lens of these three dimensions. Students in the *Itineraries* category were instead required to enact these operations first-hand, treating preparation, travel, and the slow sedimentation that leads to creative thinking as consecutive and interdependent phases of a single formative travel experience.

Taken together, the UpGranT theses constitute a body of work that, while by no means exhaustive, provides a possible starting point for rearticulating the contemporary educational character of the journey. What emerges from the similarities and differences revealed by the twelve dissertations is a notion of the journey as a site of ongoing epistemological negotiation. Across the cases examined, the capacity to observe, interpret, and translate spatial experience into design thinking is continuously tested and redefined, moving beyond the idea of a unified model of the architect's journey exemplified by the notion of the Grand Tour. In this sense, the experimental value of the UpGranT theses lies precisely in the way they allowed students to disaggregate the formative journey – directly through the *Itineraries* category and indirectly through the *Tales* category – into its constituent operations.

How to Travel

The first of these operations addresses the impact of preparation on the travel experience.

The focus of this part of the module is based on a premise that recurs throughout the historiography of architectural travel, according to which the architect's gaze is never entirely innocent. Anne Hultzsch (2014) ad-

dresses this phenomenon at length in her work *Architecture, Travellers and Writers*. *Constructing Histories of Perception 1640–1950,* where she demonstrates that, in the history of travel, the perception of architecture is inseparable from the linguistic and optical frameworks that the observer brings to it. For example, the seventeenth-century traveller John Evelyn's gaze was shaped by the Royal Society's empiricist programme before he ever set foot in Italy (Hultzsch 2014, 154). Centuries later, the young Jeanneret – who would become Le Corbusier, the architect, only after his well-known voyage – studied Gusman's publications on Pompeii and the Villa Adriana before encountering Roman architecture in person (Bernieri 2017, 31–32). Even in the late twentieth century, Alejandro Aravena recounts how, in Chile, the only available experience of European architecture came through Fernando Pérez's lectures, which served as a preparatory imaginary before any physical journey (Aravena 2007, 166).

As these cases demonstrate, across different historical periods, the eye of the travelling architect seems to be equipped well before the journey through reading, professional training, the influence of teachers, and, at times, previous travel experience.

Moreover, today more than ever, the proliferation of digital images, published drawings, digitally accessible buildings, videos, and augmented-reality spatial reconstructions means that architects may arrive at a site having already consumed hundreds of representations of it, progressively distancing the experience of direct architectural observation from the traveller's physical displacement. Even before departure, a dense archive of prior sightlines has been constructed by the travelling architect, making it ever more difficult to sustain the illusion of an unmediated encounter with the built world.

Within this condition, the preparation of the architect's gaze becomes central to any attempt to rethink the educational role of travel, including within the UpGranT Thesis Programme.

The issue addressed by this part of the programme, therefore, is no longer how to recover the educational value of travel by recreating the conditions of the Grand Tour, avoiding the accumulation of prior images and interpretations, or grounding the journey in encounters with the exotic and the unexpected. What matters instead is the capacity to work within this accumulation and, critically, against it.

One of the most interesting positions in this respect is that of Luis Moreno Mansilla, later explored in Sara Nota's thesis. In his doctoral thesis, *Apuntes de viaje al interior del tiempo* (2002), Mansilla recounts spending nearly two years walking through Italian ruins and monuments, increasingly haunted by the sense that other architects had stood in the same places before him (Mansilla 2002, 10–11). From this intuition, he developed a highly personal method for investigating architectural contexts through travel, juxtaposing the records left by different architects over time in relation to the same buildings and revealing how different formations can produce radically

different perceptions and interpretations of the same spatial reality (Mansilla 2002, 16–21). Luis Moreno Mansilla's critical position, therefore, appears to take the form of a reinterpretation that operates within the interstitial spaces left open by the readings of those who came before him.

Mansilla's reflections suggest another important, perhaps deeper, aspect underpinning the structure and objectives of this part of the UpGranT Thesis Programme. The preparation of the gaze often translates into a more complex preparation of the mind, already engaged with a problem and thus able to recognise the significance of what it encounters (Mindrup 2015). In defining the learning objectives of this section, what mattered was not simply the reinvention of the act of seeing, but also the enhancement of the act of recognising. Recognition implies that the architect does not approach the journey as a passive observer waiting for revelation – an assumption that also underpins the UpGranT Internship Programme – but as someone already equipped with specific questions, references, hypotheses, and concerns through which what is encountered can acquire meaning. Preparing the gaze and preparing the mind in this way makes it possible to recognise, during the journey, a relation, a form, a spatial condition, or a problem that may later be projected elsewhere and translated into another context.

Within the framework of this section of the UpGranT Thesis Programme, this act of recognition appeared particularly important because it suggested that travel, in its educational dimension, may already begin to enter the field of design at the moment the journey is planned. The construction of a bibliography, the definition of a research question, the selection of specific buildings and places, and even the anticipation of what might be encountered all contribute to shaping the conditions under which something can be recognised as significant and later used in the design process.

Starting from these premises, students participating in this programme were asked, in the *Tales* category, to investigate how the architects they studied had prepared their journeys and, in the *Itineraries* category, to define precise research questions before constructing their own itineraries.

It is interesting to note that, after the implementation of the programme, this principle of the prepared gaze and prepared mind emerges consistently across all the UpGranT theses, revealing four registers of travel, each associated with a different form of preparation.

The most immediately recognisable form is the classical educational journey as professional formation, inherited from the Grand Tour tradition and later institutionalised through fellowships and academic prizes that provided both the occasion for travel and the framework of expectations guiding the traveller's attention.

From John Soane's Italian journey, funded by the Royal Academy's King's Travelling Studentship and investigated in the thesis of Sara Nota *Architects on the Move*, to Hejduk's Fulbright year in Rome in 1953, investigated – with the support of Prof. Lamberto Amistadi (UpGranT PI-UNIBO) – by Eleonora Marzolla in her work entitled *Masque on the Move*. From

Venturi's residence at the American Academy between 1954 and 1956, examined by Arianna Puddu in *Educating the Gaze*, to Mansilla's two years in Italy under the scholarship of the Spanish Academy in Rome, once again investigated in the thesis of Sara Nota. Even Aino Marsio and Alvar Aalto's first Italian journey in 1924, investigated in the thesis of Ilaria Ponzoni *Tale of an Endless Journey*, might be included in this category. Although undertaken as a honeymoon, their travel was deliberately transformed into a study tour institutionalised by the tradition of the Helsinki Polytechnic, where Aalto had studied under Armas Lindgren and Gunnar Asplund, both architect-travellers who had themselves lived and worked in Italy (Mangone 2002).

The second register is ideological, encompassing journeys conceived as instruments of state policy. For example, the Soviet architectural delegations, investigated in Sara Nota's thesis – in which we might also add the figure of Raine Karp, investigated and interviewed by Leonardo Redaelli in his thesis *Between Borders and Travel Horizons* developed with the support of Ass. Prof. Gregor Taul (UpGranT PI-EKA) – were not travelling to cultivate individual sensibilities but to extract technical and typological solutions applicable to mass housing projects. Their preparation was determined by political directives rather than personal curiosity, and what they were expected to see was largely prescribed before departure (Toson 2022; Jākobsone 2025; Taul 2025).

The third register is existential, encompassing journeys shaped above all by various forms of displacement. For example, Gae Aulenti's international itineraries, as documented in Daniele Ravanelli's thesis, *Chronicles of a "Steam-Powered" Architect,* were undertaken in response to an emotional need to distance herself from her own context. Significantly, in Aulenti's case, the impulse toward displacement did not preclude a rigorous preparation. Her travels were structured around thematic itineraries, sometimes devoted to the work of specific architects, sometimes organised around building types or spatial problems, turning what might have been an act of personal escape into a disciplined instrument of inquiry.

This category may also include one of the *Itineraries* theses. In *Street of Open Words*, Martina Ghilardi set out to investigate whether and how architecture could function as an *urban activator* in contexts of suburban fragmentation. This question led her to Porto, where a year and a half of academic residence at FAUP created a condition of temporary uprooting that allowed her to observe aspects of the city that would probably have remained invisible within the limited time frame of a conventional study trip. The extended period of immersion enabled her to move beyond the isolated building and to recognise recurring urban conditions, everyday practices, and the more subtle ways in which architecture interacts with the life of the city. Within this process, she developed both a series of thematic surveys of contemporary Portuguese architecture and what she described as a learning-by-travelling approach.

The fourth and final register is *epistemological* and includes journeys conceived as deliberate instruments of architectural inquiry. Scarpa's 1969 journey to Japan marked the culmination of decades of study, nourished by a deeply personal curiosity about Japanese culture (Pierconti 2007). It is within this category, and according to the fundamental principle of travel as an experimental field within which to investigate specific research questions, that most of the *Itineraries* theses are situated. For example, Silvia Gechele's research question, investigated in her thesis *In the Architect's Shoes* and centred on the relationship between Carlo Scarpa's Japanese experience and his architecture in the Veneto region, led her to develop two connected itineraries. The first retraced Scarpa's 1969 journey through Japan, while expanding it with additional stops focused on contemporary architecture, which she considered relevant to a present-day rereading of his experience. The second brought the investigation back to the Veneto, concluding with visits to Scarpa's buildings across the region in order to compare the Japanese references with their later architectural translation. Another student, Francesco Quaini, directed his fieldwork towards Switzerland, particularly to Canton Ticino, in order to investigate the relationship between architecture and the ground, more specifically through the elementary operations of excavation, levelling, and terracing. In this way, he could study the buildings discussed in his thesis, *From the Shaping of the Ground to Architectural Form,* within their actual topographical conditions. Finally, in their thesis, *The Construction of a City*, Matilde Cicoli and Luca Lorizzo explored the way Aurelio Galfetti's individual projects contributed to shaping a contemporary image of Bellinzona, an inquiry that led them to return to the city several times and to organise each visit around a different interpretative thread. In this case, repeated travel, combined with an evolving critical focus, informed and strengthened their architectural observation.

What these cases seem to collectively suggest, across both the *Tales* and the *Itineraries* categories, is that the impact of travel today depends less on the exceptionality of the destination than on the precision and depth of the questions that precede it. This aspect of *preparation* also helps to clarify how the educational role of travel may be redefined under contemporary conditions. As already noted, journeys are now often preceded by a dense accumulation of images and representations. If the significance of the journey is measured primarily by its capacity to produce astonishment, then its relevance inevitably weakens as destinations become more accessible and more extensively represented beforehand through different forms of media. Yet what has already been seen before departure may itself become a useful instrument for orienting attention and formulating questions. In this sense, *the preparation of the gaze* does not diminish the pedagogical impact of travel or of the encounter with the unexpected. Rather, it shifts that significance towards the traveller's capacity to arrive already prepared to recognise, interpret, and learn from what is encountered.

How to Learn

If the first operation concerned the preparation of the journey, the second addresses what happens once the architect is there, standing in front of a building, walking through a city, encountering a spatial condition for the first time or, in some cases, for the second or third time with different eyes.

The question underlying this section is one that the literature has addressed in various ways: what do architects do while they travel, and how do they learn? Perhaps the most well-known example remains Le Corbusier, who, during his Voyage d'Orient, focused less on the precise construction and structure of the buildings he encountered and more on their underlying geometric forms – squares, cubes, spheres, or cylinders. It is not by chance that he returned to this aspect in *The Lesson of Rome*, later published in *Towards a New Architecture* (Le Corbusier [1923] 1986, 159).

The *Tales* category of the UpGranT Thesis Programme offered students the opportunity to investigate this question by reconstructing these learning processes, tracing where architects travelled, what they encountered, how they engaged with their surroundings, and how these experiences later informed what they came to understand, retain, and translate into architectural knowledge. What emerged was a heterogeneous range of distinct forms of inquiry, each tied to a specific way of engaging with encountered spaces and each producing a different kind of architectural knowledge.

For example, as noted by Maria Vittoria Mirra and Dalila Ranzani in their thesis *Journey of an (in)disciplinado Architect*, Siza sketches moments of everyday life, such as a figure crossing a square, the shadow cast by a cornice, or a domestic scene glimpsed through a doorway. His drawings rarely isolate the building as an autonomous object; they capture it within the texture of its use, as if what he sought to understand was not the architecture itself but the way it participates in sculpting its physical context and the life around it. A similar attention, though entrusted to photography rather than drawing, can be found in Gunnar Asplund, whom Mansilla contrasts with Louis Kahn, a parallel also explored in Sara Nota's thesis. In Kahn's case, representation seems to move away from the visible world towards the expression of an inner intention, acquiring value through its capacity to evoke a personal universe shaped by geometry and light (Mansilla 2002, 23).

Another example is that of Gae Aulenti, who, alongside the numerous photographs she would later critically rework once back home (Korolija, Margione 2025), kept what might be described as a logbook. As explored in Daniele Ravanelli's thesis, she often travelled with a diary, where she recorded the programme of the day, brief impressions, and observations about what had struck or disappointed her, in a practice that seems closer to self-interrogation than to documentation, as though the purpose of writing was to trace the broader dimension of the visited places.

Within the *Itineraries* category, students were asked to address the *learning process* by documenting, as precisely as possible, the moments when direct encounters with a building or site brought to the surface forms of knowledge that their preparatory research, however thorough, could not, by its nature, have produced. The purpose of this requirement, however, was not to test the accuracy of the students' prior study, but to make visible a specific dimension of architectural learning that depends on the presence of the body in space, and that no accumulation of mediated sources seems able to replace. Students were therefore encouraged to keep a record of these moments of emerging knowledge through journals, annotated photographs, sketches, or other means.

In Silvia Gechele's thesis, her experience in Japan offers a concrete example of this process. Months of preparatory research, which also included watching films, had already provided her with a detailed analytical framework through which to read Scarpa's relationship with Japanese architecture. Yet, as her travel journal makes clear, it was the direct observation of aspects belonging to the register of experience — the duration of a spatial sequence, the way a threshold modulates the passage between interior and exterior, or the quality of a surface perceived through peripheral vision while moving through a room — that gave her a deeper understanding both of Japanese architectural principles and of Carlo Scarpa's interpretation of them.

In Francesco Quaini's work, the fieldwork in Canton Ticino led to a comparable realisation. Walking the terrain around Castelgrande, designed by Aurelio Galfetti in Bellinzona, he began to understand how the choice of materials at the junction between architecture and the ground can signal continuity or discontinuity with the natural surface. The proportions of Galfetti's access to the castle, legible in section as a vertical passage, revealed on site their capacity to produce a sense of estrangement, accompanying the visitor in what feels almost like a metaphysical transition from the main square to the upper level.Similarly, the role of light – and of darkness, its equally essential counterpart – in shaping the dimensionality of these spaces proved to be something that could be grasped only through direct experience. The way natural light enters an excavated space, the way it sculpts the boundary between what has been carved out and what has been built, and way darkness compresses and then releases the perception of depth, appear as conditions that analytical drawings can indicate but that only the body, moving through the space, can apprehend as architectural qualities. Francesco Quaini's fieldwork, therefore, seems to have helped him transform his analytical categories into a more embodied and three-dimensional form of understanding, allowing him to move from the abstract knowledge that a building is excavated into the ground to the direct experience of what that excavation means as a spatial and physical condition, an understanding that could only emerge through his presence on the site.

How to Design

Underlying the third component of the programme is the idea that the materials produced during the travel experience – whether sketches, pho-

tographs, written notes, or interviews – are not simply records intended to preserve the memory of the journey, but constitute integral stages in the ideational and compositional process of the project (Bernieri 2017, 99). The transition from travelling to designing may therefore be understood as beginning not once the journey is over, but already in the act of recording itself, in the choices the architect makes about what to notice, what to retain, and how to fix it in a form that can later be retrieved, reinterpreted, and transformed.

The third pillar of the module, therefore, addresses this issue by posing a question that also follows directly from the theoretical framework established by the previous two teaching components: how does the experience of travel enter the design process, and, if so, through what mechanisms? What is at stake, in other words, is not so much what the architect sees during the journey as what the architect is able to make of what has been seen.

If, therefore, the first two categories address the conditions and mechanisms of the travel experience, the third concerns its translation into architectural production, namely, the process by which spatial impressions, recorded observations, and accumulated memories are transposed into design thinking.

Once again, Bernieri's work may help to structure the theoretical framework within which the teaching module was developed, particularly through her concept of *ri-creazione* (re-creation), according to which the transposition from memory to project involves a transformative operation in which what has been observed is decomposed, filtered through an existing sensibility, and reconstituted at a different scale (Bernieri 2017, 45–62). In this sense, the *return* may be understood as one of the most creative phases of the journey (Korolija, Margione 2025), since it is often at this stage that the travel experience begins to take shape either as architectural production or, in a dimension less frequently discussed in the literature, as a theoretical design position.

The relationship between travel and theory can, in fact, be traced through the published writings of many architects. Perhaps the best-known examples are again Le Corbusier's travels, which generated, over more than a decade of sedimentation, the perceptual categories that would later crystallise in *Vers une architecture*; Robert Venturi's period at the American Academy in Rome, which provided the empirical foundation for *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*; and Peter Eisenman's journey through Italy with Colin Rowe during his years in Cambridge, which helped shape an analytical method based on reading architecture as a system of formal relationships (Eisenman, Rowe 2008), later developed in his doctoral thesis, *The Formal Basis of Modern Architecture*. In all of these cases, the resulting books are saturated with references to the buildings visited during the journey, cited not as mere illustrations, but as the very material from which these architectural positions were constructed. It was precisely on the basis of these premises that the third component of the module was structured.

Within the *Itineraries* category, students were invited to work through a process in which *travel*, *learning*, and *design* became closely intertwined. This proved more demanding than in the Tales category, since the regulations of the AUIC School at Politecnico di Milano do not allow bachelor's students to complete their studies with an individual design project. The task, therefore, was to translate the experience of travel into a theoretical design position. Just as many twentieth-century architects set out with a question and, through sustained observation, gradually formed a personal standpoint, students in the Itineraries category were asked to begin from their own research question and use travel to construct an articulated theoretical position towards the issue they had chosen to investigate.

By contrast, as anticipated, within the *Tales* category, students were asked to investigate specifically how travel informed the design processes of the architects they studied, tracing, where the available sources allowed, the passage from learning to design. This involved identifying formal transpositions from one building to another, while also bringing to light less visible processes, including how references were gradually absorbed and transformed over time, how theoretical positions emerged from accumulated travel experience, and how encounters with the unfamiliar reshaped the architect's approach to design in ways that no single building could fully reveal.

Somewhat unexpectedly, the theses developed within this category revealed two contrasting, yet equally productive, modes of return through which the transition from travel to learning and design can be traced.

The first is that of slow sedimentation: the experience enters memory as a reservoir that resurfaces over time, often at a considerable distance from the journey itself. Alvar Aalto's relationship with Italy, as documented in Ilaria Ponzoni's thesis, exemplifies this process. What Aalto observed during his Italian journeys of the 1920s did not find immediate transposition in his Finnish work. Instead, as Francesco dal Co (1998) argues in his famous article, *Aalto and Alberti*, Aalto appears to have deeply absorbed certain compositional principles, transforming them within his own design logic. His Italian journeys thus opened up processes of decontextualisation and reinterpretation that were neither philological nor archaeological. Through them, travel became a form of active learning that allowed the architect to construct a personal repertoire of forms, details, and spatial relationships.

This process of *slow sedimentation* can also be illustrated through Aalto's words:

> "I do not wish to speak of a particular journey, because there is always a journey to Italy in my mind; perhaps a journey undertaken in the past that continues to live on in memory, a journey I am making now, or perhaps one I shall make in the future. A journey of this kind is perhaps a *conditio sine qua non* of my work as an architect" [tda] (Aalto 1954, 5).

The second is exorcism: Frank Lloyd Wright, investigated in the thesis of Filippo Riva *On not Travelling*, refuses to admit that he transposed the Tuscan hilltown model to Wisconsin in his Taliesin project (Costanzo 2016, Jones 2017). Another interesting case in this respect is that of Raine Karp. As described in the thesis of Leonardo Redaelli, the constraints of the Soviet system, which regulated what architects could see and what they were permitted to acknowledge, forced the assimilation of external references to operate beneath the surface of the work, producing a form of metabolisation so complete that the foreign origin of the absorbed material was effectively dissolved into the fabric of the building.

The transition from travel to design is perhaps most tangibly instantiated in the materials that architects bring back from their journeys. Architects often produce or collect travel souvenirs that cease to function as simple portable *Wunderkammern* and instead become the means by which a design-oriented way of thinking can begin to take shape. It was from this premise that students participating in the UpGranT Thesis Programme were also asked to develop their own souvenir to accompany their thesis work.

For many of them, this was not an entirely new exercise, since the majority had already taken part in the UpGranT Internship Programme, where the souvenir had been introduced as a key tool for translating travel experience into design thinking. Although the underlying pedagogical assumptions remained the same, a substantial difference emerged in the production of souvenirs between the *Itineraries* and the *Tales* projects.

In the *Itineraries* theses, the souvenirs emerged directly from the students' own spatial experience. Silvia Gechele's set of four coloured card models isolates specific design transpositions between the Japanese buildings she visited and Scarpa's works, making visible a chain of formal citations that her written thesis argues for discursively but that the souvenir renders as a physical, comparative object. Francesco Quaini's three removable, foldable card models translate the ground techniques of excavating, levelling and terracing investigated in his thesis, into manipulable forms, enabling the user to grasp through touch what his thesis demonstrates through analytical drawings. Matilde Cicoli and Luca Lorizzo produced a double artefact in which four thematic maps propose replicable itineraries through Bellinzona, each organised around one of the interpretive threads running through their thesis, while a series of foldable models offers a critical reinterpretation of Galfetti's design approaches. Martina Ghilardi's map of Porto, conceived as a journey that other users might undertake independently, also extends the souvenir beyond the sphere of personal memory, positioning it as an instrument for the dissemination of knowledge.

In the *Tales* theses, the souvenirs operated differently. Since these students had not, in most cases, undertaken the journeys of the architects they studied, their souvenirs could not draw on direct spatial experience. Instead, they were required to identify the operative mechanism by which each architect's travel had entered the design process and to make that mechanism legible through a physical artefact.

Ilaria Ponzoni's memory-game postcards pair images from Aino Marsio and Alvar Aalto's Italian encounters with their later Finnish projects, asking the user to reconstruct the analogy her thesis argues for. Filippo Riva's origami structures, articulated through a sequence of folds that reveal one surface while concealing another, give physical form to Frank Lloyd Wright's persistent tendency to conceal the influence of his travels. Arianna Puddu reconstructed Scott Brown's syllabus for her teaching courses as a toy-like object, condensing the pedagogical transposition of her Italian journey. Sara Nota's four passports, each devoted to one of the architects she studied, record destinations alongside the works produced or encountered there, compressing the temporal arc of the formative journey into a portable document.

Eleonora Marzolla's double-sided board game explores the relationship between Hejduk's "Masks" and travel experiences, reconstructing the architect's wide imagination. Daniele Ravanelli's photographic booklets deliberately match the format and dimensions of those Aulenti herself produced after returning from her travels, establishing a formal continuity between the architect's own recording practice and the student's critical reinterpretation. Finally, Leonardo Redaelli's analytical cards, designed to be displayed together, make visible the parallels between the buildings Karp visited abroad and those he subsequently designed in Tallinn.

The Persistence of the Formative Voyage

What the twelve theses gathered under the UpGranT Thesis Programme ultimately share is an attempt to inhabit, each in its own way, the full arc of the formative journey. Whether through the reconstruction of an architect's historical itinerary or through the design and documentation of an original one, students engaged with travel as something that begins well before departure, in the preparation of a research question and the construction of a bibliographic framework, and continues long after their return, in the slow work of interpretation, translation, and design. The three operations that structured this teaching module – preparing the journey, learning through it, and transposing its outcomes into design thinking – were never intended to describe a static sequence or to provide students with a fixed, immutable travel methodology. Rather, the pedagogical structure sought to make these operations visible and open to examination, so that students could develop a critical awareness of their own formative process.

They travel, then – architects and architecture students alike. The theses produced within this programme suggest that professional obligation forms only part of what draws architects to travel, alongside a persistent sense that certain forms of spatial understanding are grounded in the direct, embodied experience of space.

They learn through a process whose conditions matter as much as its outcomes. What Gechele's months in Japan, Quaini's fieldwork in Canton Ticino, and Ghilardi's year and a half in Porto each suggest is that the depth of what is learned depends less on the journey itself than on the questions brought to the journey, on the instruments used to record it, and on the willingness to remain open to the encounter with the unfamiliar and the unexpected.

They design across a range of timescales and with varying degrees of temporal distance from the journey itself. What the *Tales* theses seem to reveal, from Aalto's slow sedimentation to Wright's systematic disavowal, is that the passage from travel to design is never straightforward. It operates through displacement, transformation, and selective forgetting. Meanwhile, the *Itineraries* theses suggest that this process, even at the undergraduate level, can begin to take shape when students are given the time and the tools to stay with their experience long enough to understand what direct observation might yield for their own design thinking.

If, therefore, the formative voyage still persists today, it may be less for its capacity to enrich the architect's cultural formation than for its potential to activate a personal dimension of design. What Rossi called the *catalogue of observed things*, what, for Mansilla, were the *interstitial spaces* left by the representations of those who observed before him, and what Aalto spoke of as a *journey that lives on in memory and keeps returning,* are not simple metaphors. They are attempts to name the same underlying capacity of travel to sediment a personal repertoire of references and critical frameworks that the architect can later draw on in the design process.

Whether this constitutes a sufficient argument for the persistence of the formative journey is a question the UpGranT theses leave open. What they offer, in the meantime, is evidence that the question is still worth asking.

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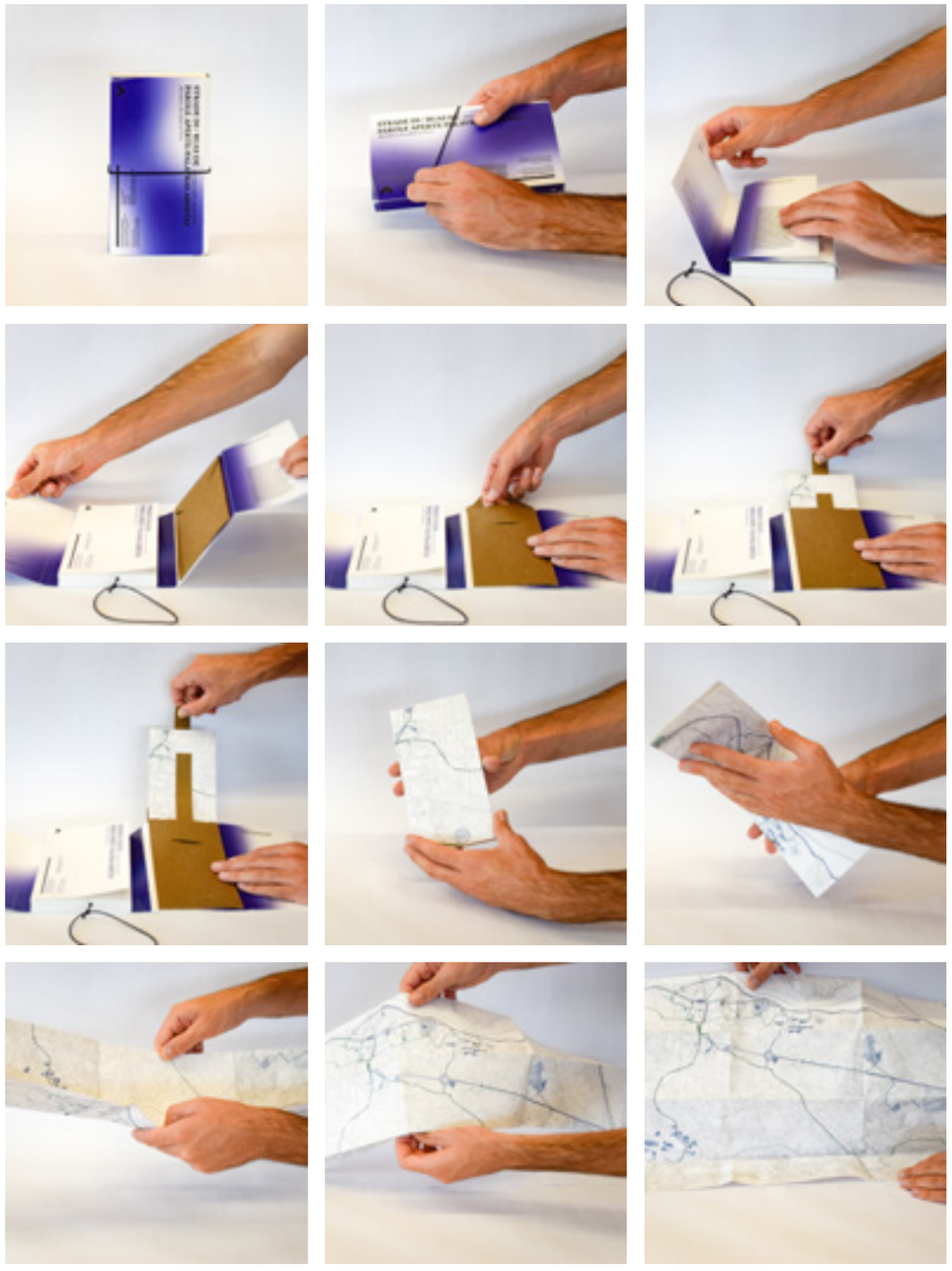

Fig. 1. UpGranT Thesis – *Itineraries: Streets of Open Words – Architecture as Urban Activator in Porto / Strade di Parole Aperte. Attivatori della città di Porto*. Student: Martina Alexandra Ghilardi. Supervisor: Emanuela Margione.



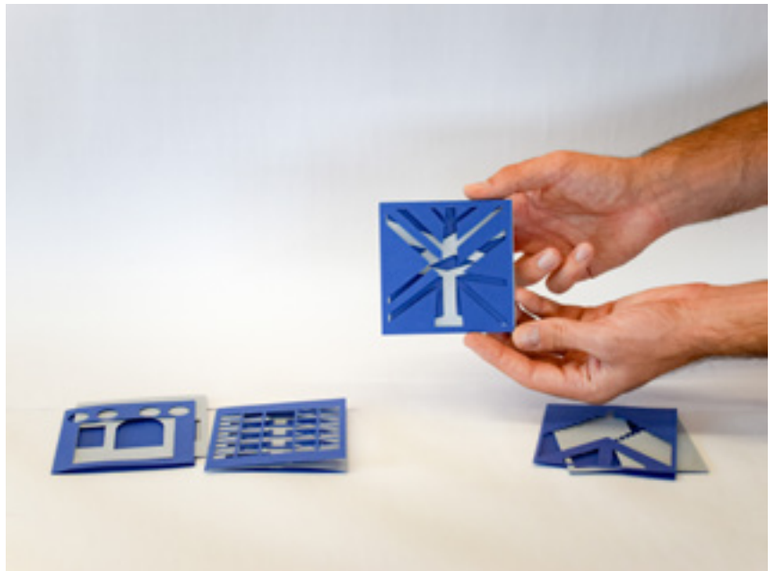

Fig. 2. UpGranT Thesis – *Itineraries: In the Architect's Shoes – A Journey into Carlo Scarpa's Japanese Journey / Sulle Orme di Scarpa. Viaggio nel viaggio in Giappone di Carlo Scarpa.* Student: Silvia Gechele. Supervisor: Emanuela Margione.

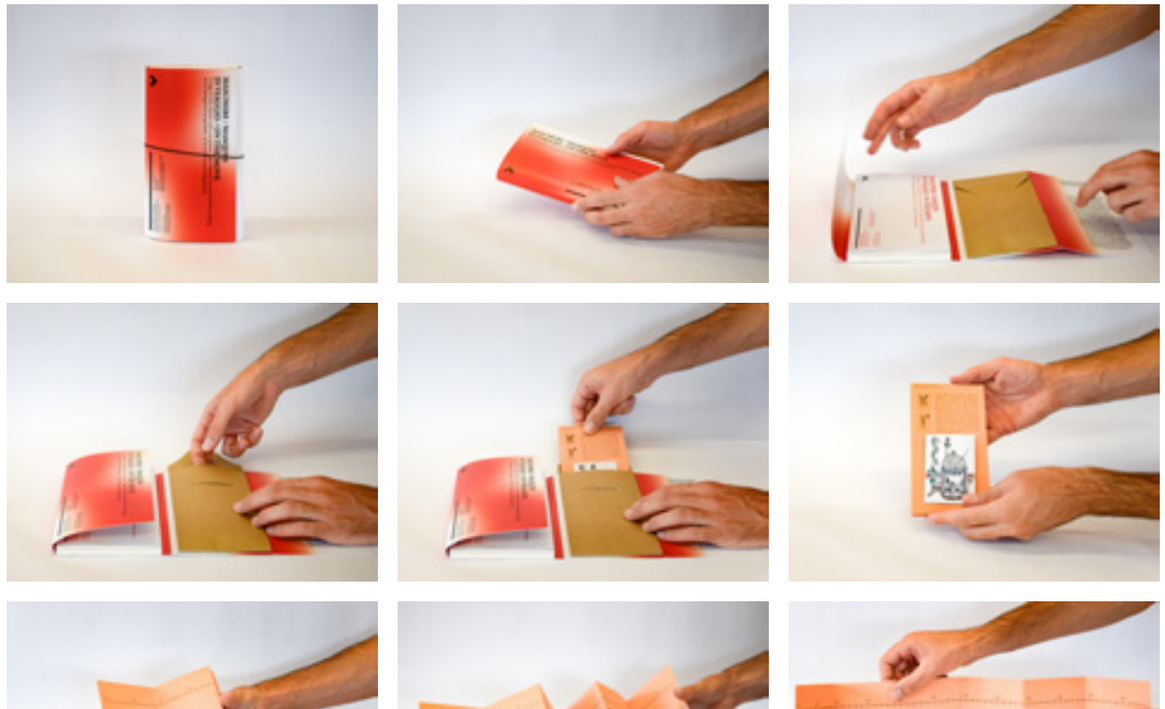



Fig. 3. UpGranT Thesis – *Tales: Masque on the Move. John Hejduk's Journeys and the Making of an Architectural Imagination / Maschere in Viaggio. I viaggi di John Hejduk nella costruzione di un immaginario progettuale.* Student: Eleonora Marzolla. Supervisor: Emanuela Margione. With the collaboration of Prof. Lamberto Amistadi and Giorgio Fiorese.

UpGranT Thesis Programme

Emanuela Margione

University
Politecnico di Milano (Polytechnic University of Milan)

Context
Estonia, Italy, Japan, Portugal, Switzerland, and USA, 2024–2025

Field of Study
Architectural Design

Degree Level
Bachelor's (3rd year)

ECTS Credits
4

Faculty
Emanuela Margione

Students
Matilde Cicoli, Silvia Gechele, Martina Alexandra Ghilardi, Luca Lorizzo, Eleonora Marzolla, Maria Vittoria Mirra, Sara Nota, Ilaria Ponzoni, Arianna Puddu, Francesco Quaini, Dalila Ranzani, Daniele Ravanelli, Leonardo Redaelli, Filippo Riva

Abstract
The UpGranT Thesis Programme represents the second teaching experiment developed within the framework of the WP3.4 Teaching Module and provides an opportunity to strengthen the consortium's collaboration by involving other UpGranT partners (Ass. Prof. Gregor Taul from the Estonian Academy of Arts and Prof. Lamberto Amistadi from the University of Bologna), as well as early-career academics at the Politecnico di Milano (Prof. Matteo Saldarini). The UpGranT Thesis Programme builds on the internship activities

and incorporates research on travel, together with the direct experience of the itineraries, into the dissertation work of students enrolled in the undergraduate programme in Architecture, Urban Planning and Construction Engineering (AUIC) at the Politecnico di Milano. The 12 bachelor's theses produced within the UpGranT Thesis Programme and developed in compliance with the undergraduate degree regulations and objectives set by the AUIC School, are organised into two thematic categories – *Tales* and *Itineraries* – reflecting two distinct paradigms through which travel operates as an instrument of knowledge and design production.

The *Tales* category brings together 8 theses in which students reconstructed the formative journeys of architects to examine how travel informed the development of specific design methods or pedagogical approaches. The case studies span a wide chronological and geographical range, outlining a varied and at times unexpected view of twentieth-century architectural culture. They include figures from John Soane to Lina Bo Bardi, from Soviet architects to Luis Moreno Mansilla; from Carlo Scarpa's travels to Japan to Gae Aulenti's journeys across the Soviet Union, the United States, and Asia; from Aino and Alvar Aalto in Italy to the Estonian architects; from Álvaro Siza's Italian itineraries to Frank Lloyd Wright in Japan and Tuscany. The sequence concludes with Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, whose formative encounters with Italy are understood as a decisive moment in the development of the Learning from Las Vegas studio.

The *Itineraries* category is closely connected to the internship activities and includes four theses in which travel is regarded as an active, first-hand experience, designed and undertaken by the students. In these projects, students design original learning journeys centred around a specific theme, using the journey itself to deepen their understanding of the topic and to engage directly with selected case studies.

To finalise both their *Tales* or *Itineraries* theses, students were additionally required to produce, alongside the written dissertation, a souvenir. The souvenir, already central to the UpGranT Internship Programme, was intended here as a tool for knowledge creation and dissemination.

Finally, special emphasis was placed on the visual identity of the UpGranT Thesis. This was designed by the teaching staff around a graphic layout inspired by the format of the traveller's notebook – the small, portable binder historically used by Grand Tourists to record their impressions, create sketches, and preserve documents. In this way, students were required to engage with a layout format not commonly used in bachelor's theses, thereby enhancing their ability to work with layout software and refining their graphic sensibility. This process aimed to ensure that both the critical content and its visual presentation were clear and effective.

Objectives

The learning objectives of the UpGranT Thesis Programme are grounded in the undergraduate degree regulations of the AUIC School and aligned with the broader aims of the UpGranT research framework, which seeks to position travel as a critical epistemic instrument within architectural education. In this context, the two thesis typologies were understood not only as the final assessment of the bachelor's programme, but also as an opportunity to consolidate and articulate the UpGranT research objective of reinterpreting and updating the pedagogical practice of the Grand Tour.

Upon completion of the thesis, students were expected to demonstrate the ability either to critically reconstruct the formative trajectory of a recognised architect (within the *Tales* category) or to conceive and document an original thematic journey (within the *Itineraries* category). In both cases, the work required the production of a written scholarly essay integrating historical research, first-hand observation, and reflective design thinking.

A central objective of the programme was to develop students' ability to construct a coherent and well-grounded critical argument through the informed use of academic sources. This included the capacity to identify relevant literature, define a consistent bibliographic framework, and synthesise complex material into a clear and rigorous line of reasoning, moving from the collection of information to its interpretation and critical re-elaboration.

A further objective concerned the development of editorial and visual literacy through the production of the thesis. Students were expected to understand how text and image interact within a structured layout and to apply this awareness in order to produce a document that was both analytically precise and visually coherent. In this sense, the thesis was conceived not only as a written work, but also as a designed artefact requiring clarity, consistency, and, where possible, a professional standard of presentation.

Method

The thesis programme was structured as a small studio-based environment organised around weekly progress reviews. It opened with two introductory sessions. The first addressed the conventions of critical essay writing, focusing on how to construct a bibliography, organise a table of contents, reference sources accurately, and develop an appropriate scholarly writing approach. The second was an intensive workshop on professional layout software, such as InDesign, through which students became familiar with the editorial framework adopted for the UpGranT theses and developed practical layout skills.

The majority of the time was then dedicated to the independent development of the thesis. Many of the students involved had previously participated in the UpGranT internship, which enabled them to draw directly on the itineraries developed during that experience. Several students also chose to extend this work further by undertaking additional, self-directed itineraries.

The adopted teaching methodologies, together with their corresponding time allocations, can be summarised as follows:

Teaching Methodology	Hours	Notes
Lecture-based learning	10	Introductory seminars on how to write a critical essay (2 hours). InDesign Workshop (8 hours).
Fieldwork learning	20	Site visits to places connected with the chosen architect or theme. Students undertook independent or semi-guided study trips to Porto, the Swiss Canton Ticino, Tallinn, Japan, and Venice.
Project-based learning	40	Independent thesis research and writing followed by weekly tutorials. This also included visits to archives and interviews with architects/experts.

Table 11

Tools

The module drew upon both digital and physical tools. Digital tools included word-processing and graphic design software (Adobe InDesign and Adobe Illustrator) for the layout of the theses in the traveller's notebook format; digital archives and online journals for bibliographic research; and institutional library databases. As in the Internship Programme, the selected digital tools were accessible through institutional licences at the Politecnico di Milano. Students were free to choose their preferred methods and tools for documenting their itineraries. By contrast, for the production of the souvenir, they were asked to work with lightweight materials, conceiving it as a playful, educational object.

Course Materials

At the Politecnico di Milano's AUIC School, students working on their bachelor's thesis are supervised by an academic advisor, who typically provides the guidance and tools needed to develop the final dissertation. In the UpGranT Thesis Programme, the teaching staff provided this guidance alongside specific materials, such as:

- An initial bibliography, including several texts produced by the UpGranT research partners and published in FAM Nos. 69–70 (2025), *Architec-Tour. Memory and Inven tion of the European Built Environment*, edited by Cristina Pallini and Lamberto Amistadi;
- A set of supporting materials, including a booklet outlining the overall aims of the UpGranT project and the role of travel in architectural education;
- A pre-structured InDesign template aligned with the visual identity guidelines established for the UpGranT theses.

Prerequisites

According to academic regulations, students are admitted to the final dissertation only upon successful completion of the three-year bachelor's programme in Architecture, Urban Planning and Construction Engineering. The module, therefore, builds upon the knowledge and competences developed over the course of the programme, including knowledge of and the ability to critically analyse architectural works, as well as an understanding of modern and contemporary architectural history.

Students were expected to be able to produce a structured critical essay and to develop interpretative visual material. However, no prior knowledge of the specific theme was assumed, and no prior experience in archival or bibliographic research was required, as these skills were developed progressively within the module.

Assessment

Assessment followed the standard procedures set by the AUIC School for undergraduate theses. During the thesis development, students received support through weekly tutorials, where they presented their work in progress and received feedback on both content and structure.

To support the organisation of their work, students received a detailed timetable including intermediate deadlines. These milestones were intended to ensure consistent progress and to coordinate the development of the thesis with the AUIC academic calendar, which mandates submission of the final dissertation one month before the defence.

The supervisor was responsible for authorising submission based on an overall evaluation of the work. This included checking the coherence and clarity of the argument, as well as ensuring compliance with the required editorial and layout standards. Before the defence, students also participated in a final review, including a rehearsal of the oral presentation.

The final assessment was conducted by the graduation committee during the defence, in accordance with AUIC regulations, and took into account both the quality of the thesis and the student's overall academic career.

Evaluation

Evaluation criteria were also subject to the AUIC School's thesis regulations. Within this framework, however, additional criteria were applied during the thesis development phase to monitor progress and evaluate students' preparation.

The criteria adopted were:

- The originality and rigour of the critical argument relating to travel or architectural production;
- The quality of the research methodology, including the use of bibliographic and archival sources, interviews, and direct fieldwork;
- The ability to reveal new or insufficiently explored aspects of the case study through the lens of travel;
- The formal and communicative quality of the thesis and the souvenir.

Deliverables

The expected outputs of the programme were organised around three main components. First, students were expected to produce a written critical thesis centred on travel as a vehicle for architectural formation, articulated within the two categories of Accounts and Itineraries. Second, each thesis was to be accompanied by a souvenir, conceived as a physical artefact capable of condensing and communicating the core ideas of the research in a replicable and playful format. This could take different forms, including folded card models, thematic maps, photographic booklets, board games, passport sets, or illustrated fascicles. Finally, all outputs were required to adhere to a shared graphic identity, adopting the traveller's notebook layout in order to produce a visually coherent body of work.

Student Feedback

The UpGranT Thesis Learners Evaluation Questionnaire was designed as a dedicated instrument to assess the educational outcomes and perceived learning experience of students who completed the UpGranT Thesis Programme. Compared with the UpGrant Internship Programme questionnaire, it targets a more advanced and autonomous form of scholarly engagement, in which students produce structured written theses articulated around the two thematic categories of the UpGranT publication format: *Tales* and *Itineraries*. The questionnaire was shared with students at the conclusion of the thesis process, and responses were collected from all participants. The instrument combines Likert-scale items (scored on the scale from 1 to 5), ranking questions, multiple-choice selections, and open-ended qualitative prompts, enabling a multi-layered analysis of both process quality and learning outcomes.

Its structure reflects the sequential phases of the thesis work:

- Research introduction: questions investigating the clarity of the module's objectives, the understanding of the two categories (*Tales* and *Itineraries*), and the degree of autonomy in the choice of category.
- Research methodology: questions evaluating the scope and quality of archival and bibliographic research, the challenges encountered, the types of sources consulted, and the contribution of comparative analysis to the development of a critical argument.
- Field trips and direct observation: a section dedicated to students who undertook field visits linked to their thesis, examining preparatory practices, on-site activities, and the contribution of direct observation to the theoretical framework.
- Souvenir design and production: an extended module investigating the souvenir's pedagogical framing, the design and prototyping process, its communicative effectiveness, the challenges encountered, and its potential for future reuse.
- Graphic format and layout: questions assessing the effectiveness of the shared graphic format (inspired by the traveller's notebook) as a structural and presentational tool.
- Overall impact and skills development: a closing section measuring the thesis's contribution to specific competencies, its transformative impact on the students' understanding of travel and architectural research, and overall satisfaction.

The results of the questionnaire are summarised below. The tables present the main findings rather than an exhaustive account of the questionnaire structure.

Research Introduction and Methodology

Questions	Score (1–5)
Clarity of module objectives and section differences	4.27
Adequacy of guidance throughout the thesis	4.36
Quality of guidance in archival/bibliographic search	4.45
Essentialness of teaching staff's bibliographic materials	3.73
Contribution of archival/bibliographic research to critical argument	4.18
Impact of comparing multiple case studies on critical argument	3.55

Table 12

The pedagogical guidance and institutional support provided throughout the thesis process were evaluated positively overall, though with some internal differentiation. Students felt adequately guided throughout the process, and the quality of guidance in the search for archival and bibliographic materials was rated 4.45/5, one of the highest scores in this cluster. By contrast, the perceived importance of the bibliographic materials provided by the teaching staff was evaluated more moderately, suggesting that, while the support was appreciated, a significant portion of students supplemented or replaced it with independently sourced material. However, the limited provision of bibliographic sources was a deliberate decision by the teaching staff, since, as noted above, one of the learning objectives was to encourage students to independently identify, select, and construct their own bibliographic framework independently.

It is therefore important to highlight that all respondents undertook bibliographic and archival research as a core component of their work. In terms of sources consulted, all students relied on published texts (books, essays, and articles). Students also consulted unpublished archival documents (letters, drawings, and notebooks preserved in physical or digital repositories), used photographic or audiovisual archives, and conducted interviews or gathered oral testimonies. Notably, at least five students conducted expert interviews or collected oral testimonies, indicating a meaningful engagement with primary qualitative sources alongside documentary research.

The archival phase generated the most significant challenges reported in the questionnaire. Limited accessibility to archives was by far the most common obstacle. Difficulty in locating original sources was reported by 63.6% of students, challenges in interpreting non-digitised or multilingual materials by 36.4%, and difficulties in integrating visual and textual content by 36.4%. Qualitative responses further illustrate the depth of these challenges. One student noted that "the architect's journey was not documented by himself, so there were no diaries or notes, and the only available source was a secondary publication with no possibility of cross-checking"; another described "difficulty in finding data on a topic that has never been explicitly addressed in the literature." These accounts confirm that the module's archival dimension placed students in genuine research conditions, with all the productive uncertainty that this entails. At the same time, the contribution of archival and bibliographic research to defining the thesis focus and critical argument received a mean of 4.18/5, with 6 of 11 students assigning the maximum score, confirming that, despite the difficulties, the research process was perceived as intellectually central.

Field Trips and Direct Observation

Field Trip Dimension	Score (1–5) / Value
Direct observation contribution to understanding	5
Travel contribution to thesis development (mean, n = 5)	5
On-site: photographic survey	100%
On-site: route/map tracing	80%
On-site: guided visits/archives	60%
On-site: sketches and notes	20%
Most effective activity for theoretical framework	Photographic survey
Physical souvenirs collected during trips	3 collected; 2 did not

Table 13

5 students undertook field trips, most of whom were developing an *Itineraries* thesis. Among those who did travel, the modalities of the visits varied: three students conducted multiple trips for different research or observation activities, one undertook a single multi-day journey, and one followed a case-study-based visit structure.

For all 5 students who undertook field trips, the contribution of direct observation to understanding was rated at the maximum score of 5/5, and the contribution of travel to the development of the thesis (including materials gathered during the trip) was also unanimously rated 5/5. While the small subsample (n = 5) limits generalisability, the unanimity of these maximum scores powerfully reinforces the programme's core pedagogical premise that direct observation constitutes an irreplaceable mode of architectural knowledge production.

As shown by the questionnaire results, on-site activities were predominantly photographic surveys combined with route or map tracing, with guided archive visits also featured in three cases. Photographic documentation was consistently identified as the most effective field activity for developing the theoretical framework, confirming photography's role as a primary instrument of architectural observation and critical documentation among students.

The responses to the open-ended questions also revealed differences in the preparation phase for field visits. Some students approached their first visit with minimal preparation, deliberately seeking unmediated perceptual experience: "I just looked for the buildings to see in order to prepare a schedule and to understand what I could understand directly from them without knowing anything before the trip." Others, by contrast, engaged in thorough pre-visit bibliographic work, collecting archival photographs to compare with their own, or tracing the itinerary of the architect they were studying in the case of the *Tales* category.

Souvenir Design and Production

On-site and Impact Dimension	Mean Score (1–5)
Effectiveness as a communication tool for conveying the key ideas of the thesis	4.09
Contribution to creativity and critical synthesis	4.00
Guidance from teaching staff during design/production	4.00
Replicability/adaptability in other teaching contexts	4.09
Accessibility to broader public (incl. disabilities)	3.73
Time spent on the souvenir relative to its critical role within the thesis	3.27
Likelihood of reusing this tool in future work	3.36

Table 14

The souvenir module in the UpGranT Thesis questionnaire shows a markedly different profile from the equivalent module in the Internship Programme evaluation.

Whereas the Internship cohort worked almost exclusively with pop-up book models, the Thesis cohort produced a substantially

wider range of artefact types, including postcard/memory-game sets, printed maps with foldable model combinations, booklets, standalone foldable models, and toy-like architect's passports.

This typological diversity suggests a closer integration between the souvenir concept and each student's specific research project.

The results obtained in this section provide a valuable basis for understanding the potential role of the souvenir as an epistemic and design device. The souvenir's effectiveness as a communication tool for communicating the key ideas of the thesis received, indeed, a mean of 4.09/5, and its contribution to creativity and critical synthesis scored 4.00/5. Another positive outcome relates to the souvenir replicability in different teaching contexts, which was rated positively at 4.09/5. This suggests that the souvenir is perceived as a transferable pedagogical tool.

Graphic Format and the Traveller's Notebook Layout

Graphic Format Dimension	Mean Score (1–5)
Teaching staff guidance on layout and formatting rules	4.36
Effectiveness of the format in showcasing the qualities of the thesis	3.91
Effectiveness of the format as a structural scaffold for the thesis	3.82

Table 15

The shared graphic format, inspired by the traveller's notebook, was assessed through the questionnaire across three dimensions. The teaching team's guidance in using the layout and its rules received the highest rating, reflecting effective instructional support.

These results suggest that, while the format was well explained and institutionally supported, a substantial proportion of students found it only moderately effective as either a structural scaffold or a vehicle for showcasing their work. The most challenging aspect of the format, as indicated by the qualitative responses, was its technical implementation. In particular, two students explicitly identified "page layout and compliance with the shared format" as the most challenging part of the entire thesis process, with one candidly noting that "my skills with InDesign and Illustrator were not enough to do the work, so I had to adapt and learn how to use them properly".

Overall Impact and Skills Development

The results discussed in this section demonstrate the continued relevance and effectiveness of travel as a formative tool in architectural education.

Overall Impact Dimension	Mean Score (1–5)
Understanding of the role of direct observation and travel in architecture	4.55
Understanding of travel as a formative tool for architects	4.45
Effect on students' personal approach to travel	4.45
Usefulness for interpreting the legacy of the Grand Tour	4.36
Overall satisfaction with UpGranT Thesis Programme	4.55
Likelihood of recommending the programme to other students	4.27
Increased interest in architectural research	3.82
Understanding the structure of a European research project	3.27

Table 16

The broader impact dimensions of the UpGranT Thesis experience were consistently rated highly. The thesis's contribution to understanding the role of direct observation and travel in architectural design scored 4.55/5, achieving the highest score in the entire questionnaire. Its contribution to understanding travel as a formative tool for architects received 4.45/5, while its effect on students' approach to travel received the same score.

The experimental teaching activity's usefulness in interpreting the legacy of the Grand Tour in a contemporary context was rated 4.36/5.

Overall satisfaction with the UpGranT Thesis experience was also rated 4.55/5 – joint highest alongside the direct observation item, with no respondent assigning a score below 4/5. This represents one of the clearest indicators of the programme's positive educational impact. By contrast, increased interest in architectural research as an academic practice scored only 3.82/5, suggesting that, while the thesis experience engaged students meaningfully with research as a discipline, its impact was not transformative for all participants.

Finally, the question of whether this kind of didactic experimentation should be more systematically embedded within architecture school curricula generated a broadly positive but nuanced response. Five students answered "yes, definitely" (45.5%) and six "possibly, depending on context" (54.5%). No respondent opposed its inclusion. The conditionality expressed by the majority likely reflects an awareness of the logistical, resource, and organisational demands of the format, rather than scepticism about its educational value. This interpretation is confirmed by the final qualitative comments, which were among the most enthusiastic in the entire dataset. One student wrote that "working on this thesis has been the most exciting and interesting experience ever in the academic context," and another stated that it had "changed my academic view in a positive way" and that they "now travel with more conscience."

A final section of the questionnaire was then dedicated to evaluating the usefulness of the different programme phases and skills development. Students were asked to rank the four main phases of the thesis process according to their intellectual and educational value, using a scale from 4 (most instructive) to 1 (least instructive).

Ranking of Thesis Phase by Learning Value	Mean Score (1–4)
Research and material collection	3.45
Writing the critical essay	3.18
Designing and producing the souvenir	2.82
Adapting the contents to the graphic layout (InDesign)	2.73

Table 17

Research and material collection were ranked as the most instructive phase by 54.5% of students, thereby confirming the centrality of the archival and documentary phase to the thesis's intellectual development. Writing the critical essay was also ranked as the most instructive by 54.5%, suggesting that, for a significant portion of the cohort, the two most cognitively demanding phases – research and writing – were jointly perceived as the primary sites of learning and intellectual growth.

The design and production of the souvenir were identified as the most instructive component by only 27.3% of students. Adapting the content to the InDesign layout received the lowest overall rating, with a mean score of 2.73/5. However, two students ranked it as the most instructive, suggesting that, for some, the technical demands of the layout constituted a genuinely formative experience.

Skill development was evaluated as follows:

Skill	Mean Score (1–5)
Critical thinking and synthesis	4.45
Graphic design and page layout	4.36
Archival and bibliographic research	4.27
Field observation and documentation	4.27
Creative visual translation of critical concepts	4.27
Model-making and prototyping	3.27

Table 18

Results show that the thesis was perceived as a broadly effective instrument for skills development across multiple competencies. Critical thinking and synthesis received the highest score, followed by graphic design and page layout, archival and bibliographic research, field observation and documentation, and, finally, creative visual translation of critical and theoretical concepts. Model-making and prototyping received the lowest score, consistent with the lower rankings assigned to the souvenir production phase. Additional skills mentioned in the open responses include bibliographic research methodology as a formalised practice, scheduling and work organisation, critical awareness of how to approach a specific theme analytically, and the ability to conduct expert interviews in an analytical and critical manner. One respondent articulated the broader significance of this last skill, noting the development of "competence in engaging with experts through analytical/critical interviews" as a transferable professional capacity.

Course Review

The UpGranT Thesis module required students to engage with the full range of academic research activities, from archival enquiry to critical writing, graphic design, and the production of a physical souvenir, working with a high degree of autonomy. The evaluation data indicate that this objective was largely achieved, with high levels of overall satisfaction and strong perceived gains in critical thinking, research skills, and architectural awareness.

At the same time, a number of structural tensions and methodological gaps emerged and deserve closer consideration. In particular, five critical issues were identified, which can be described as follows:

The first issue concerns the differentiation between the two UpGranT thesis categories. Although the overall alignment between the chosen category and the thesis content was rated very highly (4.64/5), one respondent reported never having fully understood the *Itineraries* category, and three students (27.3%) required guidance from their supervisor when making their choice. The imbalance between the two categories – with *Tales* attracting 63.6% of the cohort and Itineraries 36.4% – may partly reflect differences in research fit. However, it may also suggest that the distinctive methodological approach of the *Itineraries* category was perceived as too demanding for an undergraduate thesis. To address this issue in future implementations of the programme, it would be useful to introduce a dedicated onboarding session at the beginning of the programme, presenting examples of completed theses from both categories. This session should clearly outline the methodological differences between the two formats and the types of research questions to which each is best suited.

Limited access to archives emerged as the second, and by far the most widespread, challenge during the research stage (81.8% of respondents). This was followed by difficulties in finding original sources (63.6%) and problems with non-digitised or multilingual materials (36.4%). However, it is important to recognise that while such constraints are an inherent part of archival research, they also form a significant part of the undergraduate learning experience, exposing students to authentic research conditions. To address these issues, future versions of the module could include an initial session on approaching under-documented topics, covering strategies for dealing with indirect sources and secondary reconstruction. This would directly respond to the challenges reported by students studying historically marginalised subjects. More broadly, these findings indicate that the research framework should take a more active role in building relationships with archives and institutions to improve access to primary sources.

The third challenge concerned the UpGranT Thesis layout format. The graphic format inspired by a traveller's notebook was generally well received, but the data reveal a recurrent tension between the ambition of the layout and students' variable technical competencies in InDesign and Illustrator. Two students identified the graphic format as the most challenging aspect of the entire thesis, and the format's effectiveness in showcasing the strengths of the work was only moderately rated (3.91/5). However, the relatively high score for layout guidance indicates that the issue is not so much the quality of instruction as the gap between the demands of the format and students' baseline technical skills. This issue could be addressed in future iterations of the module by strengthening the InDesign workshop at the outset of the thesis process and making it a mandatory component. Additional workshops could be introduced at key stages of thesis development to address specific technical challenges as they arise.

Although only five out of twelve students undertook field trips directly linked to their thesis (four within the *Itineraries* category and one within the *Tales* category), it is important to reflect on both the results and the critical aspects that emerged during this phase. Those who engaged in site visits consistently rated the contribution of direct observation at the highest level (5/5 across both indicators measuring its impact), confirming its strong perceived value within the learning process. At the same time, this phase revealed some methodological challenges, particularly at the preparatory stage. Some students approached site visits without prior study as a deliberate methodological choice, while others conducted extensive archival research and reconstructed their itineraries in advance. The absence of a shared preparatory framework appears to have affected the overall coherence and effectiveness of the itinerary phase. Future iterations of the module could benefit therefore from introducing a recommended protocol for field trip preparation. Drawing on the most effective practices observed, such a framework could combine preliminary archival research with on-site documentation, providing students with a clearer methodological basis for engaging with site visits.

Finally, the souvenir module in the UpGranT Thesis Programme showed a significantly more diverse typological range than its counterpart in the Internship Programme, and students drew more consistently on their research content as their primary inspiration. Nevertheless, the data reveal a persistent gap between the souvenir's communicative effectiveness (4.09/5) and its contribution to developing the thesis's critical standpoint (3.27/5). This divergence suggests that the souvenir was successfully executed as a communicative object but was not yet fully integrated into the thesis's intellectual architecture as a critical analytical tool.

The likelihood of reusing this kind of tool in future work, together with the moderate ranking of souvenir production relative to research and writing also suggests that, for a significant proportion of students, the souvenir remained a peripheral rather than a central activity. Moreover, the difficulties associated with conceptualisation (45.5%), the graphic translation of theoretical concepts (36.4%), and prototyping (36.4%) point to the complexity of the task and the need for more structured support at the ideation stage. To strengthen this phase and address the issues identified, the module could introduce a dedicated workshop focused on the conceptual development of the souvenir, clarifying how its form and internal logic can be derived from the thesis's critical argument. The range of formats presented at the briefing stage could also be expanded, building on the diversity already demonstrated by this cohort, while previous examples could be made available as

references to encourage greater typological ambition and avoid default solutions. Finally, the production of the souvenir could be more clearly integrated into the thesis timeline, with an intermediate review to ensure that the artefact develops in parallel with, rather than after, the critical writing process.

Outcomes

A total of 12 UpGranT theses were completed, four in the *Itineraries* category and eight in the *Tales* category. Each thesis was accompanied by a souvenir artefact. Taken together, the UpGranT theses provided an opportunity to explore significant themes while reinterpreting and extending the legacy of the Grand Tour. At the same time, they offered a means of assessing the contemporary relevance of travel as a mode of learning. Moreover, through the two categories, *Tales* and *Itineraries*, the theses outlined a range of possible lines of inquiry for the future development of similar research topics. A summary of the work produced is presented below.

Itineraries

These four theses approached travel as a form of learning in its own right. Students identified a specific theme and developed a corresponding itinerary through which to engage directly with the architectural subject of the thesis. The aim was to encourage direct engagement with architecture, using travel as a means of investigating and deepening a specific line of inquiry.

Streets of Open Words. Architecture as Urban Activator in Porto / Strade di Parole Aperte. Attivatori della città di Porto
Student: Martina Alexandra Ghilardi

Building on a sustained study of Porto, this thesis explores the role of architecture as an urban activator: buildings that, through dynamic spatial organisation and adaptable programmes, serve as catalysts for the regeneration of the surrounding environment and for fostering new forms of social interaction. The research investigates twelve case studies spread across the city, encompassing a variety of building types, including housing, infrastructure, commercial premises, and public facilities. The methodology is rooted in a learning-by-ravelling approach and is based on a year and a half spent in Porto, during which the student attended academic courses at FAUP, as well as workshops and seminars. The souvenir takes the form of a map on which the student has plotted an architectural journey through Porto, conceived as a replicable model for other users.

In the Architect's Shoes. A Journey into Carlo Scarpa's Japanese Journey / Sulle Orme di Scarpa. Viaggio nel viaggio in Giappone di Carlo Scarpa
Student: Silvia Gechele

This thesis examines Carlo Scarpa's journey to Japan by interweaving historical research with direct experience. The research unfolds on several levels: from an analysis of the itinerary Scarpa undertook in 1969 to the student's own retracing of that journey, and to a close reading of his Veneto buildings as the outcome of a sustained cultural and architectural dialogue. The student devised and carried out her own trip to Japan, incorporating new stops that she identified as significant for a contemporary rereading of the original itinerary, and kept a travel journal that moves between personal observation and architectural analysis. A second itinerary, devoted to Scarpa's buildings in Veneto, extended the project to the places where the influence of Japan is most legible in his work. The souvenir consists of four small, coloured card models, cut to highlight the design transpositions between the Japanese journey and Scarpa's Venetian buildings.

From the Shaping of the Ground to Architectural Form: Three Elementary Actions in Three Contemporary Swiss Works / Dal progetto del suolo alla forma dell'architettura. Tre azioni elementari in tre opere elvetiche contemporanee
Co-Supervisor: Matteo Saldarini
Student: Francesco Quaini

This thesis explores the connection between architecture and the ground, asserting that terrain is not a neutral element but the foundation that shapes a building's relationship with its landscape. The research concentrates on Swiss territory, especially the Canton Ticino, and examines three buildings as case studies: Aurelio Galfetti's restoration of Castelgrande in Bellinzona, Peter Zumthor's Therme Vals, and Barozzi Veiga's Tanzhaus Zürich. These projects share a commitment to engaging with the site through techniques that harken back to ancient principles of building into the ground – excavation, levelling, and terracing – reinterpreted in modern terms. The analysis is based on direct encounters with the buildings and is connected to a variety of historical precedents. The souvenir includes three removable, foldable card models, each depicting one of the three ground techniques identified in the case studies, designed both as a narrative device and as a playful object.

The Construction of a City. A Journey into Aurelio Galfetti's Works in Bellinzona / Costruire una Città. Un Viaggio tra le Opere di Aurelio Galfetti a Bellinzona
Students: Luca Lorizzo, Matilde Cicoli

This thesis examines Aurelio Galfetti's role in shaping a contemporary image of Bellinzona, focusing on architectural design as a means of establishing continuity between individual buildings and the urban fabric. Travel and direct engagement with the works form the basis of the interpretative approach.

The research developed through repeated visits to Bellinzona. Following their participation in the UpGranT Internship Programme, the students returned to the city on several occasions, exploring different itineraries in relation to the evolving focus of the thesis. Archival work was carried out at the Archivio del Moderno, where original drawings by Galfetti were examined, with particular attention to unrealised or lesser-known projects. This was complemented by interviews with two of his collaborators, Alex Braggion and Carola Barchi, addressing both his design practice and the role of travel in his architectural formation.

The souvenir takes the form of a double artefact. Four thematic maps propose replicable itineraries structured around the main conceptual strands of the thesis – territoriality, light and matter, circulation, continuity, and transformation – while a set of ten foldable, demountable card models offers a critical reinterpretation of the selected buildings.

Tales

Travel was regarded as a key element in the education of many architects. Students reconstructed the itineraries of selected architects, both renowned and less well documented, examining the connections among travel, design experience, and the development of personal cultural sensitivities. The aim was to understand how direct experience influenced different theoretical approaches, providing a basis for comparing multiple perspectives on architecture.

Architects on the Move. Four Educational Journeys in Dialogue for a Contemporary Interpretation of the Grand Tour / Architetti in Viaggio. Quattro viaggi di Formazione a confronto per un'interpretazione contemporanea del Grand Tour
Student: Sara Nota

This thesis examines travel as a constitutive moment in the formation of the architect,

tracing the journeys of four figures: John Soane, Lina Bo Bardi, the Soviet architects of the post-Stalin era, and Luis Moreno Mansilla. The formative journey is understood as an immersive experience whose meaning unfolds across distinct phases – planning, direct observation, documentation, and return – and whose effects continue long after the journey itself has ended. Among the first theses completed within the UpGranT project, this work concludes with a chapter in which the student reflects on her own relationship with travel in the light of her research. The souvenir takes the form of four passports, each designed by the student and devoted to one of the four architects, recording the principal destinations of their journeys alongside the works they produced or encountered there.

Masque on the Move. John Hejduk's Journeys and the Making of an Architectural Imagination / Maschere in Viaggio. I viaggi di John Hejduk nella costruzione di un immaginario progettuale
With the collaboration of Prof. Lamberto Amistadi (UpGranT Partner) and Giorgio Fiorese
Student: Eleonora Marzolla

This thesis examines the role of travel in the formation and professional maturation of the American architect John Hejduk, focusing in particular on the Venice, Berlin, and Russia trilogies. The research asks how the projects Hejduk developed during his journeys relate to one another, and how travel became for him an occasion for both personal enrichment and disciplinary invention. The thesis draws on two interviews: one with Professor Lamberto Amistadi (University of Bologna, UpGranT Partner) and one with Professor Giorgio Fiorese of the Politecnico di Milano, who knew and worked with Hejduk. The souvenir is a double-sided board game: on one side, a narrative built from Hejduk's own words explores the role of the mask in his travelling imagination; on the other, a timeline brings together key information about his life, work, and principal publications.

Chronicles of a "Steam-Powered Architect". A Round Trip Through Gae Aulenti's Design Vision / Cronache di un "Architetto a Vapore". Andata e ritorno nel pensiero progettuale di Gae Aulenti
Student: Daniele Ravanelli

This thesis analyses the international travels of Gae Aulenti and their formative and projective role in her career. Her journeys – recorded scrupulously in notebooks and accompanied by sketches, photographs, and written reflections – functioned as genuine instruments of knowledge, leaving traceable deposits in her design practice. The student participated in the UpGranT Internship Programme, visiting the Biblioteca Tilane and the Gae Aulenti archive in person, where he examined original materials related to the Tilane library project. He was also provided with the FAM journal article on Aulenti and the role of the souvenir. The souvenir consists of four photographic booklets made in the manner of those Aulenti herself produced after returning from her travels, matching their format and structure (including identical dimensions and metal-ring binding) and organising images thematically.

Tale of an *Endless Journey*. The Legacy of the Italian Journey in Aino and Alvar Aalto's Finnish Projects / Racconto di un *Viaggio Continuo*. L'eredità dei viaggi in Italia nei progetti finlandesi di Aino e Alvar Aalto
Student: Ilaria Ponzoni

This thesis explores the influence of travel – particularly Italian sojourns – on the formation of the Finnish architects Aino Marsio and Alvar Aalto. The first Italian trip in 1924, undertaken simultaneously as a honeymoon and a study tour, received particular examination. For both architects, Italy became a kind of memory library, an endless source of inspiration from which they drew to develop a Finnish architectural identity that aimed to blend the Italian classical tradition with Nordic culture and its more archaic elements. The thesis concludes with a selection of Finnish projects from the period between 1924 and the 1950s viewed in light of the architects' direct experiences of Italian architecture. The souvenir takes the form of a set of postcards depicting images from the Aaltos' travels and later work, some of which are reinterpreted in the style of Gabriele Basilico's annotated photographs. It is organised as a memory game: each pair of images links, through visual and formal analogy, a project encountered in Italy with a later Finnish work.

Between Borders and Travel Horizons. Estonian Architects' Travel Itineraries and the Emblematic Case of Raine Karp / Tra confini e orizzoni di viaggio. Itinerari di viaggio degli architetti estoni e il caso emblematico di Raine Karp
Co-supervisor: Ass. Prof. Gregor Taul, Estonian Academy of Arts (UpGranT Partner)
Student: Leonardo Redaelli

This thesis explores how the Soviet Union's gradual opening to the West influenced the cultural and architectural life of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic, focusing on architect Raine Karp as its central figure. The student travelled to Tallinn, where he met Professor Gregor Taul (EKA Partner), the director of the Estonian Museum of Architecture, Dr Karen Jagodin, and Karp himself, whom he interviewed directly. He visited the Linnahall (1980) and Karp's private house and was able to consult bibliographic sources unavailable in Italy. The souvenir consists of a set of analytical cards dedicated to the two main case studies, designed to be displayed together in order to highlight the parallels between the buildings Karp visited and those he subsequently designed.

Journey of an *(In)disciplinado* architect. Álvaro Siza's Itineraries in Italy Between 1976 and 2016 / Viaggio di un architetto (In)Disciplinato. Gli Itinerari di Álvaro Siza in Italia tra il 1976 e il 2016
Students: Maria Vittoria Mirra, Dalila Ranzani

This thesis traces the Italian itinerary of the Portuguese architect Álvaro Siza Vieira from the 1970s to the first decade of the twenty-first century. Siza is a particularly compelling figure for a study of travel because his design method is founded on a principle of (in)discipline in which direct, unconditioned observation of reality plays a central role. The research draws on documents, sketches, and first-hand testimony recording Siza's encounters with key figures in the European architectural debate, as well as on the projects through which the traces of these Italian experiences become legible. The students retraced Siza's presence in Venice through an itinerary approaching the Giudecca, documented in a first-person account with sketches and photographs. The souvenir is a small, illustrated fascicle that brings together Siza's travel sketches and free-hand drawings related to his Italian projects, alongside the students' own drawings and photographs, structured for comparison in the manner of an educational picture book.

On Not Travelling. Frank Lloyd Wright's Itineraries in Italy and Japan Between 1905 and 1951 / Contro il viaggio. Itinerari di Frank Lloyd Wright in Italia e Giappone tra il 1905 e il 1951
Student: Filippo Riva

This thesis examines the connection between Frank Lloyd Wright and the experience of travel, a relationship that was, as the title

indicates, notably ambivalent. Wright never claimed travel as a source of learning, yet his career was characterised by numerous journeys, and a close analysis of his writings, drawings, and buildings shows how decisively these experiences influenced his architectural ideas. The thesis traces the main stages of his travels from 1905 to 1951, examining his first extended stay in Italy and Europe (1909–1910), his long engagement with Japan, and his return to Italy after the war, when his encounters with Carlo Scarpa and Bruno Zevi marked a more mature phase of his dialogue with Italian culture. The souvenir comprises three small paper objects created using origami principles: square, multi-faceted structures that unfold through a sequence of folds, revealing one face while concealing another – a mechanism that alludes to Wright's consistent tendency to hide the influence of his travels on his work.

Educating the Gaze. The Role of Travels to Italy in the Shaping of Venturi and Scott Brown's Pedagogical Method / Educare lo sguardo. Il ruolo del viaggio in Italia nella definizione del metodo pedagogico di Venturi e Scott Brown
Student: Arianna Puddu

This thesis offers a parallel interpretation of the formative experiences of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, analysing how their Italian journeys influenced and, in a sense, generated the Learning from Las Vegas studio of 1968–1969. The encounter between the Italian urban tradition and the American commercial landscape was not, for Venturi and Scott Brown, a matter of equivalence or hierarchy, but rather an opportunity to apply the observational method they had each developed separately during their Italian visits. Venturi's extensive knowledge of Italy, gained during his years at the American Academy in Rome, and Scott Brown's practice of systematically reading unfamiliar contexts without bias converged in Las Vegas to develop a genuinely new approach to architectural enquiry. The souvenir is a small, toy-like object that reconstructs the syllabus Scott Brown devised for the course Form, Forces and Functions, adapting its structure to the materials collected by the student during the Las Vegas seminar, and following the original sections: Introduction, Manifesto, Readings, Mapping, Sketches, Comparative Method, Photography, and Video-making.

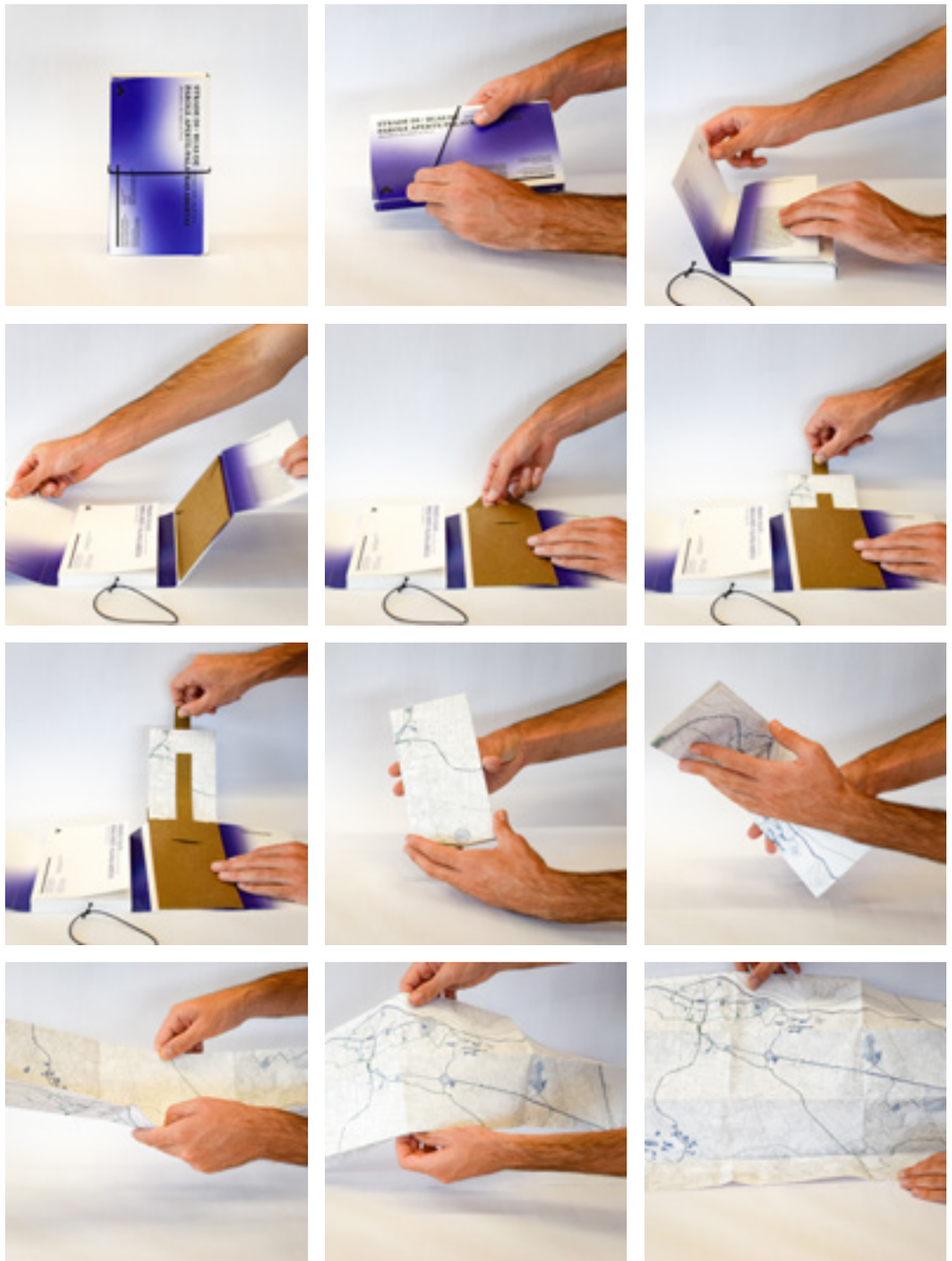

Fig. 1. UpGranT Thesis – *Itineraries: From the Shaping of the Ground to Architectural Form. Three Elementary Actions in Three Contemporary Swiss Works / Dal progetto del suolo alla forma dell'architettura. Tre azioni elementari in tre opere elvetiche contemporanee*. Student: Francesco Quaini. Supervisors: Emanuela Margione, Matteo Saldarini.

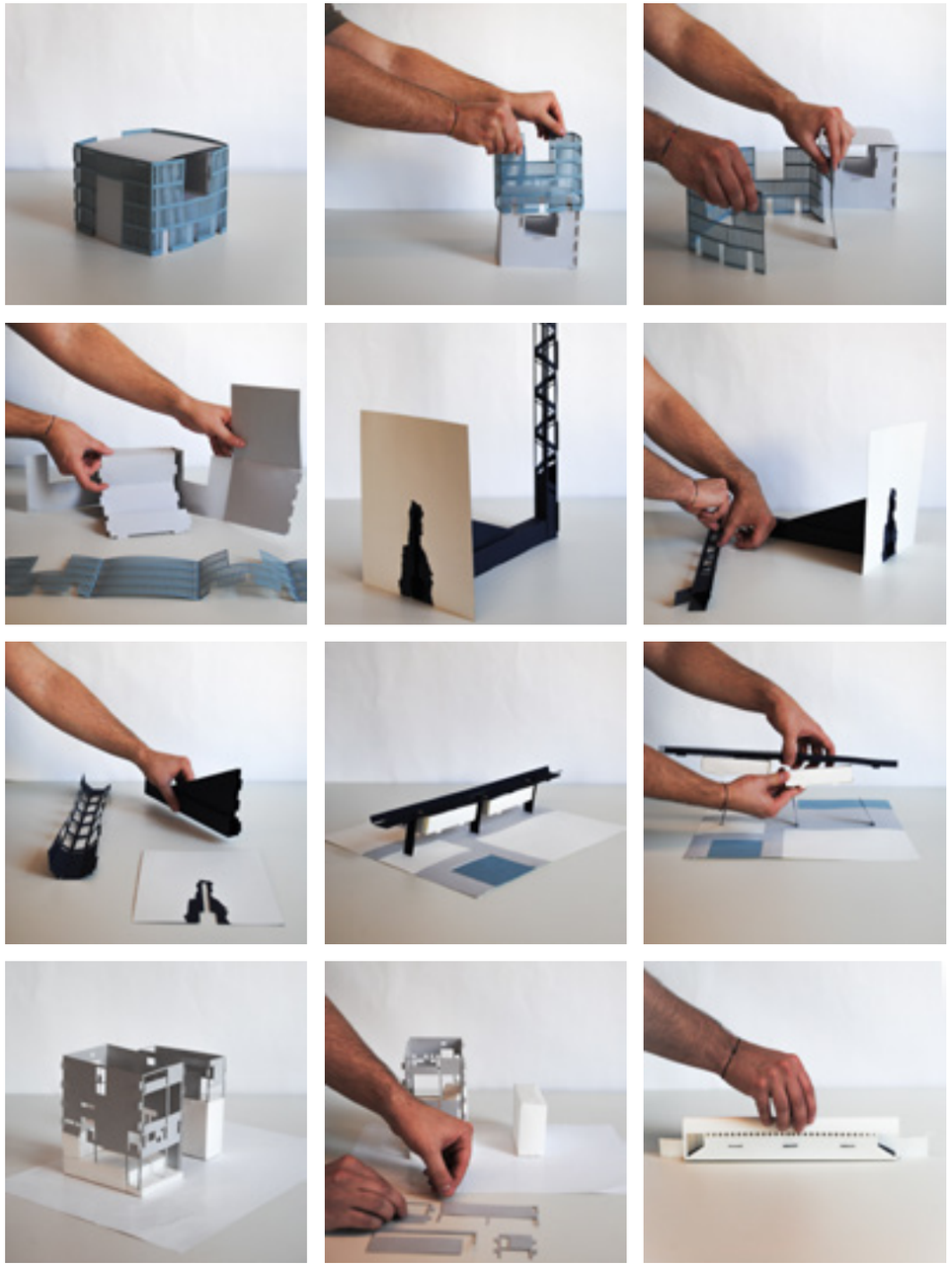

Fig. 2. UpGranT Thesis – *Itineraries: The Construction of a City. A Journey into Aurelio Galfetti's Works in Bellinzona / Costruire una Città. Un Viaggio tra le Opere di Aurelio Galfetti a Bellinzona*. Students: Luca Lorizzo, Matilde Cicoli. Supervisor: Emanuela Margione.



Fig. 3. UpGranT Thesis – *Tales: Architects on the Move. Four Educational Journeys in Dialogue for a Contemporary Interpretation of the Grand Tour / Architetti in Viaggio. Quattro viaggi di Formazione a confronto per un'interpretazione contemporanea del Grand Tour*. Student: Sara Nota. Supervisor: Emanuela Margione.





Fig. 4. UpGranT Thesis – *Tales: Chronicles of a "Steam-Powered Architect". A Round Trip through Gae Aulenti's Design Vision / Cronache di un "Architetto a Vapore". Andata e ritorno nel pensiero progettuale di Gae Aulenti*. Student: Daniele Ravanelli. Supervisor: Emanuela Margione.













Fig. 5. UpGranT Thesis – *Tales: Tale of an Endless Journey. The Legacy of the Italian Journey in Aino and Alvar Aalto's Finnish Projects / Racconto di un Viaggio Continuo. L'eredità dei viaggi in Italia nei progetti finlandesi di Aino e Alvar Aalto*. Student: Ilaria Ponzoni. Supervisor: Emanuela Margione.



Fig. 6. UpGranT Thesis – *Tales: Between Borders and Travel Horizons. Estonian Architects' Travel Itineraries and the Emblematic Case of Raine Karp / Tra confini e orizzoni di viaggio. Itinerari di viaggio degli architetti estoni e il caso emblematico di Raine Karp*. Student: Leonardo Redaelli. Supervisors: Emanuela Margione, Gregor Taul.



Fig. 7. UpGranT Thesis – *Tales: Journey of an (In)disciplinado Architect. Álvaro Siza's Itineraries in Italy Between 1976 and 2016 / Viaggio di un architetto (In)Disciplinato. Gli Itinerari di Álvaro Siza in Italia tra il 1976 e il 2016*. Students: Maria Vittoria Mirra, Dalila Ranzani. Supervisors: Emanuela Margione.



Fig. 8. UpGranT Thesis – *Tales: On Not Travelling. Frank Lloyd Wright's Itineraries in Italy and Japan Between 1905 and 1951 / Contro il viaggio. Itinerari di Frank Lloyd Wright in Italia e Giappone tra il 1905 e il 1951*. Student: Filippo Riva. Supervisor: Emanuela Margione.



Fig. 9. UpGranT Thesis – *Tales: Educating the Gaze. The Role of Travels to Italy in the Shaping of Venturi and Scott Brown's Pedagogical Method / Educare lo sguardo. Il ruolo del viaggio in Italia nella definizione del metodo pedagogico di Venturi e Scott Brown*. Student: Arianna Puddu. Supervisor: Emanuela Margione.

Integrated Master's Programmes

Grand Tourismo

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Despoina Zavraka
Alexandra Vougia

University
School of Architecture – Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Context
Thessaloniki, 2025

Field of Study
Architectural Design

Degree Level
Integrated Master's (workshop)

ECTS Credits
3

Faculty
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Fig. 1–2. Grand Tourismo workshop flyer (front & back).

Objectives

The workshop aimed to develop students' capacity to evaluate established methods of interpreting and exhibiting architecture, while experimenting with unconventional means of communicating spatial qualities. More specifically, it sought to explore both traditional and alternative modes of showcasing the functional, tectonic, and aesthetic dimensions of selected buildings, conveying their underlying spatial intentions alongside their poetic potential. Through this process, the workshop investigated how new perceptual, cognitive, and aesthetic insights can heighten architectural significance, actively prompting reflection, emotion, and critical engagement in both general and specialist audiences.

Method

The workshop consisted of two separate stages – *Part 1: Analysis*, and *Part 2: Interpretation*.

During *Part 1: Analysis*, students were divided into ten teams consisting of four to five students each.

The ten selected architects (Grand Tourists) were assigned to the ten teams, with each team studying a different Grand Tourist. Each team was provided with access to a digital repository containing selected archival material related to its allocated Grand Tourist and was asked to conduct an in-depth study on one selected architectural project designed by that Grand Tourist.

For each team, the aim of *Part 1: Analysis* was to gain an in-depth understanding of the selected architectural project through an investigation of its compositional principles. This analysis was carried out by experimenting with analytical models and diagrams which, when presented alongside the original drawings, models, and photographs of the project, led to a deeper understanding of the project.

To proceed with the creation of analytical works, each team was expected to produce architectural drawings and a three-dimensional model of the studied architectural project, following a common set of specifications to ensure consistency across all analyses. This uniformity facilitated associations, comparisons, and connections among the different teams.

The individual stages of *Part 1* were as follows:

- Preparation of a complete set of technical architectural drawings at a scale of 1:200 (according to the provided specifications).
- Construction of a model at a scale of 1:200 (according to the provided specifications), followed by photographic documentation
- Construction of five analytical models at a scale of 1:200 (using freely chosen materials and techniques), one for each of the following: massing, load-bearing Structure, boundaries, openings, and materiality.
- Design of analytical diagrams at a scale of 1:200 (using freely chosen materials and techniques), one for each of the following: grid and lines; proportions and rhythm; sequences and functions; transitions and thresholds; natural light and shadows.

In *Part 2: Interpretation* students were expected to work either individually or in groups.

Working on the project they analysed during *Part 1*, students were asked to create interpretative works that demonstrated its conceptual surplus value through its material and/or intangible architectural qualities.

Students were given freedom to choose the expressive and cognitive means with which to experiment, including sketches, diagrams, drawings, models, collages, photo-

graphs, videos, posters, stickers, animation, apps, manuals, and narratives.

The interpretative works were expected to (i) reflect the functional, tectonic, and aesthetic choices that characterise the studied architectural projects, and (ii) convey the spatial intentions manifested in these projects, revealing their poetic dimension.

Kinds of Activities

Learning activities included lecture- and seminar-based learning as well as studio work, including laboratory-based, project-based learning.

The students worked both in teams and through personal projects. Accordingly, the workshop included both interactive and collaborative learning and personal project development.

Amount of Work

The total workload per student was 90 hours, distributed as follows:

- Lectures and seminars: 6 hours
- Studio tutorials: 14 hours
- Group work: 21 hours
- Independent work: 49 hours

Tools

Students were expected to utilise physical and digital expressive and cognitive means and media (sketches, diagrams, drawings, models, collages, photographs, narratives, etc.), with which they had become familiar through architectural design and art classes attended in previous semesters of the curriculum.

During the workshop, students were introduced to an expanded field of expressive and cognitive means and media, as well as innovative analytical and synthetic approaches, sources, and references drawn from architecture, the visual, audiovisual and digital arts, visual communication, and interactive application design.

Within the framework, the following specialists conducted six seminars on the representational and performative dimensions of different media and techniques:

- Babis Alexiadis, animation designer and illustrator
- Stergios Galikas, architect and visual communication designer (Post-Spectacular Office)
- Konstantinos Zves, architect and visual artist
- Maria Kriara, architect, visual artist, and assistant professor at the School of Architecture, University of Ioannina
- Vasiliki-Maria Plavou, architect and visual communication designer (Studio Precarity)
- Fotis Sagonas, architect and visual artist

Students were expected to use the digital and analogue tools that are available in our school's fabrication laboratory. All model-making materials were provided to the students by the programme.

Course Materials

At the beginning of the workshop, students were provided with access to a digital repository, created by the programme, containing all original selected archival material and the relevant bibliography relating to the ten Grand Tourists and their work.

Prerequisites

The module was open to students in their sixth semester or above of a ten-semester Integrated Master's Course. By this stage in their studies, students had acquired a significant understanding of architectural concepts, as well as well-developed skills in working with physical and digital architectural tools.

Assessment

The workshop took place during the spring semester of 2025.

The assessment of the learning objectives was accomplished through a combination of studio tutorials and lectures and seminars, fostering an ongoing exchange between tutors and students. Group and individual work, depending on the stage of the project, was undertaken by students between studio tutorials and seminars, allowing progress to be discussed with tutors and among peers. Intermediate deadlines were set at the end of each part of the workshop and of its allocated work packages, allowing students to organise their work effectively while creative discussions were ongoing.

The assessment of the learning objectives followed the schedule of the programme, which was organised as follows:

Part 1: Analysis

27 March: Lecture: Introduction; Studio: Groups formation; Project assignment
31 March: Seminar: Vassiliki-Maria Plavou and Stergios Galikas; Studio: Design
7 April: Seminar: Babis Alexiadis and Konstantinos Zves; Studio: Model construction
28 April: Seminar: Fotis Sagonas and Maria Kriara; Studio: Analytical models and diagrams
5 May: Studio: Analytical Models and Diagrams

Part 2: Interpretation

12 May: Studio: Interpretative works
19 May: Studio: Interpretative works
26 May: Studio: Interpretative works
16 June: Studio: Final presentation

Evaluation

In creative research, research is carried out through the praxis of design itself, where praxis includes both theory and practice. Creative research, such as that conducted in a design studio or design workshop, takes on the character of heuristic inquiry, during which the produced work contains the thought that has been translated into design, and vice versa. In other words, the produced work contains that which can only be designed, and it is only in this way that the work can be expressed and manifested.

In creative practices, research concentrates on the search for form and on the content of expression, followed by a critical reflection on the process, as well as on the material and immaterial qualities of the work. There is no coherent theory, systematic unity, or set of universal criteria on which to base the evaluation of creative work. The only way to evaluate such a work is at the moment when the community formed around the work recognises it as significant; that is, a work that restructures the way we look and think about space and the world, by forming a synthesis of sensations that reframe our perceptual and cognitive functions.

The works produced during the module were evaluated based on the degree to which, within each work, thought was successfully translated into design and discourse. The degree of this translation constituted the evidence of the research activity produced. The following factors were assessed:

- Completeness and legibility of the project itself
- Conceptual and formal elaboration
- Analytical, synthetic, and expressive skills
- Sovereignty regarding the outcome
- Degree of innovation
- Significance for the design discipline
- Relevance
- Reasoning ability
- Self-assessment
- Amount of work
- Use of resources

Deliverables

The analytical works, created by the students in *Part 1: Analysis*, together with the

different interpretive works created in *Part 2: Interpretation*, collectively accompany the Grand Tourists' original drawings, models, and photographs to compose exhibition sets that stimulate states of attention, reflection, and emotion among both general and specialised audiences, by creating a new perceptual, cognitive, and aesthetic experience that enhances and highlights the significance of architecture.

Impact

During the workshop, students were introduced to an expanded field of expressive and cognitive means and media, as well as innovative analytical and synthetic approaches, sources, and references drawn from architecture, the visual, audiovisual and digital arts, visual communication, and interactive applications' design.

After the conclusion of the programme, students were expected to be able to use a variety of tools and methods to analyse and interpret significant architectural buildings encountered during their travels and visits, as well as to study buildings through publications and other sources, thereby developing a broader and deeper understanding of architecture.

Tutors tested and assessed these new analytical and interpretative tools, approaches, and methods with the aim of introducing them into and/or further developing them within their design courses, as well as using them during architectural trips and visits.

Student feedback

The evaluation of the Grand Tourismo workshop included both informal evaluation during the workshop itself and a post-workshop individual anonymous questionnaire.

In keeping with the customary practice followed in every studio course, conversations with students throughout the workshop, together with tutors' informal observations of students' progress, interactions, and performance, provided real-time feedback on the workshop's implementation, allowing for immediate adjustments as well as improvements to future editions.

The post-workshop questionnaire was designed to collect feedback on the various aspects of the students' learning experience. It was clearly described to the students that their anonymous insights, provided as openly and thoughtfully as possible, would be extremely valuable in evaluating the effectiveness of this learning format and improving future editions.

The questionnaire included both Likert-scale questions (from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) and open-ended questions that gave students the opportunity to reflect on what they learned, what worked well, and what could be improved.

The questionnaire was structured as follows:

Intro

Please define your level of study:

- Third-year Integrated Master's Student
- Fourth-year Integrated Master's Student
- Other

Section 1: WORK

(Evaluation from 1=Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree)

1. The presentation of the UpGranT project during the introductory sessions of the workshop was clear. The teaching team explained the structure and the specific activities to be carried out.
2. The preparatory material and introductory lecture provided a clear understanding of the workshop structure and objectives.
3. The seminars delivered by visiting architects, designers, and artists were helpful in expanding my ways of thinking about and communicating architecture.
4. The workshop included buildings that I had not encountered before.
5. The workshop changed my perspective on the building(s) I worked with.
6. The time allocated for this workshop was sufficient to work on the allocated building(s).
7. My expectations regarding knowledge and skills acquisition before the workshop were met.

Section 2: IMPACT

(Evaluation from 1=Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree)

1. The workshop was planned in a way that is appropriate for sixth-semester students.
2. All the buildings selected could be included in future workshops for students.
3. There was a good blend of teamwork and individual work.
4. I am satisfied with the balance between professor-guided and student-led activities during the workshop.
5. Looking back on the experience, I think I could have used different analytical and expressive tools.
6. I will apply the workshop experience to other buildings in my personal creative research.
7. I think the workshop should be included in the architecture curriculum.

(Questions requiring free-text responses)

8. Which part of the workshop had the greatest impact on your understanding of architecture and why?
9. Were there moments during the workshop where you felt particularly inspired or challenged? Please describe one.
10. What would you add, remove, or change in the workshop to improve the experience for future students?

Additional question. Is there anything we haven't asked that you think is important to highlight regarding the workshop?

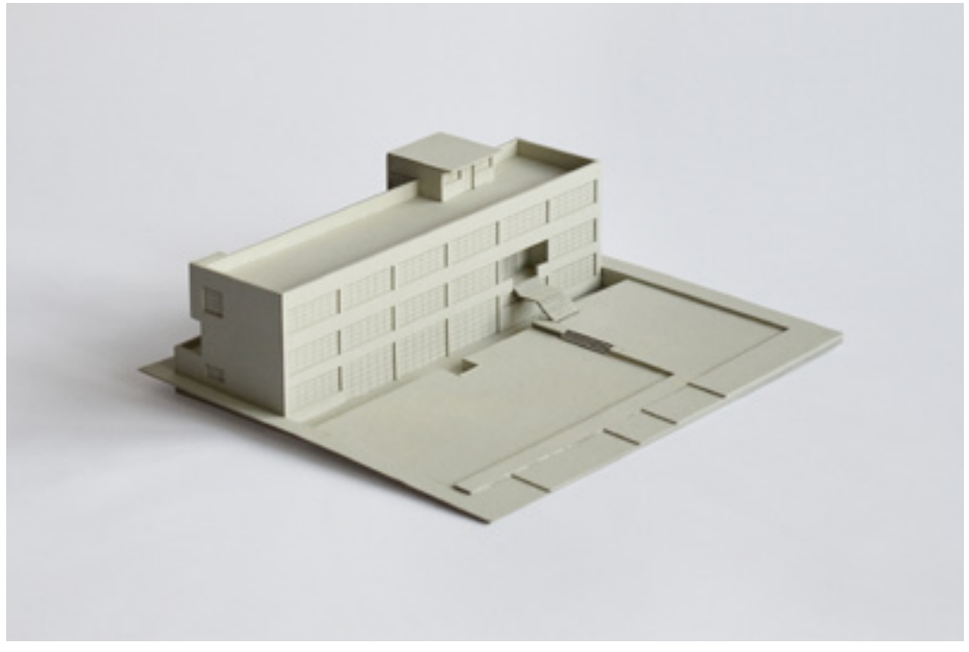
Course Review

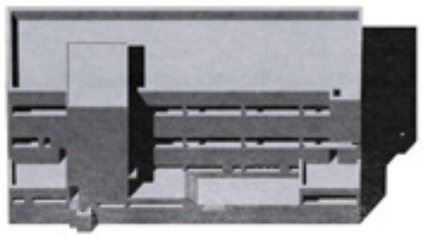
The students' evaluation of the workshop was very positive. Most students found that their expectations regarding knowledge and skills acquisition before the workshop were met and that the workshop changed their perspectives on the building(s) they worked with. They found that there was a good balance between teamwork and individual work, and that they would apply the workshop experience to other buildings in their personal creative research, which is very promising. Most students felt that the workshop should be included in the architecture curriculum.

A small number of sixth-semester students felt that they could have needed more guidance from the professors during the workshop, but this is expected at this level of study, where students are at the threshold of gaining more agency and independence in the design process. A few students felt that the duration of the workshop should be more condensed, which would be appropriate in programmes that allocate a specific period of time for workshops within the academic year during which no other courses are taught. This is not the case at our school, so the only solution was to extend the workshop schedule to better accommodate the other work that had to be completed during the semester.

Once again, most students found that the seminars delivered by young visiting architects, designers, and artists were very helpful in expanding their expressive means of thinking about and communicating buildings. Most importantly, they felt that the workshop expanded the ways in which they think about encountering buildings and reinforced the importance of learning through travel as an integral part of an architect's education.

Marina Bougia, Antonios Bouzouras, Angeliki Pantelidou, Stamatis Vouzikis (Team 1), Higher School for Girls by Nikolaos Mitsakis. Thessaloniki, 1933.





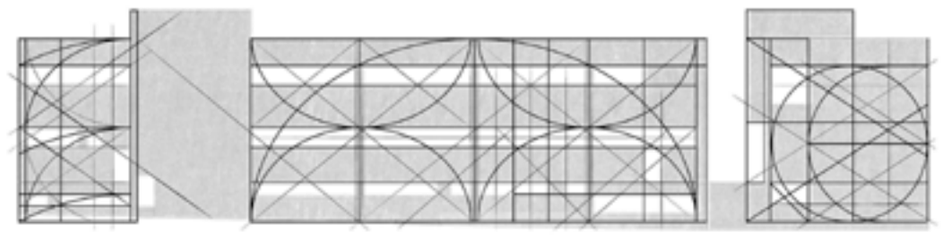


Fig. 3. Architectural model at a scale of 1:200 by Team 1.
Fig. 4. Analytical diagrams by Team 1.



Fig. 5. Interpretative work by Team 1.

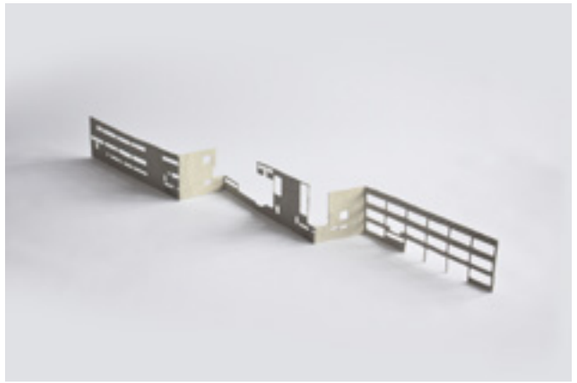
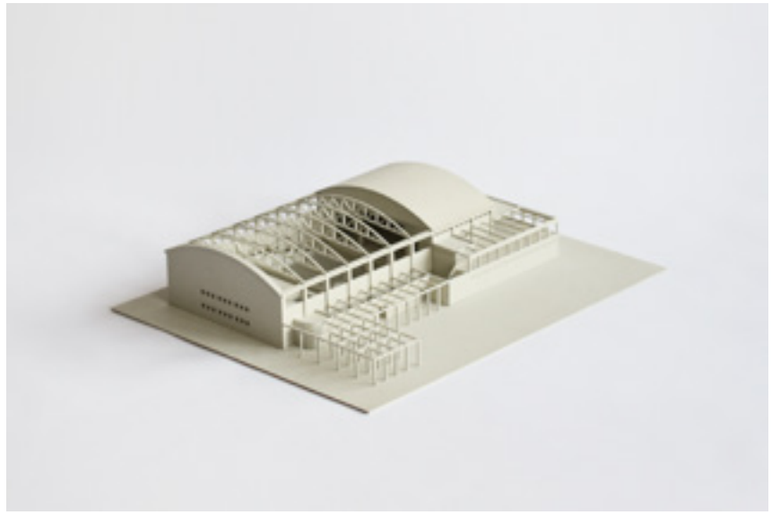


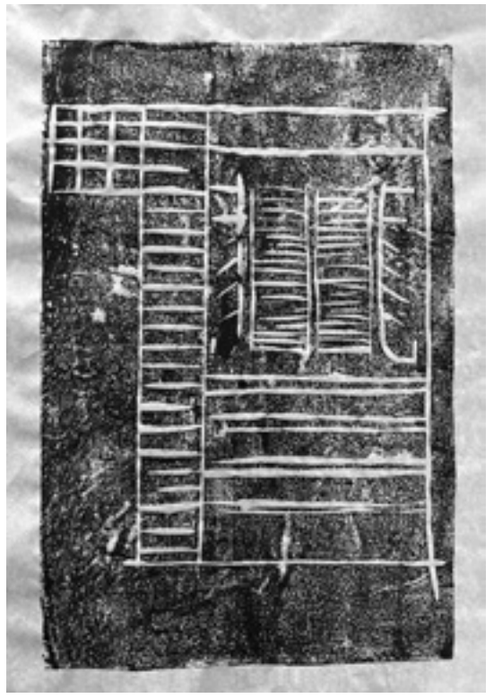




Fig. 6. Interpretative work by Marina Bougia.
Fig. 7. Interpretative works by Stamatis Vouzikis.

Alexandra Agrafioti, George Kreopolis, Maria Eleni Kyriazis, Maria Eleni Tetepoulidou (Team 2),
Royal Theatre by Constantinos A. Doxiadis (with A. Skepers). Thessaloniki, 1938.





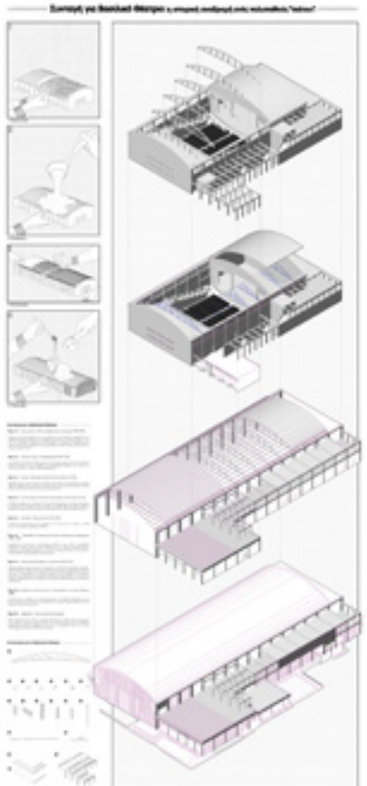
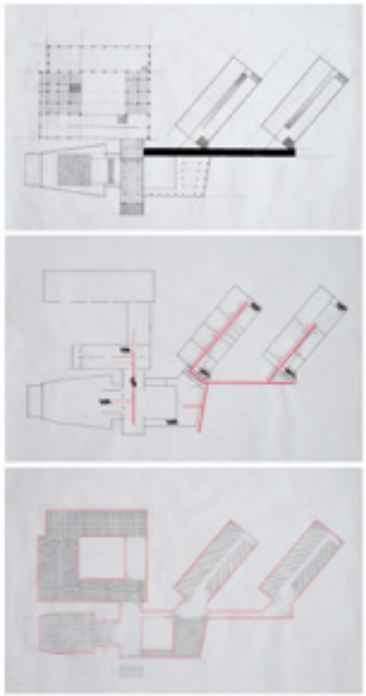


Fig. 8. Architectural model at a scale of 1:200 by Team 2.
Fig. 9. Analytical diagram by Team 2.

Fig. 10. Interpretative Work by Alexandra Agrafioti and George Kreopolis.

Maria Theodora Agalidis, Eleni Panou, Danae Mitakidi, Katerina Vardikou, Myrsini Vlahou (Team 3),
Polytechneion – Faculty of Engineering, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki Campus by Patroklos Karantinos (with I. Liapis, P. Skroumbelos), 1958–1962.





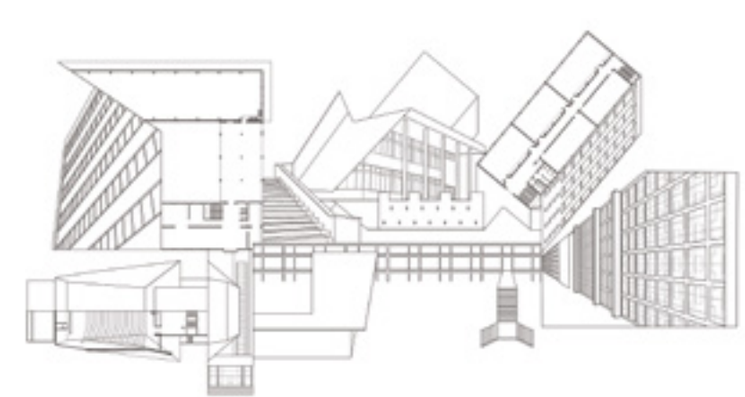




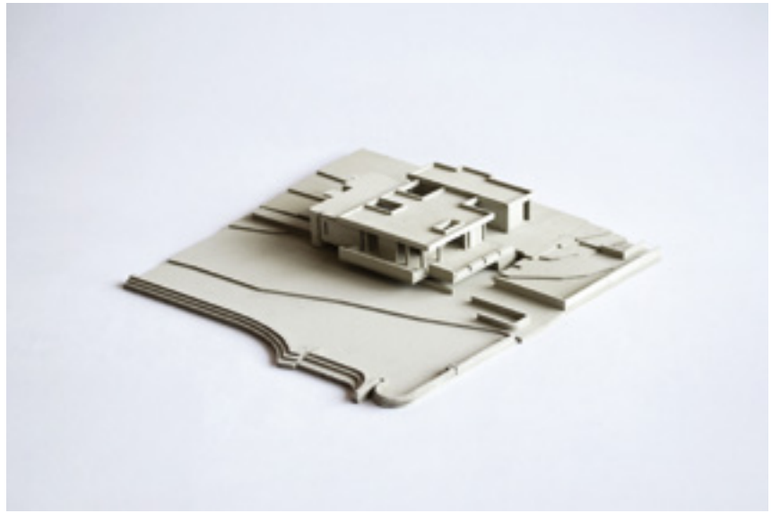




Fig. 11. Architectural model at a scale of 1:200 by Team 3.
Fig. 12. Analytical models by Team 3.
Fig. 13. Interpretative work by Myrsini Vlahou.

Fig. 14. Analytical diagrams by Team 3.

Efthymia Kantourou, Irini Mavridou, Vassiliki Topriska, Theodora Vassiliadou (Team 4). The Kazazi Residence in Panorama by Dimitris (Mimis) A. Fatouros. Thessaloniki, 1962–1964 and 1973.





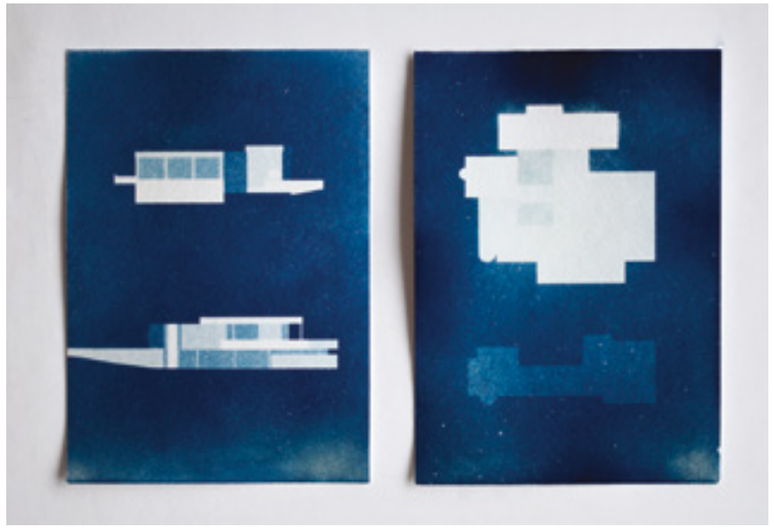




Fig. 15. Architectural model at a scale of 1:200 by Team 4.
Fig. 16. Interpretative work by Vassiliki Topriska.

Fig. 17. Interpretative work by Theodora Vassiliadou.
Fig. 18. Interpretative work by Irini Mavridou and Theodora Vassiliadou.

Emmanuela Hassapi, Vassiliki Kapeleri, Marios Alexandros Poulimenos, Sofia Psychoudaki, Theodoros Raphail Tsikanteris (Team 5), Museum of Byzantine Culture by Kyriakos Krokos (with G. Makri, coll. G. Kalavrytinou, L. Mantziou, N. Rokas). Thessaloniki, 1978 and 1989–1993.



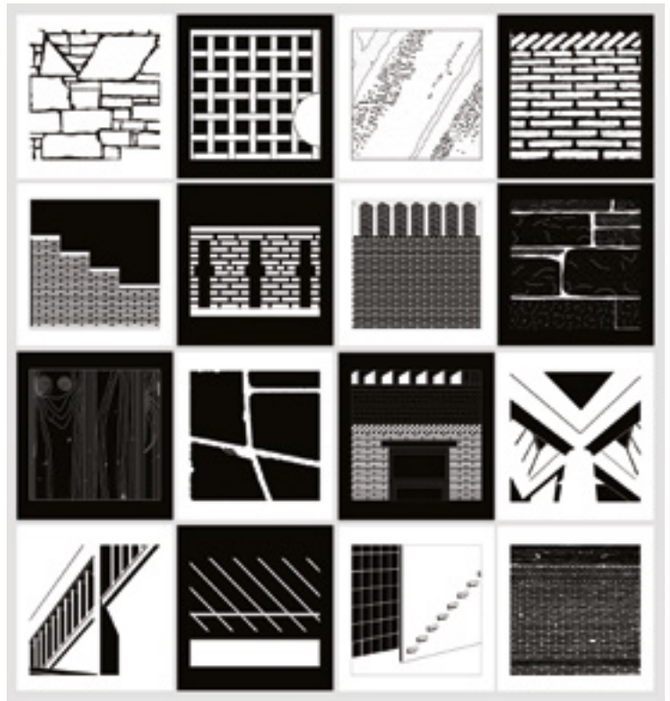






Fig. 19. Architectural model at a scale of 1:200 by Team 5.
Fig. 20. Interpretative work by Emmanuela Hassapi and Vassiliki Kapeleri.

Fig. 21. Interpretative work by Sofia Psychoudaki.
Fig. 22. Interpretative work by Marios Alexandros Poulimenos and Theodoros Raphail Tsikanteris.

Haris Kyriazis, Alexandros Polyzoidis, Ioannis Vassiliou (Team 6), Residence in Ano Poli by Anastasios M. Kotsiopoulos (with E. Halkiopoulou). Thessaloniki, 1998.



Fig. 23. Architectural model at a scale of 1:200 by Team 6.
Fig. 24. Interpretative work by Team 6.

Olympia Antoniou, Daphne Kamopoulou, Alexia Panagiotou, Serafim Simos (Team 8). Residence in Eptapyrgio by Nikos Kalogirou (with K. Manolidis, F. Mavrokordatos). Thessaloniki, 1997–2001.



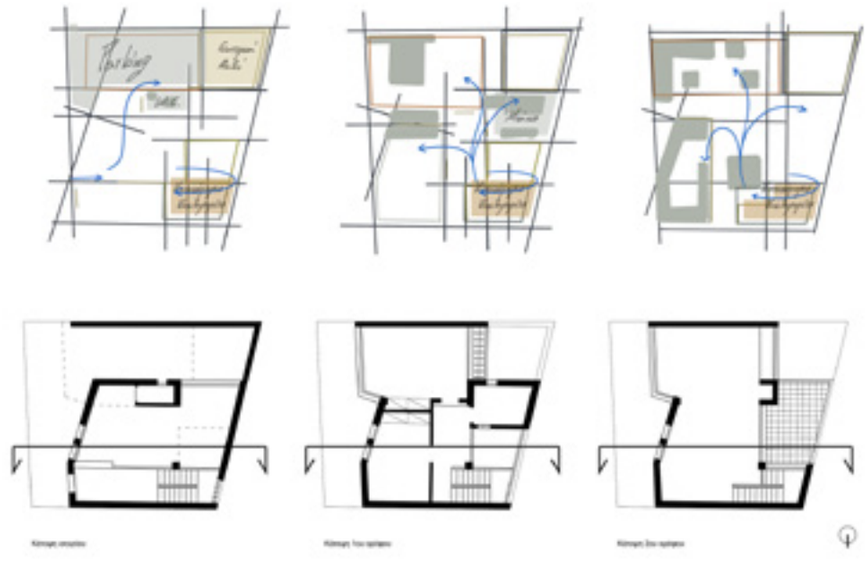


Fig. 25. Architectural model at a scale of 1:200 by Team 8.
Fig. 26. Analytical diagram by Team 8.

Myrto Dounavi, Smaragda Gouli, Sozon Kalfas, Aliki Rouva, Agapi Angeliki Stavrochristou (Team 7), Polytechneion Atrium and Exhibition Space, AUTh Campus by Lois Papadopoulos (with G. Papakostas, I. Vlahos). Thessaloniki, 1984 and 1986.





Fig. 27. Architectural model at a scale of 1:200 by Team 7.
Fig. 28. Analytical model by Team 7.

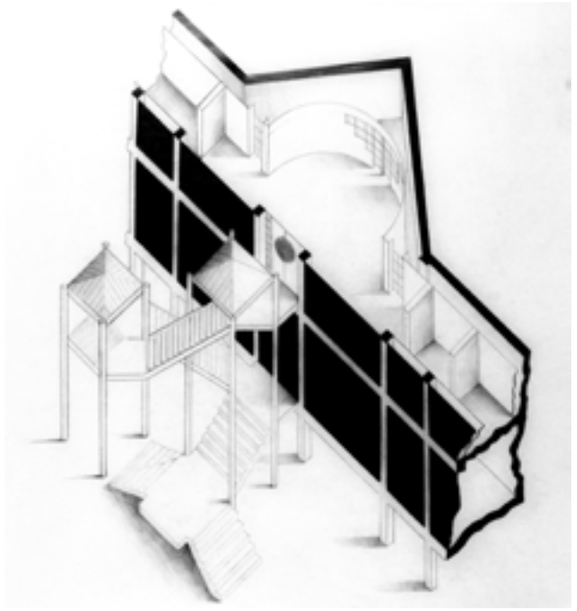


Fig. 29. Axonometric drawing by Team 7.







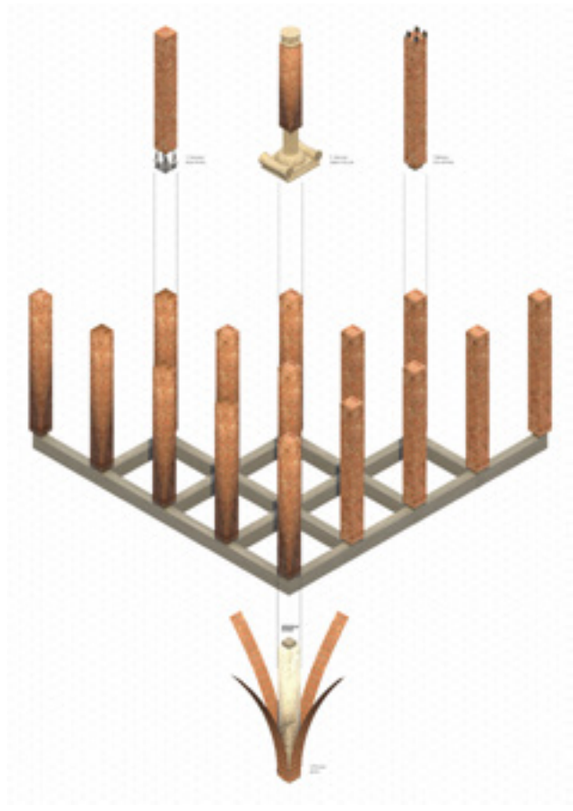


Fig. 30. Interpretative works by Smaragda Gouli and Agapi Angeliki Stavrochristou.
Fig. 31. Interpretative work by Aliki Rouva.





Fig. 32. Interpretative work by Sozon Kalfas.
Fig. 33. Interpretative work by Myrto Dounavi.

Anastassia Hatzichristodoulou, Dimitris Hatzigeorgiou, Eleni Madourou, Vassiliki Matsaga (Team 9), The Karydas and Tsassis Residence in Thermi by George P. Triantafyllidis (with D. Gourdioti). Thessaloniki, 2004.









Fig. 34. Architectural model at a scale of 1:200 by Team 9.
Fig. 35. Interpretative work by Eleni Madourou.
Fig. 36. Analytical models by Team 9.

Fig. 37. Interpretative work by Vassiliki Matsaga.

Dimitra Argyropoulou, Ioanna Bakaliou, Despina Kofinaki, Iris Roditou (Team 10), New Building of National Bank of Greece by Irini (Rena) Sakellaridou and Morpho Papanikolaou. Thessaloniki, 2000–2002.





Fig. 38. Architectural model at a scale of 1:200 by Team 10.
Fig. 39. Interpretative work by Team 10.





Fig. 40. Guest seminar by Konstantinos Zves.
Fig. 41. Guest seminar by Stergios Galikas.

Theories and Techniques of Architectural Composition

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University
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Context
Cesena, 2024–2025

Field of Study
Architectural and Urban Composition

Degree level
Integrated Master's (5th year)

ECTS Credits
4

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Abstract
The museum is a central theme in the practice of contemporary architecture. It is particularly through the museum that contemporary architecture has been able to measure its potential and the limits of its invention. Bearing this in mind, research into significant forms of architecture involves not only a discourse on language and urban morphology, but also on the collective dimension and its implied relationship with history and culture, especially with the memory and historical experience of architecture itself. From a teaching/learning point of view, the module *Theories and Techniques of Architectural Composition* explored the formative role of the architectural references, namely, works designed for other places and at other times,

whose interpretative comparison constitutes the most authentic experience of travelling.

Objectives

The integrated design workshop *Architecture, Museum, Image* proposed the transformation of an urban area within the consolidated city through the design of a museum. Naturally, the aim was not only to design a new building, but also to understand the museum project as an incentive to enhance part of the city through the creation of a collective space and a fresh image.

Within the integrated course, the teaching/learning module *Theories and Techniques of Architectural Composition* addressed the issue of the meaning of the image in our time. As is well known, Western culture can find a motive for unity and continuity in the conception of the image as something capable of reinventing reality, consequently, the main aim of the module was strictly related to the UpGranT programme *Memory and Invention of the European Built Environment* which introduced a narrative and figurative dimension that familiarised students with the need to rediscover the sensitive and emotional component of architectural design.

Method

The teaching module activities included a series of lectures and seminar-style discussions on the theoretical and compositional aspects of architecture, accompanied by practical work on architectural form. Since its origins in the post-war period, the Italian school of architecture has always prioritised the relationship between theory and practice, establishing *ex cathedra* lectures alongside practical design work (Rogers 1958, Samonà 1968). Accordingly, the nature of the design studio workshops in the Cesena Integrated Master's Course in Architecture is precisely to integrate lecture-based learning and workshop-based learning, bringing together practice and theory.

The lectures focused on the theme of the museum, considered in its historical, theoretical, typological, and compositional aspects, starting from the relationship between theory and practice found in the work of selected contemporary architects. The experimental nature of the *Theories and Techniques of Architectural Composition* module concerns the study of selected exemplary buildings, not so much through their final form as in an analysis of their formation over time. The students examined sketches and drawings of the works from different stages of their composition found in archives and books, representing different moments in the lives of their creators. In this way, two types of journey and temporality intersected: the internal time of the compositional process and the life histories of the architects. The theoretical work was accompanied and complemented by seminar-style discussions and periodic weekly meetings, which provided opportunities for interactive and collaborative teaching and learning.

Lecture-based learning: 10 hours
Interactive and collaborative learning: 4 hours
Learning assessment: 2 hours
Workshop-based learning: 15 hours
Project-based learning: 15 hours
Fieldwork learning: 2 hours

Tools

The goal of the teaching module, as part of the final postgraduate design workshop, is to provide students with a formative, conceptual, and figurative method for the invention and development of an architectural project conceived as part of a city. This approach to design invention involves improving the skills necessary to acquire the awareness needed to develop a design theme considered in relation to: 1) with the urban history of the city, 2) with the physical and geographical context that is the subject of the urban transformation, 3) with the historical and critical culture of the place, 4) with compositional techniques and their expressive extensions, 5) with structural and constructive expression. For these reasons, the tools adopted belong both to the world of theoretical reflection – critical essays collected in scientific journals and books – and to the principal design tools, such as drawing (by hand and using CAD) and physical architectural models. The paper used for such design sketches should also be very thin, as its role in the design process is to allow different layers to be superimposed through its transparency. As Oswald Mathias Ungers writes (and Vieths 1997, 17): "[…] this word (layer), borrowed from the language of some CAD programs, was used to translate the German term Folie, which refers to a very thin sheet or film, usually transparent, and which in a figurative sense means background, in front of which there is something. This highlights the idea of the city itself as a support on which to draw." Equally important is the work with physical architectural models, for which Cesena students have the support of the LaMo Architectural Model Laboratory. All teaching resources are uploaded as open-access materials on the Virtuale e-learning platform.
In this way, students learn how to intervene autonomously and responsibly within a complex architectural and urban reality, understanding that every transformation of reality requires a critical reflection that is simultaneously technical, ethical, and aesthetic.

Course Materials

Two types of material are required for the course: the material needed for the Integrated Course and the material required for the innovative teaching module *Theories and Techniques of Architectural Composition*. The basic material for the project design is provided by the course teaching staff and includes historical and technical cartography (CAD DWG files) and a basic bibliography covering both on the place being studied and relevant theoretical perspectives. By contrast, the material needed for the experimental teaching module is generated through the students' own research. Students are expected to retrieve this material both from books and directly from the archives of the architects under study, where the original drawings relating to the exemplary buildings under investigation are kept. It is also the students' responsibility to explore specific topics related to their own project. In other words, they must identify relevant bibliography on the relationship between these architects and travelling, and on the reciprocal influences between their architecture and the architecture produced by other architects in other places and at other times.

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Prerequisites

The teaching and learning experimentation of the module *Theories and Techniques of Architectural Composition* is part of the integrated course within the final (fifth-year) workshop. For this reason, it requires students to have completed previous design workshops, which provide them with the technical and cultural foundations needed to undertake the final workshop. Nevertheless, the methodology adopted in the teaching and learning module, based on a close relationship between theory and practice, is designed to be replicated independently, even outside the context of an integrated course. Furthermore, a reform of the curriculum of the Integrated Master's Course in Architecture at Cesena is being planned, which will allow students to choose their final workshop in advance so that they can better organise their preliminary preparation.

Assessment

Assessment of the achievement of the learning objectives is accomplished through seminars and scheduled presentations. The nature of this assessment is closely related to the nature of the discipline, which, unlike the exact sciences, thrives on mutual exchanges between teachers and students. As Enrico Prandi has rightly argued in reference to distance learning, architectural education still requires a direct, on-site relationship with the student: "Architecture is a discipline that synthesizes different kinds of knowledge: it is by definition composite and made up of a part of basic theoretical knowledge and a characterizing part of practical experimentation based on design workshop activities. Theoretical training is essential and has implications in the practical-planning aspect. An architectural project must be able to synthesize all the theoretical knowledge (historical, social, technical, technological, etc.) acquired in other teachings. This aspect is fundamental in the distinction of two different teaching methodologies on which the considerations relating to the modernization of teaching methods will fall. If the theoretical knowledge in architecture follows teaching methodologies not dissimilar to any other knowledge, whether humanistic or technical-scientific, in which teaching through the aid of ICT has already undergone extensive experimentation, in the case of the workshop teaching of design things appear less obvious and above all lack extensive experimentation" (Prandi 2021). Both students' progress towards the learning objectives and the development of the design theme are verified during the course of the workshop through periodic reviews.

Evaluation

The evaluation criteria for the results of the teaching and learning module *Theories and Techniques of Architectural Composition* concern the verification of three aspects: 1) the evaluation of knowledge of the theoretical issues addressed in the design workshop; 2) the evaluation of the exercises carried out during the year; 3) the evaluation of the project documentation. These three aspects correspond to the teaching units previously discussed (theory and practice) and, from another point of view, to the various stages of the compositional process. The evaluation combines quantitative and qualitative criteria. The quantitative criteria concern the types of material to be delivered: to be eligible for assessment, students must be submit the following: a) historical and cartographic documentation of the city and the area under study; b) documentation on materials and interpretative tools relating to the city and the exemplary buildings; c) drawings and project reinterpretations of the exemplary buildings within the study context. From a qualitative point of view, the assessment includes a technical component relating to the syntactic and compositional development of the students' interpretations and an aesthetic and expressive component relating to the quality of the representations. When evaluating the design materials, particular consideration is given to the expressive and representational methods used to communicate the content and images of the project, with particular attention being paid to the production of the model and the photographic images of it. On a formal level, the final assessment is carried out through a single test, common to all the modules of the final workshop, scheduled at the conclusion of the workshop. This assessment aims to ascertain the individual level of learning achieved across the contents of all the modules that make up the integrated course.

Deliverables

Students collect documentary material – including bibliography, archival drawings, and photographs – related to selected exemplary buildings and explore their connection to the physical and metaphorical journeys undertaken by their architects. Students then create interpretative works – including drawings and models made from various materials and at different scales – which represent the relationships and cross-pollinations between these architectural works across time and space.

Course review

The teaching and learning module *Theories and Techniques of Architectural Composition* awards 4 ECTS, corresponding to 48 hours of classroom instruction led by a tutor. In addition to these, students are required to complete 52 hours of independent study (1 ECTS = 25 hours of student workload). Most classroom teaching focuses primarily on two areas: lecture-based learning (10 hours) and workshop- and project-based learning (30 hours in total). This is because the Italian tradition of architectural and urban studies has emphasised the importance of theory since the 1950s. In the specific case of the *Theories and Techniques of Architectural Composition* module within a European project focusing on the relationship between architecture and travel, the main limitation was the lack of fieldwork. In other words, to provide students with a more comprehensive educational experience, it would have been beneficial for them to have travelled to see the actual architectural sites they had studied first-hand.

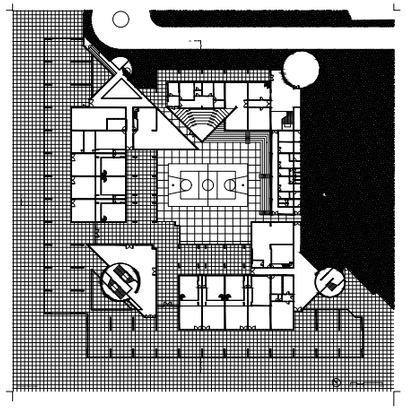
Outcomes

The teaching and learning module *Theories and Techniques of Architectural Composition* focused on three architectural works: the Pesaro School Campus, designed by Carlo Aymonino between 1970 and 1979 and partially realised; The Thirteen Watchtowers for Cannaregio in Venice, designed by John Hejduk between 1974 and 1979; and the Civic Tower within the Pesaro School Campus, designed by Aldo Rossi in 1979. The achieved outcomes included:

- Searches for original archival drawings;
- Production of scale drawings of the designs;
- Research and analysis of references;
- Production of original interpretative materials.

The creation of original interpretative materials involved both the production of drawings in various styles and formats and the construction of physical models. Many students and several departments within the programme, including the LaMo Architectural ModelLaboratory of the Integrated Master's Course in Architecture, contributed to the creation of the models.







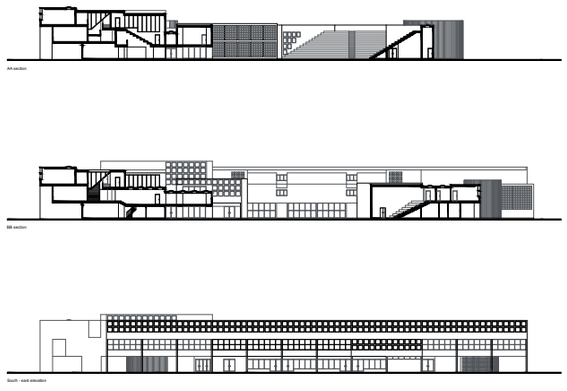


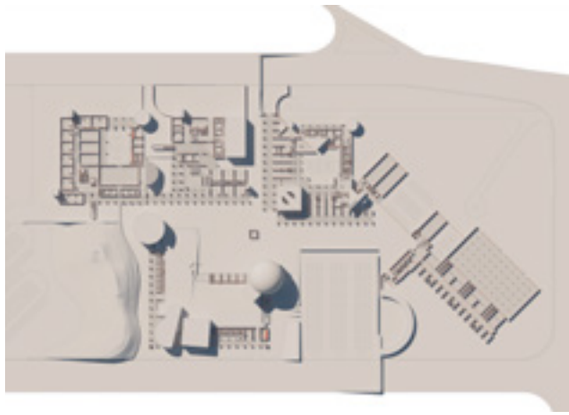
Fig. 1. Carlo Aymonino, Pesaro School Campus, 1970–1979. Courtesy of IUAV Archivio Progetti, Venice.
Fig. 2. Carlo Aymonino, Pesaro School Campus, 1970–1979. Photograph of the corner.

Fig. 3. Carlo Aymonino, Pesaro School Campus, 1970–1979. Redrawings.





Fig. 4. Aldo Rossi, Residential building in the Gallaratese building, 1967–1973.
Fig. 5. Le Corbusier, Convent of Sainte-Marie de La Tourette, 1953–1960.



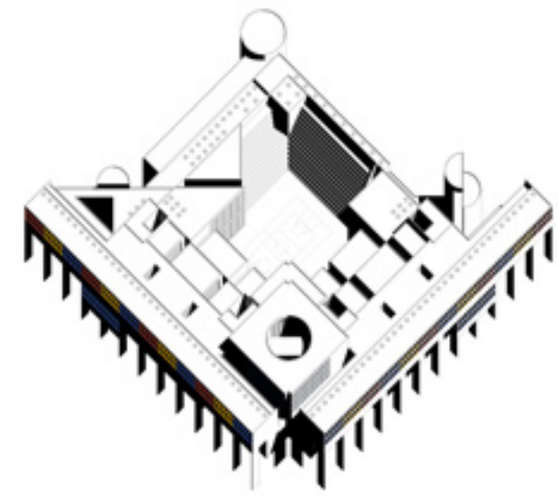
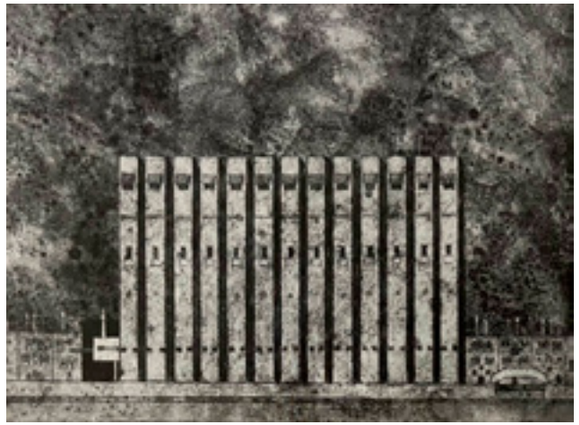


Fig. 6. Carlo Aymonino, Pesaro School Campus, 1970–1979. View of the three-dimensional model. Drawing by Giuseppe Buttazzo.
Fig. 7. Carlo Aymonino, Pesaro School Campus, 1970–1979. Axonometric projection. Drawing by Francesco Bruno.





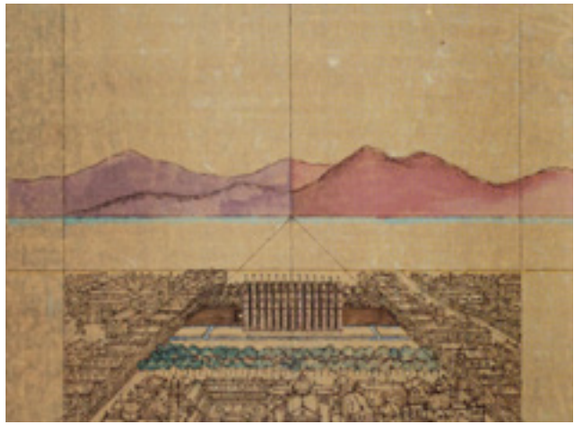


Fig. 8. John Hejduk, The Thirteen Watchtowers for Cannaregio, 1974–1979. Courtesy of Canadian Center for Architecture



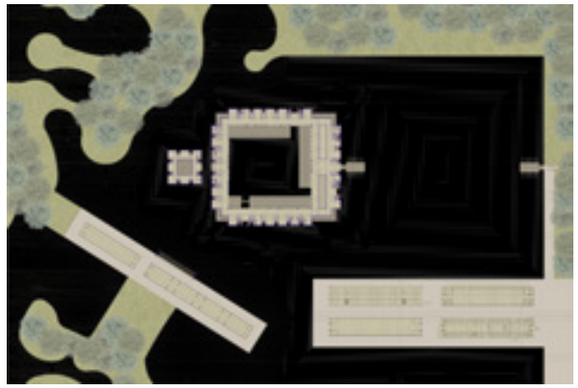
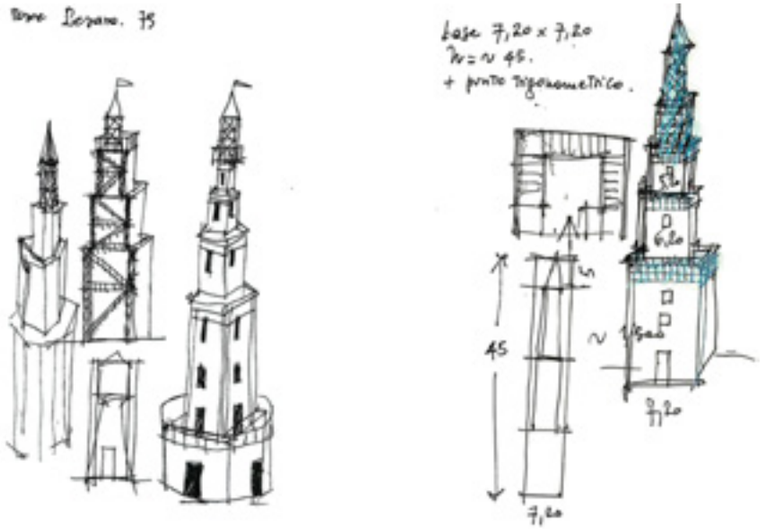


Fig. 9. Angelo Finelli, Drawing of Bologna with its towers, 1917.
Fig. 10. Teaching module *Theories and Techniques of Architectural Composition, Once Upon a Time*. General plan. Project by Mirko Marchetti and Alessandro Minghetti.





Fig. 11. Teaching module *Theories and Techniques of Architectural Composition, Once Upon a Time*. Perspective views. Project by Mirko Marchetti and Alessandro Minghetti.
Fig. 12. Teaching module *Theories and Techniques of Architectural Composition, Once Upon a Time*. Photograph from the workshop.



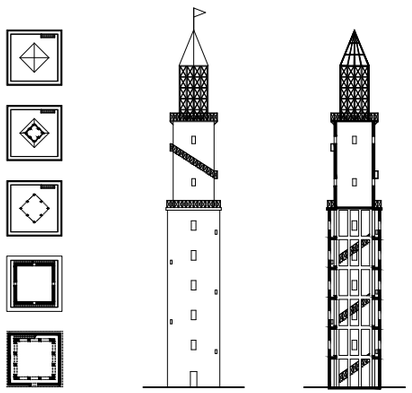
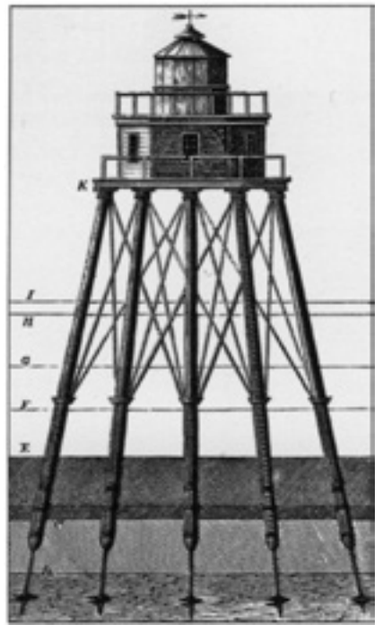


Fig. 13. Aldo Rossi, Civic Tower within the Pesaro School Campus, 1979. Courtesy of the Canadian Center for Architecture.
Fig. 14. Aldo Rossi, Civic Tower within the Pesaro School Campus, 1979. Redrawing.



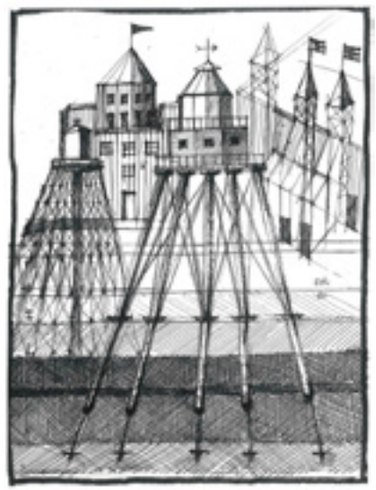




Fig. 15. Screw-pile lighthouse erected at port Fleetwood, on the Wyre, near Lancaster. From: Charles Tomlinson, *Cyclopaedia of Useful Arts*, 1854.
Fig. 16. Aldo Rossi, Drawing of Wyre Lighthouse with the Teatro del Mondo, 1980. From: Aldo Rossi, *Teatro del Mondo*, 1982.
Fig. 17. Athanasius Kircher, “Turris Norizonta Sinenfium”. From: *China monumentis*, 1667.







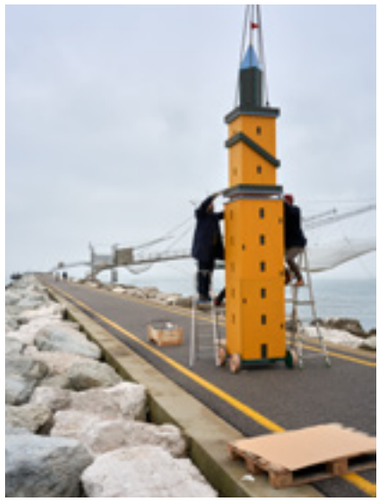


Fig. 18. Interpretation of the Aldo Rossi, Civic Tower within the Pesaro School Campus, 1979. The model was built in the LaMo Architectural Model Laboratory of the Integrated Master's Course in Architecture at the University of Bologna, Cesena Campus, transported and assembled on the south dam of the port of Marina di Ravenna near the Porta del Pensiero. Structural calculations by Giada Gasparini and Emma Ghini. LaMo staff:Francesco Gulinello (Scientific Director, Davide Giaffreda (Technical Manager), Marika Mangano (Laboratory Technician). With contributions from Mila Cappello and Armin Aziri, Thomas Capacci, Gina Celestini Radaelli, Jovita Maria Chirivi, Paola Valentina Di Silvio Vasquez, Lorenzo Forlivesi, Simone Monti, Matteo Suzzi, Arianna Toscano. Project by Mirko Marchetti and Alessandro Minghetti. Photograph by Michele Buda.
Fig. 19. Interpretation of Aldo Rossi's Civic Tower within the Pesaro School Campus, 1979. Photographs from the workshop.

Master's Programmes

Presentation Methods: Pärnu KEK Construction Company's Housing Complex Kuldne Kodu (Golden Home)

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Context
Pärnu and Tallinn, 2024

Field of Study
Interior Architecture

Degree Level
Master's (1st year)

ECTS Credits
2 ECTS

Faculty
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Students
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Abstract
The course is part of the research project *UpGranT – Updating the Grand Tour: Memory and Invention of the European Built Environment,* which focuses on the concept of the Grand Tour and studies how architects have been influenced by travelling. As the project asks what learning through travel means, we aim to address this question by leaving the university building and settling in for four days in the Kuldne Kodu (Golden Home) building designed by Toomas Rein. Over the course of four days, students will explore the building both inside and out, analysing the apartments, stairwells, common areas on the attic floor, courtyards, garages, the kindergarten integrated into the building, and the famous 800-metre-long interior street that runs through the building.

Objectives

Through a blend of traditional and experimental techniques, students build presentation skills grounded in *in situ* practice. By exploring knowledge production through lived, multisensory experiences, the analytical focus shifts from what a building represents to what constitutes its physical presence.

Method

The course consists of four types of learning activities: studio sessions and lectures, a four-day on-site workshop at the Kuldne Kodu, independent work by students between sessions, and a final presentation in the open area of the EKA Faculty of Architecture.

1 Studio: Introduction, course overview, and assignment description – 1.5 hours, followed by one week for individual research.
2 Lecture: Architectural historian Mait Väljas on Soviet-era architecture connected to the collective farms – 1.5 hours
3 On-site workshop – 4 days, followed by three weeks for developing the deliverables.
4 Individual desk critique and group feedback – 3 hours, followed by one week for developing the deliverables.
5 Final presentations – 3 hours

Schedule of the on-site workshop

Day 1
Arrival in the afternoon
Tour of the building led by Malle Ellam (Head of the Kuldne Kodu Apartment Association) – 2 hours
Drawing and sketching outdoors – 1 hour
Tour of Tralli kindergarten (adjacent to Kuldne Kodu) – 1 hour
Joint dinner and discussion, including the assignment of the following day's task – 2 hours
Free time

Day 2
Joint breakfast
Mapping assignment – 2 hours
Joint lunch
Process journal assignment – 3 hours
Presentations, reflections, and group discussion
Dinner (participants' choice)
Free time

Day 3
Joint breakfast
Model-making and independent work on the assignment – 3 hours
Joint lunch
In-depth reflection and group discussion. Students present their models and identify the model they will continue to develop – 2 hours
Joint dinner
Free time

Day 4
Joint breakfast
Pärnu Riigimaja visit – 2 hours
Spatial intervention presentations and wrap-up – 2 hours
Departure in the afternoon

Tools

Students use both digital and analogue techniques to study and interpret the Kuldne Kodu residential complex. These techniques, in turn, are used as tools in both traditional and new, unexpected ways.

For example, during their first studio session in the classroom, students are given the task of collecting, within 15 minutes, as many different materials and potential tools from the architecture faculty's open studio as they can gather or consider useful, and placing them in a shoebox. The students do not know what these boxes are for. Their purpose becomes clear a week later in Pärnu, at the Kuldne Kodu residence. While creating models from found materials, students are given the boxes they had set aside the previous week, and they must now use their contents to build the models.

At the Kuldne Kodu, in addition to their own apartment, students can also work in the apartment building's former shop, where materials such as paper, cardboard, scissors, knives, glue, tape, and measuring tape are available. In addition, students are required to bring their own diary or notebook, which will serve as a process journal; continuous sketching and its presentation are part of their assignments. Students are also encouraged to take photographs or videos using their phones or a separate camera.

Provided Material

At the beginning of the course, students are provided with digitised archival materials, such as the original drawings and sections of the building. Students also have access to the previously collected material related to the building and to the oeuvre of Toomas Rein assembled for the UpGranT project (interior and exterior views, and photos of different apartments).

Recommended Reading

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Kurg, A. and Laanemets, M. (2008) *Keskkonnad, projektid, kontseptsioonid. Tallinna kooli arhitektid 1972–1985* [Environment, Projects, Concepts. Architects of the Tallinn School 1972–1985]. Estonian Museum of Architecture, Tallinn.

Rein, T. and Väljas, M. (compilers) (2010) *Arhitekt Toomas Rein*. Estonian Museum of Architecture, Tallinn.

Urbel, E. (2020) "Laureaat – Toomas Rein – täht, kellega sarnast ehk enam ei tulegi" [Award Winner – Toomas Rein – a star the likes of whom we may never see again] – *Sirp* 21. II 2020.

Varblane, R. (2010) "Isepäine modernist Toomas Rein" [The Unconventional Modernist Toomas Rein] – *Sirp* 23. IV 2010.

Recommended Viewing

Volkov I. and Park T. (reporters) (1982) *Vikerkaar: Maa-arhitektuur* [Archival series]. ETV. https://arhiiv.err.ee/video/vaata/vikerkaar-maa-arhitektuur.

Brambat, P. (director) (2010) *Ehituskunstnik Toomas Rein* [Film]. Oculos Film https://vimeo.com/407524423

Prerequisites

Basic knowledge of drawing, drafting, and model-making.

Assessment

Throughout the course, students work on individual assignments, on which they receive feedback both privately from the tutors and from fellow students during group discussions. As part of an on-site workshop at the Kuldne Kodu residence in Pärnu, students work on individual projects, which are later refined into final projects during consultations. Following the Pärnu workshop, all students receive detailed written feedback from their advisors, analysing the work completed so far and suggesting possible directions for further developing their projects. The written analysis is then discussed during the last individual desk critique session.

Evaluation

Like other courses in the master's programme in Interior Architecture, this is a pass-or-fail course. To successfully complete the course, students must attend the on-site workshop in Pärnu and miss no more than one of the studio sessions.

Deliverables

During the on-site workshop at the Pärnu Kuldne Kodu apartment building, students

must actively update a process journal containing sketches, collages, spatial analysis, text-based descriptions, and research. The process journal includes both independent work and assignments given by the instructors. At Kuldne Kodu, each student chooses one specific space to map. These are spaces to which we have guaranteed access as part of the workshop: apartments, the interior street, outdoor areas, the former store, the daycare centre, the courtyard, and the front of the building. The mapping process includes an architectural drawing assignment in which students must sketch the building and their chosen space without looking at the paper – capturing the feeling of the building. In addition, students are given an assignment to map a single journey within the building, in which a selected space or spatial element is interpreted through time and narrative, revealing the human relationships that bring it to life on a daily basis.

For the final presentation, students transform their process journal into a visually and conceptually comprehensive poster or zine that provides a complete overview of the project's development, sources of inspiration, and references, and, in addition to conventional forms of architectural representation (drawings, sections, elevations), using other freely chosen means of expression to best interpret their ideas.

In Pärnu, students also work with models made in different formats and materials. First, students interpret their chosen space using a model made from materials found on-site. Following this, they work with materials they had gathered into a shoebox from the EKA studio area during the first meeting. In the third stage, students can also use conventional model-making tools and materials (cardboard, wood, etc.). For the final presentation, based on the previous work process, students create a completely new model, using the various workshops available at EKA.

The last part of the on-site workshop at Kuldne Kodu in Pärnu is a so-called fragment tour, where each student introduces the part of the building they have been working with over the four days. If possible, the student also incorporates the UpGranT aspect, explaining whether and to what extent the architectural development of the building was influenced by Toomas Rein's foreign travels or his role models from world architectural history and among his contemporaries.

For the final presentation, each student presents one final scale model, a selection of models produced during the work process, and a journal providing an overview of the work process, spatial analysis, and research findings. Each student has five minutes to introduce their project, followed by ten to fifteen minutes of feedback.

Student Feedback

After the course, students were asked to rate their satisfaction by completing an online questionnaire. Of the 10 students, 8 responded to the questionnaire. The students were asked to rate the questions – which were divided into three sections – on a five-point scale.

Student feedback regarding the logistics and organisation of the course was generally positive, though it highlighted minor differences in initial expectations. Regarding the clarity of course expectations and planned activities, 62.5% of the respondents selected ratings in the upper half of the scale, while the remaining 37.5% gave the highest possible rating. Satisfaction was even stronger regarding course materials (such as bibliographies and archival materials), with 75% of respondents finding them completely sufficient and well aligned with the course structure and expectations. Opinions differed most when it came to the assessment criteria. While a little over a third of the students understood the criteria perfectly, half felt they were only moderately clear, and one student found them rather confusing.

The hands-on, spatial, and travel-based elements of the course received overwhelmingly positive feedback. There was complete consensus regarding the value of experiential learning: 100% of the students strongly agreed that the travel experience and direct site visits positively contributed to their learning. Perceptions of teaching quality and feedback were more varied. While the majority felt the lecturers taught well and made the subject engaging, 37.5% rated this aspect as average. Feedback received throughout the module was consistently valued, with responses evenly split across the upper half of the scale, indicating that it effectively supported student development.

Students gave the course high marks for its contribution to their academic and professional outlook. Specifically, 62.5% strongly agreed that it helped them build a more critical attitude toward observing and communicating architecture. The international makeup of the group was also highly appreciated (two Erasmus students joined the course), with the same percentage noting that it significantly enriched their learning. By the end, 87.5% of the students were highly satisfied with the outcomes and saw them as valuable for their future careers, with nearly all respondents indicating that they would recommend this UpGrantT learning-through-travel approach to others.

Students also had the opportunity to share their thoughts through open-ended questions, which provided further valuable feedback. One student's reflection illustrates the impact of the course particularly well: "Translating a vast, complex architectural structure into a tiny little contraption that is purely for fun and serves no specific purpose is an approach to spatial analysis that I had never tried before, but which has opened up a whole new world for understanding space."

Course Review

According to the feedback, the students were highly enthusiastic about the opportunity to reside and work for four days within one of Estonia's most prominent twentieth-century residential landmarks. They emphasised that they had not previously experienced such an intense and deep engagement with a research object during their academic studies. However, this privilege also generated a degree of anxiety and dissatisfaction. The sheer scale and historical resonance of the architecture proved somewhat overwhelming. Additionally, the scope of the assignment was perhaps disproportionate to the actual volume of the studio (2 ECTS), causing many students to express a desire for more time to develop their final presentations and models. Considering that the students completed an extraordinary amount of work for a micro-course and presented fruitful outcomes, more precise communication from the tutors regarding the course credits, expected workload, and realistic expectations could have mitigated student stress.

The students' feedback reflected their confusion regarding the clarity of the assessment process. In contrast to bachelor's programmes, the master's curriculum in Interior Architecture utilises non-graded (pass/fail) courses, an evaluative approach that often raises questions among first-year students. For the participants in this course, the Pärnu field trip constituted their initial studio experience, occurring a mere two weeks after commencing their studies. The findings indicate that both the teaching staff and the head of the programme should communicate the framework of formative assessment more proactively.

Furthermore, a few students noted that the emphasis on individual assignments compromised their learning process and limited their outcomes. As this heterogeneous cohort had just begun their studies, solving

individual tasks in isolation felt alienating and fostered a competitive environment, focusing on who could deliver the most innovative solution, rather than encouraging collective engagement during the site visit to Kuldne Kodu. While this issue was explicitly raised by only two students, it underscores a fundamental pedagogical challenge: course design must account not only for specific learning outcomes but also for the module's position within the broader curriculum and its impact on group dynamics.

Outcomes





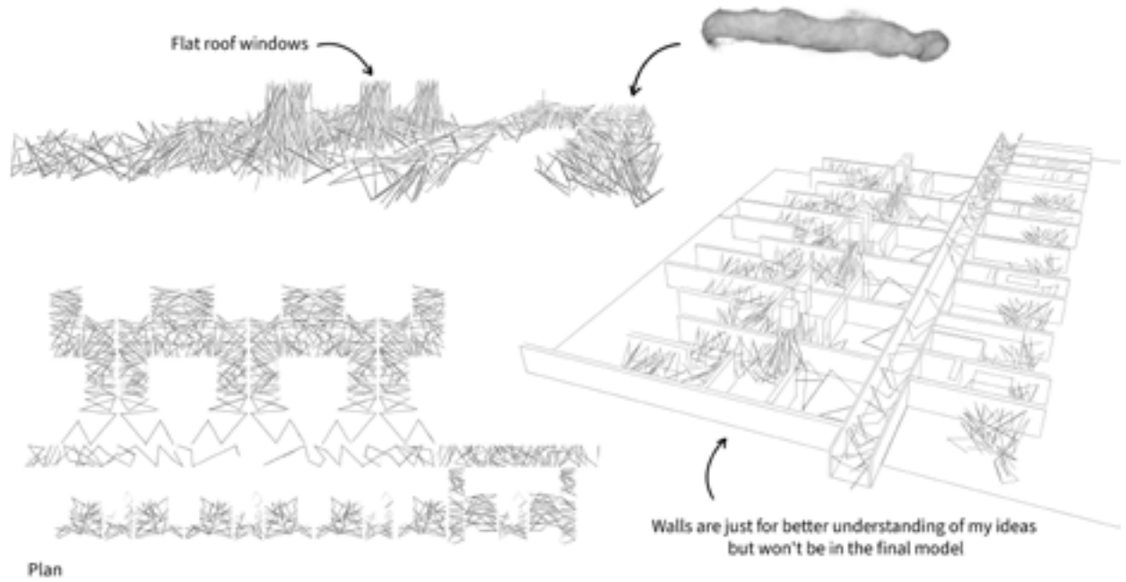


Figs. 1–3. Theresa Roth. 4:29. 2024. Courtesy of the artist and EKA.



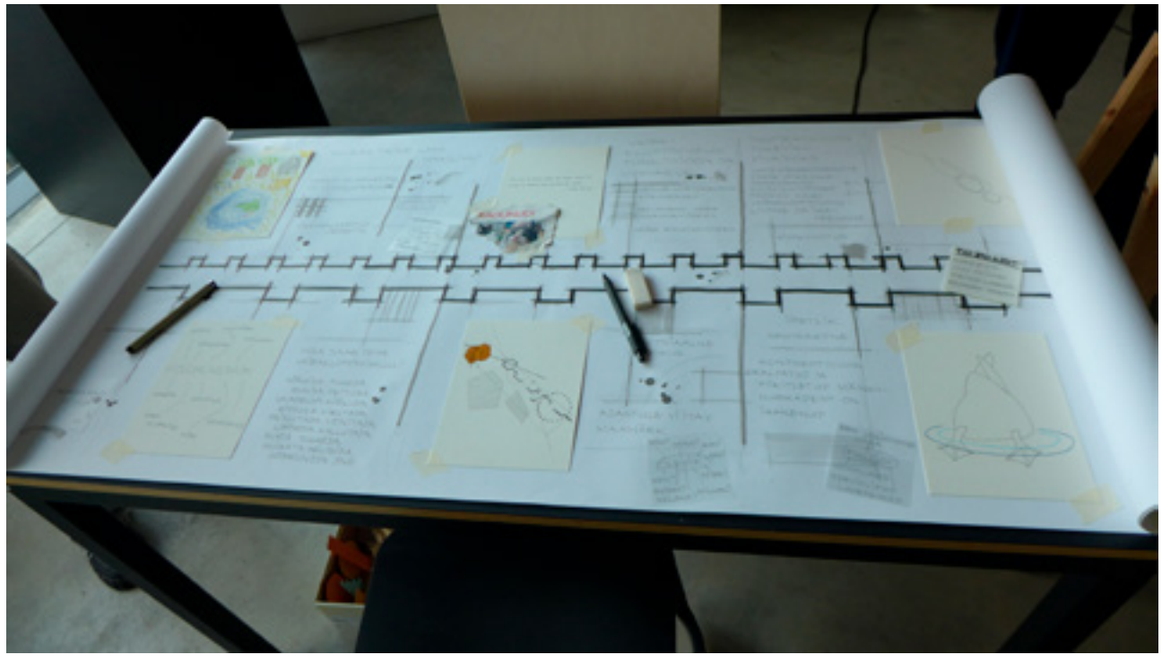


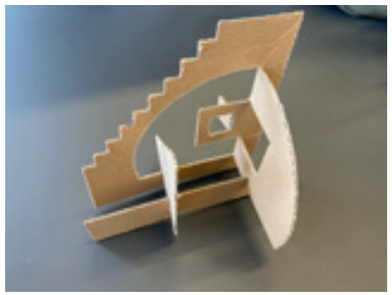
Figs. 4–5. Gert Christjanson. Pärnu KEK. 2024. Courtesy of the artist and EKA.





Figs. 6–7. Benoit Herickx. Chasing the Daylight on the Ground Floor. 2024. Courtesy of the artist and EKA.





Figs. 8–9. Rebeka Kollo. Pärnu KEK. 2024. Courtesy of the artist and EKA.

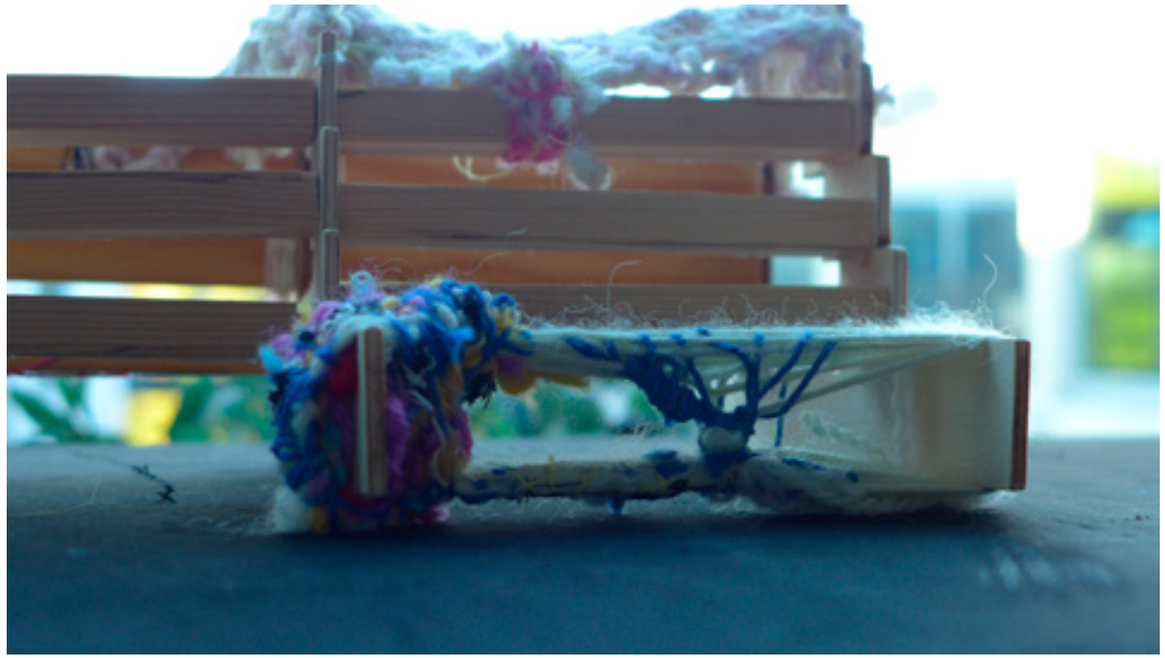


Fig. 10. Kristiina Kuusik. Pärnu KEK. 2024. Courtesy of the artist and EKA.



Fig. 11. Markus Sirg. Pärnu KEK. 2024. Courtesy of the artist and EKA.

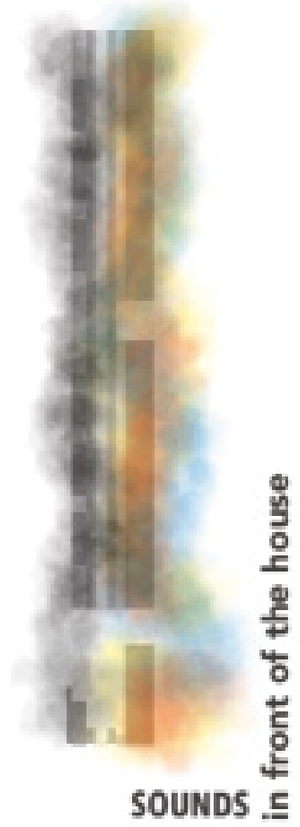


Fig. 12. Liina Pärn. Kuldne Kodu. 2024. Courtesy of the artist and EKA.

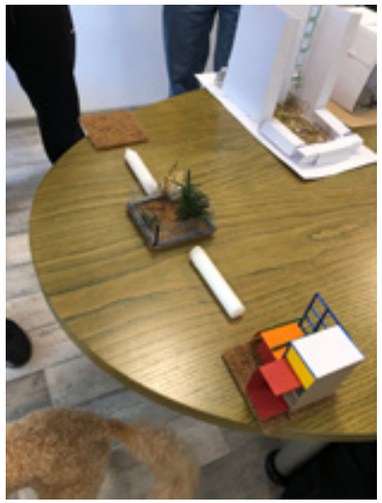


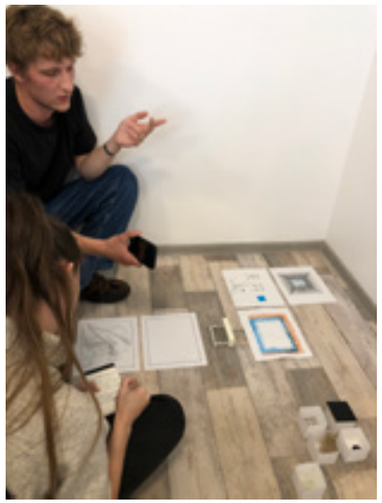
Fig. 13. Ulvi Tiit. Into The Void. 2024. Courtesy of the artist and EKA.





Figs. 14–15. Students living and working in Pärnu KEK apartment building. 2024. Photos: Gert Christjanson. Courtesy of the artist.









Figs. 16–19. Students living and working in Pärnu KEK apartment building. 2024. Photos: Triin Kampus. Courtesy of the artist.

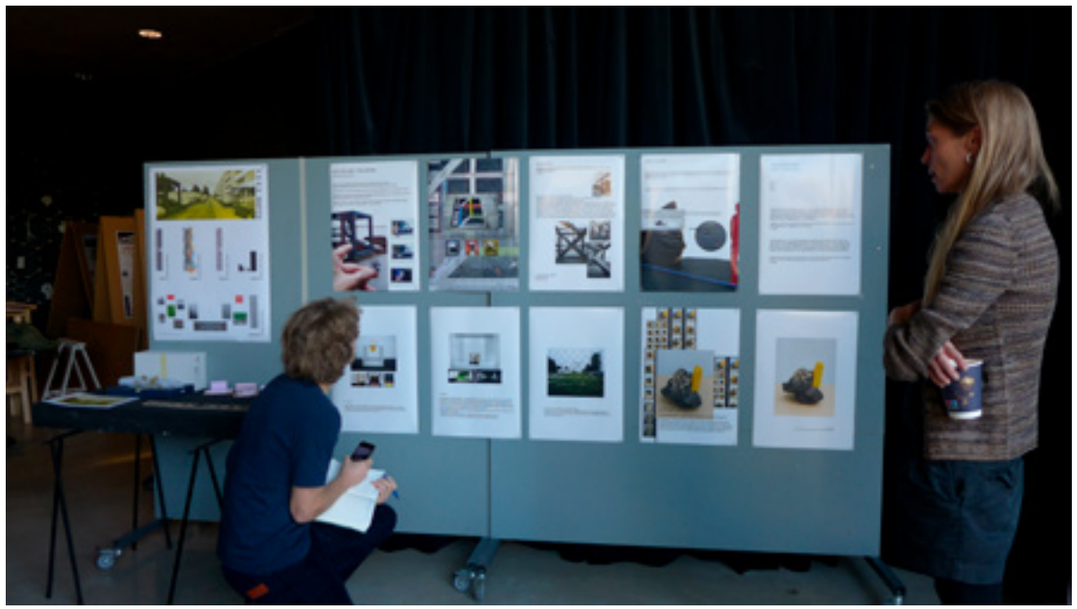


Fig. 20. Final Presentation. 2024. Photo: Merilin Tee. Courtesy of the artist.

Modernism Begins at Home: Converting* Interiors of Pärnu KEK

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Gregor Taul

University
Estonian Academy of Arts

Context
Tallinn, 2024

Field of Study
Interior Architecture

Degree Level
Master's (1st year)

ECTS Credits
6 ECTS

Faculty
Pavle Stamenović

Students
Gert Christjanson, Benoit Herickx, Rebeka Kollo, Kristiina Theresa Kuusik, Liina Pärn, Jaan Repnikov, Theresa Roth, Markus Sirg, Marleen Začek, Ulvi Tiit, Tizian Wojan

Abstract
* re-purposing | re-programming | re-fitting | re-furbishing | re-imagining | re-constructing | re-structuring | re-orienting | re-framing | re-establishing | re-conceptualizing | re-considering | re-viving | re-naming | re-fining | re-placing | re-birthing | re-making | re-composing | re-using | re-cycling | re-funding | re-collecting | re-branding | re-opening | re-thinking | re-locating | re-starting | re-generating | re-forming | re-building | re-adjusting | re-assambling | re-cuperating | re-covering | re-igniting | re-producing | re-settling | re-populating | re-[…]

domesticity
noun
do·mes·tic·i·ty .dō-.me-ˈsti-sə-tē -mə-; .dä-

1: the quality or state of being domestic or domesticated
2: domestic activities or life
3: domestic affairs

Keywords: rehabilitation, domestic spaces, spatial conversion, homemaking

The pace of contemporary life inevitably raises the question of duration in the context of spatial design practices. The physical object of architecture presumably lasts longer than the the current needs of those for whom it was intended; it also endures beyond the timescale of contemporary socio-political processes (Piątek and Trybuś 2008). Unlike buildings whose expected life span ranges from 50 to 100 years, the life span of an interior is closely linked to the ever-accelerating pace of everyday life, technology that accommodates contemporary lifestyles, and, ultimately, the dynamics of a consumer-driven economy. This applies equally to living spaces and commercial spaces. We live faster – a now familiar observation – and, consequently, the need to continually adapt the spaces we inhabit has increased.

We could argue that the conventional understanding of a building as a typologically determined product with an imposed function implies a divergence between the architectural project and the subsequent life of the building. The interior space is therefore seen as an interface or mediator through which socio-political processes are negotiated, enabling the inhabitant or user to inhabit the space.

The life span of an interior architectural space inevitably exceeds the intent of its designers, the purpose it was originally meant to serve, and the technologies available at the time of its creation, thereby rendering its original programme increasingly compromised and obsolete. This creates a mismatch between two temporalities: the life span of a building and the changing content, users, and circumstances it accommodates over time. In relation to this, Jeremy Till argues "that time, not space, should be seen as the primary context in which architecture is conceived" (Till 2010).

Interior architecture should be capable of accommodating the contemporary, transient mode of existence while fostering an intelligent relationship with preservation, ecology, and, above all, repair and recycling.

The studio is founded on the speculative premise that enough has already been built and that a more sustainable way of thinking about space lies in adapting (and reappropriating) existing environments rather than constructing new buildings. More precisely, the studio investigates the concepts of contemporary and future modes of inhabitation through the notion of occupying and transforming existing architecture and spaces instead of building anew. There is a lot of creative potential in the act of converting the spaces that already exist.

The course also reflects on the way we live today in a fragmented, simulated, augmented reality, in which our home is not only our house, but also an environment where the physical space that we inhabit extends beyond its presumed borders, becoming a personal landscape of activities, data, and objects. The space that we live in transgresses the physical space that we inhabit.

On the other hand, the topic of the studio focuses on the contemporary aspects of everyday life, with the intention to untangle and investigate the changes that are emerging in the context of living spaces. It is important to underline that, even though our everyday lives are ever changing under the influence of technology, spatial configurations and patterns are still, more or less, repeating the twentieth-century Modernist view on the functionality and needs of everyday life.

References

Piątek, G. and Trybuś, J. (eds.) (2008) *Hotel Polonia. The Afterlife of Buildings*. Zachęta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw. (The Polish Pavilion at 2008 Venice Architecture Biennale was awarded the Golden Lion for Best National Participation).
Till, J. (2009) *Architecture Depends*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

Objectives

This course develops a comprehensive understanding of the principles of interior architecture, focusing on the conversion and adaptive reuse of typologically distinct buildings. Students will explore techniques for analysing existing spatial elements, relationships, and historical significance, using these insights to craft compelling spatial narratives throughout the design process. Ultimately, the curriculum encourages innovative thinking about future uses for repurposed interiors, while equipping students with the effective space planning and design methodologies needed to shape domestic environments and spatial relationships for modern living.

Method

The course focuses on the creative and transformative process of adapting interior spaces in typologically determined architectural objects for habitation. Students will explore the principles of interior architecture to reimagine and repurpose these spaces into habitable, functional, and contemporary living environments. By emphasising the proposed methodological tools, such as tracing the existing, storytelling, designing relations, and shaping the space, this course aims to empower students with the skills needed to develop innovative and context-sensitive interior design proposals.

Besides the conventional teaching methods, students are introduced to a design apparatus that includes the following techniques and methods:

1 tracing the existing
2 storytelling
3 anticipating the new
4 designing relations
5 shaping the space

Tools

In order to better understand the building under study, students are encouraged to pursue individual design techniques that relate to their design topic. The techniques are as follows: hand drawing, physical model making, 3D modelling, digital printing, digital drawing, photographic documentation, montage, and collage.

Course Materials

Before the studio begins, the students visit and dwell for several days in the building under study, which provides them with an authentic, direct experience of the subject of their design research project. Subsequently, students are provided with original archival material such as archival plans and sections of the building. The building in question is significant within the context of Estonian architecture of the second half of the twentieth century, and the architect Toomas Rein is one of the most prominent architects of the period. Accordingly, students have access to a significant body of knowledge related to the building itself.

Recommended Reading

Bauman, Z. (1991) *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Polity Press, Cambridge.
Clément, G. (2022) *Manifesto of the Third Landscape*. Trans Europe Halles, Berlin.
Mertins, D. (2007) "Where Architecture Meets Biology: An Interview with Detlef Mertins" – J. Brouwer and A. Mulder (eds.) *Interact or Die!* V2 Publishing, Rotterdam, pp. 110–131.
Mrduljaš, M. and Kulić, V (eds.) (2012) *Unfinished Modernisations: Between Utopia*

and Pragmatism: Architecture and Urban Planning in the Former Yugoslavia and the Successor States. Croatian Architects' Association (UHA), Zagreb.
Rowe, C. and Slutzky R. (1963) "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal" – *Perspecta* 8, pp. 45–54.
Till, J. (2009) *Architecture Depends*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
Towers, G. (2005) *An Introduction to Urban Housing Design: At Home in the City*. Architectural Press / Elsevier, Amsterdam.

Recommended Viewing

Taretto, G. (director) (2011) *Medianeras* [Sidewalls] [Film]. Pandora Filmproduktion; Rizoma Films.
Tati, J. (director) (1958) *Mon Oncle* [My Uncle] [Film]. Specta Films; Gray-Film.
Tati, J. (director) (1967) *Playtime* [Film]. Specta Films.
Wheatley, B. (director) (2015) *High-Rise* [Film]. Recorded Picture Company; HanWay Films.

Prerequisites

Regarding prior knowledge, the course is developed according to the master's (MA) level of studies in spatial design and in accordance with the accredited curriculum of the Interior Architecture Department at EKA.

Assessment

The course includes three mid-term milestone presentations, concluding each chapter with a formal assessment. These sessions are organised around group feedback, with invited guest experts contributing to the critique and discussion.

Evaluation

Structured around three distinct chapters, the course requires student presentations at the conclusion of each chapter. The evaluation criteria correspond directly to the established learning objectives and expected project outputs.

Deliverables

To maximise the expected learning outcomes, the course fosters highly individual approaches. We view diverse educational backgrounds as an asset and actively encourage them throughout the process. Consequently, project deliverables are tailored to match each student's specific design interests and skills.

Student Feedback

After the course, students were asked to rate their satisfaction by completing an online questionnaire. Of the 11 students, 9 responded to it. The students were asked to rate the questions – which were divided into three sections – on a five-point scale. The questions corresponded to the other questionnaires completed by the students at EKA.

With the exception of one question ("The time allocated for the teaching module was sufficient to complete the proposed tasks"), over 80% of the responses were either 4 or 5 points, which means that the students' overall feedback was very positive. As for the students' criticism regarding time management, one student gave the statement a score of 2, and two students gave it a score of 3. The students' differing opinions on time management may be related to the fact that, since the course was taught by a visiting professor who came to Tallinn twice for week-long sessions, the students had to go through two particularly intensive study periods. While students typically have days or weeks to prepare for the next desk critique, during this course they had to develop, present, and defend their ideas multiple times in a single day. For some students, this workload was exhausting and overwhelming, given that they were also taking other courses at the same time and many of them were working. As one student replied, the lack of time "caused a great deal of stress, which lowered motivation and productivity."

Students highly valued watching films as "homework" (the tutor compiled a selection of twentieth-century film classics that directly addressed the topics discussed in the studio). Many also appreciated the fact that the active production of visual material (drawings, diagrams, schematics, and models), which formed part of the final course assignment, was conducted in the studio and in constant collaboration with the professor, who was able to assist and guide them throughout the process.

The students' open-ended feedback also revealed that there were no challenges with data collection and processing during this course, because these issues had already been addressed in an earlier course. Since the tutor was not fully aware of how much information the students had gathered during the previous course (which included a residency at the Pärnu KEK building) or whether and to what extent they had worked with archival materials, this created a certain gap between the teacher's expectations and the students' knowledge. Since not all students had participated in the previous course, this in turn made it difficult to establish a common rhythm for the course.

Course Review

Overall, the students highly appreciated the smooth and engaging structure of the course as designed by the tutor. It began with a broader theoretical explanation of the era and architectural style, continued in a more experiential manner that evoked the building, became increasingly detailed, and concluded with the production of extensive visual materials exhibited at the final presentations. Students felt it was very important that a site visit had taken place earlier and that they had experienced the space so directly through the opportunity to live in the building under study for several days.

Since the course took place over two separate intensive weeks, some students felt they would have benefited from a semester-long course with weekly sessions. The students felt this would have given them more time to consult archival materials, make drawings, and analyse their ideas. One student felt that, ideally, more time could have been set aside to compare the Pärnu KEK building with other apartment buildings constructed during the same period in the Estonian SSR. On the other hand, one could always argue that there is never enough time to address every single issue, and overall, the students were pleasantly surprised by how much information could be gleaned from a single architectural case study and an in-depth visit to it.

During the course, students had the opportunity to take a fresh, outside look at Soviet-era Estonian architecture, a perspective helped foster by the professor from abroad. Since standardised residential construction has drawn particularly harsh public criticism, societal prejudices have often influenced the students' attitudes and research topics. At the same time, however, more than three-quarters of Estonia's population lives in residential buildings constructed during the Cold War, which means that understanding, interpreting, and renovating these buildings is an extremely relevant topic. The fact that, one year after the course ended, four of the participants chose the topic of the Soviet-era housing stock for their master's theses confirms the students' active engagement with this subject.

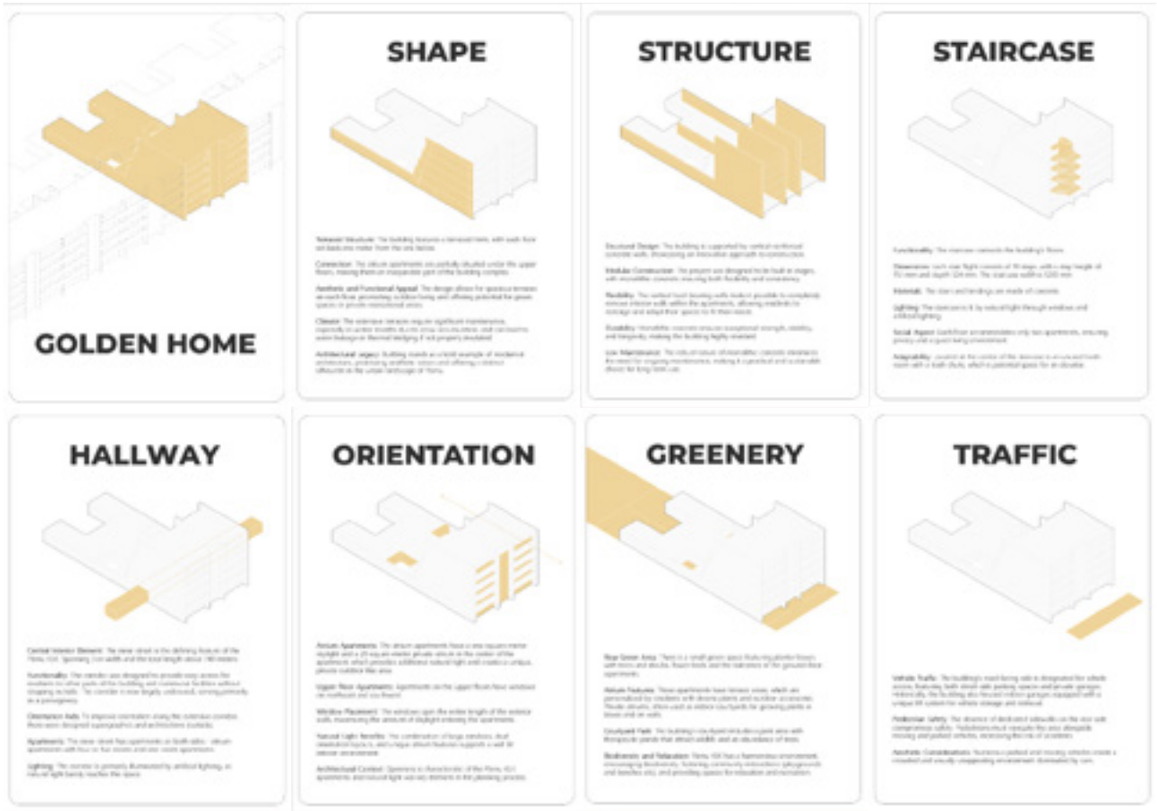
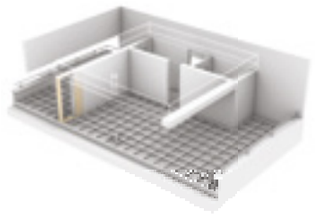


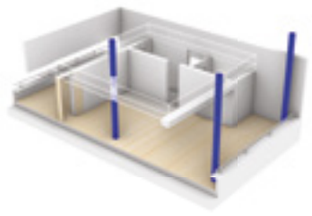
Fig. 1. Marleen Začek and Rebeka Kollo. Toilet, Bed, Vase: Layering in Design. 2024. Courtesy of the artists and EKA.

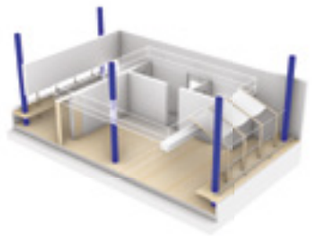
Steps towards making the space inhabitable

Raising the floor
Portal
Pipes
Protection





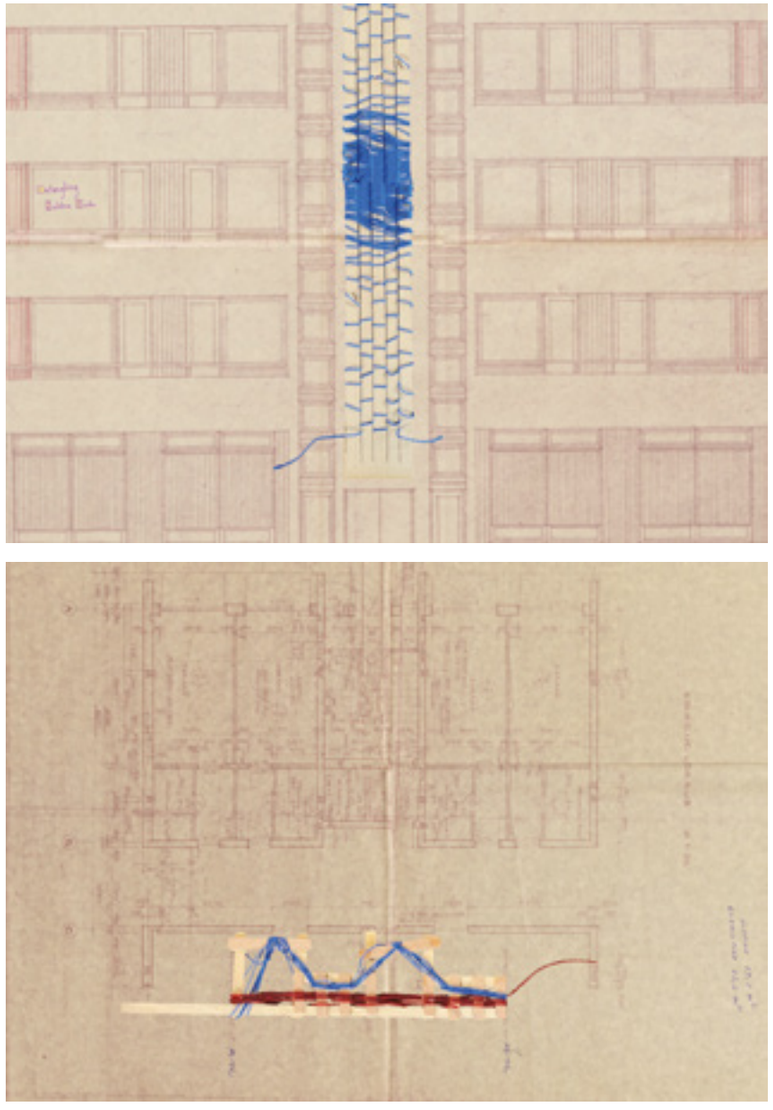








Figs. 2–3. Gert Christjanson. The Space in Between: Designing the Conditions for Inhabiting the Space. 2024. Courtesy of the artist and EKA.



Figs. 4–5. Kristiina Kuusik. Poetic Tectonics: Detangling the Structure of Kuldne Kodu. 2024. Courtesy of the artist and EKA.





Fig. 6. Markus Sirg. Lost Cause… Exploring the Mutations of Everyday Life. 2024. Courtesy of the artist and EKA.

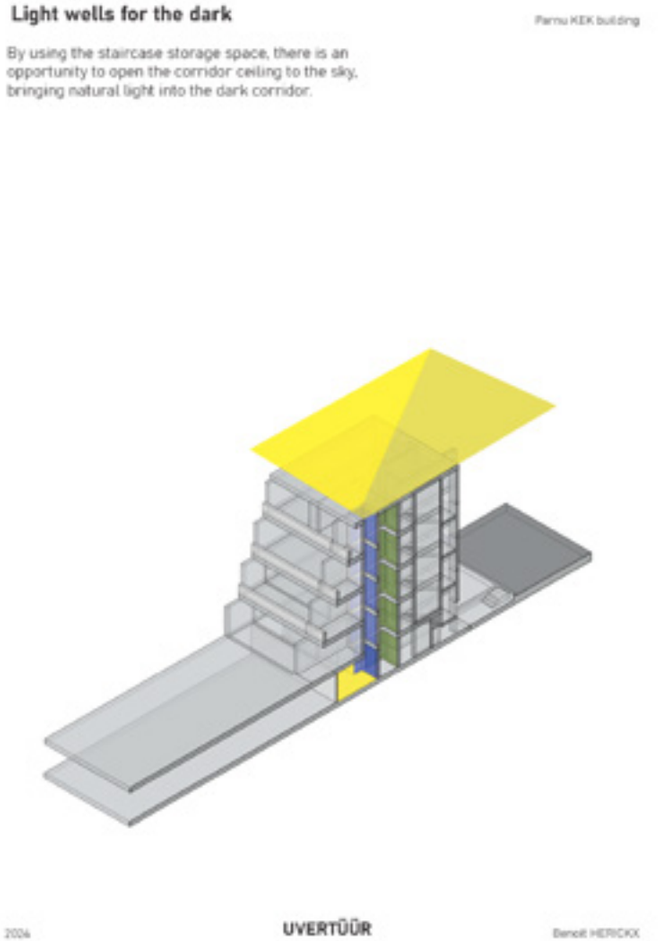
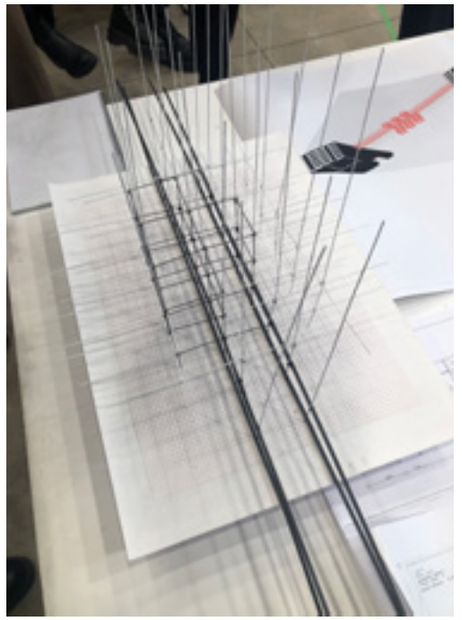
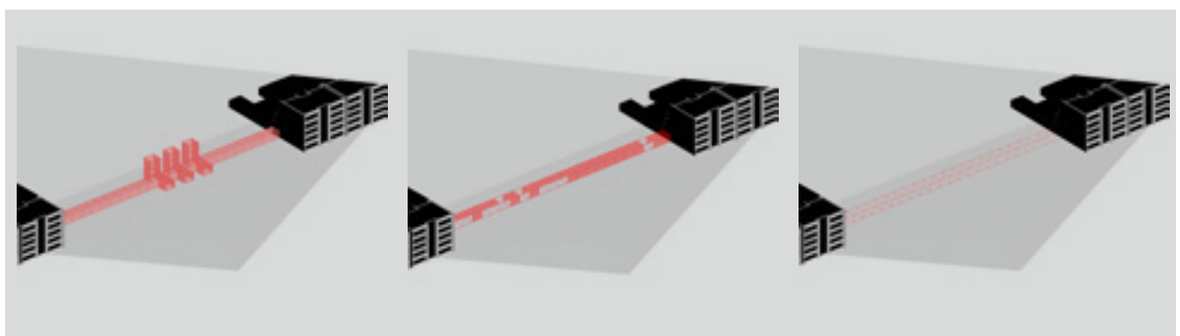


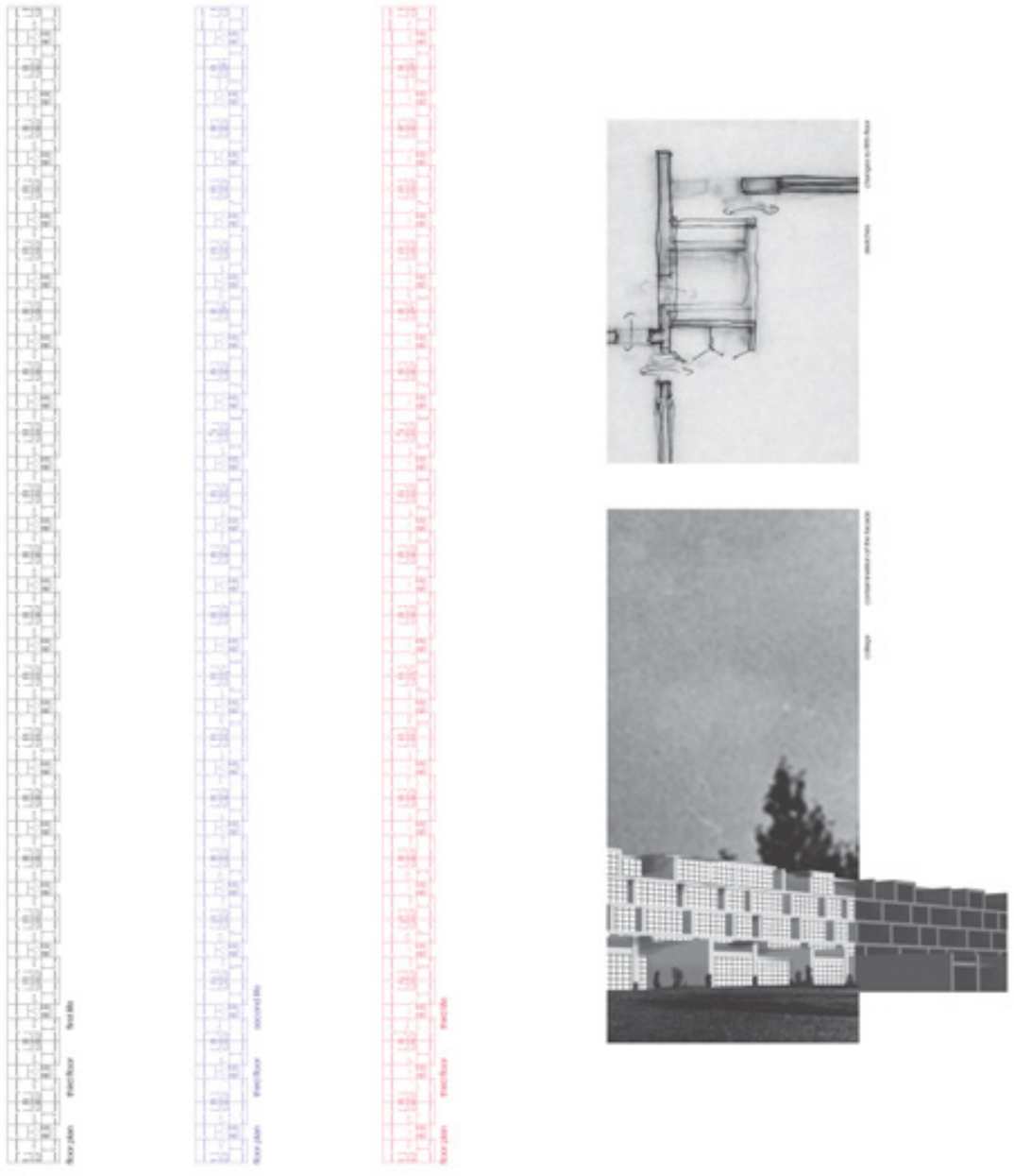
Fig. 7. Benoit Herickx. Uvertüür: Light Wells for the Dark. 2024. Courtesy of the artist and EKA.



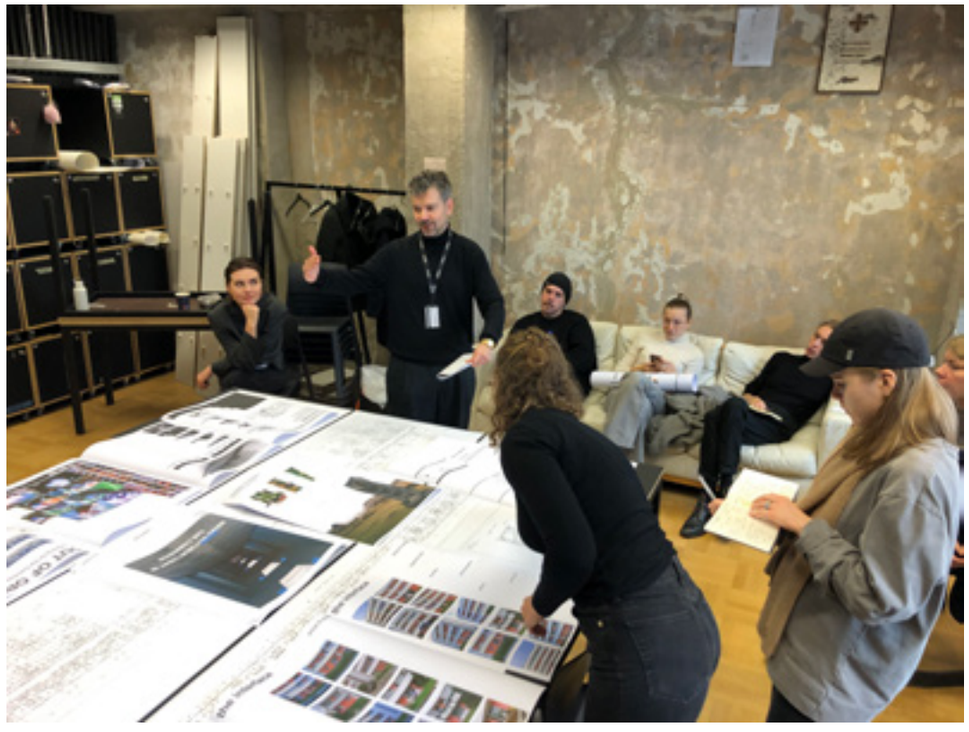




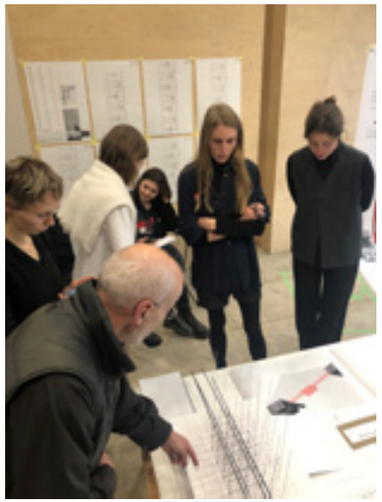
Figs. 8–10. Ulvi Tiit. Rewriting the Void: Linking Life, Space and Buildings. 2024. Courtesy of the artist and EKA.



Figs. 11–12. Tizian Wojan. Contaminated by Life: Expanding on the Utopia(s) in Pärnu KEK. 2024. Courtesy of the artist and EKA.



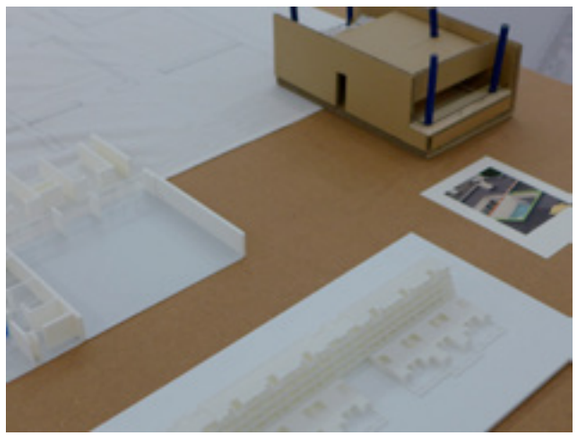
Figs. 13. Mid-term review. 2024. Photo: Gregor Taul. Courtesy of the artist.



Figs. 14–17. Final Presentation. 2024. Photos: Gregor Taul. Courtesy of the artist.





Figs. 18–20. Student works at the Updating the Grand Tour exhibition in Thessaloniki. 2026. Photos: Merilin Tee. Courtesy of the artist.

Artistic Research: Research and Interpretation of the Legacy of Vello Asi

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Merilin Tee

University
Estonian Academy of Arts

Context
Tallinn, 2025

Field of Study
Interior Architecture

Degree Level
Master's (1st year)

ECTS Credits
4

Faculty
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Students
Marleen Armulik, Kadi Berens, Lauri Eltermaa, Katariina Kivi, Anni Kärmik, Roger Matthias Laas, Laura Movits, Kairi Mändla, Sven Samyn, Maarja Varkki

Abstract
The year 2027 marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of Vello Asi (1927–2016), one of the most important figures in Estonian interior architecture and a long-time lecturer at the Department of Interior Architecture. To celebrate Asi's life and work, the Department of Interior Architecture is planning an anniversary exhibition at the Museum of Applied Arts and Design.

In the autumn semester of 2025, we were researching and interpreting Asi's legacy in the first-year master's course, Artistic Research. Ten students were divided into five pairs, each working on one specific aspect of Asi's life and work: his self-designed home in Merivälja, his work as a graphic designer, his contribution as a teacher, the artifacts and

archive materials that survived him, and the interiors and exhibitions he designed.

The course was part of the research project *UpGranT – Updating the Grand Tour: Memory and Invention of the European Built Environment*, in which Vello Asi's work is placed in dialogue with the work of dozens of other European architects. During the course, students explored the circumstances and influences that shaped Vello Asi's work – including the social context, education, colleagues, travels abroad – and interpret these aspects through the format of an exhibition designed to be accessible to a broader public.

Objectives

Artistic research (often also known as creative or practice-based research) can be considered an umbrella term that encompasses various methods of knowledge creation and collection used in the humanities, the arts, and the fields of architecture and design. In Estonia, the Estonian Academy of Arts, Tallinn University, and the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre are engaged in the development of artistic research. The doctoral programmes offered by these three universities follow the Estonian Artistic Research Framework Agreement, according to which the output of artistic research consists of creative practice or a work of art, the creative process (e.g. the development of technologies, materials, models, and prototypes), a product or service, and a (typically written) component that conveys and elaborates on the new knowledge generated during the creation of these outputs, all of which together form a cohesive research whole.

The methodology – and the outcome – of artistic research is hybrid, as it is developed based on a specific research project and in close dialogue with the research material and research question. Although architects, designers, and artists have historically been engaged in the creation of knowledge, artistic research as an academic discipline has only been pursued at the highest (doctoral) level over the past fifty years. Most structured doctoral programmes in the field date from the 2000s onwards. In Estonia, practice-based research in architecture and design at the doctoral level is offered at the Estonian Academy of Arts and Tallinn University of Technology. The master's thesis in interior architecture at the Estonian Academy of Arts follows the practice of artistic research, in which students combine various empirical, experimental, and other research methods with creative practice. While the master's thesis prepares students for future research (whether at the academic level or as independent practitioners), the theoretical courses and practical design studios in the first year of the master's programme prepare students to successfully complete their master's research project.

Method

As part of the Artistic Research course, students learn about the main empirical and creative research methods used in spatial design (archival research, exploring museum and private collections, visiting the site or object under study, taking notes, and organising, analysing, and interpreting them, conducting interviews, compiling a bibliography, developing a theoretical framework, and presenting their research). Since the course is part of a research project on architects' travels, we place great emphasis on tracking the movement of people and ideas. To this end, we will, on the one hand, familiarise ourselves with materials from Estonian museums and memory institutions related to Vello Asi's travels abroad, and, on the other hand, meet with researchers and colleagues who will share their knowledge and memories of Vello Asi as a person and designer.

Based on the premise that, in research focusing on travel, it is most important to be on the move ourselves, the lectures and seminars



Fig. 1. Facsimile of an article published in the Czechoslovak journal *Domov* (1967, No. 5) about Vello Asi's initial living space in a garage at Kõivu Road 12. Family archive of Vello Asi.

held in the classroom will be supplemented by field trips and visits. During the course, we will, among other things, visit Vello Asi's home in Merivälja and meet with architecture researchers at the Estonian Museum of Architecture. In addition, we will visit the house designed by architect Raine Karp for himself, as well as the home in Treppoja designed by Ivi-Els Schneider, a long-time colleague of Vello Asi.

1 Field trip: Raine Karp's home (Viimsi tee 45, Merivälja), Vello Asi's home (Kõivu tee 12, Merivälja) – 4 hours
2 Lecture: Introduction, assignment description, artistic research methodologies – 1.5 hours
3 Field trip: Vello Asi's home (Kõivu tee 12, Merivälja) – 3 hours
4 Field trip and seminar: Karen Jagodin on museum collections (Estonian Museum of Architecture) – 1.5 hours
5 Studio: Presentation of ideas – 1.5 hours
6 Mid-term review – 3 hours
7 Lecture and seminar: Sam De Vocht on exhibition design (Marie-José Van Hee Architekten) – 3 hours
8 Field trip and private collection viewing: Ivi-Els Schneider's home (former student of Vello Asi) – 3 hours
9 Studio: Idea development – 3 hours
10 Field trip and seminar: Gregor Taul's home – 1.5 hours
11 Studio: Idea development – 3 hours
12 Exhibition opening and presentations – 3 hours

Tools

Students are given access to a wide range of digitised materials stored in the department's Google Drive folder. In addition, they are introduced to the main public digital platforms where they can find archival materials, photographs, and other resources related to both Vello Asi and his closest colleagues. Since Vello Asi's home belongs to his heirs and is currently unoccupied, we have the opportunity to visit the building on multiple occasions; it has largely retained its original design, furniture, books, documents, mementos, works of art, and other personal items that Vello Asi considered important to preserve. With the tutors' permission, students are allowed to take photographs and make sketches on site, and, if necessary, they can visit the house outside the scheduled studio sessions.

Since the three-part outcome of the course (see below) is based on and builds upon the methodology of the UpGranT Intensive Programme for Learners held in Porto, this workshop will present the student projects completed during the programme and provide a broader analysis of the work process developed there.

Recommended Reading

Glanville, R. (2014) "Teadmine, disain ja loomepõhine uurimistöö" [Knowledge, Design, and Creative Research] – *Sirp*, December 12.

Hermann, E. (2016) "Krista Mölder's Ripening Air." – Ilves K., Tulgiste T. (eds.), *Between Archive and Architecture* [exhibition catalogue].

Jagodin, K. (2007) *Tamm and Asi. Interior Architects Väino Tamm and Vello Asi*. Estonian Museum of Architecture, Tallinn.

Lige, C.-D. (ed.) (2015) *Expedition Wunderlich. 11 Interior Architects*. Estonian Academy of Arts, Tallinn.

Kunst ja Kodu [Soviet-era Estonian design journal]

Tee, M. (2021) *Kaduv sisearhitektuur. Vello Asi kodumaja* [Vanishing Interior Architecture. Vello Asi's Home]. Master's thesis. Department of Interior Architecture, Estonian Academy of Arts, Tallinn.

SISU-LINE [journal]

Geiser R., Kubo, M. (eds.) (2022) *Futures of the Architectural Exhibition*. Park Books, Zurich.

Recommended Viewing

Mõtõlus, season 2, episode 18, "Vello Asi," hosted by Taavi Karu, directed by Juho Jalviste, originally broadcast 2005 on ETV, Jupiter video, https://jupiter.err.ee/1608378635

https://paarkeedus.ee/vello-asis-home

Prerequisites

The course takes place during the first semester of the master's programme in Interior Architecture; therefore, a prerequisite is the successful completion of a bachelor's degree in interior architecture or a related field (such as architecture, product design, or furniture design, etc.). Since applicants to the master's programme in Interior Architecture must also submit their master's thesis project as part of their application – which consists of a proposal for a research project – this provides a solid intellectual foundation upon which to begin learning and refining the research process.

To successfully complete this course, students require a basic proficiency with standard digital tools – specifically 3D modelling (Rhinoceros) and vector graphics software (Adobe Illustrator). Because the course culminates in a physical model, basic manual skills and a willingness to work in the EAA woodworking shop or model-making studio are essential. A mandatory safety course must be completed before using the workshop facilities.

Assessment

The ten students participating in the course are divided into five two-person groups during the first session, based on their main interests. For each group, the tutors provide a detailed introduction to the topic, possible approaches, and information sources. From the first session onward, students are informed when the project interim review will take place and by what date the final result must be ready. In addition to one mid-term peer review held midway through the course, there are three studio sessions with desk feedback sessions, during which each group presents its work in progress and receives feedback from both instructors and fellow students.

Throughout the semester, students have the opportunity to meet with their instructors privately and, if necessary, request assistance with accessing research materials or arranging additional visits to Vello Asi's home. The main feedback sessions take place during the mid-term peer review and the three studio sessions; however, since the number of students enrolled in the course is small, there are also opportunities to present and analyse all projects during field trips and meetings with other presenters. One meeting takes place in the tutor's home library, where students explore the collection of small-format publications, providing an opportunity to discuss in greater detail the texts being produced as part of the course.

The course concludes with an exhibition at the Estonian Academy of Arts Library. Since, by that time, all students have already received thorough feedback on their work and their creative process, the exhibition opening with invited guests is more of a celebratory guided tour of the exhibition than a round of critical feedback.

Evaluation

Like other courses in the master's programme in Interior Architecture, this is a pass-or-fail course. To successfully complete the course, students must attend at least 75% of the sessions, participate in group work, and present their work at the final exhibition. If a student is unable to attend 75% of the sessions, arrangements to make up for the missed sessions will be made on an individual basis.

Deliverables

The course culminates in an exhibition at the Estonian Academy of Arts Library where each group presents three works:



Fig. 2. Vello Asi. Study of graphic work, undated. Family archive of Vello Asi.

The object is a three-dimensional work that interprets the chosen theme as a model of a space or detail, an architectural model, or a prototype. Students choose the materials themselves. Along with the object, a photograph of it will also be presented.

For the visual interpretation, we envision a 30 × 30 cm graphic work, created by hand or on a computer, which may be (and may also combine) a plan, section, elevation, axonometric projection, detail, sketch, collage, abstraction, or construction.

The (interior) architectural narrative is conceived as a text-based extension that presents a specific aspect of Vello Asi's work, whether in the form of a process diary, poem, essay, academic article, podcast, facsimile, interview, memoir, comic, reflection, etc.

Student Feedback

After the course, we asked the students to rate their satisfaction by completing an online questionnaire. Of the ten participating students, seven responded to it. The students were asked to rate the questions – which were divided into three sections – on a five-point scale. The questions were as follows:

Planning and communication

The activities planned as part of the teaching module were clearly explained by the teaching staff, so when the time came to carry them out, I knew what to do and how to do it.

The materials (e.g. course schedule, bibliography, archival materials, etc.) provided for the teaching module were sufficient and aligned with the structure and expectations set by the teaching staff.

The composition of the working group was appropriate for the nature of the tasks assigned.

The basis for assessment was clear to me.

Activities

The spaces provided were suitable for the planned activities.

The time allocated for the teaching module was sufficient to complete the proposed tasks.

The travel experience and/or direct experience of the building(s) contributed to the development of the learning activities.

The lecturer(s) taught well (made the subject interesting, took an interest in me, explained the material well, and presented different perspectives).

The feedback received during the course supported my development as a student.

Outputs

I am satisfied with the outcomes of this teaching module and I consider them useful for my future academic and professional path.

The teaching module helped me to develop a more critical and reflective attitude towards architectural observation, representation, and communication.

The interdisciplinary and international dimension of the working group (teachers and students) enriched my learning experience.

I would recommend this teaching approach, which incorporates travel and/or site visits as a learning tool, to my peers.

Without intending to list all the responses here, the data reveal that, overall, students were very satisfied with the course (by far the most common response was 5, followed by 4). No questions received the lowest possible rating, however, responses to the statement "The feedback received during the course supported my learning process" were more varied: one student gave it a rating of 2, two students rated it 3, two rated it 4, and two gave it the highest rating of 5). No other response showed such a wide range of scores. The only question for which students' overall satisfaction was less than 4.0 concerned the

statement "The interdisciplinary and international dimension of the course (faculty and students) enriched my learning experience." It should be noted here that the question was somewhat problematic, as no international students participated in the course and, among the international faculty, Sam De Vocht attended only one session.

The highest average satisfaction scores were given to the responses in the "Planning and Communication" and "Activities" sections. Satisfaction was rated lower in the "Outputs" section, which concerns the course results.

In addition, at the end of the questionnaire, students had the opportunity to answer ten open-ended questions – that is, to write as much as they deemed necessary. The questions were as follows:

- What learning methods or formats worked best for you during the teaching module?
- Which tools did you prefer to use for recording and remembering the buildings you visited during the teaching module?
- Which research activities did you carry out?
- What did you find most challenging about the data collection and data processing activities?
- What aspect(s) of the teaching module did you find most engaging?
- Which activities would you have liked to spend more time on?
- Among the things you learned, what do you think you will reuse in your academic path?
- How would you share what you've learned with peers who do not study architecture?
- Did the experience challenge your previous understanding of architecture or your approach to design? If yes, how?
- Is there anything you would improve in terms of teaching, organisation, or logistics?

Given that the students' responses totalled several A4 pages, this method of collecting feedback can be considered successful and is recommended for other similar courses as well. From the students' feedback, it can be concluded that the most valuable learning experiences occurred during meetings with various guests and the discussions that arose from them. Several respondents felt that all meetings held outside of the school environment were eye-opening. The feedback revealed that the most challenging aspect for students was compiling the materials; since there was a vast amount of archival material and historical information, filtering and synthesising the most relevant content within a short timeframe proved overwhelming. Since we were not allowed to take photographs freely in Vello Asi's house – but had to ask the family's permission to photograph each specific object – it was surprising to see how a generation of students accustomed to taking photographs anywhere at any time was disturbed by the photography ban, and how this somewhat hindered the natural workflow.

Ultimately, from the tutor's perspective, it was particularly inspiring to read that the experiences and lessons gained during the course also broadened the students' understanding of architecture. One respondent noted that, by working through posts and comments in Facebook groups focused on local history and Soviet nostalgia, they understood and perceived for the first time the rich folkloric and memory-based layer of architecture – a layer that can often be lost when one is immersed in the field. In addition, one student responded to this question in a compelling way: "This course probably didn't change my understanding of architecture, but it did make me think deeply about how to approach the practice – more boldly, more deeply, and with greater focus."

Course Review

A strong syllabus, a well-planned schedule, and effective communication can be considered the foundation of a successful course. Since this course included several off-campus meetings that could not be planned months in advance, changes were made to the schedule that disrupted the course's rhythm and the students' preparation. In addition, as tutors, we decided to increase the number of meetings with external guests during the course, and additional field trips were added. Although the students were grateful for these meetings, their critical feedback suggests that, while the focus shifted to "enjoying the process," progress towards the final outcome suffered as a result.

In their feedback, the students rightly pointed out that during the very first meetings, it was unclear whether the works created during the course would be displayed at the final review or in a separate exhibition. When the opportunity arose during the course to exhibit the final results as a joint exhibition at the EAA Library, some students felt that instead of three final projects, the focus could have been on a single strong idea (since it cannot be assumed that all ideas would result in works suitable for exhibition). As instructors, we resolved the situation by stipulating that, although the student groups were required to produce three works for a passing grade, we, as exhibition compilers, reserved the right to decide whether any given work would be included in the exhibition or not. The students found this approach interesting and motivating. In their feedback, the students also pointed out that if, in addition to the three works, an exhibition is produced as a result of the course, then its organisation and curation should be addressed more clearly as a learning outcome of the course, and students should be provided with more specific tools to bring this to fruition. This would also require dedicated time in the form of studio sessions and desk critiques.

Although the students did not mention this in their feedback, given that the course was part of the UpGranT research project, it must be acknowledged that the themes of the Grand Tour and travel received little attention both during the learning process and in the final outcome. Although students were introduced to UpGranT's findings to date and to Vello Asi's work in the context of European spatial designers who lived and worked alongside him, none of them specifically focused on Asi's travels abroad. On the other hand, the course structure itself can be considered a form of active (local) tour, as five of the twelve sessions took place outside the school building.



Figs. 3–4. Lauri Eltermaa and Maarja Varkki, Home in Merivälja. 2025. Courtesy of the artists and EKA.



Fig. 5. Lauri Eltermaa and Maarja Varkki, Home in Merivälja. Sketches. 2025. Courtesy of the artists and EKA.





Figs. 6–7. Katariina Kivi and Laura Movits. Work as a Graphic Designer. 2025. Courtesy of the artists and EKA.





Fig. 8. Kadi Berens and Sven Samyn. Contribution as a Teacher. 2025. Courtesy of the artists and EKA.
Fig. 9. Anni Kärmik and Roger Matthias Laas. Interiors and Exhibition Designs. Courtesy of the artists and EKA.

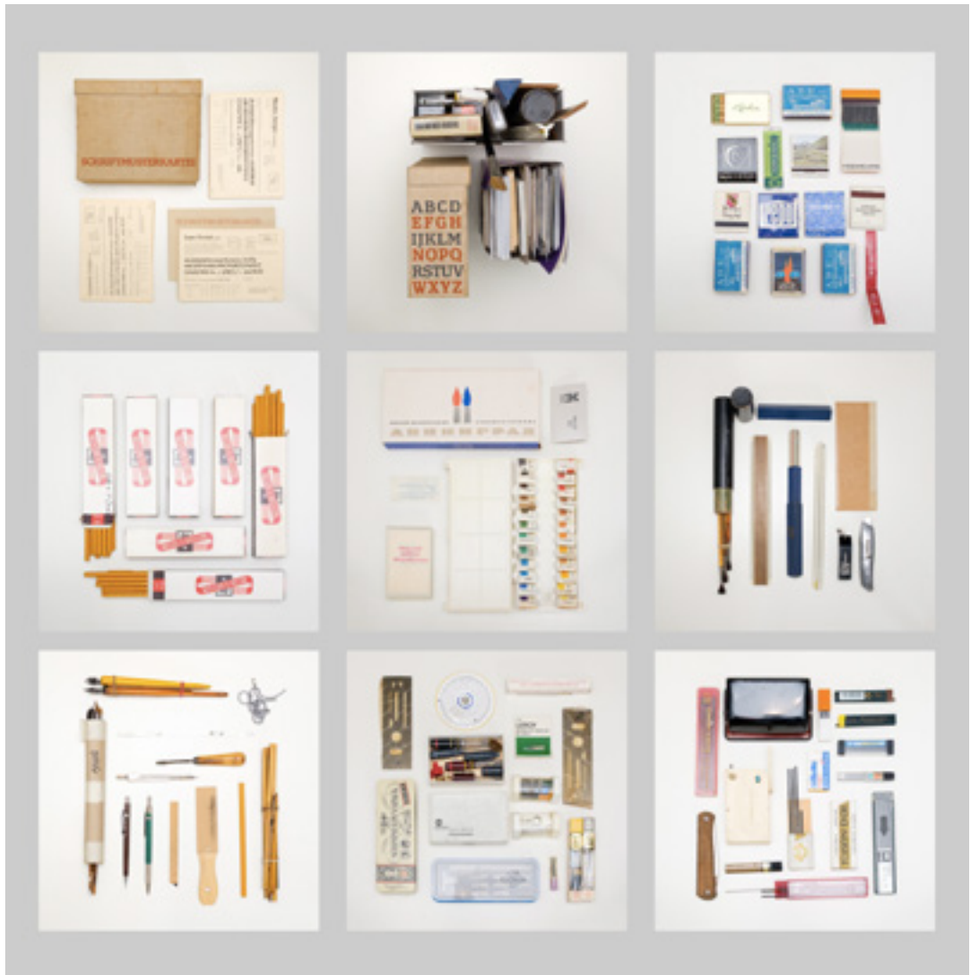
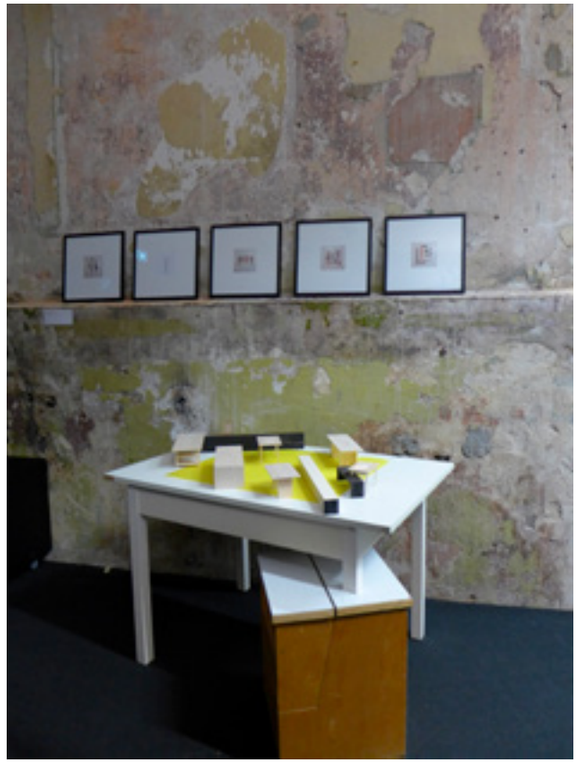


Fig. 10. Marleen Armulik and Kairi Mändla. Artifacts and Archive Materials. 2025. Courtesy of the artists and EKA.





Figs. 11–12. Marleen Armulik and Kairi Mändla. Artifacts and Archive Materials. 2025. Courtesy of the artists and EKA.





Figs. 13–14. Field trip: Raine Karp’s home (Viimsi tee 45, Merivälja). 2025. Photos: Merilin Tee. Courtesy of the artist.

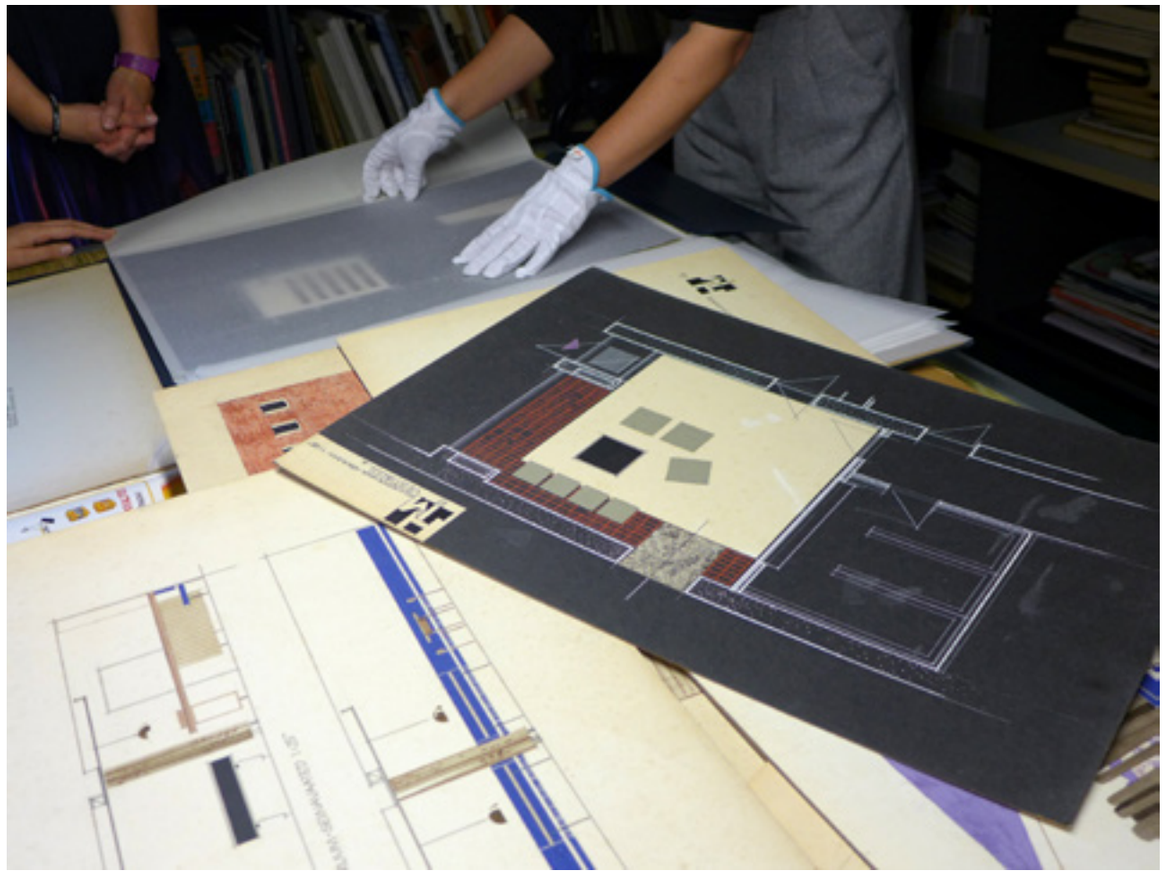


Fig. 15. Field trip and seminar: Karen Jagodin on museum collections (Estonian Museum of Architecture). 2025. Photo: Merilin Tee. Courtesy of the artist.







Fig. 16. Mid-term review. 2025. Photo: Merilin Tee. Courtesy of the artist.
Figs. 17–18. Lecture and seminar: Sam De Vocht on exhibition design (Marie-José Van Hee Architecten). 2025. Photos: Merilin Tee. Courtesy of the artist.





Figs. 19–20. Field trip and private collection viewing: Ivi-Els Schneider's home (former student of Vello Asi). 2025. Photos: Merilin Tee. Courtesy of the artist.

Sol-Fa Exercises

Cristina Pallini

Introduction

Although enacted differently by individual professors, “designing with the aid of references” (Bonfante 2014) is a long-standing and common practice at the Milan School of Architecture, where I graduated in 1990 and later taught architectural design, initially as a teaching assistant.

Over the years, a recurrent trait has emerged among students of architecture – even if it seems paradoxical – namely, the difficulty of visualising space in its tangible form. Despite the fact that inhabiting space is part of their daily lives, when they approach a design assignment, a sense of disorientation often arises. Some counter this by conducting extensive research into the context, while others focus on functional aspects, attempting to delay the “leap of faith” necessary to envisage a transformation and/or a space that does not yet exist. A turning point for me occurred during the 1984–1985 academic year, when, as a second-year student, I took the first-year course in Architectural Composition taught by Alessandro Christofellis. Before the final design assignment, he gave us an exercise called “Making Friends with an Architect.” He encouraged us to immerse ourselves completely in the work of Étienne-Louis Boullée, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, Louis I. Kahn, Giuseppe Terragni, Guido Canella, and Aldo Rossi, the architects he most admired. Much like Sol-Fa exercises for musicians, two- and three-dimensional

drawings helped us grasp rhythm and the expressive role of architectural elements, guiding us towards an understanding of the principles of composition through complete examples that we could study and internalise. Over the years, I have refined this approach by exploring the link between precedent and site, considering the building type and its programme, and gathering a collection of my favourite examples.[1]

Disseminating / Reading / Interpreting

Bruno Zevi's *Saper Vedere l'architettura* (1948), which emphasised that architecture primarily involves experiencing interior spaces dynamically, was one of the earliest attempts to make architectural education accessible to everyone. Nine years later, Giò Ponti published an equally enthusiastic book presenting architecture as vital and accessible to all (1957).

Architecture does indeed frame our lives. The first EU Council resolution on quality architecture (February 2001) clarified that architecture constitutes an essential means of artistic expression in the daily lives of citizens, emphasising historical continuity, the quality of public spaces, social diversity, and the richness of urban environment as the defining characteristics of European cities. Within this perspective, the Commission encouraged the dissemination of architectural culture among both institutional bodies and the public, with due respect for cultural diversity. More recently, the EFAP Survey 2012 stressed the importance of improving architectural literacy. A recent EU document, *Towards a Shared Culture of Architecture* (2019), likewise calls for greater architectural literacy, emphasising the link between social well-being and the quality of the built environment.

Indeed, most of us pass hundreds of buildings each day without understanding them, as the author of the practical guide *How to Read Buildings* (Davidson Cragoe 2013) observes. The guide explores the language of architecture and offers a framework that connects the grammatical structures of style, building type, and materials. Architect Charles Holland, author of *How to Enjoy Architecture,* takes this idea further by seeking to convey the joy of experiencing a building. His chapter on composition features a discussion of Aldo Rossi, highlighting Rossi's ability to draw on classical archetypes and their enduring metaphysical strength to navigate the complexity of architectural programmes (Holland 2024, 71–74).

The evocative power of architecture was exactly what Christofellis aimed to communicate to us in 1984–1985, by introducing us to the symbolic strength of geometric figures while exploring the architect's ability to assemble them. Like Aldo Rossi, he also believed in the archetypes of classical architecture, in contrast to the then-growing trend towards object-like buildings. We were encouraged to internalise exemplary projects and examine the process of synthesis embodied within them. The detailed study of a single architectural work was intended to help us appreciate its dimensions, proportions, and spatial characteristics, while understanding the meaning of its stylistic features. For Christofellis, architecture functioned as a stage where various figures performed their symbolic and evocative roles. Drawing on his knowledge, intellectual energy, and artistic talent, he consistently used architectural images that expressed meanings beyond mere functionality, evoking multiple layers of association.

While developing an awareness of high-quality architecture and the built environment is certainly an integral part of architectural design education, the trajectory of this awareness remains controversial. As architecture stands at the crossroads between the sciences and the humanities, the program of activities and its translation into spatial sequences, formal solutions, and expressive features should be traceable through the design process, beyond mere iconic statements.

We might question whether these concerns remain valid after more than 40 years, well beyond the era of object-like buildings, and in the face of the haste driven by the diffusion of architectural images online, as artificial intelligence rapidly enters design practice. Does all this undermine the slow process of assimilation and the habit of questioning precedents?

From Mimesis to Autonomy

Carlos Martí Aris poignantly argued that architectural knowledge primarily resides in the works themselves. It permeates them but remains hidden, protected from simplified interpretations. To uncover this encoded knowledge and use it effectively, one must study a work carefully, manipulate it, dismantle it, and try to understand how it was created (Martí Arís 1993).

As students delve deeper into their study of existing works, or of designed works selected as references, they come to understand the underlying creative mechanisms by reflecting on their spatial qualities, dimensional and proportional aspects, until they grasp their dominant formal themes. The relationship between the spatial layout, the brief, and the geometric structure becomes apparent.

Like contestants on talent shows, who perform cover versions before finally presenting their own original songs, students start with "mimesis" before gradually developing their own expressive independence.

However, despite their increasing mobility, most students seem less able to interpret real buildings as lessons in architecture. They are overexposed to visual representation, which they often struggle to assess critically.

The partners' experience as teachers of architectural design reveals a clear difficulty among students in identifying, observing, recording, and retaining the structural principles and compositional forms of an architectural work both quickly and effectively. Although applied to a specific case, the process of understanding and interpretation can be extended

1
These include G. Jappelli's plan for the new University of Padua (1824), which demonstrates how a new building fits into its context and acts as a trigger for the urban and architectural scale (Pallini 2014).

whenever one wishes to reconstruct the rationale and the deeper meaning of a project.

Attempts

Before the start of the UpGranT project, the idea of "Making Friends with an Architect" was revisited in the Final Studio Class, taught by C. Pallini, A. Korolija and J. di Pasquale during the 2019–2020 academic year. We proposed a number of case studies to students while also allowing them to suggest their own. Some groups exceeded our expectations, producing more than one model to clarify the design strategy and make it available for further development.

We repeated the experiment in the third-year Studio Class, taught by C. Pallini, A. Korolija, and A.M. Di Lauro in the 2021–2022 academic year, narrowing down the selection to four exemplary buildings: Marés Swimming Pool by Álvaro Siza (1959–1963), the Public Baths at Bellinzona by Aurelio Galfetti, Flora Ruchat-Roncati, and Ivo Trümpy (1967–1970), the Giza Solar boat museum by Franco Minissi (1961–1982) and the Open-Air Theatre at Salemi by Francesco Venezia, Marcella Aprile and Roberto Collovà (1987–1990).

Finally, after the start of the UpGranT project, we organised a teaching module within the Studio Class, held in the second semester of the first year of the Master's Course in Architecture and Urban Design (AUD), taught by C. Pallini, A. Koroloija and F. Foti.

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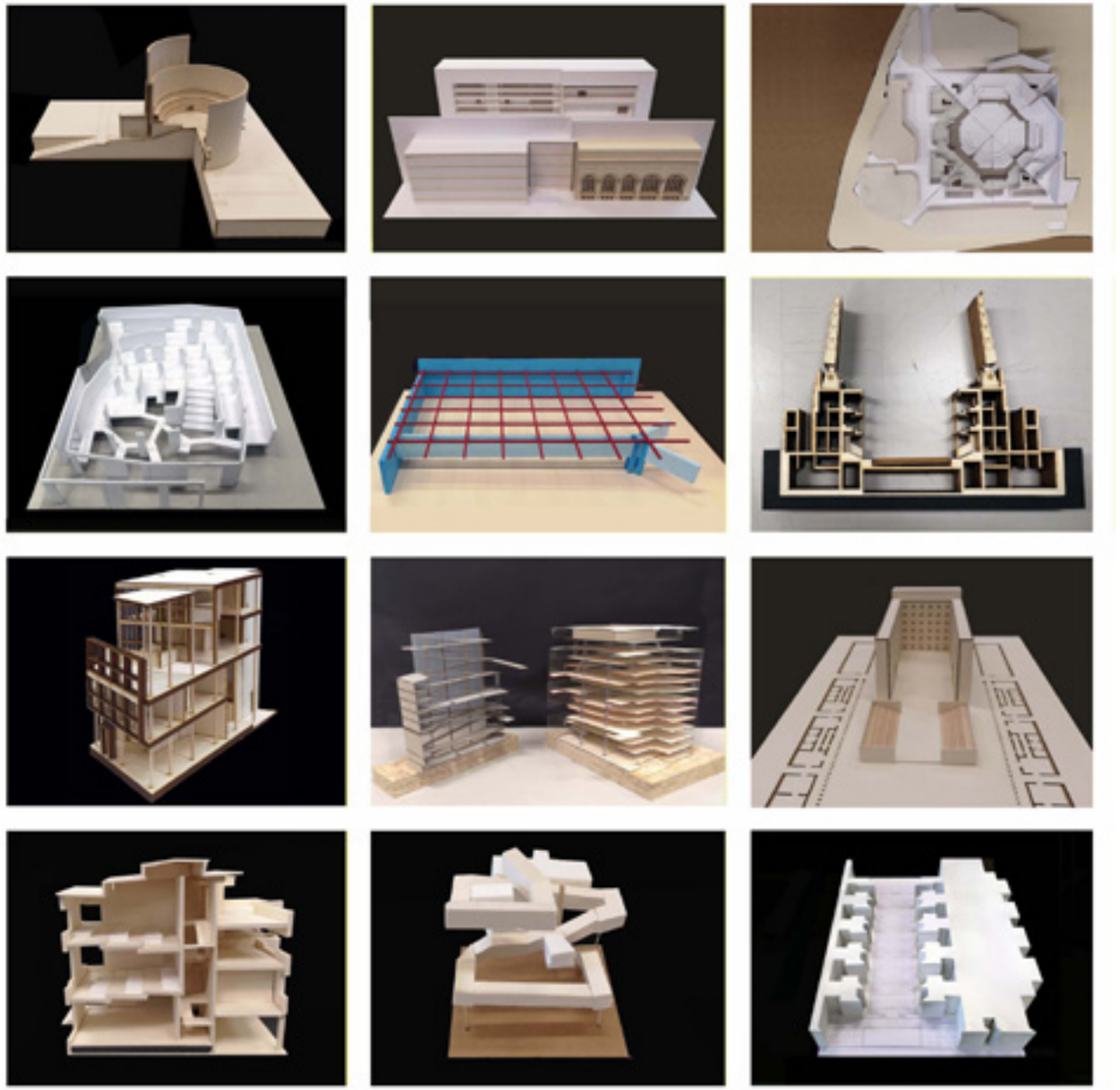

Fig. 1. The 12 precedents studied in the Final Studio Class held by C. Pallini, A. Korolija, and J. di Pasquale, academic year 2019–2020. From top left: Stockholm Public Library, G. Asplund (1922–1928) model by A. Dentoni; Yale University Art Gallery, L. Kahn (1951–1953), model by G. Cotti and L. Lori; Muziekcentrum Vredenburg (Utrecht), H. Hertzberger (1973–1978), model by A. Catanzariti; Musashino Art University Library, S. Fujimoto (2010), model by F. Governo and E. M. Pinardi; Nordic Pavilion at Venice Biennale, S. Fehn (1962), model by V. Baggi; Gdańsk Shakespeare Theatre, R. Rizzi (2005–2014), model by A. El Assali and D. Malandrino; Curutchet House, Le Corbusier (1948–1949), model by G. Brenta; SECS 24 de Maio, San Paolo, P. Mendes da Rocha (2001), model by M. Branchini and C. Sacco; Project for a theatre at Udine, A. Monestiroli (1974), model by R. Righi; Summer Camp at Riccione, G. De Carlo (1963), model by M. Bertoni; Netherlands Embassy in Berlin, R. Koolhaas (1997–2003), model by G. Gambardella and R. Simonetto; Salk Institute for Biological Studies, L. Kahn (1963), model by A. Bortolotti.

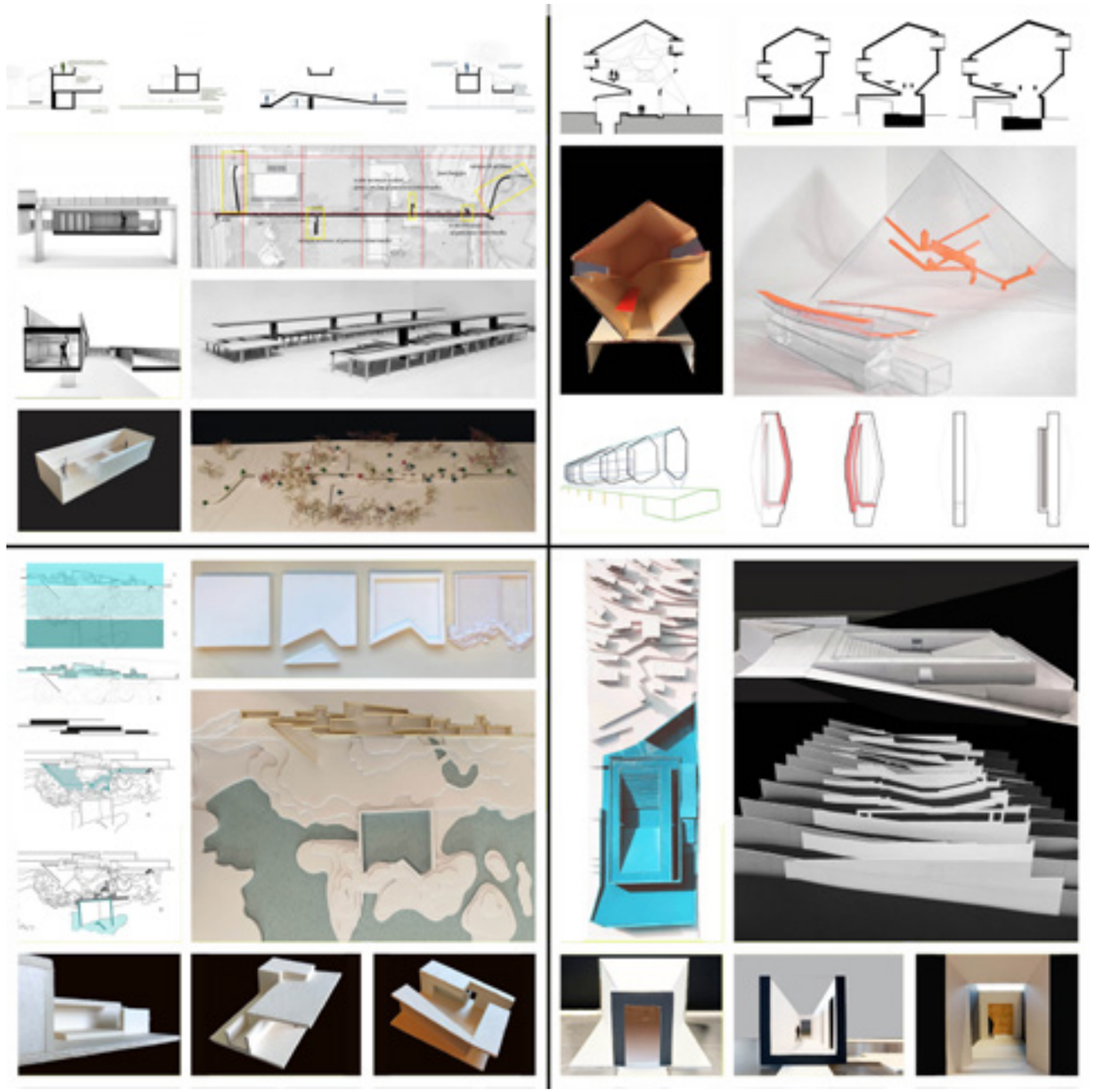

Fig. 2. The 4 precedents studied in the Studio Class held by C. Pallini, A. Korolija, and A.M. Di Lauro, academic year 2021–2022. From top left: Public Baths at Bellinzona, A. Galfetti, F. Ruchat-Roncati and I. Trümpy (1967–1970); Giza Solar Boat Museum, F. Minissi (1961–1982); Marés Swimming Pool, A. Siza (1959–1963); Open Air Theatre, F. Venezia, M. Aprile, R. Collovà (1987–1990).

“Interpreting Buildings to Identify Compositional Principles” within the Architectural Design Studio [Section B]

Cristina Pallini

University
Politecnico di Milano

Context
Milan, 2023–2024

Field of Study
Architectural and Urban Composition
Architectural Design
Structural Engineering

Degree Level
Master’s (1st year)

ECTS Credits
14

Faculty
Professors: Francesco Foti, Aleksa Korolija, Cristina Pallini
Teaching assistants: A. Isastia, L. Nameda Lazda, L. Luini, R. Righi, L. Sartori

Students
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Abstract
Within the Master's Course in Architecture and Urban Design (AUD), the studio held in the second semester of the first year explores the complexity of developing an architectural project for a real site, which, in this case, was Genazzano, a small historic town on a ridge at the south-eastern edge of the province of Rome, renowned for its churches, castle, and the ruined nymphaeum attributed to Donato Bramante (1444–1514), a key figure of the Italian Renaissance. This scenic location is certainly worthy of inclusion in a Grand Tour of central Italy. Its topography is so steep that no design can rely solely on the plan; it must also be understood in cross-section. In preparation for the final design assignment, the teaching module opened the Studio by studying a series of buildings from different periods, all easily reachable from Milan. Half of them were directly linked to GT1, a one-day walking tour in Milan that included Piazza del Duomo, the Sforza Castle, Sempione Park, and Corso Sempione.

Objectives
During a site visit to Genazzano, students experienced the variety of Italian landscapes. Prior to the visit, they were encouraged to explore real buildings and gain an understanding of the underlying design narratives. This exercise, linked to the first assessed submission, aimed to discuss and share compositional ideas that would enable students to approach the final design beyond a merely functional perspective. Students were asked to develop a narrative explaining how architectural design relates to proportion, rhythm, and measurement, and explore the relationships among formal elements and spatial units. Before the end of the teaching module, students presented the sites in Genazzano that they had selected and began drafting a design proposal using the compositional principles identified either in their own case study or in another group's.

Method
The Studio Class took place on Tuesdays (in the morning) and Thursdays (throughout the day). The initial phase of the programme ran from 20 February to 14 March 2024, starting with students presenting three slides showcasing their previous projects. This provided the teaching team with an overview of their backgrounds, while students gained insight into one another, enabling them to form 16 groups of two to three members each (with the option of revising the group composition later for the final design project).

The teaching team then introduced 14 case studies for the students to choose from: five historic complexes, four interwar buildings in Milan and the province, and five postwar buildings in Milan, Genoa, and Turin. As no group selected the historic buildings, the case studies were reduced to nine.

By 18 April, students were required to submit the first set of materials. The second phase ended with two critique sessions with invited guests from the UpGranT consortium.

The pedagogical approach involved alternating lectures, independent investigation, tutorials, and students' independent work, distributed as follows:

- Lecture-based learning: 14 hours
- Interactive and collaborative learning: 16 hours
- Learning assessment: 10 hours
- Laboratory-based learning (tutorials): 24 hours, plus independent work
- Guided fieldwork: 6 hours, plus independent fieldwork

Calendar of Lectures, Seminars, and Guided Fieldwork

20.02.2024	Framing the Studio Class within the UpGranT Project • C. Pallini and A. Korolija, Grand Tour: Architects' Experiential Training • C. Pallini, Making Friends with an Architect
22.02. 2024	Presentation of the first assignment • C. Pallini and A. Korolija, Interpretation Tools and Methodologies • A. Korolija, Interpreting an Existing Building: 14 Case Studies • Formation of groups and selection of case studies
27.02.2024	Grand Tourists • A. Isastia, Louis Kahn's Travel Sketches
05.03.2024	On architectural notions • A. Korolija, Re-reading Transparency
14.03.2014	Seminar: Group presentations and exhibition of drawings and scale models; feedback from C. Pallini, A. Korolija, A. Isastia, L. Nameda Lazda, L. Luini, R. Righi, L. Sartori
19.03.2024	Grand Tourists • Walking tour in Milan, from PAC to Piazza della Repubblica
21.03.2024	Grand Tourists • A. Isastia, Milanese Houses • Presentations of the sites in Genazzano, group discussions, and site selection
26.03.2024	Grand Tourists • C. Pallini, Le Corbusier's Journey into the Orient
11.04. 2024	UpGranT in progress • H. Casal Ribeiro (FAUP Porto) Constants and Contrasts: Castelo de Santa Maria da Feira • Critique session with H. Casal Ribeiro (FAUP Porto) and L. Amistadi (University of Bologna)
18.04.2024 morning	UpGranT in progress • L. Jakobsone and M. Devriendt (Art Academy of Latvia), Architecture Beyond Architecture • Crit session with L. Jakobsone and M. Devriendt (Art Academy of Latvia)
18.04.2024 afternoon	Bridging the first and the final assignment: Back to Genazzano • M.C. Loi (Politecnico di Milano), Donato Bramante "inventore et luce della buona et vera architettura", Urbino, Roma, Milano. • M. Doring-Williams (Vienna University of Technology), Donato Bramante at Genazzano

Tools
The lectures *Making Friends with an Architect* and *Interpretation Tools and Methodologies* included many examples of student drawings and models from previous years. While offering a broad overview of modelling methods and techniques, this material helped clarify the distinction between descriptive and interpretative representations. In the second case, students were required to make deliberate interpretative choices, highlighting only selected aspects of the building, such as its connections with the urban environment, spatial and structural design, functionality, and formal expression. Another objective was to reveal a compositional principle, a latent geometry, or a system of proportional relationships. Given the students' diverse cultural and academic backgrounds, we allowed considerable freedom in the choice of medium, whether producing drawings or physical models. Group presentations and exhibitions of drawings and models helped all of us understand the significance of our collective work while sharing the main ideas emerging from each case.

Course materials
The lecture *Interpreting an Existing Building: 14 Case Studies* presented the following case studies:

- Historic complexes: the Ducal Palace in Mantua, the Sforza Castle in Vigevano, Palladio's Olympic Theatre in Vicenza (1580–1585), the Rotonda in Milan (1695–1732), and Caffè Pedrocchi in Padua (1826–1842);
- Interwar buildings in Milan and its province: theTriennale by G. Muzio (1931–1933), Casa Rustici by P. Lingeri and G. Terragni (1933–1935), the Arengario by P. Portaluppi, G. Muzio, P.G. Magistretti, and E. A. Griffini (1936–1956), and, approximately 20 km north-east of Milan, the former Casa del Fascio by G. Terragni in Lissone (1937–1939).

- Post-war buildings: Casa al Parco by I. Gardella (1947–1954), Scarlioni Room in the Sforza Castle by BBPR (1954–1956), the Library in the Park by I. Parisi, with S. Longhi and L. Antonietti (1954) in Milan; the Treasury Museum in San Lorenzo Cathedral in Genoa by F. Albini (1952–1956), and the Royal Theatre in Turin by C. Mollino (1964–1973).

We provided only basic information, leaving our students the space to explore and learn more independently. While all students had to visit the selected building, some sought archival material, whereas others relied primarily on bibliographic sources. Our lectures addressed how to cross-reference complementary sources, while the tutorials proved essential in enabling each group to discuss the purpose of their interpretation, the narratives embedded in their case study, and how to best express these aspects through drawings and models.

Prerequisites

Offered in the second semester of the first year of the Master's Course in Architecture and Urban Design (AUD), the course required a bachelor's degree in Architecture. Previous knowledge was expected to include a basic understanding of descriptive geometry and drawing, architectural history, and architectural design. Furthermore, it was essential for students to be able to sketch, take photographs, and demonstrate a high level of skill and patience in model-making. Another key requirement was the soft skill of being able to work effectively as part of a team.

Assessment

The assessment of the achievement of the learning objectives was conducted through weekly tutorials and three scheduled seminars. The first seminar aimed to promote mutual exchange between teachers and students. The following two seminars featured invited guests from the UpGranT consortium, H. Casal Ribeiro (FAUP Porto) and L. Amistadi (University of Bologna, Cesena), as well as L. Jākobsone and M. Devriendt (Art Academy of Latvia). These seminars focused primarily on transferring knowledge from the teaching module to the final design assignment.

During the final exam, the groups presented both the results of the teaching module and their projects for Genazzano, giving us the chance to evaluate the overall effectiveness of our pedagogical approach. Some groups adopted the compositional criteria identified in the teaching module, while others produced good design solutions that were not as closely connected to their previous exercise.

Evaluation

The overall evaluation was primarily based on attendance and active participation in studio activities. It included group assessment of the first assignment (interpreting an existing building) and of the final project, together with an individual assessment through an oral exam based on the bibliography and lectures delivered during the Studio Class. The assessment of the final design proposal (including Prof. Foti's questions on structural aspects) accounted for 70% of the final grade of the Studio Class. Evaluation criteria focused on the quality and appropriateness of the project, with emphasis on the ability to interpret the context, identify the project theme, trace the design process, and apply the Studio's theoretical content in its development.

Deliverables

For the teaching module, we asked each group to prepare a PowerPoint presentation explaining the impressions gained during their visit to the building and how this direct experience influenced their subsequent interpretation. We also requested a set of individual sketches and/or photographs documenting the survey, complemented by visual reinterpretations that supported the group's argument. In addition, we asked for one or more scale models that revealed the compositional criteria identified. Our aim was to share these criteria and encourage their application in the final design project.

From the *UpGranT in Progress* sessions, we expected our students to gain a broader understanding of how their work aligned with the research objectives.

Impact

This teaching module had a dual impact: it influenced the teaching of the Studio Class at Politecnico di Milano and served as a test of the research hypothesis together with team members from our partner institutions.

Firstly, this teaching module could help us communicate our approach to using precedents in design to international students. Although it feels so ingrained in our daily practice, students often find it challenging to understand the nature of space when they approach a design assignment. By exploring a real building through repeated surveys, this teaching module helped them develop a comprehensive understanding of architectural references, enabling them to interpret the relationship between form, function, and structure. They also gained an understanding of the relationship between a particular building and the site on which it is located, as well as the role of its individual parts in shaping the whole.

Secondly, by involving team members from partner institutions, we sought to stimulate discussion and feedback on WP3 dedicated to "souvenirs" – namely, physical objects that Grand Tourists took home to preserve the memory of the places they had visited, thereby encouraging processes of re-reading, reinterpretation, and invention.

Outcomes

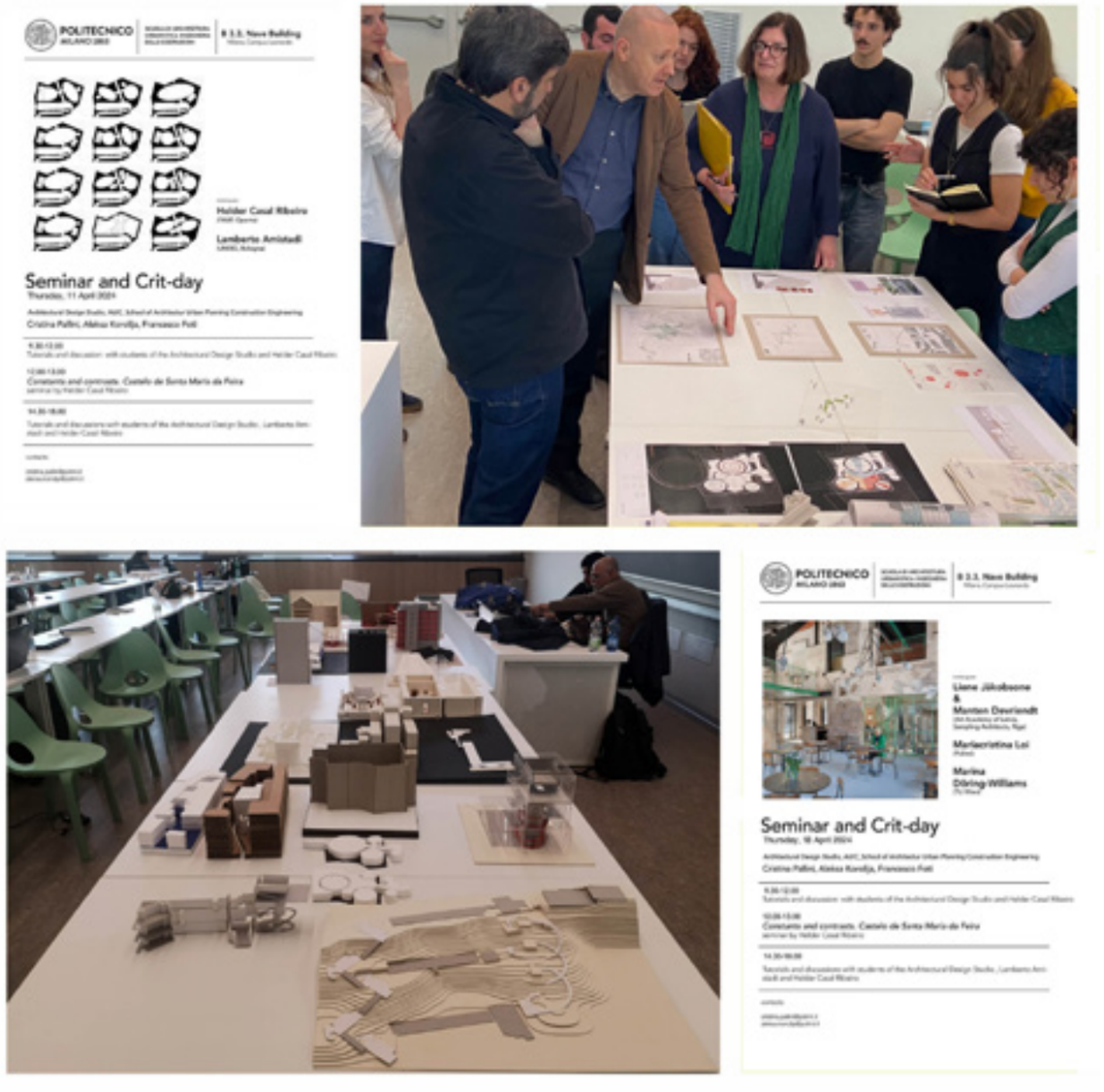


Fig. 1. Posters and photographs of the feedback sessions with members of the UpGranT consortium.

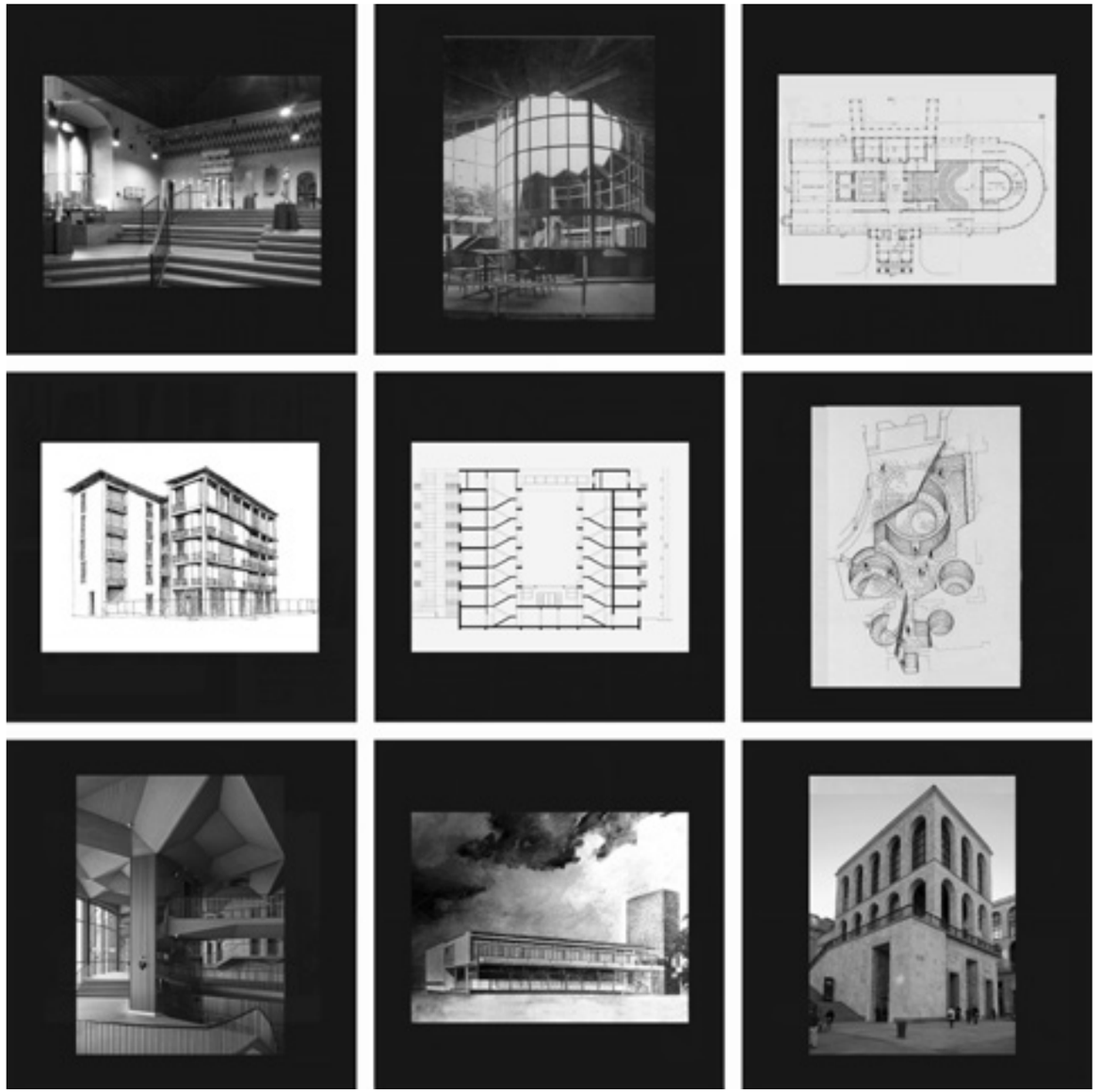


Fig. 2. The 9 precedents selected by groups of students for the teaching module (from top left): Scarlioni Room in Sforza Castle, Milan, BBPR (1954–1956); Library in the Park, Milan, I. Parisi, S. Longhi, and L. Antonietti (1954); Triennale, Milan, G. Muzio (1931–1933); House by the Park (Casa Tognella), Milan, I. Gardella (1947–1954); Casa Rustici, Milan, P. Lingeri and G. Terragni (1933–1935); Treasury Museum in San Lorenzo Cathedral, Genoa, F. Albini (1952–1956); Royal Theatre, Turin, C. Mollino (1964–1973); Casa del Fascio, Lissone, G. Terragni (1937–1939); Arengario, Milan, P. Portaluppi, G. Muzio, P. G. Magistretti, and E. A. Griffini (1936–1956).

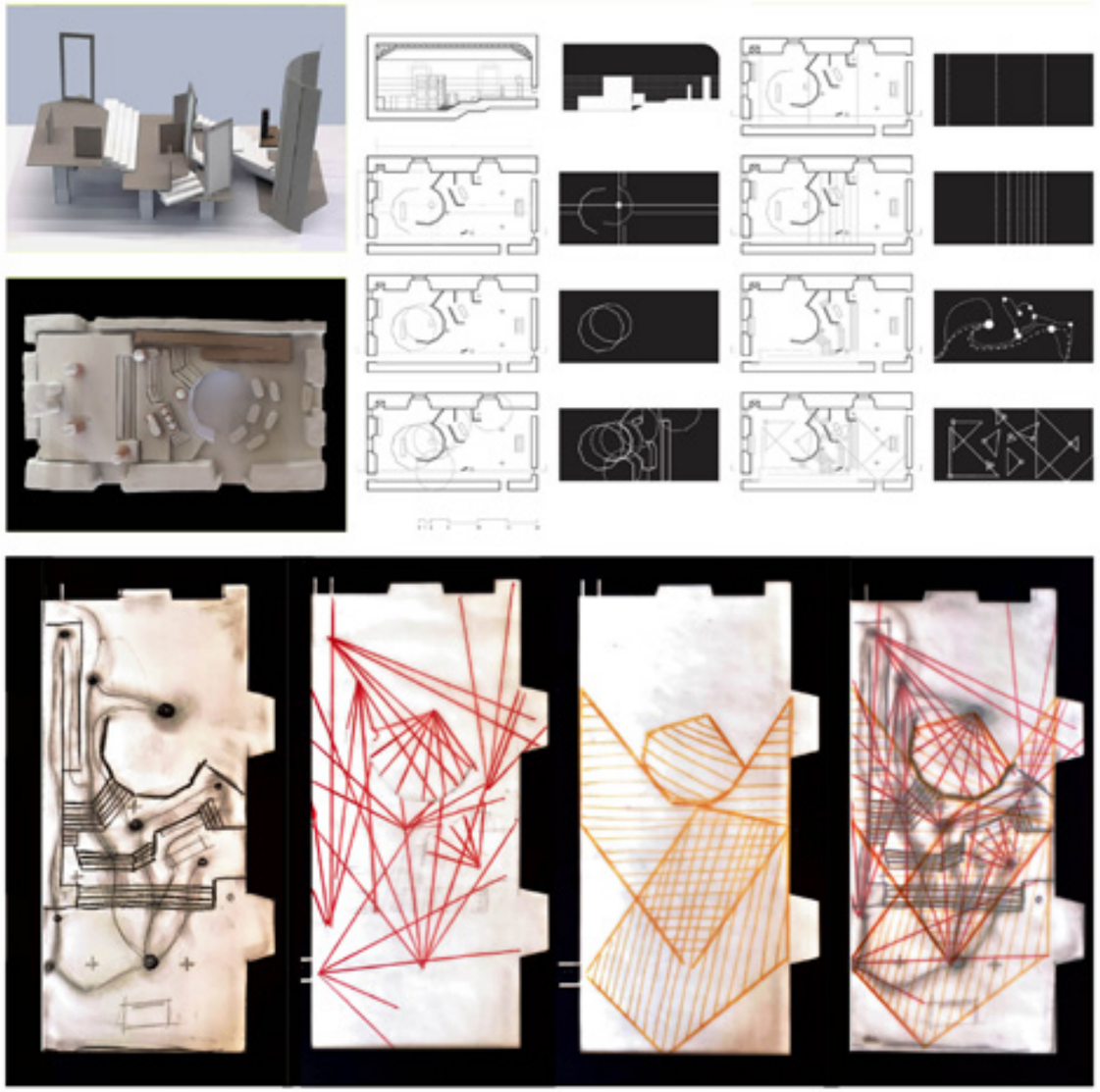


Fig. 3. Scarlioni Room in Sforza Castle, H. Demeyere and M. Kring (Group 13). This group depicted the interaction between the visitors' route and their lines of sight as they entered the room, descended the stairs, and ultimately turned to view Michelangelo's Pietà, set within the apse-like space.

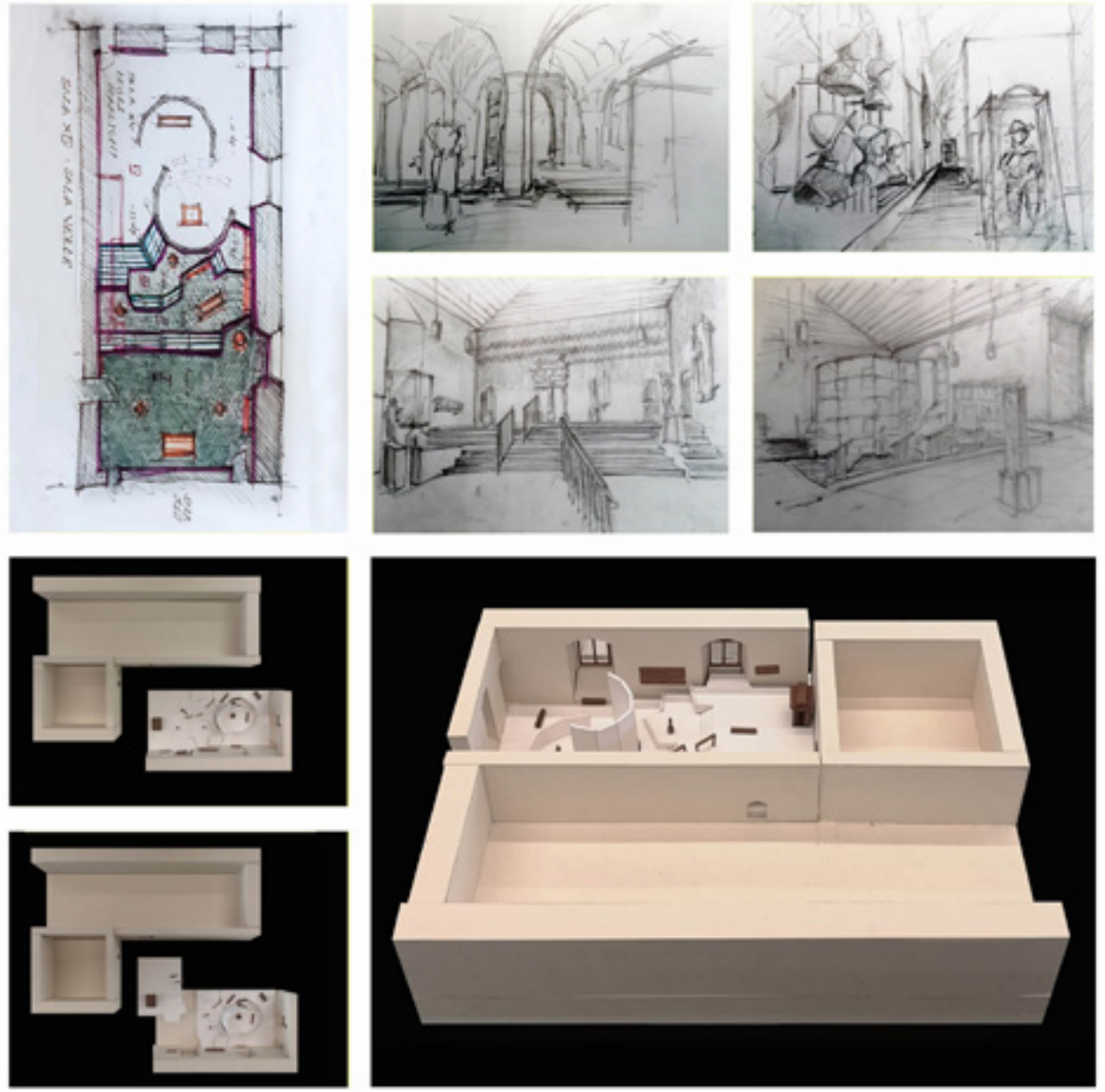


Fig. 4. Scarlioni Room in Sforza Castle, A. Aptecar, Th. Noretu, and I. Roce (Group 8). Hand-drawn sketches show what visitors see upon entering the room, descending the stairs, and turning to view Michelangelo's *Pietà*. The model also shows neighbouring spaces, including the long hallway featuring ancient armour.

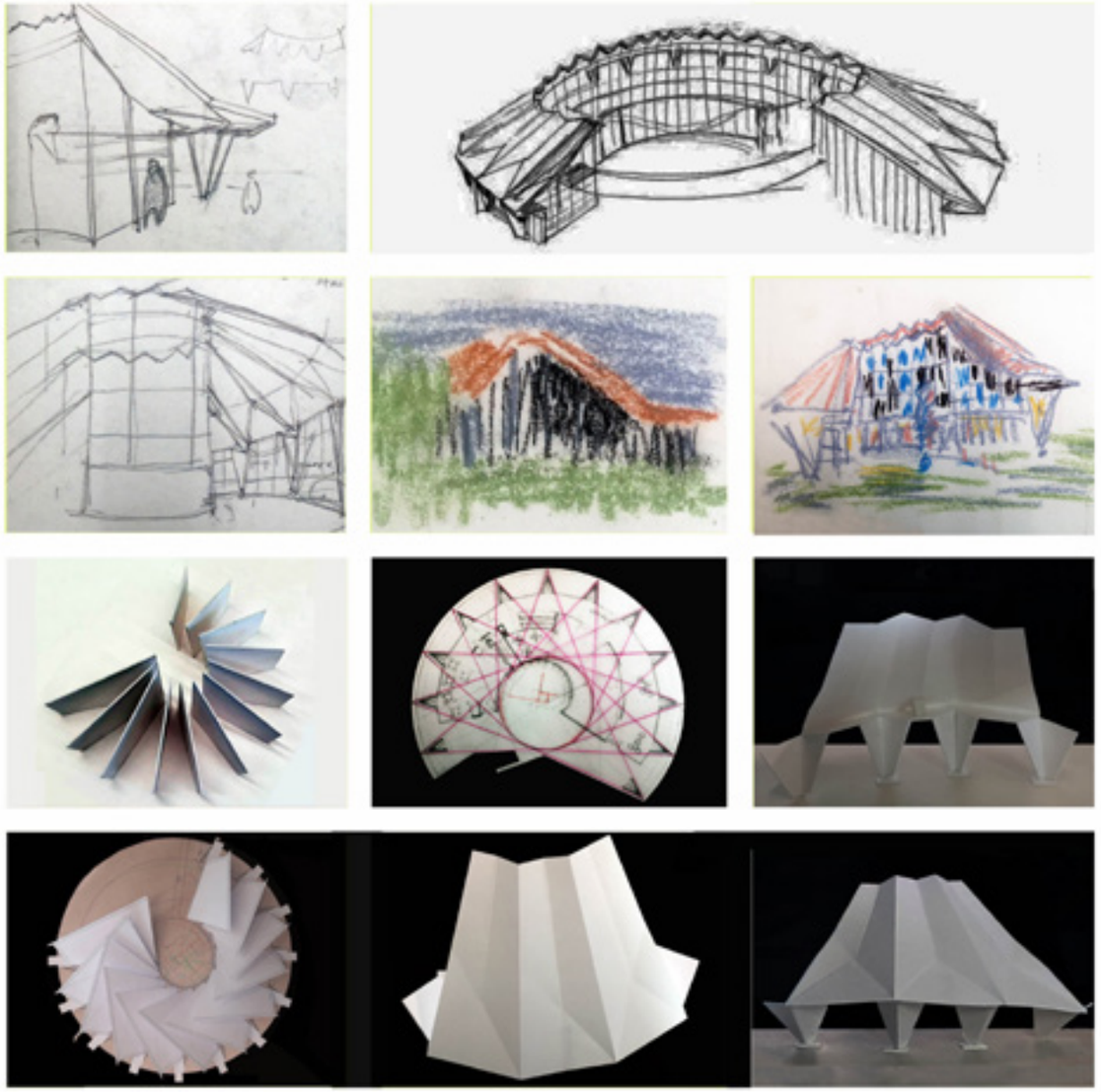


Fig. 5. Treasury Museum, San Lorenzo Cathedral, Genoa, Y. Cemaloglu, I. Morsy, and D. Ozkoc (Group 11). This group considered the museum in its architectural and urban context, depicting the sequence of small passages and courtyards adjoining the Cathedral, and highlighting the many thresholds before accessing the actual museum.



Fig. 6. Treasury Museum, San Lorenzo Cathedral, Genoa, N. Avalishvili, R. Kleib, and R. Teixeira (Group 4). The three alternative solutions envisaged by Albini featured different entrances and different ways of occupying the space under the courtyard of the Archbishop's Palace, which is contiguous with the apse and sacristy. The group explored the hidden geometry that regulates the relationship between the individual spatial units and the exhibition furnishings.

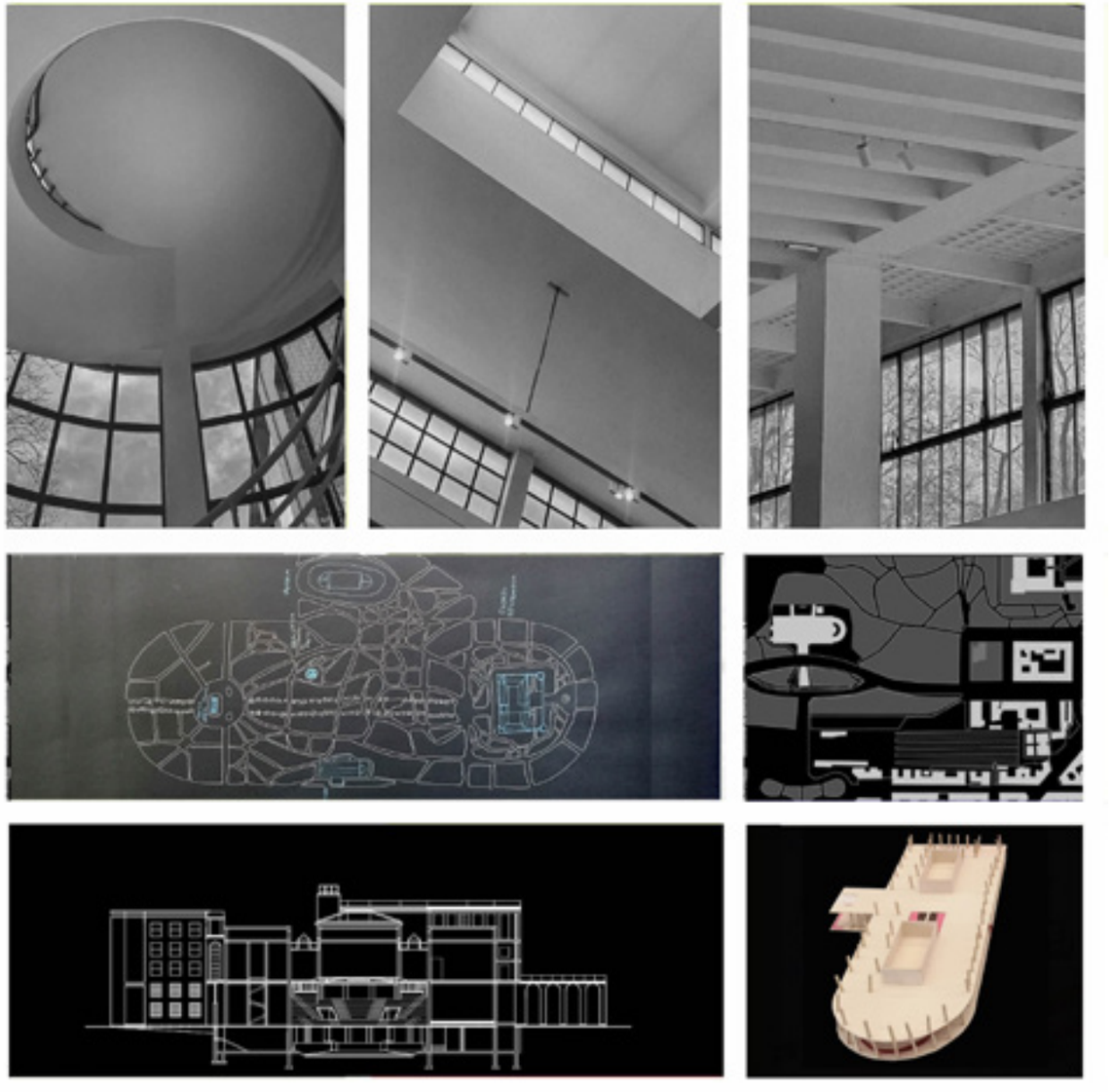


Fig. 7. Treasury Museum, San Lorenzo Cathedral, Genoa, M. Bibbò, and B. Caporale (Group 14). Using sketches and scale models, this group studied the approach path to the museum from the left aisle of the Cathedral.

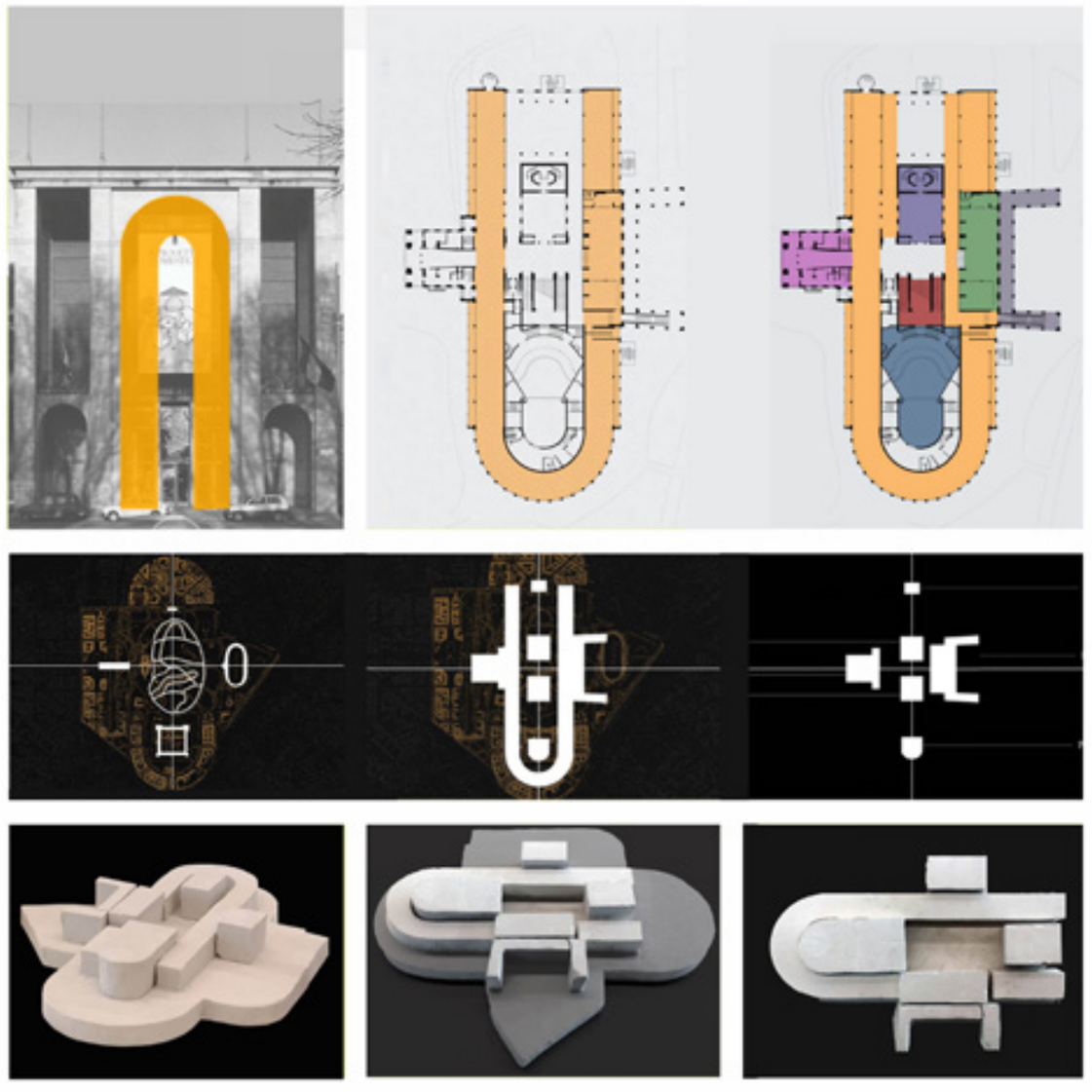
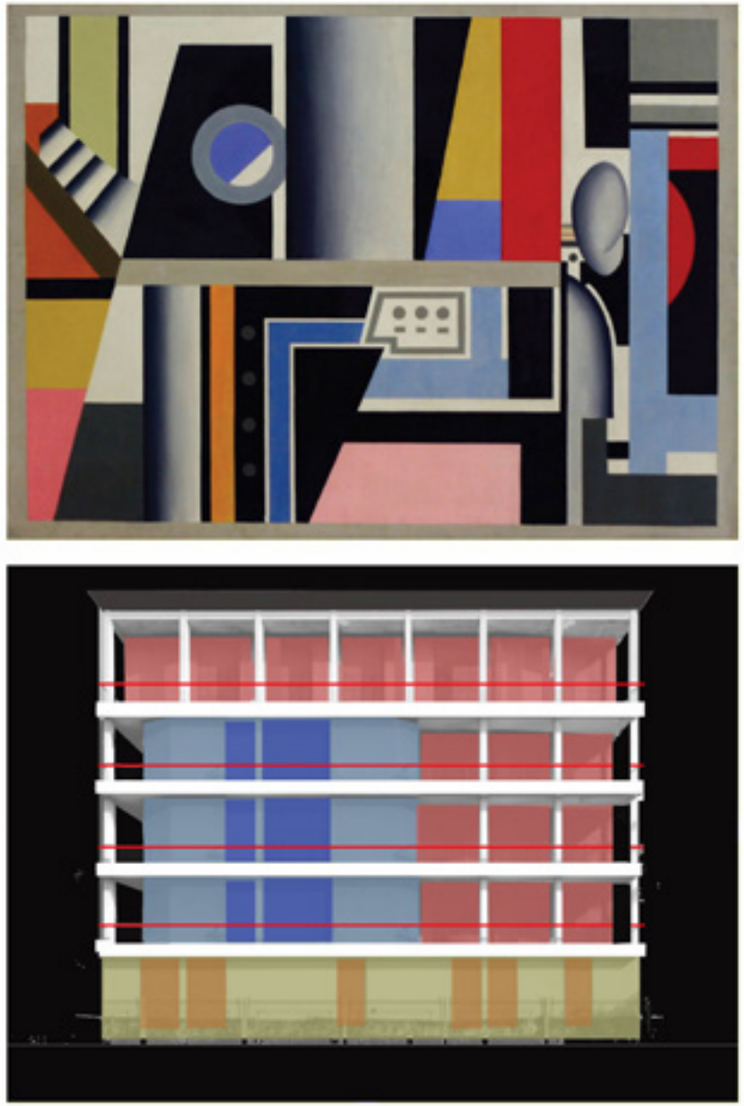
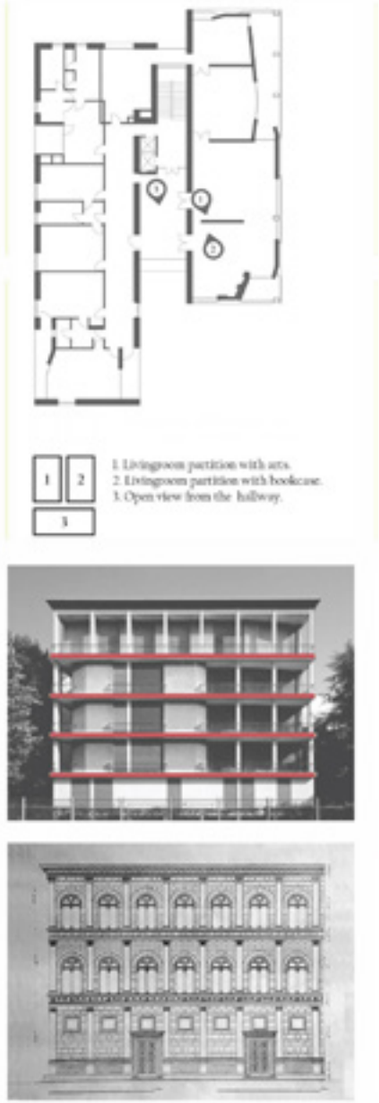


Fig. 8. Casa Rustici, P. Safonova, and A. Vinnikova (Group 2). This group studied the relationship between the block and the built-up volumes, framed by recessed, semi-recessed, or extruded balconies.





1. Livingroom partition with arts.
2. Livingroom partition with bookcase.
3. Open view from the hallway.

Fig. 9. House by the Park (Casa Tognella), D.G. Garcia Vazquez, B. Radomsky Viapiana, and A. Torres Asseo (Group 16). This group focused on the rhythmic composition of the main elevation, working across different levels of the façade.

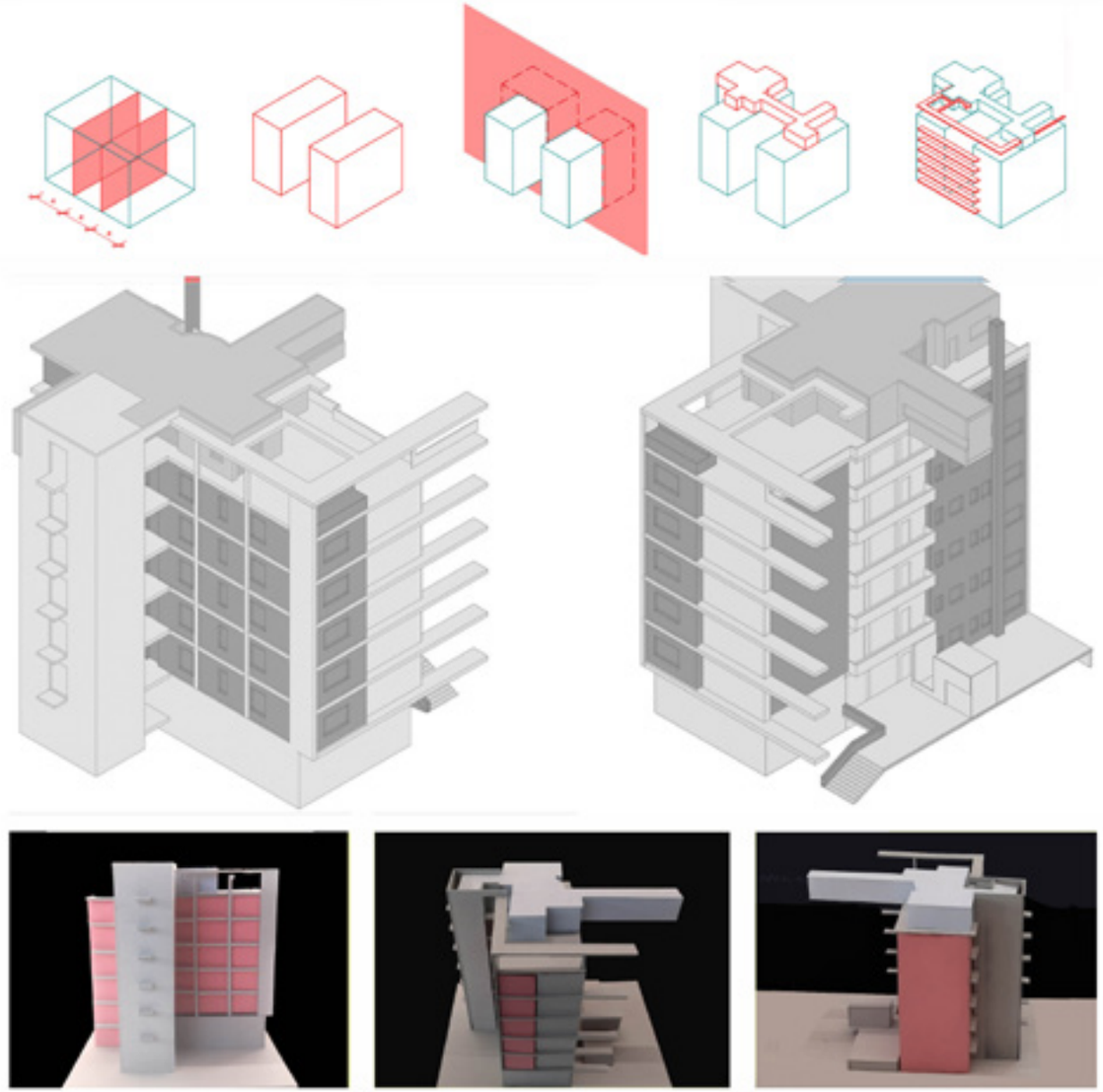


Fig. 10. Royal Theatre, Turin, G. Gogava, V. Popova, and M. Tsaava (Group 12). The pathways leading to the various tiers of the stalls resemble the visionary drawings of prisons by Giovanni Battista Piranesi.

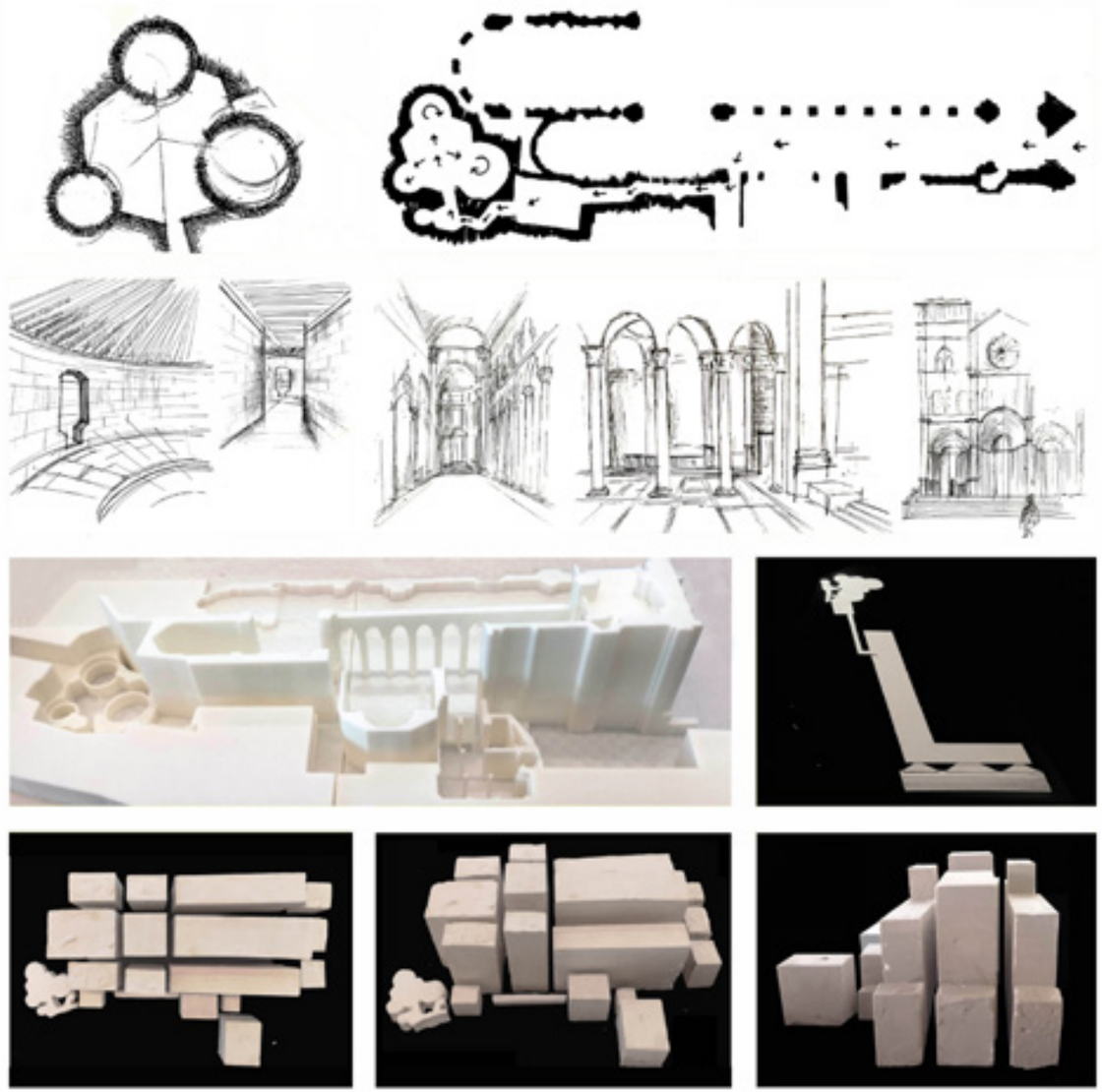


Fig. 11. Triennale, G. Gibelli and D. Josic (Group 6). This group sought to highlight the building's structural aspects.

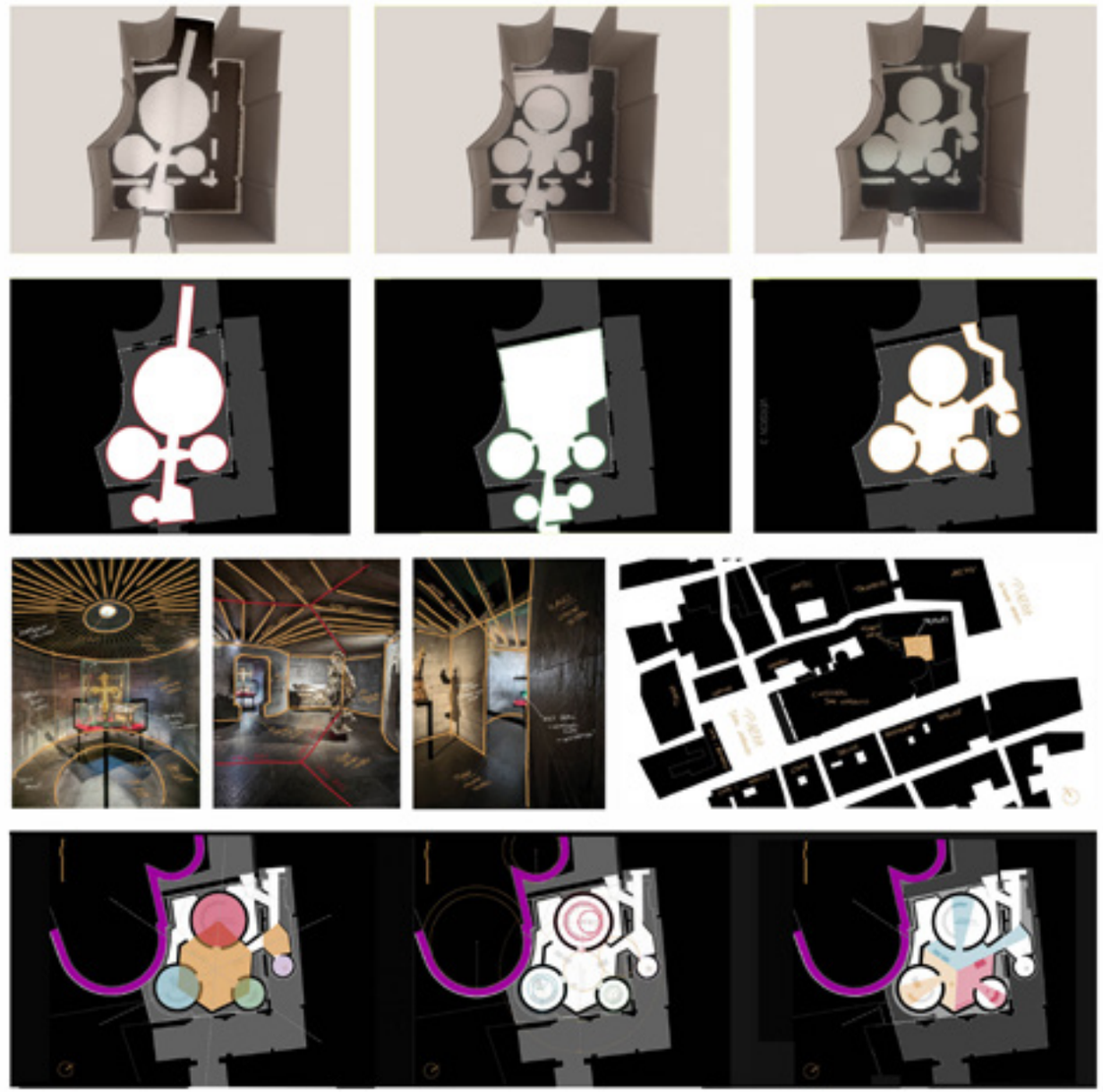


Fig. 12. Triennale, A. Adam, Z. Dubinskaia, and H. Rajput (Group 1). When viewed at urban scale, the building footprint encompasses the entire urban area, stretching from the Sforza Castle to the Arco della Pace. Accordingly, the building layout seems to embed a series of building types.

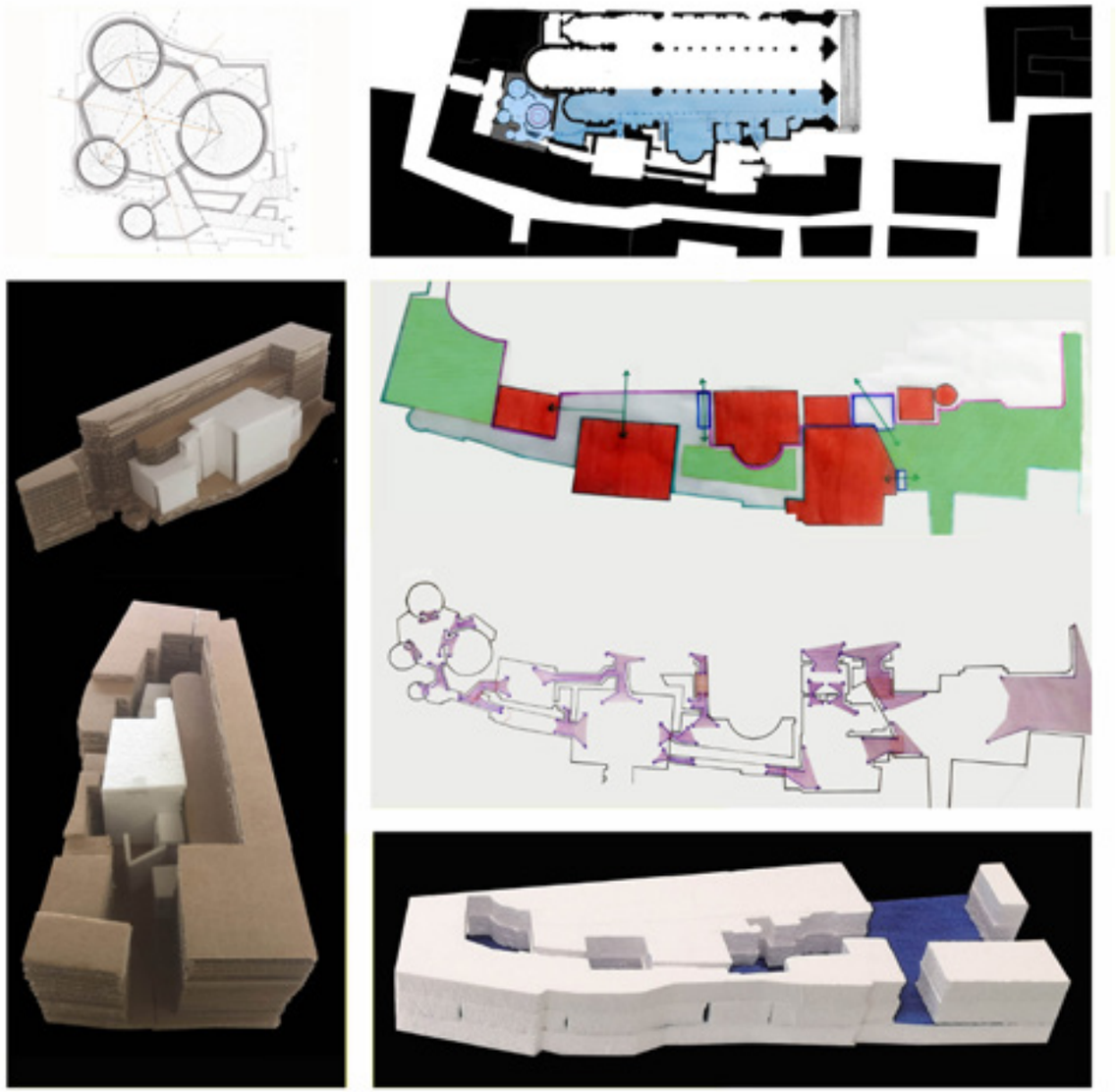


Fig. 13. Library in the Park, Y. Peng, S.Z. Qiu, and W.Y. Xie (Group 3). While establishing a visual relationship with the nearby monument, the building features an incremental geometry that connects the plan to the structure.



Fig. 14. Library in the Park, S. Jäckel, A. Kukarina, and C. Naccari (Group 7). This group studied the building's spiral geometry, generated by the floor plan and related to the roof's shape.

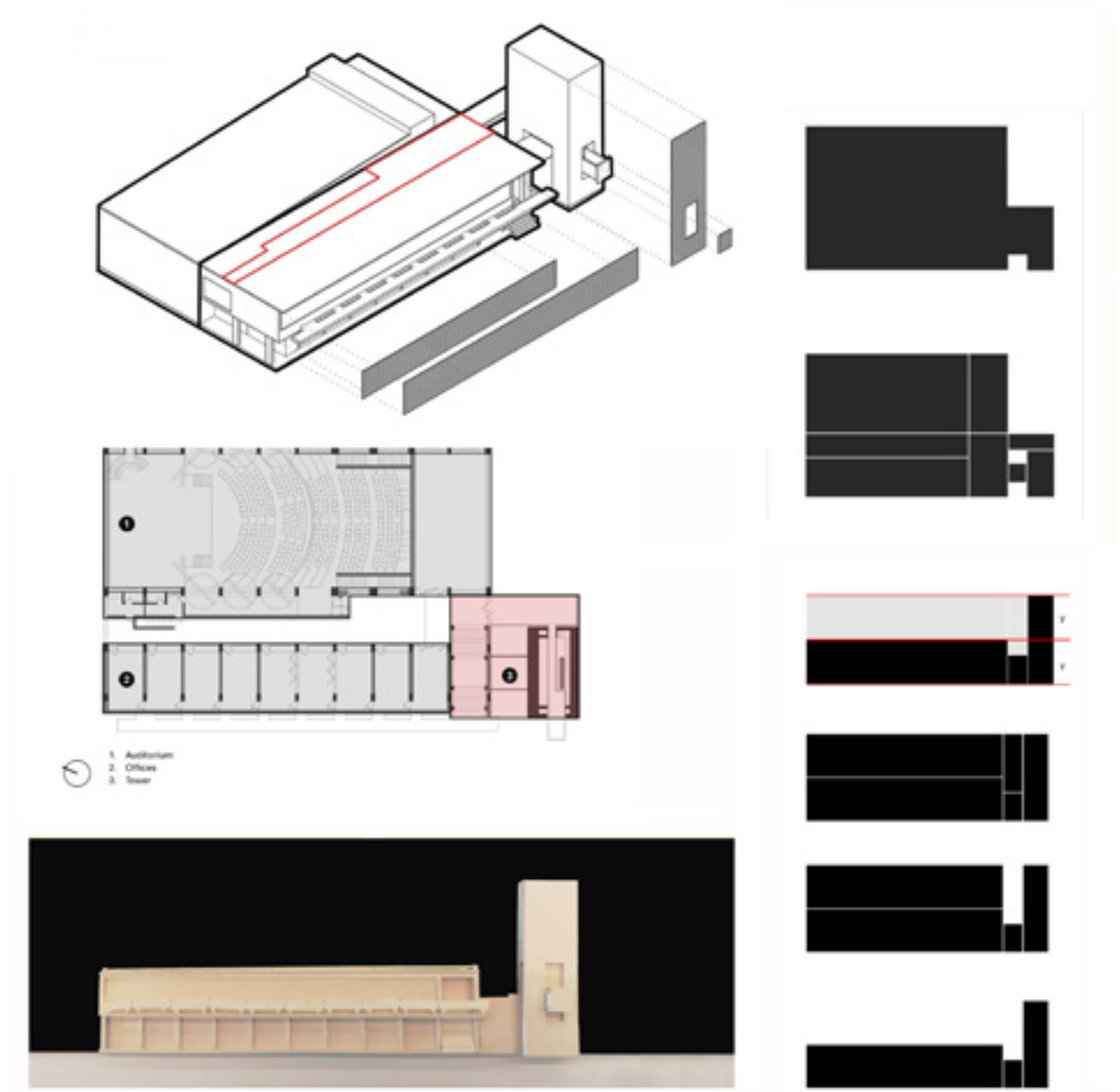


Fig. 15. Casa del Fascio, Lissone, C. Pannone, L. Rota, and E. Tomaselli (Group 10). The long office block, spanned by a balcony that emphasises its horizontal form, contrasts with the imposing verticality of the tower, with its strongly projecting balcony. An external staircase, situated between the horizontal building and the tower, provides access to the upper floor.

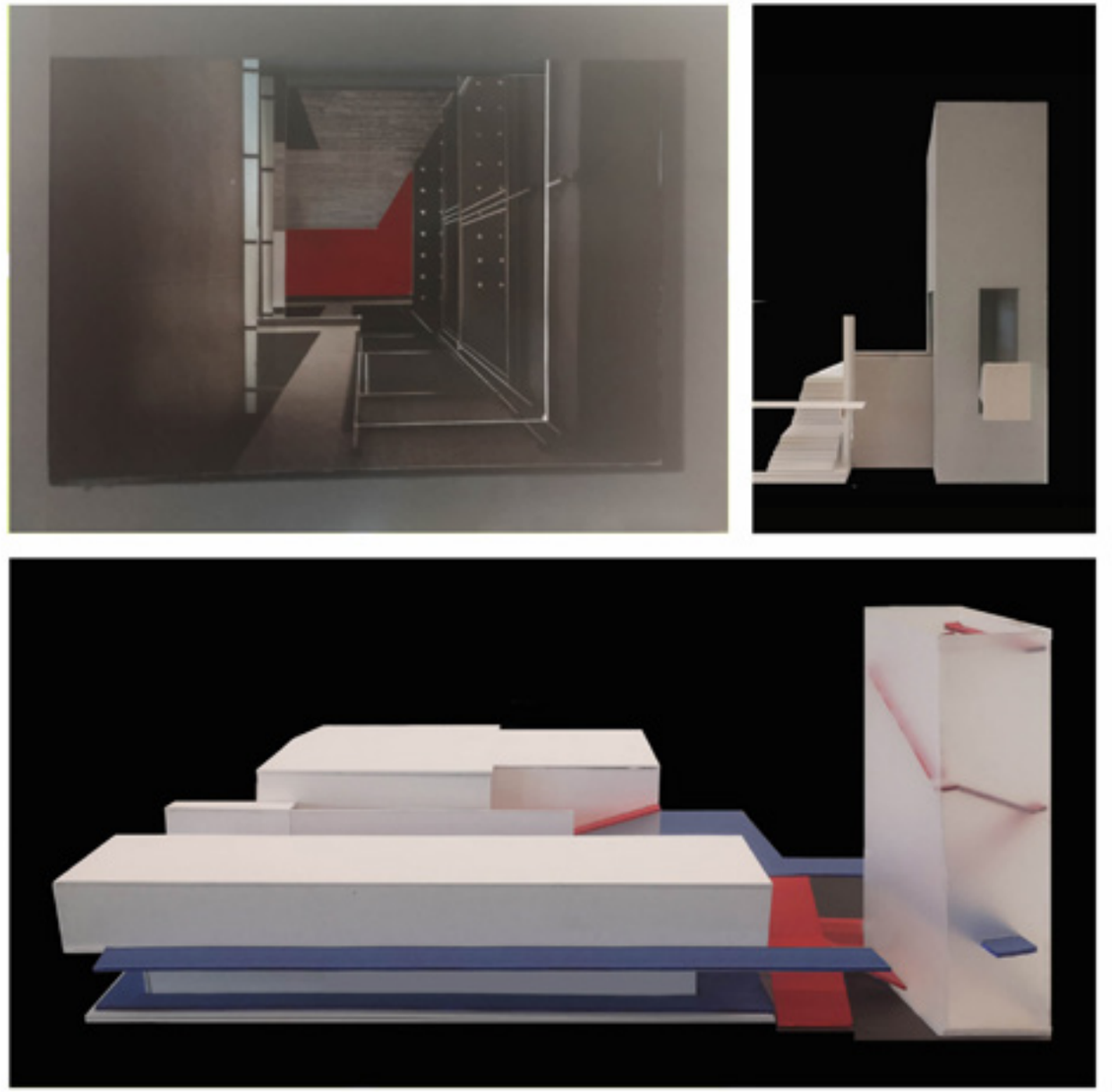


Fig. 16. Casa del Fascio, Lissone, D.G. García Vázquez, B. Radomsky Viapiana, and A. Torres Asseo (Group 9). The building's horizontal layout, bounded on the right by the tower's imposing verticality, clearly delineates the office block and the auditorium. This group studied the proportional relationship between the parts.

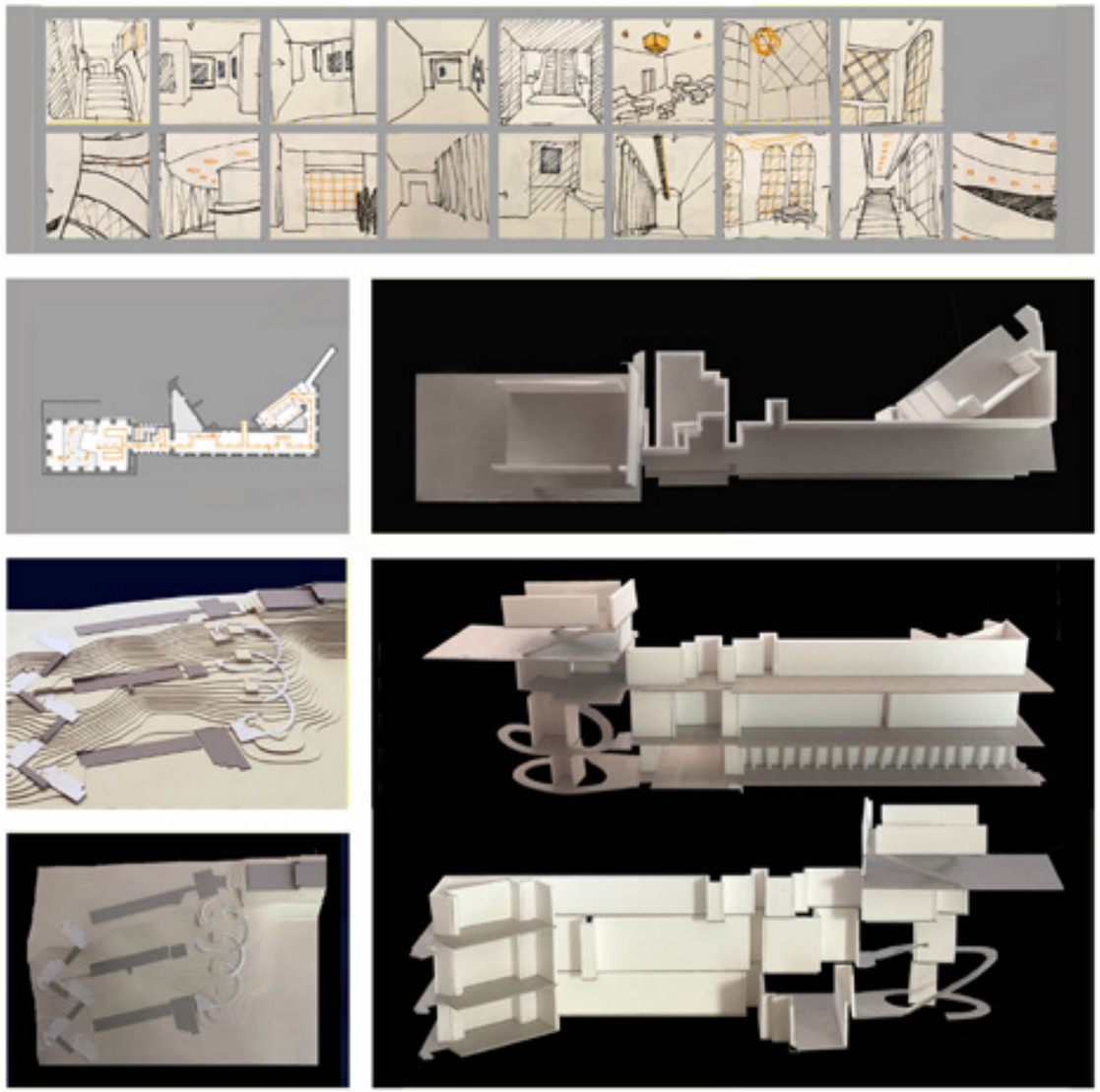


Fig. 17. Arengario, Milan, J. Haipassa, S. Derecho, and M. Dimitrova (Group 5), as transformed by I. Rota and F. Fornasari. This group sought to depict the recent intervention as a “building within a building,” using the model to show the visitors’ routes.

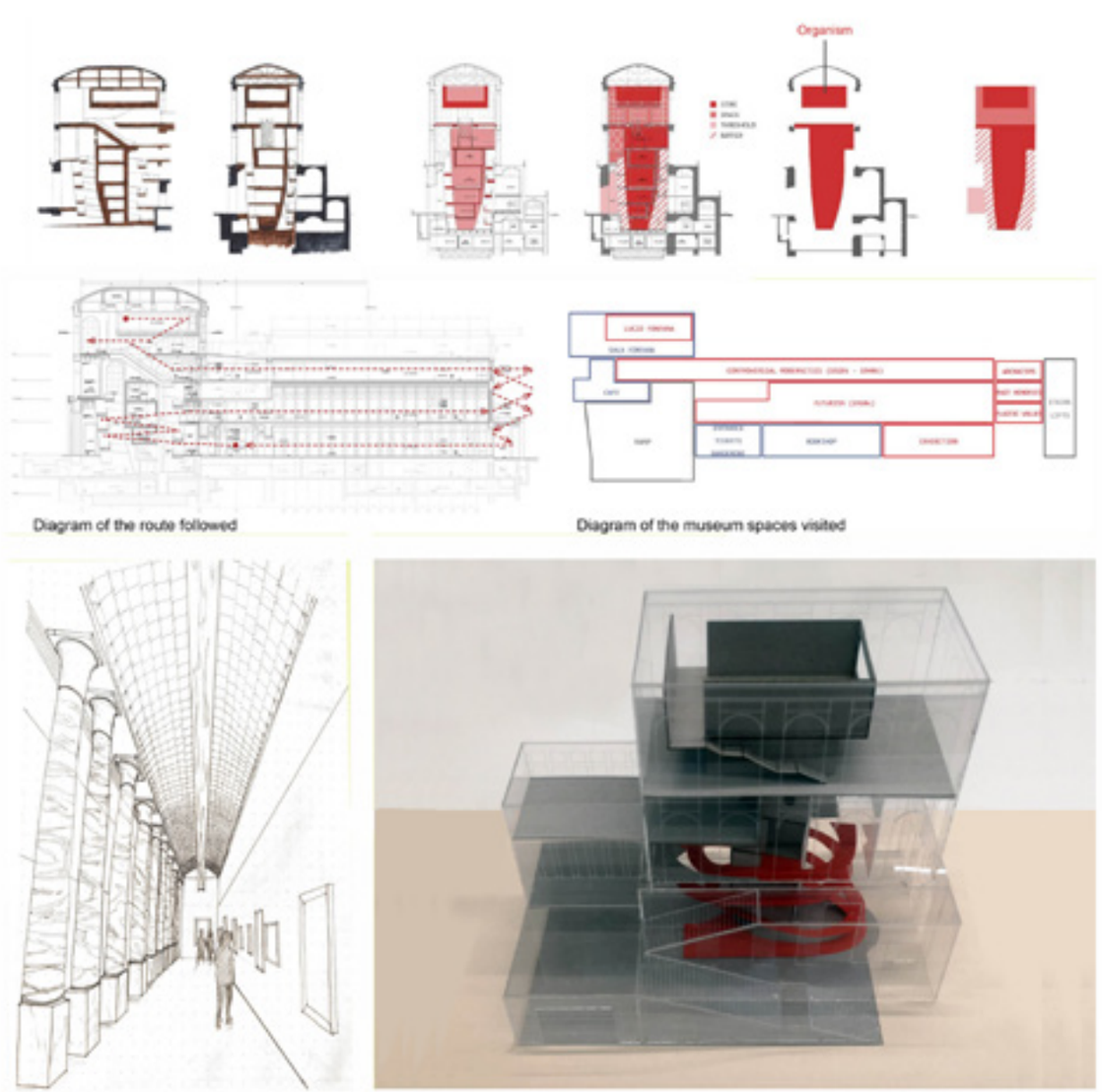


Fig. 18. Arengario, Milan, as transformed by I. Rota and F. Fornasari, E. Denvir, and V. Xifaras (Group 15). After using a series of sketches to describe the spaces through which visitors pass, this group created a model of the wall separating the vertical circulation areas from the exhibition galleries, attempting to imagine how this structure might be rearticulated in relation to an imaginary topography.

Doctoral Programme

A Grand Tour for Architects and Engineers in Milan

Helder Casal Ribeiro
Pietro Giuseppe Crespi
Nicola Longarini
Cristina Pallini

In Italy, the professional roles of architects and engineers have gradually diverged since the 1920s. However, Italian architecture during the interwar period and after the Second World War produced many flagship projects that served as common testing grounds for architects and engineers alike, many of whom were affiliated with the Politecnico di Milano. The journal *Strutture. Rivista di scienze e arte del costruire* (Structures: Journal of Building Science and Art), founded in 1947 under the editorship of Adalberto Libera, Sergio Musumeci, and Carlo Cestelli Guidi, documents their continuous and intense dialogue (Desideri 2013).

In 2013, the aim of integrating research and training in the design, production, construction, management, maintenance, and transformation of buildings and the built environment led to the establishment of the Department of Architecture, Built Environment and Construction Engineering (DABC) at Politecnico di Milano. Within this broad cross-disciplinary spectrum, DABC PhD programme offers a valuable platform for interaction, as demonstrated by the course "Architectural Bodies. Multidisciplinary Design Perspectives,"[1] taught collaboratively by two architects, C. Pallini and H. Casal Ribeiro, and two structural engineers, P. G. Crespi and N. Longarini. Based on a sustained exchange of perspectives between the Milan and Porto Schools, the course also built on previous courses taught within the DABC PhD programme.[2]

1
The course borrowed the notion of "architectural bodies" from two books: one by the architectural theorist Arie Grafland, an anthology highlighting the role of the human body in the work of Le Corbusier, Rem Koolhaas, Peter Eisenman and Daniel Libeskind (Graafland & Speaks 1996) and another by artist-architects Shusaku Arakawa and Madeline Gins, exploring the interconnectedness of inventive architectural design, poetic processes, and philosophical inquiry (Arakawa and Gins 2002).

2
These include: *Architecture as Conceived and Built* (2017–2018, 2018–2019, 2019–2020 academic years), taught by C. Pallini and H. Casal Ribeiro; *Architects and Engineers at Work*, jointly taught by F. Bonfante (Full Professor of Architectural and Urban Design at DABC), C. Pallini, P. G. Crespi, and N. Longarini (2020–2021 academic year); *Cutting-Edge Architecture: Creativity and Innovation* (2020–2021 academic year), taught by C. Pallini, H. Casal Ribeiro, and G. dall'O' (Full Professor of Environmental Engineering at DABC and an expert in the sustainability of the built environment); and *Cutting-Edge Architecture: Creativity and Innovation* (2022–2023 academic year), taught by C. Pallini and H. Casal Ribeiro.

While aiming to promote debate among teachers and PhD candidates from diverse backgrounds, this course also sought to assess the effectiveness of the teaching approaches outlined in the UpGranT project at PhD level. In this respect, UpGranT asserts that architecture fosters the shift from STEM to STEAM, and that design education cultivates a crucial mindset not only for architects (Sorguç, Özgenel et al. 2019; Süyük Makaklı 2019).

The project aims to experiment with an *in situ* pedagogical model, reinterpreting the Grand Tour as an experience-led learning pathway, that is, learning from real buildings. To this end, the Grand Tour is understood as a legacy, embedded in the co-identities of European townscapes.

PhD candidates at DABC were, for us, an ideal target group for moving beyond strict disciplinary boundaries. We encouraged them to explore architecture *in situ* to sharpen their inquisitive eyes and learn how to analyse it: initially through site visits, either before or after our lectures; then through structured visual reports; and finally, through brainstorming during their draft lectures, combined with critical references. Our aim was to encourage a bottom-up approach and identify a level of consistency between the initial conceptualisation and the final built form. While prioritising integration between architecture and structural engineering, the course also sparked debate about the different contributions made by each discipline and the conditions required for a successful design process. Since the survey was so crucial, our case-study buildings had to be in Milan, easily reachable and available when needed. To support the idea of the Grand Tourists and the co-identities within European townscapes, we selected three recently completed buildings designed by foreign architects: the Bocconi University Extension by the Irish firm Grafton Architects (2004–2008), the Feltrinelli Foundation by the Swiss firm Herzog & de Meuron (2008–2016), and the Allianz Tower at CityLife by the Japanese firm Arata Isozaki & Associates (2012–2015). They were awarded the Pritzker Prize in 2020, 2001, and 2019, respectively, and are known for drawing on design principles inspired by travel. Therefore, we engaged with two categories of Grand Tourists: the designers and our eight PhD students, of whom only one was Italian.

The Bocconi University Extension appears as a compact network of solids and voids arranged alternately on a vertical and horizontal grid. It comprises three underground levels and five to six storeys, divided into three main sections: the large assembly hall, the internal office blocks, and a linear volume along Röntgen Street. From the outside, the massive, cyclopean, stone-clad volumes seem to challenge gravity, especially around the recessed void of the assembly hall's foyer. This architectural approach, which some have compared to Mies van der Rohe's monument to Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg or Melnikov's *Rusakov Workers' Club* (The Bocconi Circle in Milan 2007, 92, 96), and which others attribute to Grafton Architects' familiarity with modern buildings across Europe (Nezosi 2009, 78), involved numerous structural challenges (Ayers 2018). Although the exterior appears sealed off, partly due to the nearby residential buildings, the ground level remains permeable, offering vertical views into the narrow internal courtyards of the department offices, which feature staggered, frameless glazed panels.

The Feltrinelli Foundation, Herzog & de Meuron's first public building in Italy, is a long linear structure rising from the footprint of the pre-existing city walls, of which the Porta Volta toll pavilions are the only surviving elements.[3] While the building fits into the complexity of the stratified city, it maintains a non-mimetic relationship with its context, expressing its own identity through its size, form, and distinct architectural features, while enabling a unified interpretation of the different activities. It consists of two autonomous, aligned linear volumes, collectively extending for 200 metres. They are separated by a narrow gap that divides the Foundation from the rest of the programme, which includes a bookstore, a café and restaurant, offices, an auditorium, and a public library. Made of glass and exposed concrete, the building appears as a bare skeleton, with the roof merging smoothly into the elevations. Whether drawing inspiration from Gothic architecture or from the configuration of farmhouses in Lombardy (Interview 2016), the repetition of 16-metre-wide structural concrete portals (and their distortion of perspective) defines the building's overall form, addressing multiple design problems and characterising the interior spaces as structured around solid elements (i.e. the vertical distribution shafts). The portal columns angle inward to form a triangular wedge, framing views from both inside and outside, and creating a seamless appearance, since no additional reinforcing structure is needed to support the floors and, consequently, the roof (Márquez Cecilia and Levene 2010; Dal Co 2017).

The Allianz Tower is Italy's tallest building, and one of three office towers in the CityLife district, which replaced the former Milan Trade Fair with luxury residences and a shopping area. Overall, this project has sparked heated debate among architects and urban planners due to the initial lack of urban connections and the self-referential nature of the individual skyscrapers, reigniting the debate over high-rise buildings in Milan (Coppa & Tenconi 2015). The Allianz Tower, where each floor is identical to the others, measures approximately 60 m in length and 22 m in width The building takes the form of a slender rectangular prism supported by reinforced concrete columns and two sturdy cores located on the short sides, which connect to the elevator blocks and ensure its stability, together with a series of steel belt trusses midway up the building and at the top. While the building's form echoes Brancusi's *Endless Column*, its structure, designed by Arup, incorporates two pairs of external steel struts to improve comfort and stability under dynamic wind effects (Biagi 2015; Isozaki and Maffei 2020).

3
This gate along the road to Como was opened in 1866 to connect the centre with the new cemetery.

Students attending the course were tasked with examining the correlations between form and structure, paying special attention to typological and figurative aspects, as well as structural innovation. To support them, we provided a basic theoretical framework for spatial and figurative research that explored the gap between tradition and modernity. Accordingly, the course was structured around four main lecture sessions that brought together different themes and perspectives.

In his lecture *Precision of Thought*, H. Casal Ribeiro examined the topic through an exploration of complementary subjects, including artistic practices, focusing on the work of specific artists influenced by a heightened sense of composition and embedded visual narratives that highlight the importance of exchange and contamination through travel.

These included the work of artists whose heightened compositional sensibility and embedded visual narratives highlight their poetics, such as Kazimir Malevich (1879–1935)[4], Alexander Calder (1898–1976)[5], and Richard Serra (1938–2024).[6] Christian Kerez's *Glossary* (2015, 14–19), shifted the focus to terms and definitions: architectural space; obsession; structure; generic space; conceptual model; experiencing architecture; details; and uncertainty. John Pawson's photographic book *Spectrum* (2017), a visual inventory of space, dimension, and time, ultimately interprets photography as sculpture and experience, breaking down disciplinary boundaries and presenting travel as an interpretive lens. The lecture concluded with Valerio Oligiati's *Iconographic Autobiography* (2006), a series of visual representations and interpretations, and his publication *The Images of Architects* (2013), which is presented as a set of individual collections, which, in Oligiati's words, present a personal assessment of an individual world, while providing a universal view of the perceptible origin of the architect's practice and their role in contemporary architecture.

C. Pallini's lecture *On Architectural Expression and Language* purported an analogy between architecture and a text (whether a conversation or a written document), exploring the differences between "syntax" and "parataxis", and between architecture and theatre or film direction, while delving into the concept of "estrangement", as one of the key factors in architectural expression. While syntax relates to how words and phrases are arranged to form well-structured sentences, parataxis involves placing two words, often quite different, side by side without a clear connection. A comparison between the works of Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola (1507–1573) and Andrea Palladio (1508–1580) translated this dichotomy to the realm of architecture (Thoenes 1993). The concept of "estrangement", which refers to the distancing effect employed by Bertolt Brecht to break the illusion of the stage and disrupt the audience's emotional identification, was presented as a method for reimagining the meaning of forms and opening new perspectives on familiar places (Christofellis 1984).

N. Longarini's lecture presented the Bocconi University Extension by Grafton Architects as a notable example of an original structural

4
Boy with Knapsack (1915, *Color Masses in the Fourth Dimension*).

5
Two Acrobats (1929), *Red Post* (1941), and *Triumphant Red* (1959–1963).

6
The installations *The Matter of Time* (1994–2005), *Every Which Way* (2015), *Triptychs and Diptychs* (2019), *Forged Rounds* (2020), and *Reverse Curve* (2020), as well as the drawings *Triptych* (2019), in paint stick, etching ink, and silica on three sheets of handmade paper.

configuration, featuring fixed reinforced concrete cores extending from the foundations to the roof, from which the post-tensioned concrete floor slabs are suspended by tie rods hanging from the roof beams. This configuration enabled the creation of a fully open, permeable ground floor and an architecturally monumental, column-free main hall. The lecture covered the numerical approaches used during the design phase, the monitoring procedures implemented during construction, and the structural testing methods employed to verify the design. The dedicated site visit illustrated how this structural solution shapes both the exterior and interior architectural character of the building, most notably by enabling the integration of green spaces at multiple levels above grade. The Grafton complex was examined alongside other recently completed buildings on the new Bocconi campus, which adopt conventional structural configurations. However, these buildings incorporate distinctive architectural features, such as their façades, which required dedicated wind analyses and load testing during the design phase. These aspects were explained during the lecture, with particular attention paid to the interaction between the architectural envelope and the primary load-bearing structure, and they were further observed during the site visit.

In P. G. Crespi's lecture, the problem of the interaction between structure and architecture in the case of high-rise buildings was introduced, with reference to new interventions in the Porta Nuova and CityLife districts of Milan. The influence of architectural choices on construction site challenges was highlighted by describing the various construction details designed to address these issues. In high-rise buildings, wind is the primary load that governs structural design. The numerical modelling of the structure and wind loads was presented, illustrating the main results obtained from wind tunnel testing and their application in the numerical models of the towers. The issue of perceived comfort inside the building during windstorms was also discussed, in line with the most recent design codes governing this issue. Various technological solutions for controlling the towers' dynamic response during windstorms were also described (e.g. tuned mass dampers, belt trusses, and viscous dampers), including considerations of their associated economic implications and the revisions to the interior architectural design required for their potential installation.

The lectures on the three case studies were attended by all the teachers, who contributed presentations on the architecture and engineering aspects. All the lectures were shared and accompanied by additional illustrated journal articles on the three buildings, including many technical details and drawings.

Students were guided to identify key structural and design challenges. In the Feltrinelli Foundation, for example, the structural solution influences both the exterior and interior architectural character of the building, whereas in the Bocconi University Extension, the architectural themes en-

visaged by Grafton Architects posed new engineering challenges. For the Allianz Tower, a more conventional structural configuration was adopted. Another point of discussion concerned which of the case studies epitomised "syntax" or "parataxis" as a compositional method. The relationship between physical transparency (Rowe and Slutzky 1963) and public accessibility emerged as a lens for comparing the three buildings.

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Fig. 1. Interpretative scale model of the Feltrinelli Foundation, Derya Erdim and Hosein Roasaei, from the course *Architecture as Conceived and Built*, May 2018.

Architectural Bodies: Multidisciplinary Design Perspectives

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Context
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Field of Study
Architecture Design
Structural Engineering

Degree Level
Doctoral

ECTS Credits
5

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Abstract
The course fostered an interdisciplinary approach to the evolving challenges of architecture by examining three recent buildings in Milan: the Bocconi University Extension by Grafton Architects (2004–2008), the Feltrinelli Foundation by Herzog & de Meuron (2008–2016), and the Allianz Tower by Arata Isozaki & Associates (2012–2015). All three architectural practices have been awarded the Pritzker Architecture Prize and their work reflects the spirit of the Grand Tour, both personally and professionally. They also exemplify a continuous dialogue between engineering and architecture across diverse cultural backgrounds, where travel – understood as exchange with

other geographies and cultures – is a foundational learning experience and a design tool.

The course was based on C. Pallini's and H. Casal Ribeiro's work on the Feltrinelli and Bocconi cases (respectively, in *Architecture as Conceived and Built*, 2017–2018, and *Cutting-Edge Architecture*, 2022–2023), as well as on P. G. Crespi's and N. Longarini's consulting work for the Bocconi University Extension and the Allianz Tower.

Objectives

The course aimed to establish a foundation for cross-disciplinary debate among teachers and PhD candidates alike. The latter were asked to develop their viewpoints beyond the comfort zone of their main disciplinary fields. Our primary aim was to use real buildings as a shared basis for theoretical discussions on architectural design and structural engineering, with a view to the future. PhD students were asked to investigate the relationships between the constructional and structural aspects of architecture and its spatial and figurative elements, and to recognise the importance of integrating theory with direct experience.

Method

The course comprised two intensive weeks: an initial block (5–9 May) and a final block (12–16 May). It required 35 contact hours, including time during which all the teachers were present, as well as additional time for students to work independently. Each week, live, experience-based learning frameworks and *ex cathedra* lectures alternated with tutorials and group discussions, as follows:

- Lecture-based learning: 8 hours
- Fieldwork learning: 8 hours
- Interactive and collaborative learning: 8 hours
- Laboratory-based learning: 8 hours
- Assessment: 3 hours

The three initial lectures, *Introduction to the Course*, *Precision of Thought*, and *On Architectural Expression and Language*, held greater overall significance, while the others focused on the case studies from both architectural and engineering viewpoints. These lectures were immediately preceded or followed by on-site surveys.

The students were guided to identify key structural and design challenges, starting with the suspended structure of the Bocconi Extension, the rhythmic exoskeleton of the Feltrinelli Foundation, and the relationship between physical transparency and public accessibility of the Allianz Tower. Their final assignment involved delivering a structured lecture, which they prepared collaboratively through various stages: gathering initial impressions, developing a personal interpretation through themes and notions, and outlining the lecture structure so that the visual material would support the oral presentation.

Tools

The attendees were eight PhD candidates from diverse disciplinary backgrounds and cultural contexts. On the first day, they introduced themselves and presented their PhD theses, allowing us to identify how their respective expertise could best contribute to the course. Four of them focused on issues related to energy efficiency in the building sector, two specialised in technological and environmental design, and only one had a clearly design-oriented approach.

We emphasised the importance of using both visual material from existing literature (some of which we provided) and critical texts, as well as digital and physical tools (models, drawings, etc.). We also recommended producing interpretative materials to clarify the methodology adopted and their personal or original interpretative lens.

Course Materials

Most of the material was provided through the lectures, which were all uploaded to the Politecnico platform, WeBeep. We also provided journal articles on the three buildings, including many technical details and drawings.

In the *Introduction to the Course*, we introduced ourselves and the course calendar, including the intermediate and final submission deadlines, and presented examples of the expected final submissions, using materials produced by PhD students who had previously worked on the Feltrinelli Foundation and the Bocconi University Extension.

In his lecture, *Precision of Thought*, H. Casal Ribeiro examined the topic through an exploration of complementary subjects, including artistic practices, focusing on the work of Kazimir Malevich, Alexander Calder, and Richard Serra. Christian Kerez's *Glossary*, John Pawson's *Spectrum*, Valerio Olgiati's *Iconographic Autobiography*, and *The Images of Architects* shifted the focus to visual representations and interpretations, as well as terms and definitions, while breaking down boundaries between disciplines.

C. Pallini's lecture *On Architectural Expression and Language* proposed an analogy between architecture and a text (whether a conversation or a written document), exploring the differences between "syntax" and "parataxis" and the concept of "estrangement" as key elements of architectural expression.

The lectures on the three case studies were attended by all the teachers. N. Longarini presented the innovative structural configuration of the Bocconi University Extension, covering the numerical methods used during the design phase, the monitoring procedures implemented during construction, and the structural testing techniques. The dedicated site visit demonstrated how this structural solution influences both the exterior and interior architectural character of the building, facilitating the integration of green spaces across multiple levels above ground.

P. G. Crespi presented the Allianz Tower at CityLife, exploring the interaction between architecture and structural engineering in high-rise buildings, where wind is the primary load governing structural design. After presenting the numerical modelling of the structure and wind loads, he discussed the issue of perceived comfort inside the building during windstorms in accordance with the most recent design codes governing this issue. Different technological solutions for controlling the tower's dynamic response during windstorms were also described (e.g. tuned mass dampers, belt trusses, and viscous dampers).

Prerequisites

The course required a degree in architecture or engineering, as well as a willingness on the part of each participant, including the teachers, to step out of their disciplinary comfort zones.

Assessment

For their final assessment, students, working in pairs, had to produce a scientific presentation in the form of a conference paper. This choice proved to be the most realistic, as PhD candidates are expected to produce papers and/or journal articles. Furthermore, being able to effectively combine verbal expression and visual material to construct an argument is a crucial skill for a young researcher. We asked them, first, to clarify their scientific standpoint, approach, and methodology, and recommended that they develop their presentation by incorporating original analyses that support the specific argument put forward and are linked to the concept of learning through travel. This was achieved through repeated tutorials and scheduled presentations that fostered mutual exchange between teachers and students, during which we challenged them to cross-reference key concepts

and notions with visual material – including interpretative redrawings and explanatory narratives – and to apply some basic analytical frameworks:

Themes: spatial relationships: narrative/dialogue (inner and outer logic)
Composition: measure, proportion, rhythm, geometry
Materiality: matter and meaning (global to particular)
References: learning by travelling; origins
Synthesis: key notions supported by visual evidence (interpretative tools)

This pedagogical dynamic aimed to structure a complex thought process around the relationship between architectural design and structural solutions, addressing measurement, proportion, rhythm, and the tension between different elements and spatial entities.

Evaluation

First, we valued attendance and a willingness to interact with the teaching team and fellow PhD students. Our evaluation criteria were mainly qualitative, focusing on the ability to analyse a building directly experienced through repeated site surveys and to address the relationship between the constructional and structural dimensions and the spatial and figurative aspects. We introduced the evaluation criteria during the intermediate presentations, in order to progressively improve the students' work in the following aspects:

- Beginning the paper with a research question and clarifying its structure and objectives to help the listener understand where the speaker is heading from the outset.
- Outlining the theoretical framework, possibly with the help of references.
- Developing the slide sequence with conceptual "anchors".
- Selecting appropriate material.
- Avoiding redundancy.

Unexpectedly, two groups decided to compare the three case studies. One of them, though composed of PhD candidates whose theses did not focus on architecture, greatly impressed us by raising the issue of the correlation between physical transparency and public space.

Deliverables

A scientific presentation comparable to a conference paper, integrating original analyses and visual reinterpretations, in support of the specific argument proposed, articulated around the notion of learning by travelling. The students participated in all activities and showcased innovative aspects of the case studies through personal reinterpretations triggered by *in situ* readings, thereby enhancing the notion of "learning by travelling" as the principal interpretative lens and as a possible design tool.

Impact

This course aimed to foster further cross-disciplinary debate by encouraging PhD candidates to share their viewpoints beyond their primary fields, with a focus on future challenges. Within DABC and Politecnico di Milano in general, this programme may help strengthen the collaboration between architects and engineers. In the context of UpGranT, the significance of the programme lies in the participation of PhD-level students and educators from the fields of Architectural Design and Structural Engineering. In this respect, we tested how the direct experience of a building may contribute to the education of not only architects but also engineers.

Student feedback

Planning and communication

1 In the application phase, the brief was clear and presented in an appealing form.
2 At the course launch, the teaching staff framed and explained the programme comprehensively.
3 During the course, the teaching staff were approachable and engaging.

Activities

1 The course's workspace and facilities were suitable for the planned activities.
2 The course dynamics and workload were adequate for PhD candidates.
3 The *in situ* experiences were fundamental to achieving the course objectives.

Outputs

1 The course activities were useful for developing research methodologies.
2 The learning activities were consistent with the objectives of the PhD programme.
3 The course themes and activities were generally useful for the doctoral thesis.

Open questions

1 Were the topics covered thorough and up to date?
2 Did the course change your research perspective about "learning by travelling"?
3 Overall, are you satisfied with the impact of the course?

Course review

The two intensive weeks proved to be an effective working framework, because both the PhD candidates and the teachers were not distracted by other commitments. A further positive factor was the interaction among the teachers. A critical aspect was the difference in the ways how the architectural design PhD candidates and the other participants used interpretative tools, some of whom, however, performed exceptionally well.

Outcomes

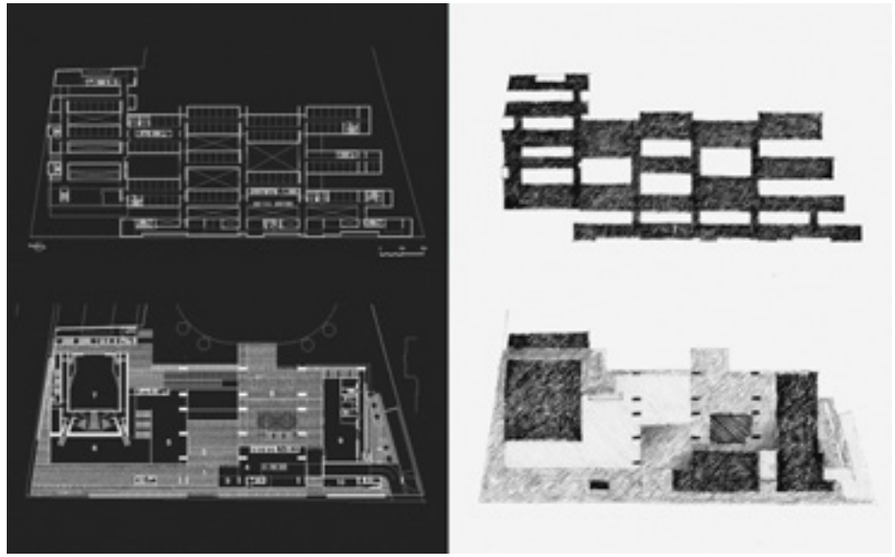
Interestingly, one of the groups, formed by Xin Zhiyuan and Zheng Jiawei, compared the three buildings using the relationship between physical transparency (Rowe and Slutzky 1964) and public accessibility as a lens of interpretation. They entitled their lecture *From Visible Openness to True Participation: Architectural Transparency, Publicness and Boundary*, concluding that the Allianz Tower demonstrates a discrepancy between physical transparency and its restricted public accessibility. Noelia Melany Huanca Coacalla and Mahsa Rastegari compared the three buildings, together with the New Bocconi Urban Campus by SANAA, in terms of energy efficiency, as certified by LEED parameters. Their lecture *An Architectural Interpretation of the Sustainability Aspects* began with a key question: Why does the Bocconi University Extension not meet LEED requirements?

Ruzanna Meliksetyan and Giacomo Usai, by contrast, focused on the Feltrinelli Foundation and entitled their lecture *Metaphysics of Presence*. They considered the building to be an *objet trouvé* within the city, highlighting its hidden geometry and its sense of geometric abstraction, as well as the privileged position of its public spaces (i.e. the library).

Two students, Bin Liu and Ben Luo, did not attend the course regularly and therefore missed the final presentation.

During the brainstorming sessions, several useful points were raised:

- How is the structural arrangement reflected in the architectural layout?
- What is the relationship between architectural design and energy performance and what could be done to improve energy efficiency?
- Can we restrict the sustainability of a building to its technicalities?
- How do we measure sustainability by shifting the focus from quantity to quality?
- The importance of aesthetic sustainability, as proposed by the new European Bauhaus.



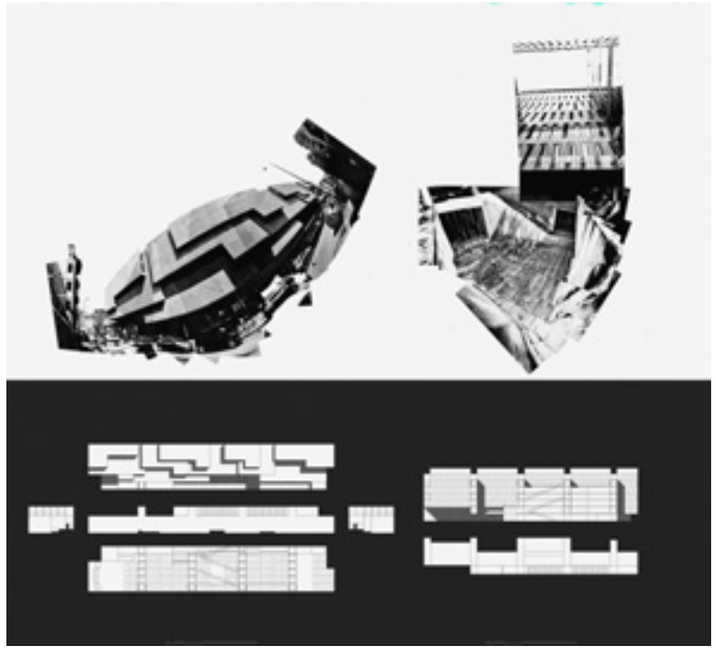
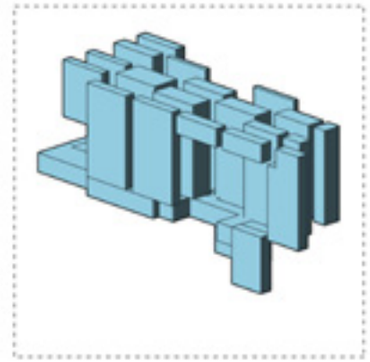


Fig. 1. Bocconi University Extension, plans and interpretative sketches of the ground and upper levels, showing the ground level permeability as opposed to the density of the upper levels, Houssam Mahi, from the course *Cutting-Edge Architecture*, May 2023.
Fig. 2. Bocconi University Extension, a comparative study of the outer and inner elevations. The photographs (above) were taken from the same viewpoint to capture the entire structure of the building through the camera's "gaze"; the photo on the left depicts the building's tectonic mass, while the photo on the right shows the relationship between the courtyard and the sky above the building, *Duality*, by Houssam Mahi, from the course *Cutting-Edge Architecture*, May 2023.



The density representation of vacant spaces at Bocconi University compared to the volumetric and functional dimensions of the project.



Fig. 3. Bocconi University Extension, schematic cross-section ("The Earth and the Sky"), Houssam Mahi, from the course *Cutting-Edge Architecture*, May 2023.

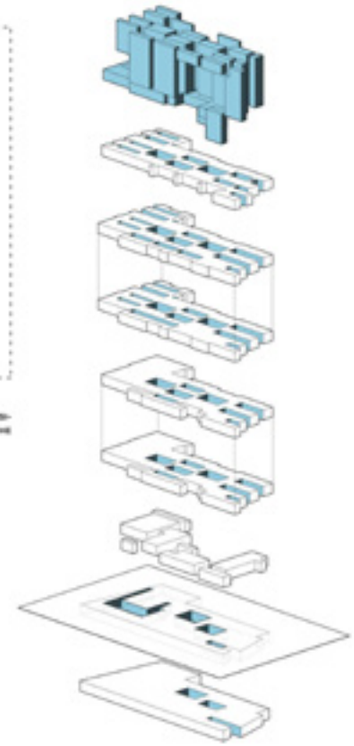
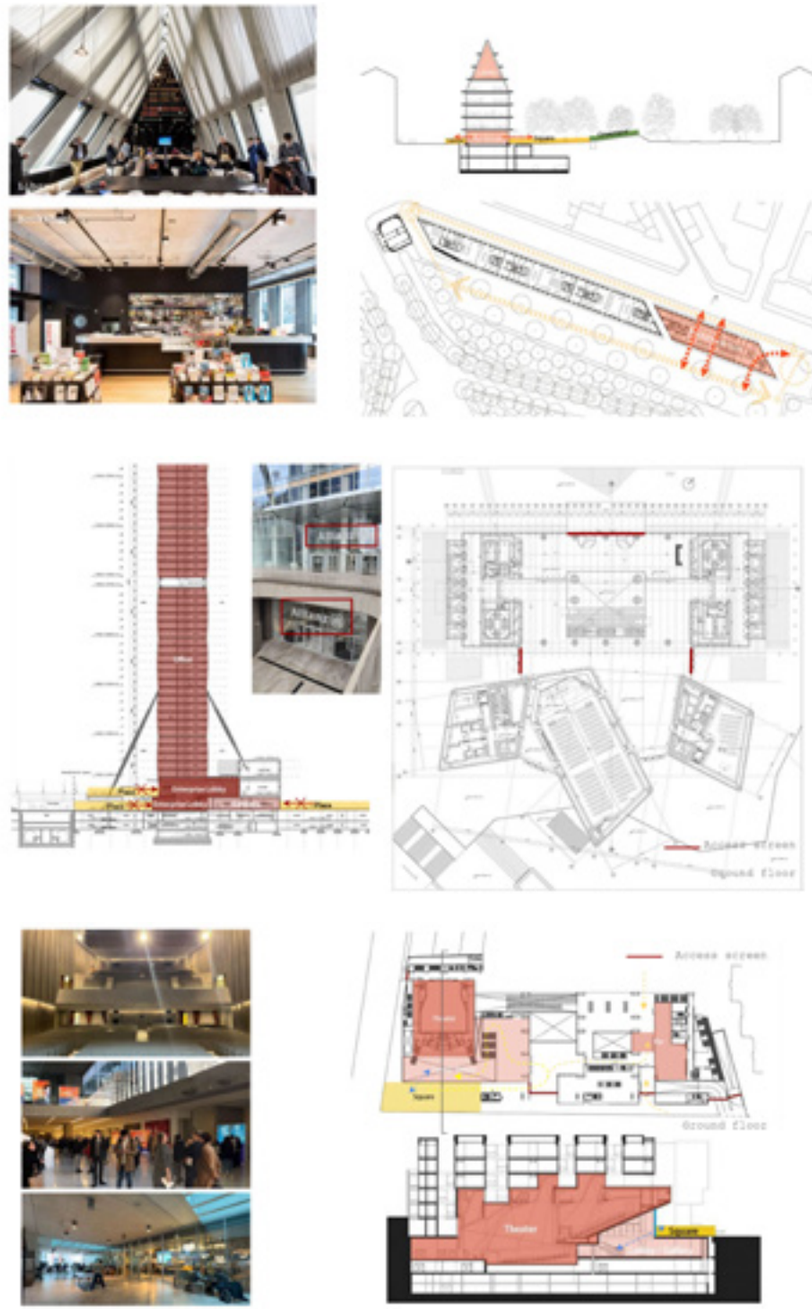


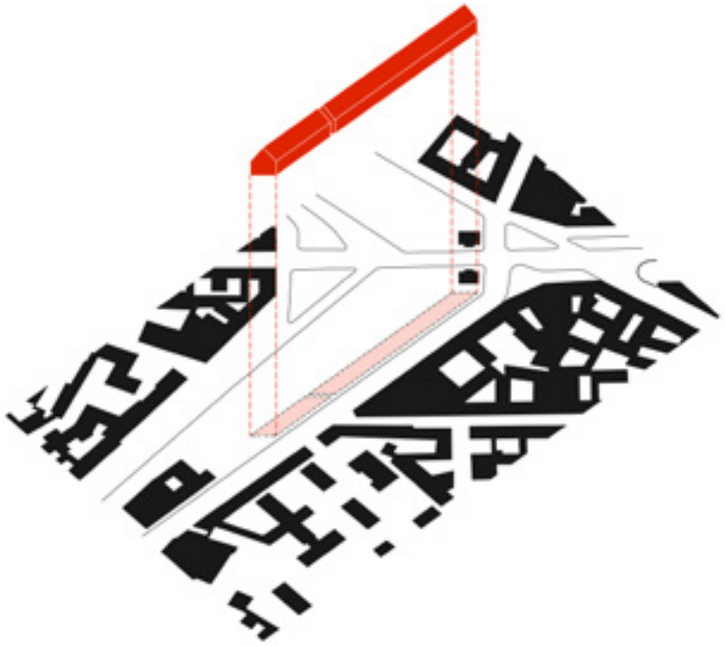
Fig. 4. Bocconi University Extension, study of mass density, Mohamad Pirdavari, from the course *Cutting-Edge Architecture*, May 2023.



Fig. 5. Cover of the presentation by Noelia Melany Huanca Coacalla and Mahsa Rastegari, which compared the Allianz Tower by Isozaki, the New Bocconi Urban Campus by SANAA, the Bocconi University Extension by Grafton Architects and the Feltrinelli Foundation by Herzog & de Meuron in terms of LEED parameters of energy efficiency, from the course *Architectural Bodies. Multidisciplinary Design Perspectives*, May 2025.



Figs. 6-8. "From Visible Openness to True Participation: Architectural Transparency, Publicness and Boundary", three comparative analyses by Jiawei Zheng and Zhiyuan Xin, from the course *Architectural Bodies. Multidisciplinary Design Perspectives*, May 2025.



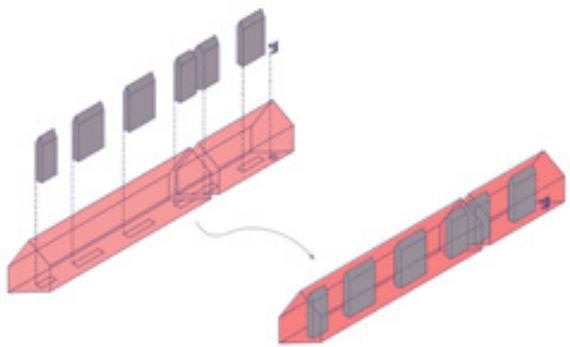
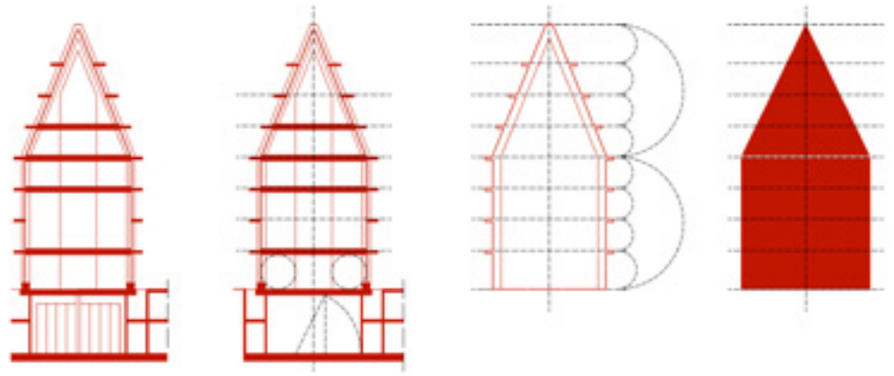


Fig. 9. The Feltrinelli Foundation in its urban context, analysed by Ruzanna Meliksetyan and Giacomo Usai, from the course *Architectural Bodies. Multidisciplinary Design Perspectives*, May 2025.
Fig. 10. The stereometric space of the Feltrinelli Foundation inhabited by the vertical distribution shafts, analysed by Ruzanna Meliksetyan and Giacomo Usai, from the course *Architectural Bodies. Multidisciplinary Design Perspectives*, May 2025.



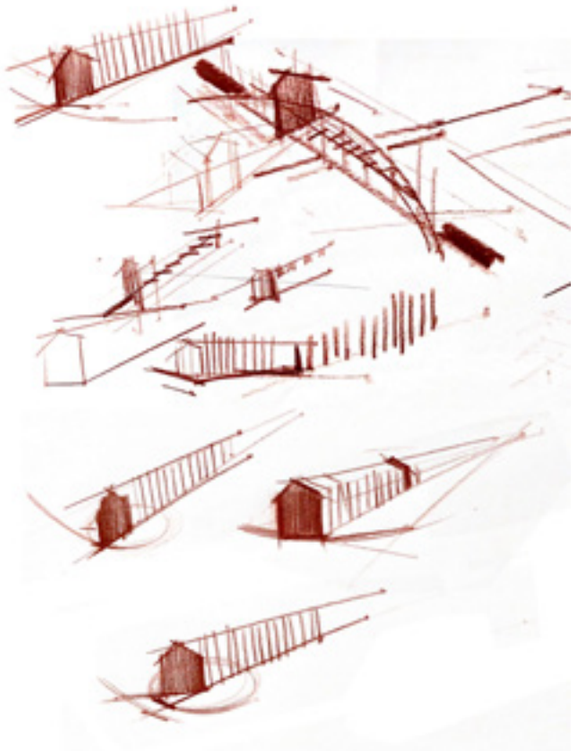


Fig. 11. Study of the hidden geometry regulating the cross-sections, analysed by Ruzanna Meliksetyan and Giacomo Usai, from the course *Architectural Bodies. Multidisciplinary Design Perspectives*, May 2025.
Fig. 12. Freehand sketches by Ruzanna Meliksetyan and Giacomo Usai, from the course *Architectural Bodies. Multidisciplinary Design Perspectives*, May 2025.

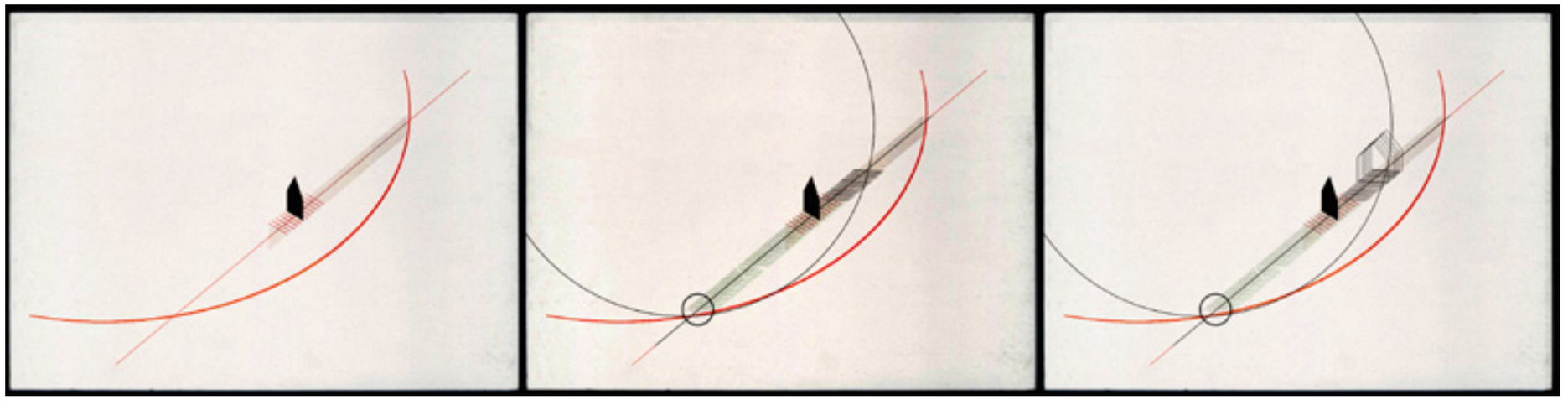


Fig. 13. Interpretative analyses by Ruzanna Meliksetyan and Giacomo Usai, from the course *Architectural Bodies. Multidisciplinary Design Perspectives*, May 2025.

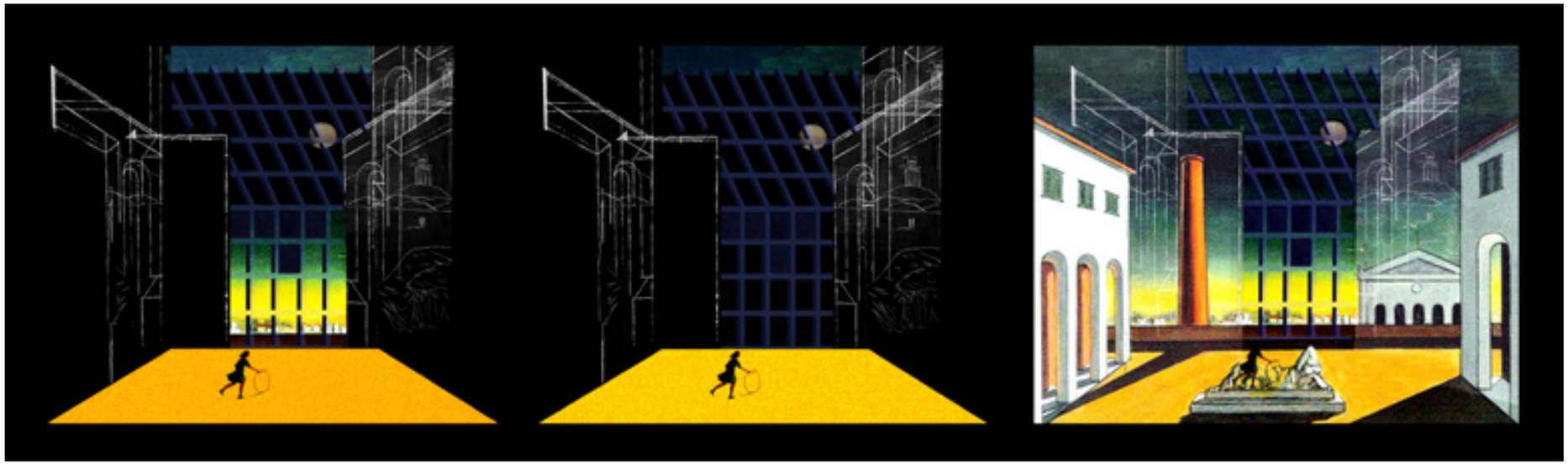


Fig. 14. A sequence from the lecture *Metaphysics of Presence*: collages with cut-outs from the works of Giorgio de Chirico by Ruzanna Meliksetyan and Giacomo Usai, from the course *Architectural Bodies. Multidisciplinary Design Perspectives*, May 2025.

Joint Programme

UpGranT Intensive Programme for Learners

Helder Casal Ribeiro
Sílvia Ramos

University
Faculty of Architecture – University of Porto

Context
Porto, 2025

Field of Study
Architecture

Degree level
Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral

ECTS Credits
6 days / 48 hours (ECTS credits not applicable)

Faculty
Coordinators: Helder Casal Ribeiro and Sílvia Ramos
Tutors: Lamberto Amistadi, Themis Chatzigiannopoulos, Ildebrando Clemente, Cesare Dallatomasina, Manten Devriendt, Martini Ghirardi, Liene Jākobsone, Apostolos Kalfopoulos, Mattia Maffi, Emanuela Margione, Cristina Pallini, Gregor Taul, Merilin Tee

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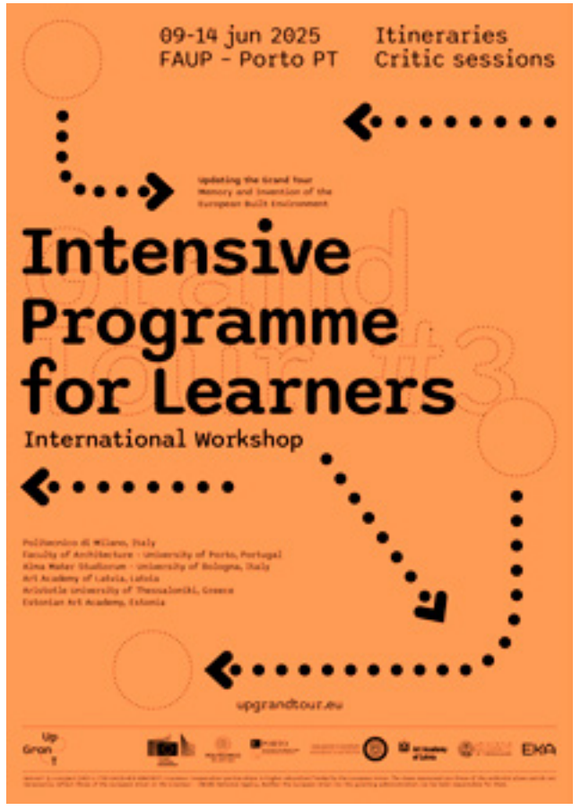

Fig. 1. The IPL poster, graphic designer Marta Ramos, 2025. Courtesy of the UpGranT Archive.



Fig. 2. The IPL flyer (back), graphic designer Marta Ramos, 2025. Courtesy of the UpGranT Archive.

Abstract

The Intensive Programme for Learners (IPL) is a six-day in-person international workshop in the field of Architecture, focused on the Architectural Design Process, with English as the primary language.

It is organised by the Faculty of Architecture – University of Porto (FAUP), the host institution dedicated to higher education in architecture and urban studies, in collaboration with the Politecnico di Milano, Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna, Art Academy of Latvia, School of Architecture of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Estonian Academy of Arts, and has the support of the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art and the Casa da Arquitetura – Portuguese Centre for Architecture.

The workshop gathered at FAUP 36 students and 15 professors/researchers from 6 different universities participating in the UpGranT Consortium, revisiting the idea of the Grand Tour as a privileged practice for the training of students and architects. The main aim of the IPL is to test and implement an *in situ* pedagogical model of learning by travelling through the FAUP ensemble, and to test it with students from different cultural and academic backgrounds, stimulating their autonomy through self-directed exploration and individual itineraries.

The IPL integrates two complementary phases: a pilot phase and a reloaded phase.

Objectives

- To highlight the potential of travelling in architectural education by demonstrating that experiencing architecture in a non-mediated way remains a unique opportunity for a genuine personal discovery and learning about architecture and architects.
- To engage students in active, open, and sensorial readings that go beyond available published information or archive representations, enabling learners to understand the buildings and spaces as integrated wholes and in all their complexity (scale, nature, context, atmosphere, etc.), while responding to each student's individual interests.
- To promote, within a laboratory setting, the development of authorial and creative knowledge about a building or space, through critical thinking and attentive observation, which can be retained and later re-emerge, transformed, in subsequent design processes.

Additionally, the IPL aims, through its programme and case study, to improve the portrayal of Portuguese and Porto's architecture, namely associated with "Porto School" architects.

Method

The IPL focuses on combining laboratory-based learning with fieldwork and project-based learning approaches. It provides students with the opportunity to learn from first-hand experience, through attentive observation of architecture, and to construct authorial and creative, hands-on interpretations through teamwork.

In pursuit of the most immersive experience for learners, the workshop is grounded in a single travel destination that serves simultaneously as the workshop venue and the case study, which may already be familiar to the participants, and to which participants have full open access. As further selection criteria the case study must be thematically dense and capable of being explored through diverse, universal and, at the same time, authorial themes at different design levels by addressing: (1) a broad context comprehension and insertion; (2) a vast number and variety of design problems and corresponding design solutions; and (3) the author's extensive body of work and architectural

references. Complementarily, the case study design process should comprise an extensive archive of sketches, rigorous drawings, and photographs that disclose the design's inception and reveal the different hypotheses developed to address the same design 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.

To enable a more fruitful exchange and transfer of practices, the students are grouped into international teams of six, comprising one student from each of the six participating educational institutions. Each group is assigned a significant space that can be identified within the case study design process. The boundaries of these spaces can be expanded and even overlap.

The IPL comprises an opening session framing the workshop, thematic work sessions, guest talks, and a closing session with the presentation of the workshop results and a conference on the travels of a selected practising architect. There are also parallel itineraries in Porto (both pre-organised and self-discovery routes).

The IPL work sessions are structured into three phases, according to the main actions undertaken: (1) *Recognise* (8 hours), which includes a collective guided visit to the case study and autonomous group visits to the assigned significant spaces; (2) *Propose* (4 hours), which corresponds to the conception of personal *in situ* readings based on intense group debate; (3) *Build* (16 hours), which corresponds to the construction of physical objects that could be taken home as mementoes of the experienced architecture.

These objects consist of a "postcard series" (visual interpretation), a "kinetic narrative" (architectural narrative), and a "totem" (model), all organised in a "souvenir box".

The conception and elaboration of each of these components are monitored by a team of two professors from different institutions, thereby enhancing cross-institutional collaboration and fostering mutual didactic and cultural exchange between professors and student groups.

Tools

The Intensive Programme for Learners pursues an active, student-centred, experiential approach, with travelling as its main learning tool, triggering architecture within a heightened cultural understanding and stimulating educational crossover.

Being a workshop in architecture, the IPL calls for the use of tools accessible to all, commonly used in architectural practices or architecture schools and challenges students to share their cultural intakes through the tools and methods used in their educational institutions.

Taking into consideration the specific condition of a current traveller – limited in means and resources – the IPL prioritises the use of personal, small-format, lightweight tools to document, interpret, and reconstruct the object of travel or case study in brief notes that allow for easier recall. This includes the use of analogue instruments and digital tools for sketching, designing, and modelling, alongside basic design and image editing software accessible through personal devices.

During the IPL, tools for collaborative and visual brainstorming include both paper-based methods and whiteboards, as well as the Miro app. Tools used for content creation, editing, or design include writing and drawing by hand, model making, and software such as Canva and Adobe, as well as AutoCAD or ArchiCAD.

For final or intermediate presentations, the IPL uses the PechaKucha format, with a short hands-on performance featuring the physical objects – the "postcard series", "kinetic narrative", and "totem" – set in the "souvenir box".

Course materials

- A booklet introducing the IPL, with information on its objectives, case study, and expected outcomes, together with guidance on time management and student organisation.
- A selection of original archive materials relating to the case study and recent digital redrawings.
- A selection of support texts on Portuguese architecture, particularly that of Porto, and free access to the FAUP library, specialised in architecture.

Additionally, the IPL students are provided with information on itineraries previously tested by the UpGranT Consortium, as well as additional maps and brochures designed to frame and stimulate self-discovery itineraries.

The IPL students are also invited to tour Casa da Arquitectura – Portuguese Centre for Architecture, namely its archive and main exhibition on Portuguese architecture.

Selected readings

Cortés J. (2013) "Master lessons. Eleven Architectural issues on the work of Alvaro Siza". El croquis, 168/169, pp. 6–58.

Curtis W. (1998) "A Conversation [with Alvaro Siza]". El croquis, 68/69+95, pp. 6–21.

Domingues A., Nonell A., Tavares R. (1994) "Oporto". In: *Atlas histórico de ciudades europeas: Península Ibérica*. Salvat, Barcelona.

Frampton K. (1991) "Sketching. Álvaro Siza's Notes". In: *The Eye of the Architect – Lotus 68*. Electa, Milano.

Frampton K. (1986) "Poesis and transformation: the architecture of Alvaro Siza". In: *Álvaro Siza: poetic profession*. Electa, Milano.

Huet B (1986) "Critical anthology". In *Álvaro Siza: poetic profession*. Electa, Milano.

Morales J. (2014) "Una conversación con Eduardo Souto de Moura". El croquis, 176, pp. 5–27.

Portas N. (1986) "The search for a language". In *Álvaro Siza: poetic profession*. Electa, Milano.

Rojo De Castro L. (2005) "La naturalidad de las cosas [una conversación con Eduardo Souto de Moura]". El croquis, 124, pp. 6–18.

Rojo De Castro L. (2005) "The Invention of Problems". El croquis, 124, pp. 19–26.

Santos J. (2007) "The meaning of things, a conversation with Alvaro Siza". El croquis, 140, pp. 7–59.

Távora F. (2020) "On space organization / «Da Organização do Espaço», Fernando Távora, 1962". In: B. Bogoni, J. Mendes Ribeiro. *In class with Távora. Teaching and learning (living) today*. AMAG Publisher, Porto.

Zaera A. (2000) "Getting through turbulence: Interview with álvaro siza". El croquis, 68/69+95, pp. 6–45.

Siza A. (1986) "Foreword". In: *Álvaro Siza: Poetic Profession*. Electa, Milano.

Maps

"Fernando Távora, Architectural Map-Guide, North Region"

"Álvaro Siza, Architectural Map-Guide, Porto Region"

"Eduardo Souto de Moura, Architectural Map-Guide, Porto Region"

"José Marques da Silva, Architectural Map-Guide, North Region"

"Agostinho Ricca, Architectural Map-Guide, North Region"

"Arménio Losa / Cassiano Barbosa, Architectural Map-Guide, North Region"

"João Álvaro Rocha, Architectural Map, Maia North and South"

"Matosinhos architecture map"

Brochures – *Sebentas d'Obra*
"#03, Teleférico de Gaia"*, Vila Nova de Gaia*
"#24, Terminal Intermodal de Campanhã"
"#29, i3S da Universidade do Porto"
"#32, Extensão do Museu de Serralves"
"#36, Estação de São Bento / Ala Sul | Time Out Market"
"#39, Monasterium, requalificação do mosteiro de Leça do Balio"

Prerequisites

IPL participants are students enrolled in the bachelor's, master's and PhD programmes at the universities of the UpGranT Consortium, preferably near the completion of the first cycle of studies (bachelor's degree), with a minimum of 120 ECTS credits. This requirement ensures that all participants have an advanced and consistent academic background in architectural design, are familiar with distinct of design themes, narratives, and references, and are prepared to deepen complex knowledge through the implementation of a design process with a high level of autonomy.

Additionally, IPL participants must be proficient in English, from the perspective of an independent user.

Assessment

IPL promotes the shift from passive lecturing to active participation, where students, together with their professors, engage in a cycle of action and reflection, collaborating to identify problems, share knowledge, and co-design solutions.

The assessment of the IPL objectives spans both the workshop and the period thereafter, measuring its immediate and mid-term impact on participants.

During the IPL, to keep the students focused, the work is structured into three main actions that correspond to intermediate deadlines. Each of these actions involves timed work sessions as well as presentation and critique sessions, as previously set out in the workshop schedule included in the dedicated booklet. There is also a scheduled final project presentation by the students.

The presentation and feedback sessions take place without exception at the end of each working day and involve all student groups and professors. These sessions provide opportunities to directly observe skill acquisition and document progress towards the final outcomes.

Additionally, short, informal, and frequent moments of exchange between teachers and students occur at the worktable during work sessions, allowing for immediate feedback, course corrections, the encouragement of divergent thinking, and the promotion of emerging themes.

After the workshop, each partner in the UpGranT Consortium will implement the reloaded phase of the IPL through specific activities used to evaluate its educational effectiveness.

Evaluation

Evaluation through a final numerical grade or a simple "pass/fail" assessment is not applicable to the IPL.

Instead, IPL prioritises a narrative-driven assessment, with an evaluation method based on descriptive and qualitative standards that assess the merit, value, or significance of the students' participation. This approach enables a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the students' performance, which is particularly relevant when assessing the impact of IPL's applied methodology: were the students able to showcase personal interpretations of the case study through their *in situ* study?

Evaluation within the IPL is continuous, encompassing the workshop's entire duration and all planned activities, from the working sessions and presentation/critique sessions to the parallel activities – talks, the conference, and itineraries. It monitors the students' performance, valuing both the students' learning process and the group's final outputs. The evaluation has three distinct, yet complementary, components: (1) continuous assessment, resulting from individual feedback on the group work; (2) focused assessment, based on comparative feedback on the key aspects of the work's development; (3) specific evaluation of the work performed by the group. Therefore, the IPL requires the students' presence and active participation throughout all the proposed activities.

All the students who complete the IPL with at least 90% attendance receive a participation certificate, validated by the six partners of the Consortium.

Deliverables

The main output of the IPL is inspired by André Malraux's *Le musée imaginaire* (1952) and by Mansilla + Tuñon Architects' *Playgrounds* (2008/2014) concept, and takes the form of a "souvenir box" created by each student group.

Each box contains a collection of physical objects that aim to communicate an original, authorial, and creative perspective on the group's assigned significant FAUP space, based on an active, open, and sensorial *in situ* reading, that goes beyond previously collected information and reports, and directly addresses the students' personal interests.

This personal point of view is expressed through a set of visual interpretations (a "postcard series"), a visual/textual report of a process or situation that evolves through space/time displacement (a "kinetic narrative"), and an object that functions as a symbol of the selected space (a "totem").

These elements must not only fit within but also organise the interior space of a pre-purchased 27 × 33 × 11 cm cardboard box. This box, when completed, must be able to travel.

Student feedback

The evaluation of the IPL impact includes: (1) informal follow-up evaluations; and (2) an individual post-event questionnaire.

The short survey, designed to collect immediate feedback on the workshop experience and suggestions for improvement, may address planning and communication, activities, and outcomes. These three themes may require students to rate their level of agreement with a series of statements (from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). They may be followed by a series of open-ended questions that encourage students to reflect on their learning by travelling experience.

The questionnaire must be kept concise to minimise respondent fatigue.

It is to be presented in English, the IPL's official language.

Agree/Disagree questions
Planning and communication

The questions in this section concern activities related to the implementation of the subject.

1 The workshop's programme (activities and schedule) was clearly and correctly explained by the teaching staff before my application.
2 The workshop's selected bibliography was studied in advance.
3 The workshop's programme was explained in detail and clearly framed in its opening session.
4 The archive materials available during the workshop together with the information available in the booklet – course schedule, case study and outcome, selected bibliography, maps and brochures, and redrawings on the case study – were used and useful.
5 The workshop identification elements received (pin and bag) were used during the workshop, both inside and outside FAUP.
6. The workshop space was relevant for experiencing FAUP's atmosphere and was suitable for the different activities.

Activities

The questions in this section concern the learning activities during the IPL.

1 I had knowledge of the FAUP architectural ensemble and of Álvaro Siza's work prior to the workshop.
2 The guided experience of the FAUP's ensemble contributed to the construction of new and personal interpretations.
3 The construction of the "souvenir box" contributed to consolidating the new readings of the ensemble in an organised manner.
4 The feedback received during the workshop supported the development of my work.
5 The parallel activities organised within the workshop (talks, the conference, and itineraries) were relevant in sustaining my interest in learning by travelling.
6 The time allocated for the workshop was sufficient to complete the proposed outputs.

Outputs

The questions in this section concern the students' opinions about the IPL outcomes.

1 The workshop experience was relevant to my academic and professional development.
2 The workshop helped me to develop a more critical and reflective attitude towards architectural observation, representation, and communication.
3 The interdisciplinary and international dimension of the workshop (its teachers and students) enriched the learning experience.
4 I would recommend the IPL's teaching approach, which incorporates experiencing architecture *in situ* as a learning tool, to my colleagues.

<u>Open questions (free-text responses)</u>

1 Which methods/tools did you use to record the spaces visited during the workshop?
2 Which methods/tools did you use to construct your memory of the architecture themes explored during the workshop?
3 Did the experience challenge your previous understanding of architecture or your approach to learning by travelling?
4 Is there anything you would improve regarding teaching, organisation, or logistics?

Course review

Enhancing the methodology applied may involve:

- Presenting the workshop programme in a virtual joint session open to all the professors and students interested in participating from the different academic institutions. This short collaborative session will ensure a clearer, shared perspective on the workshop programme, thereby helping to shape expectations more accurately. It could be followed by a common email summarising the workshop programme and additional resources. A teaser document (the IPL flyer) might also be shared in advance.
- Encouraging architectural readings on Portuguese and Porto architecture. Although the students were provided with selected readings in advance to support the IPL, few of these texts were read before the workshop. Having students discover the selected bibliography *in situ*, either by creating a reading corner in the workshop space or through the FAUP library, might be a more effective way to encourage independent and self-directed learning.
- Encouraging the self-discovery itineraries by inviting students to engage in intentional and immersive walks through FAUP's surroundings and Porto city centre and its neighbourhoods, fostering a direct, unfiltered connection with new environments, creative reflection, and a personal perspective on Porto's architectural and cultural identity. Key strategies for experiencing spaces and monitoring these interpretations might include keeping a dedicated travel journal and/or a sketchbook to document observations and interpretations.
- Synthesising the workshop results over the following days into a final open showcase moment, during which the readings of the collection of significant spaces would be reassembled (and read as a continuous whole) to offer a new perspective on FAUP's architectural environment, built through the contribution of the various IPL participants.

Some of these improvements would benefit from, or would only be possible with, an increase in the number of days dedicated to the IPL. The duration of the workshop is a pivotal factor in the success of the applied methodology and its adequate assimilation by students. It is of utmost importance that the schedule identifies and appropriately paces the different activities, taking into account their nature and the time required for students' self-discovery.

Outcomes







Fig. 3. The IPL opening session.
Fig. 4. A guided tour of FAUP.
Fig. 5. Themed work session: *Recognise*.









Fig. 6. Open talk by Maria Conceição Melo and family, entitled *Travelling with João Álvaro Rocha*.
Figs. 7-8. A guided tour to Casa da Arquitetura – Portuguese Centre for Architecture.
Figs. 9. Themed work session: *Propose*.







Fig. 10. Open talk by Luísa Moura, entitled *Travelling with Eduardo Souto de Moura*.
Figs. 11–12. Themed work session: *Build*.











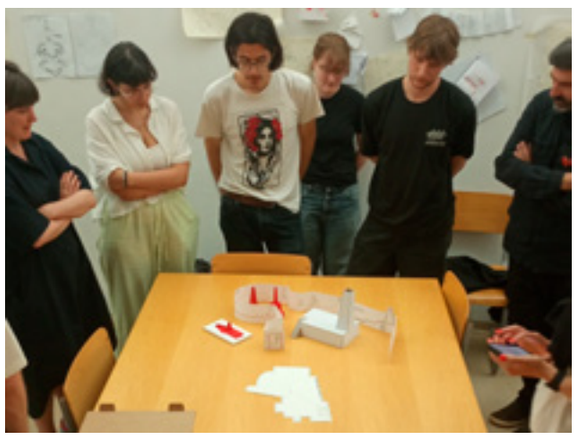

Figs. 13–18. Presentation of the final projects.





Fig. 19. Open conference by Nuno Melo Sousa, entitled *Travelling*.
Fig. 20. The IPL closing session – Part 1: Certificate presentation.
All photographs (3–20) by UpGranT FAUP Team. Courtesy of the authors.

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