

# CANON<sub>and</sub>CODE

THE LANGUAGE OF ARTS IN TODAY'S WORLD

P R O C E E D I N G S



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Dipartimento di Architettura e Progetto  
Sapienza Università di Roma



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The language of arts in today's world

*edited by*

Orazio Carpenzano | Alessandra Capanna

Anna Irene Del Monaco | Francesco Menegatti

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# CONFERENCE PROGRAM

## DAY ONE | 30 june

### PLENARY SESSION

### CANON AND CODE

*Opening Cerimony  
and Introduction*

**Orazio Carpenzano**

Dean of Faculty of Architecture, Sapienza University of Rome

**Alessandra Capuano**

Director of DIAP, Sapienza University of Rome

*Keynote Speech*

**MANFREDI CATELLA**

CEO & Founder COIMA

*discussants*

**Alfonso Femia** Atelier(s) Alfonso Femia

**Pierluigi Morano** Polytechnic of Bari

*moderator*

**Anna Irene Del Monaco** Sapienza University of Rome

*Keynote Speech*

**JOSÉ FERNANDO DE CASTRO GONÇALVES**

Architect and Professor of FCT, University of Coimbra

*Keynote Speech*

**ELISA VALERO RAMOS**

Architect and Professor of ETSA, University of Granada

*discussants*

**Giovanni Leoni** University of Bologna

**Emanuele Fidone** University of Catania

*moderator*

**Dina Nencini** Sapienza University of Rome

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*Introduction*                      **Alessandra Capanna, Anna Irene Del Monaco, Dina Nencini** Sapienza University of Rome

## PLENARY SESSION      THE LANGUAGE OF ARTS IN TODAY’S WORLD

*Round table*                      **FRANCESCO CARERI** University of Roma Tre  
**CHERUBINO GAMBARDELLA** University of Campania ‘L. Vanvitelli’  
**VALERIO PAOLO MOSCO** IUAV Venice  
*moderator*                      **Orazio Carpenzano** Sapienza University of Rome

## CLOSING SESSION      All Chairs of Parallel Tables

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*moderator*                      **Anna Irene Del Monaco** Sapienza University of Rome

*Keynote speaker*                      **XING RUAN** Shanghai Jiao Tong University  
*presentation of the book*              ***Confucius’ Courtyard. Architecture, Philosophy and the Good Life in China***  
Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021

*discussants*                      **Lucio V. Barbera** Sapienza University of Rome  
**Domenico Chizzoniti** Polytechnic of Milan

*Keynote speaker*                      **Gianluca Peluffo** University of Enna ‘Kore’  
*presentation of the book*              ***Il giuramento di Pan***, Marsilio, 2020  
*discussants*                      **Orazio Carpenzano** Sapienza University of Rome  
**Dina Nencini** Sapienza University of Rome

*Keynote speaker*                      **Reinhold Martin** Columbia University of New York  
*presentation of the book*              ***Knowledge Worlds: Media, Materiality, and the Making of the Modern University***  
Columbia University Press, 2021  
*discussants*                      **Antonino Saggio** Sapienza University of Rome  
**Francesco Menegatti** Polytechnic of Milan

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## introduction

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# Beyond meanings. Symbiosis and metamorphosis in the arts chase and mirror each other

TRACK B. METAMORPHOSIS / ACTIONS

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Politecnico di Milano

*The artistic works expressed through the actions – drawing, painting, sculpting, but also sewing, photographing, making films, writing, crossing deserts – define its limits or the potential not for the type of action performed but through the ability to render the action like a text, that is, to give rise to a meaning (Vettese, 2015). The central knot of the avant – garde of the twentieth century was to free the “mediums” to open up to the multiplicity of means and expressive channels. Architecture, a kaleidoscope of the arts, is transformed into a terminal generated and regenerated surprising, hyperbolic visions and news (Celant 2004). However, in a context in which the work of art risks being ignored, the idea’s implementation must lead to a practical device; the work of art exists when it becomes a generator of meaning. Rosalind Krauss supported the supremacy of the project over the execution, also releasing it from the hypothesis of making a device. Therefore, the artwork would ignore any external rules but continue to exist as a design and a significant fact. Mixing means and languages over time, the project that is an expression of meaning explores the changes in the physical and social space that generated it and worked with the desire to change the present. Within disruptive and inexorable modernity since the beginning of the twentieth century, critical points of view appear on the landscapes of the contemporary post – metropolis. On the one hand, works such as Canaletto’s intriguing Capriccio or the subversive visions of landscapes by Malevich, El Lissitzky, Ivan Leonidov, the collages by Mies Van Der Rohe, Lingeri and Terragni, the interiors of Figini and Pollini (Rosellini 2019) up to the creative universe of Giò Ponti, constitute precious texts that tell about “similar” cities. Practical works in which the arts chase each other and mirror each other, in which it is possible to read the expression of a thought in which the architectural space participates. On the other hand, a critical point of view is thrown towards the hyperrealism of renderings, the perfection of digital images that do not transmit principles or communicate the designer’s idea but persuades the observer (or client) of the result’s validity. The reflection focuses not on the image market but the relationship between images and consciousness, between image and the degree of awareness of architectural action as an artistic practice (Gregotti 1991). The arts have never ceased to represent autonomous works, emblems of that sort of clash against the most deeply rooted convictions and beliefs. Some works of art are the manifesto of timeless relevance made by characters outside the clichés within hopeless scenarios, weaving disturbing but perfectly contemporary collages. Against the background of the torn peripheries of globalized metropolitan territories, today’s acid elements appear that combine following a highly fragmented logical flow, disorienting the cut of the public linked to a conventional plot. In the end the only possible meaning to be grasped in these cases is that there is no meaning.*

What generates the relationship with art is mainly the representability of architecture as it can become an icon of rapid, public and common identification. Architecture approaches the idea of the monument, each time striking, a reference to an image – logo that functions within a global media and consumerist context.

However, it is also possible to decline the communicative value as a vehicle for messages concerning, for example, advertising and promotional, political and institutional investment. Regardless of the use, function and life, a building welcomes inside, regardless of the relational quality of the spaces, the interactive facades become digital displays that send messages to the city. Priority is assigned to the exterior rather than to the interior, to the surface instead of the structure. As defined by Marco Consoli (Abitare 2018), talking facades make the envelope of a building interactive, which dialogues and interacts with the city through its skin. The opportunity is to ignore advertising or entertainment and share helpful content and information, as in the facade of the Light Creature hotel in São Paulo, designed by Guto Requena, which displays the city's noise and all its level of pollution. "What attracts these facades is the spectacular effect", writes the architect Simone Giostra, who created GreenPix, Zero Energy Media Wall, a zero – impact multimedia envelope covering the Xicui Entertainment Centre in Beijing district of the 2008 Olympics. He adds that multimedia facades become like gadgets that people get tired of very quickly unless these digital screens broadcast content with artistic value. In the opposite direction, the relationship between art and architecture can give rise to the common need to rediscover the original energy of aesthetic tension in the direct physicality of the primary structures, in their concrete object dimension in close relationship with the environmental context. The site – specific artistic logics recognize the context, as Gregotti wrote in 1988 in the magazine *Rassegna* titled "Minimal", and re – establish the principle of geometry, restoring and rediscovering the relationship established between the constructive principle in action and the possible manifestations of shape. Through an analytical procedure, actions such as disposing of (Walter De Maria, *The Lightning Field*, 1977), digging, reporting (Michael Heizer, *Double negative* or *Displaced / Replaced Mass*, 1969), multiplying and repeating (Donald Judd, *Untitled*, 1971; Sol LeWitt, *Variations of Incomplete open Cubes*, 1974), engrave, settle (Robert Smithson, *The Broken Circle*, 1971), become common operations and elementary actions. These actions clarify the correspondence between architecture and the logical order of the choices made in constructing the form. In Minimal art, in Land Art, in Earth – works the involvement of the landscape and the territory makes them at the same time subjects and objects of the work itself, developing the idea that even a place or an intentional action on the place can give cultural value nature, identifying new relationships.

However, in a context in which the artwork risks not being recognized, the idea's implementation must result in a practical device; the work exists when it becomes a generator of meaning. The work of art takes shape when it can produce and transmit a thought, endowed with meaning, always indispensable, concerning a value of truth, which may not exist or be shared. Rosalind Krauss, supporting the project's supremacy over the execution of the work, also frees the work from the hypothesis of the realization of a device. The existence of the work itself, therefore, would disregard any external rule but would continue to exist as a project and a significant fact. Krauss identifies the revolutionary conceptual art of the seventies as an art that has developed a new 'syntax' that discards the 'narrative' to aim for an immediate impact. The opening of new horizons towards the poetics of the broader field proposes terms that, in expressing direct oppositions, build multiple relationships: Marked sites, Earthwork, Landscape design and Land art are confused and reflected in continuous references.

"The broad field that characterizes this domain of postmodernism possesses two characteristics (...) One of these concerns the practice of individual artists; the other has to do with the question of the medium. In both of these points, the limited conditions of modernism have undergone a logically determined break. As far as individual practice is concerned, it is easy to see that many of the artists have subsequently found themselves occupying different places within the wider field. Moreover, although the field experience suggests that this continuous repositioning of one's energies is entirely logical,

Fig. 1

*Re – make Collage  
of the Interior  
perspective of  
the Concert hall  
project,  
1942  
by Ludwig Mies Van  
Der Rhoe*



an art critic still at the mercy of a modernist ethos has been largely suspicious of this movement, calling it eclectic. This suspicion of a career that moves continuously beyond the domain of sculpture derives from the modernist demand for purity and separateness of various mediums.

However, what appears eclectic from one point of view can be seen as rigorously logical from another. Because, within the situation of postmodernism, practice is not defined concerning a given medium – sculpture – but rather concerning logical operations on a set of cultural terms, for which any medium, photography, books, lines on walls, mirrors, or the sculpture itself, could be used” Rosalind Krauss, *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*, 1979.

The project explores the physical and social space changes and works to change the present, mixing means, medium, and languages over time. Within disruptive and inexorable modernity since the beginning of the twentieth century, critical points of view appear on the artistic landscapes of the contemporary post – metropolis.

#### *Intrusions and interference: analogue cities*

Canaletto’s intriguing *Capriccio* in reproducing unexpected fragments within the famous view of the Grand Canal constitutes a montage of de – localized, decontextualized and transposed architectures to Venice.

In the Venetian view Canaletto inserts Palazzo Chiericati and the Basilica of Vicenza and represents Palladio’s project for the Rialto Bridge in place of the existing one. Through engraving or painting, or drawing, art has explored from the Renaissance onwards, imaginary combinations diverging from the codified compositional rules and the reality of places. In the fantastic drawing by Jacopo Bellini (c.1435), human and animal figures between reality and fable with arbitrary decontextualized elements populate the urban spaces of Venice and its architecture. Thus the Arcimboldo portraits become burlesque *Teste Composte*. Moreover, Tiepolo’s *Scherzi* are full of irony that laughs at mythology and

has fun with allegories (G. C. Argan 1968). The unexpected intrusion into drawings or paintings such as photomontage or collage that developed during the twentieth century contaminates the representation by exploring the possibilities of similar imaginary but possible cities. The subversive visions of the landscapes of Malevich, El Lissitzky, Ivan Leonidov, the constructivist posters, or the collages of Mies Van Der Rohe, the perspectives of Lingeri and Terragni, the interiors of Figini and Pollini up to the creative universe of Giò Ponti, constitute precious texts narrating ‘analogous cities’, virtual and purely composed thought spaces. These are influential works in which the arts chase each other and mirror each other, in which it is possible to read the expression of thought with the participation of architectural space. Aldo Rossi, in 1976, also designed an imaginary city made up of a collage of projects, images and places he loved. He calls it an ‘analogous city’, evoking with this title the mixture of desire, dream and reason present in every authentic architectural project. In the analogous city, history, an instrument of the project, is represented as a discontinuous process that proceeds by catastrophes and thresholds, determining recognizable ridges and changes in the structures. The continuous comparison between physical experiences of the past and projective experimentation of the future, together with the dimension of the human being, returns a collage concept that is still exemplary today. The history of places and the history of the architectural discipline still stand as part of the essence of design practice. Even disciplines such as biology, semiology, physics of dynamic systems study the possibilities of stability and instability of phenomena, analyzing the processes of development and morphogenesis and the transitions from one form to another through states of temporary stability. Therefore, in trying to grasp the laws of modification of form under the pressure of external phenomena, morphology constantly frequents ridges of reality and imagination (Renè Thom, 1980).

### *Symbols and new icons*

The expansion of the boundaries of architecture expressed by Tafuri starting from the 1980s, in the urge to “tear apart what allowed the consoling game of recognition”, dissolves and shatters the historical space. An apology for the multiple, broken up and elusive initiates the destruction of the linearity and autonomy of history. Traces, floating marks, and unhealed cracks identify themselves as the thresholds, limits, and boundaries defining the object and giving it thickness. However, at the same time, the object itself thus circumscribed becomes immediately evanescent. Tafuri affirms the dissolution of architecture and the shipwreck of the project in a labyrinth of images, thus putting the relationship between man and his physical space in crisis (Tafuri, 1980).

After having lost a substantial unity of purpose, the perspectives of architecture multiply; therefore, “we are in the age of the image of the world” said Heidegger in 1938<sup>1</sup>. The contributions of philosophy and aesthetics (Franzini, 2001) investigate image’s meaning as a complex reference structure within which intentionality is a correlation between object and subject. The image presents itself as something allusive but not entirely exhaustive: the image that “refers to” defines a horizon of intersubjective allusive meaning that identifies symbols and their change in different historical periods. We can consider icons as an emblematic example of the “phenomenology of the invisible” that goes beyond the value of the physical image; real access doors to an element of meaning that goes beyond presence. Questioning the image today means acquiring awareness of the number of images to which the human being is incessantly subjected, for the consequent risk of not seeing and critically distinguishing the meaning and objectives that the image itself must achieve. In the passages from presence to representation, up to the image of representation, the stage is determined in which the image tends to replace itself with reality itself, tends to coincide with it: “it de – realizes reality”. From photography, a static image, to the cinema, sequences in motion, representation becomes a problem of presence again. The realistic representation absorbs and identifies completely. It homogenizes, cancels and definitively annihilates. In the territories of cinematography (Carmagnola, 2006) involving the virtual, space – time perceptions are altered, up to the experiments of the cyber world, with its special effects.

Fig. 2

*Re – make  
Axonometric  
section of the  
Villa Studio for  
an artist,  
1933  
by Luigi Figini,  
Gino Pollini*



Fig. 3

*FRAGILE  
LANDSCAPES  
| ELOQUENT  
SHAPES:  
from Giorgio  
De Chirico's  
metaphysical  
silence to  
Fausto Melotti's  
Sette Savi, fragile  
landscapes of  
abandonment  
are recomposed  
to the rhythm of  
architecture;  
by Barbara  
Coppetti,  
Raffaella Cavallaro,  
Fabio Santonicola,  
for OCiam 2019*



*Barbara Coppetti | Raffaella Cavallaro | Fabio Santonicola*

The architectural space represented through spectacular images and the renderings' hyperrealism serves to persuade the observer (or client) of the validity of the result. The perfection of three – dimensional views with realistic renders does not convey principles or communicate the designer's idea. The risk for architecture is to be identified in its iconic value, therefore only for the immediate communicative value of the building and its public space. The image replaces the experience.

The immediacy of the communicative image becomes a priority objective of the design. It even becomes a parameter for judging the quality of the architectural project. The interest and consensus around architecture are oriented towards evaluating the exterior and the surface of the new object. It aims to become a sign and image/logo, a striking and resonant media monument as much as possible.

So it is a question of reflecting not on the image market as on the relationship between images and consciousness (Gregotti 1991), between image and the degree of awareness of architectural action as an artistic practice in space and time. An actual loss of depth in the artistic disciplines is caused precisely by communication and economic and commercial logic. They unleash dynamics based on virtual representations and the special effects that the images can convey, hiding the total lack of design and limiting themselves to simple suggestions. From the mid – 1960s onwards, the scenario became more complex, and a new sensibility developed. In Public Art, an artistic expression in architecture characterized by creative interventions in public spaces, the works acts on an ambiguous and polysemic ridge of criticality/opportunity. It is necessary that they have a relationship with the context understood not only in an architectural sense but also in a social and environmental sense and that they give rise to meaning. The goals of Public Art are connected to the civil value of the works that can re – signify places and stimulate relationships (Detheridge 2012) so far beyond the iconic and communicative value.

#### *Conclusions: mediums as research, thought and design tools*

Hyper – realistic renderings and captivating virtual representations raise numerous questions about the traditional idea of drawing as a graphic explanation of an architectural theory and a modifying idea of physical space. Images that seem not to illustrate the designer's principles as to persuade and amaze the observer. New technologies, parametric design and digital innovation have brought substantial changes to traditional graphic methods (Ackerman, 2003).

A single certainty remains indisputable: the persuasion that graphic processing is part of a path of research and comparison in which thought and the genesis of form are intertwined. Therefore, drawing is not a simple instrumental means but a medium intended as a communication channel between the physical world and the sphere of ideas.

Starting from the basic conventions and the roots of orthogonal architectural design established in the thirteenth century by Villard De Honnecourt, passing through the elaboration of Leon Battista Alberti in *De Re Aedificatoria*, up to the use that the Modern made of it with Mies, Le Corbusier, El Lissitzky and Hans Scharoun, up to the graphic processing on photographs in the collages of Malevich and Leonidov, to enhance the theoretical and narrative value of the project, the prefiguration of the idea contains the inventive value of the work.

Physical space and mental space are imprinted in the graphic elaborations, fix a thought, stop the idea. The design process as a continuous development of the solution is a cognitive and creative act. Four aspects – seeing, thinking, communicating, remembering – are identified by Franco Purini and define the perimeter of the meaning of drawing activity, reaffirming the expressive power that should emerge every time. The density of meanings implicit in the symbolic language of design drawings establishes a link with thought, memory, and design hope. They define the horizons of measurement with an emotional, expressive charge and progressively reduce the indeterminate.

The arts have never ceased to represent autonomous works, emblems of clash against the most deeply rooted convictions

Fig. 4

*PIXEL CRISIS*  
*Between Utopia*  
*and Dystopia, by*  
*Matilda di Michele,*  
*Rachele Cremonini,*  
*Rengina Dimitratou*  
*in Architectural*  
*Design Studio I,*  
*2020 – 2021,*  
*prof. B. Coppetti,*  
*A. Poletti*



Fig. 5

*ART NETWORK*  
*New spaces*  
*for Artkademy*  
*between Art,*  
*Nature and*  
*Community, by*  
*Benedetta Melli,*  
*Arianna Missaglia,*  
*Ludovica Savio*  
*in Architectural*  
*Design Studio I,*  
*2020 – 2021,*  
*prof. B. Coppetti,*  
*A. Poletti*



and beliefs. Some works of art are the manifesto of timeless relevance made by characters outside the clichés within hopeless scenarios, weaving disturbing but perfectly contemporary collages. Against the background of the torn peripheries of globalized metropolitan territories, today's acid elements combine following a highly fragmented logical flow, disorienting the cut of the public linked to a conventional plot. In the end, the only possible meaning to be grasped in these cases is that there is no meaning.

In architecture and the arts, the communicative aspect of the project involves the digital and virtual dimension. The difference, however, lies in the ability to give shape to an idea regardless of the medium used to represent it.

The correlative abilities of the montage of fragments of space and time continue to constitute scenarios that generate mutations in the existing, becoming manifest of meaning.

Each of us is primarily a physical being in a physical world. Secondly, a biological being in a biological world and finally a human being in a society, therefore the ring of the sciences in the three terms species – individual – society, is part of a continuous process of metamorphosis of human history (Morin, 2015). Symbiosis – like the original symbiosis between two cellular beings, from which the eukaryotic cell of poly cellular beings was born – and metamorphoses – such as those that transform caterpillars into butterflies or dragonflies – are equally driving forces of living evolution and artistic practices.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The era of the world's image is an essay written by Heidegger on the occasion of a conference held in Freiburg in 1938. He concentrated on the analysis and elaboration of the concept of *Weltanschauung* (image of the world), which referred to the modern era. Manfredo Tafuri takes it up again in his *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*.

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