

EXPOSED PRÀXIS

DISPLAY

Exposed Pràxis.
The Studio and Other
Crypto-Exhibitions
of Architectural Poetics
and Intentions

EDITED BY

Fabrizia Berlingieri

WITH

Marco Addona, Serafina Amoroso, Marta Atzeni, Filippo
Lorenzo Balma and Miriam Pistocchi, Alejandro
Campos Uribe, José Cherem Serur, Luca Esposito, Duccio
Fantoni, Luca Galofaro, Josep Maria Garcia-Fuentes, Lucia
La Giusa, Jacopo Leveratto and Alessandra Bruno, Lina
Malfona, Giulia Menzietti and Cino Zucchi, Isidoro
Michan-Guindi, Enrico Miglietta and Jo Van Den Berghe,
Vincenzo Moschetti, Gabriele Neri, Benedetta Patella, Sezin
Sarica, Giulia Setti, Annalisa Trentin

10
Exposing Pràxis. The Problem of the Studio
BY
Fabrizia Berlingieri

51 Figures/Spaces

52
Not Meant to Be Seen. The Silent Praxis of Casa Mollino
BY
Marco Addona

62
Gae Aulenti's Home-Office: a Spatial Montage
of Architecture and Theatre
BY
Serafina Amoroso

74
The Shophouse of a 21st-Century Rammendino
BY
Filippo Lorenzo Balma, Miriam Pistocchi

84
The Back Side of Piero Portaluppi's Studio
BY
Lucia La Giusa

94
Vico Magistretti Foundation. From Studio to Museum,
and Back Again
BY
Gabriele Neri

104
Gianfranco Frattini: an Atelier-Manifesto
BY
Benedetta Patella

114

Ezio Bruno De Felice. An Architectural Office on the Edge
of the Mediterranean

BY

Luca Esposito

124

Back to the Future, Fortuny's Search for Lost Time in Venice

BY

Josep Maria Garcia-Fuentes

134

Constructed Provocations

BY

José Cherem Serur

144

The Atelier as an Urban Microcosm

BY

Duccio Fantoni

154

The Museum of Innocence. Writing a Museum

BY

Luca Galofaro

162

Rooms with a View. The House-Atelier of Bijoy Jain,
Studio Mumbai

BY

Giulia Setti

172

Seamless. Peter Märkli's First Room

BY

Vincenzo Moschetti

180

Oswald Mathias Ungers. House in Belvederestraße

BY

Annalisa Trentin

192

The Archive and its Affects

BY

Alejandro Campos Uribe

202

Between a Quadreria and a Man's Cave. On Fernando Higuera's 'Rascainfiernos'

BY

Jacopo Leveratto, Alessandra Bruno

212

Bridging Cultures and Time. The Noguchi Museum in New York

BY

Marta Atzeni

222

Collecting as a Design Strategy. Philip Johnson's Glass House

BY

Lina Malfona

232

Collecting on Cloud/s. Architectural Imaginaries and the Archive of Affinities

BY

Sezin Sarica

243 Dialogues/Intentions

244

From Room to Room: Portraits of an Architect through the Thickness of Time

BY

Enrico Miglietta, Jo Van Den Berghe

262

Collecting Objects, Designing Unveilings

BY

Giulia Menziatti, Cino Zucchi

Taller Isidoro Michan-Guindi

BY

Fabrizia Berlingieri, Isidoro Michan-Guindi

292 **Bibliography**

300 **Biographies**

Exposing Pràxis. The Problem of the Studio

BY

Fabrizia Berlingieri

On Pretexts and Digressions

My father dealt with being an architect for almost half his life. Over more than twenty-five years, he ran his eighty-five square metres office in the province of Cosenza, Calabria, Italy. The *atelier* – as he himself titled it – consisted of two rooms and a small shared entrance where clients would wait, and in his later years even those who were not exactly welcome. The larger L-shaped room served as main workspace, filled with several drawing tables where he handled design projects closely with a few collaborators. In the smaller one, my father met with clients privately. The archive – comprising approximately forty years of professional work – was dispersed across the space: uncatalogued folders lined the walls, mingled with a vast collection of architecture magazines and disparate objects. I grew up in that space: on afternoons and off-school mornings as a curious child, later during my architectural training, finally as an apprentice with an assigned table. This early, unconscious familiarity with the architectural workplace only became clear to me during a trip to London in 2003, while visiting the Soane Museum at 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields. Suddenly, the everyday surroundings were swept away by a profound sense of wonder. I lost myself repeatedly in the dizzying beauty of those rooms, endlessly multiplying in both number and depth, as a world visible only from within.

The house-museum echoes the relationship between the three-fold architectural ensemble and the archaeological and art collection it displays. The forty-years process of transformation lies not merely in the continuous spatial reconfiguration, it actively participates in building the Soane's architectural discourse itself, progressively aligning with the collection – as specific design language grounded on the concept of fragment – so that each room emerges as a *solo*. Architecture bends to poetics, and the house finds its definitive image in the aesthetic of bricolage.

1. F. Berlingieri, *Non finito: processo, poetica. La casa-museo di Soane a Lincoln's Inn Fields*, in L. Malfona, L. Giorgetti, S. Ruszczewski (edited by), *Unfinished. Sul non finito*, Pisa University Press, Pisa 2023, pp. 62-67.



Jo Coenen home-studio: the library, Maastricht.
Photo by the author (2025)

The elements which the ‘bricoleur’ collects and uses are ‘pre-constrained’ like the constitutive units of myth, the possible combinations of which are restricted by the fact that they are drawn from the language where they already possess a sense which sets a limit on their freedom of manoeuvre.²

This first experience was followed by others – some more consistent, others purely occasional – that over time have shaped my own cultural and spatial understanding of what an architecture studio is, what it conveys and translates. From the early collaborations in Messina at Franco Cardullo’s quiet *studiolo*³, I recall the counter-sunlight entering in the brownish interiors, smoothly enlightening the wooden archive’s shelves and the countless yellow paper sketches dispersed all over the space.

On the contrary, the Purini-Thermes studio is woven into a complex spatial narrative, at once enigmatic if not hindering⁴. Like “frames nested within frames”⁵, an interlocking taxonomy of more

2. C. Lévi-Strauss, *The savage mind*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd, London 1966, p. 19.

3. The *studiolo* emerges as place of intellectual labour within the domestic sphere in the early 14th-century, a lay heir to the medieval *scriptorium*, traditionally devoted to the copying of manuscripts and often connected to the library within monastic settings. Its shape refers to a diaphragm between interior architecture and furniture, typically realised in wooden structures raised off the ground, articulated through a writing desk and bookcases. In literature and through its iconography it has been assessed as a trope, an ideal space – even before being a real one – embodying the scholar’s cultural status. A space that establishes a critical distance from the present, a privileged vantage point from which to observe reality and grasp its meaning through the act of study. See O. Iardino, *Lo studiolo: uno spazio architettonico tra realtà e rappresentazione*, in “Heliopolis Culture Civiltà Politica”, n. 2, 2018, pp. 161-176.

4. The notion of ‘architecture-as-obstacle’, drawing on Kafka’s spatial constructs, derives from A.M. Racheli, *Il luogo kafkiano, architettura evocante architettura evocata*, Dedalo libri, Bari 1979.

5. The Henri Bergson’s quote in *La Pensée et le mouvant* (1922) is taken from G. Bachelard, *La poétique de l’espace*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1957; it. trans. edited by E. Catalano, *La poetica dello spazio*, Edizioni Dedalo, Bari 1999 (V ed.), p. 101, translation by the author.

private rooms appears alongside others operating within a highly crafted design workflow. Among these, the library – where I still enjoy extended conversations with Laura Thermes – houses their published works and personal sketchbooks. One sits at the heart of this overflowing shelving, where discussions unfold without haste.

During the period spent in Jo Coenen’s home-studio in Maastricht, activities took place in a long room outfitted with paired tables, arranged to facilitate dialogue among the team. Adjacent to this, a perpetually disordered and ever-changing library plays a vital role: volumes by various architects are pulled from the shelves multiple times daily, laid out on tables, and summoned to address project challenges, support analytical process, or inspire modes of representation. Like a *herbarium*, it serves for everything⁶. Sometimes I had the impression it could even provide medical or culinary recipes, depending on the day and the pressure under which the books were consulted. I vividly recall the sparse entrance of Giorgio Grassi’s studio in Milan, marked by a long mirror and warm, indirect lighting, and the walls of Gianni Braghieri’s one in Cesena, entirely covered in large hand drawings and ancient architectural prints. It was not like that in other settings, where the workspace features prevail as a large-scale production machine-kind, and the overall atmosphere reminds to nothing more than a conventional office set-up.

Crossing the threshold of these places has meant for me, then as now, entering wondrous domains of a simultaneous belonging to the self and to the other. The seemingly intentional retreat from overt self-assertion has sparked a lasting fascination throughout my personal trajectory, strengthened by the subtle difference between exposing and exhibiting: the former an ever-questioned necessity, the latter a presumed certainty. This attraction has persisted

6. The Latin term *herbarium* originally refers to a classificatory collection focused on the description and use of plant specimens. From the 16th-century onward, it evolved into a physical space ordered according to scientific codes. Its configuration as a filing cabinet and set of preservation objects reveals a way of seeing and cataloguing the natural world, establishing itself as a link between knowledge and its archival forms, and as early display medium of the natural science museography models.

over time, resilient against the neglect brought by every day's distractions. And, indeed, it has recently resurfaced with intensity in the context of the research project *Display: The Presence of the Future. An Archive-Laboratory of the Immaterial Heritage of Architectural Exhibitions*⁷, whose main aim is to provide a platform for knowledge and dissemination of the architectural exhibitions in Italy over the past fifty years, while questioning their forms and places in the contemporary contexts. Within this framework, the research *Exposed Pràxis* tackles the architect's workplace – in its various facets of atelier, home office, workshop, and lab – as a proper stage for expressing and disseminating, consciously or unconsciously, the generative processes and imaginaries underlying design poetics. A dual place where architecture, in the making and thinking, shows itself. It is not just a working environment, but a place where attitudes and experiences crystallise into spaces that often turn out to be true personal collections, fragments of a discreet and authorial mosaic⁸, ultimately 'crypto exhibitions' of architectural poetics and intentions.

Recently, and on an international scale, the institutional landscape has witnessed a renewed interest in those spaces, as reflected in the increasingly widespread recognition of many architectural archives as being of cultural significance⁹. In Italy, for instance, a

7. National Research Program of Significant Interest (PRIN 2022), conducted by three research units belonging to the University of Camerino (UniCam), Scuola di Ateneo di Architettura e Design Eduardo Vittoria Ascoli Piceno (SAAD), the University of Napoli Federico II (UniNa), Dipartimento di Architettura (DiArc), and the Politecnico di Milano (PoliMi), Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DASTU), coordinated respectively by Pippo Ciorra, Pasquale Miano, and Alessandro Rocca.

8. G. Manganelli, *Emigrazioni oniriche*, edited by A. Cortellessa, Adelphi, Milan 2023.

9. The Iconic Houses Network (<https://www.iconichouses.org/houses>) represents one of the most significant projects in this field. While it does not strictly focus on ateliers or architectural workplaces, it more broadly connects and documents the most significant houses built or designed by architects, as well as artists' homes and studios from the 20th-century, which are now open to the public as house museums. A similar aim is pursued in the work *La casa dell'architetto* (The Architect's House) by

national register of private architectural archives has recently been established¹⁰. These initiatives acknowledge individual and collective architectural practices as embedded in – and contributing to – a broader historical, social, and economic context, with the mandate to preserve their traces and to affirm their value for the disciplinary discourse and beyond. However, most architectural foundations, archives, and private museums remain relatively invisible both within the disciplinary field and to the wider public. They can be recognised as particularly fragile, as they are still perceived as deeply anchored in a biographical rationale: once the creative energies animating them fade, even the physical traces become difficult to maintain, and the original spatial settings easily undergo transformation and evolution, if not outright erasure. Despite their cultural significance, many of them survive only through scattered documentation, photographs or drawings often made by the architects themselves. This lack of structured archival work opens a gap in understanding how spatial practice and architectural poetics intersect. As Ignacio Fariás and Alex Wilkie observe, “the studio remains a peculiar and remarkable *lacuna* in our understanding of how cultural artefacts are brought into the world and how creativity operates as a situated practice”¹¹.

What is at stake in recording the architectural studio? Is there any cultural or scientific urgency beyond personal fascination? Can the architectural studio be inquired as an exploration of the

Gennaro Postiglione, which features nearly 100 homes of some of the most prominent architects of the last century. See: G. Postiglione (edited by), *La casa dell'architetto*, Taschen, Köln 2013.

10. Originating from the initiative on architectural archives in Lombardy (<https://sab-lom.cultura.gov.it/la-soprintendenza/progetti/archivi-di-architettura>), the project later led to the establishment of a national register (<http://www.architetti.san.beniculturali.it/web/architetti/home>), which nevertheless still faces difficulties in achieving full implementation. Its primary objective is to survey the existing collections across the country through their preliminary identification and description, in anticipation of future digitisation aimed at promoting broader access and understanding.

11. I. Fariás, A. Wilkie (edited by), *Studio Studies. Operations, Topologies and Displacements*, Routledge, London 2016, p. 2.

creative process, addressed both to the disciplinary discourse and to a broader public?

Such a perspective calls for a shift from a merely biographical focus toward an authorial dimension of the studio, recognizing both the value of individual specificity and its potential resonance in terms of cultural dissemination and awareness. Hence, the research project grounds upon a broader dowsing investigation into whether and how these spaces – in-between the personal and the public, and exposed to risky fetishist perversions – can, instead, enlighten lateral practices of display in the contemporary, contributing, in reverse, to the expansion of the architectural praxis. In that sense, the curatorial work – conceived as an act of ‘archival archaeology’, tracing and reinterpreting the material evidence of architectural practices – seeks to imagine how, and with what tools, it is possible to analyse and document them, capturing a snapshot of their highly diverse states and conditions, with the purpose of expanding their interpretation and legacy beyond the individual *persona*.



John Soane house-museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, 1792-1833. Redrawing by the author (2022) of the main transformation phases of the house. In light grey are depicted the initial change of the first house unit (12); in medium grey the changes occurred with the first expansion (13) from 1807 to 1821, and the new entrance of the house; in dark grey the latest ones in 1833 involving the entire property (12,13,14).

Epistemics of Metamorphosis

In the introduction to his recent work *The Artist's Studio: A Cultural History* – a comprehensive historical investigation of the artist's workspace from antiquity to the present – James Hall first highlights its inherent imprecision:

This instability and semantic imprecision reflect the fact that the artist's workspace is a permeable and mutable entity, one that maintains a symbiotic relationship with artisan workshops, monastic cells, scholars' studies, and other interior and exterior spaces.¹²

Throughout the chapters, the author traces the origins of the studio to three main spatial models, today yet informing the variety of terms through which it is defined. The first one places the studio within the domestic sphere, deriving from the aristocratic *studium* and the later *studiolo* of liberal arts, toward the contemporary home-office. The second one addresses its autonomy as workplace belonging to the setting of the *officina* and the *bottega* in the late Middle Ages, later evolving into the factory, and the more contemporary spaces of the laboratory. Finally, the third links the studio to the more courtly tradition of the library – the space of collection and display of the knowable – originating in the medieval *scriptorium*, later transfigured into the Renaissance invention of the *wunderkammer* and the gallery space.

Both linguistic and spatial polysemy show the coexistence of different epistemological domains that govern the ways in which the artist (and the architect) generates knowledge through action, and how this knowledge is accomplished through a variable, and often simultaneous combination of three agencies: contemplative, experimental, and performative¹³ moulded by actions clashing onto

12. J. Hall, *The Artist's Studio: A Cultural History*, Thames & Hudson Ltd, London 2022; it. trans. edited by P. Del Vecchio, C. Veltri, *Lo studio d'artista. Una storia culturale*, Giulio Einaudi editore, Turin 2022, p. 10, translation by the author.

13. M. Cole, M. Pardo (edited by), *Inventions of the Studio, Renaissance*

a single, physical space. The entity of the studio revolves around the encroachment of these different epistemic realms which crystallise as many specific spatial models. Their combination, overlap and accumulation produce the inherent ambiguity of the studio – its instability according to Hall – where the writing desk, the workbench, and the bookshelf are coexisting archetypes that explicit the space's internal tensions and turn it into a place of metamorphosis¹⁴.

The studium spatialises in a bounded, intimate environment that fosters reflection through distance, and where knowledge is pursued through the individual experience of reading and meditation. The spatial feature of the bottega (workshop) or laboratory engages with the episteme of pràxis¹⁵, where the knowledge production occurs through an inductive, often iterative, process of making and experimenting, trials and errors, in contrast to theoretical approaches. The third model, the wunderkammer, as one could understand the collection as almost deriving from the speculative activity – and being the precursor of the later museography

to Romanticism, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill 2005. In particular, the reference is to the *Origins of the Studio* chapter where the authors survey various activities present in the artists' workplace such as study, reception, collection and display.

14. Hall indirectly refers to the metamorphic nature of the studio by tracing its roots back to myth and antique Greek historiography, with the examples of Hephaestus, the god of fire, who rises from the cave where he was educated in the art of metalworking to the grand palace where, triumphant among the gods of Olympus, he runs a family enterprise. Again, is the case of Phidias' workshop in Olympia, originally used for the construction of a colossal statue of Zeus and later transformed into a Christian Basilica. In J. Hall, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

15. The concept of pràxis, although of classical origin and present in the Aristotelian philosophy, gained significance as Marxist philosophical perspective, later developed by Antonio Gramsci, which inseparably links theory to human practical activity, considered the only concrete reality. Unlike a purely speculative philosophy, that of praxis focuses on transforming the real world and producing a new history and culture, combining philosophical reflection with the social and political action of the masses. The significance of praxis as specific way of producing knowledge ultimately acquires depth in contemporary architectural research as cultural and intellectual product, see M. Biraghi, *L'Architetto come intellettuale*, Giulio Einaudi editore, Turin 2019.

– envisages the peculiar process of knowledge-by-transfer, embedded within the epistemic realm of performance:

(...) For a collector, I mean a collector as he ought to be – ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects. Not that they come alive in him; it is he who lives in them. So I have erected one of his dwellings, with books as the building stones, before you, and now he is going to disappear inside, as is only fitting.¹⁶

The artist's (and the architect) studio is a space of metamorphosis and ascesis, a site of conflict between the self and the world, a suspension between action and thought, a place of mediation between the human and the inhuman¹⁷. Between 1630 and 1680, the *Galeria* of Canon Manfredo Settala – housed in his private quarters inside the Paleo Christian Basilica of San Nazaro in Brolo on Corso di Porta Romana – was an unmissable attraction within Milan's cultural circles. The domestic gallery was, in fact, a complex assemblage of spaces comprising the pinacoteca, the library, and a room with various *scriptoria* hosting his vast collection of ethnographic artefacts. At the end, the laboratory of *artificialia* gave rise to a new staging of the manifold world¹⁸, orchestrated by Settala himself through the creation of automata, mechanical devices, and scientific instruments of various kinds¹⁹ arousing both wonder and

16. W. Benjamin, *Illuminationen*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt 1955; en. trans. edited by H. Arendt, *Illuminations*, Schocken Books New York, 1969, p. 67.

17. V. Trione, *Prologo celeste. Nell'atelier di Anselm Kiefer*, Giulio Einaudi editore, Turin, 2023.

18. G. Perani, *La meravigliosa galleria di Manfredo Settala*, in “Nuova Museologia”, n. 42, 2020, pp. 2-12, <https://www.nuovamuseologia.it/2020/06/01/la-maravigliosa-galleria-di-manfredo-settala/> (accessed October 5, 2025).

19. The attempt, albeit partial, to recompose the vast collection of the *Museum Septalianum*, which had been lost and divided among different institutions in the city, took place once in 1984 with the homonymous exhibition at the Natural History Museum of Milan. See: A. Aimi, V. De Michele, A. Morandotti, *Musaeum Septalianum. Una collezione scientifica nella Milano del Seicento*, Giunti Marzocco, Florence 1984.

unease among visitors. During the second half of the 18th-century, the bottega of Palazzo Tomati in Rome was a well-known centre for the international market of antiquities among the European Grand Tour travellers. In that place, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, together with his son Francesco and the assistants, carried out an intense activity of recovery, transformation, and sale of *falsi d'autore*, combining his nocturnal practice of looting archaeological finds from the city's open-air excavations with the more noble pursuits of sculptor and extraordinary engraver. His creations of candelabra, vases, fireplaces, and furnishings – today sparse all over the world²⁰ – are the result of manipulations, assemblages, and recompositions of pieces that lie halfway between his own poetic vision, the authenticity of the archaeological remnants, and an idealized aesthetic of antiquity, taking place in the proto-industrial process making of his workshop.

Lastly, long before taking shape as the iconographic research corpus *Bilder Atlas, Mnemosyne*²¹ was the result of a painstaking collection process, one of the world's most extensive assemblages of photographs and images of mythological subjects. Aby Warburg, in his ambiguous role of author-collector-researcher, sought to illustrate the mechanisms by which themes and figures from antiquity were transmitted to the modern era, particularly through the recurring motions, gestures, and postures that convey the full range of human emotions. The outcome is an ambitious intellectual journey across the centuries, bearing witness to the enduring resonance of recurring visual motifs. In 1921, Warburg's personal library rapidly evolved into a more open research centre. In 1933, four years

20. P. Panza, *Museo Piranesi*, Skira, Milan 2017.

21. The seventy-nine boards assemble the reproductions of different works: evidence of a particularly Renaissance context, with artworks, manuscript pages, playing cards, etc.; archaeological finds from eastern, Greek and Roman antiquity; newspaper clippings, advertising labels, postage stamps as testimonies of the culture of the 20th-century. For an updated overview of the studies and research about Warburg and his oeuvre see: M. Picciché (edited by), *Warburg Updated. Bibliography and Mnemosyne Atlas*, in "Rivista Engramma", n. 217, 2025; <https://www.gramma.it/eOS/resources/bookstore/digital/e219b.pdf> (accessed October 10, 2025).

after his death, the Institute – along with its collections and staff – relocated from Germany to London to escape the Nazi regime. Ten years later, the Warburg Institute was incorporated into the University of London, where it still functions as research and educational institution.

The chronological and spatial *diaspora* of these three examples emerges as the tip of an iceberg, standing among many others in a sort of undismitted historiography. Beyond being “a creative hybrid between the production and the exhibition of the artwork”²², they exemplify, in even extreme conditions, the subversive role of the studio. This is not only the place where the process of knowledge production appears and where the subtle boundaries between reflection, production and display become pivotal. Rather, its real nature is a blurred one: a private religious environment transformed into a public gallery and a scientific cabinet of invention; an architectural practice of assemblage fostering a profitable family company; a personal obsession in transcultural studies evolving into an institutional framework. Moreover, each of them illustrates the practice of collecting as transfer: the fragment’s incompleteness as the basis to build upon and to decode the ‘world’, the modern logic of taxonomy, the creative aspect of manipulation²³.

While historical and theoretical research has primarily focused on artists’ workspaces, it is evident that similar conditions – as previously illustrated by some examples – can also be observed in architects’ studios, and more broadly in spaces dedicated to creative practice today²⁴. In the loci of pràxis, dispositions – both interior and objectual, especially in the case of the architectural studio – converge to translate attitudes into sign, atmosphere, and space.

22. H. U. Obrist, B. Vanderlinden, *Laboratorium*, Du Mont, Antwerp 2001.

23. A. Rocca, *Lo spazio smontabile*, Lettera ventidue edizioni, Syracuse 2017.

24. K. Thoring, R.M. Mueller, P. Desmet, P. Badke-Schaub, *Spatial design factors associated with creative work: a systematic literature review*, in “Artificial Intelligence for Engineering Design, Analysis and Manufacturing”, n. 34 (3), 2020, 300-314. doi:10.1017/S0890060420000232 (accessed November 13, 2025).

The materiality, lights and shadows of the atelier as a space of ascesis characterizes the *Black box* that Klas Anselm built in Lund as the home-studio addition that hosted Sigurd Lewerentz in his later years, devoting time to the construction of his architectural works' archive.

The new room was rather unusual in that it had no windows, and was lit only by three evenly spaced skylights in the roof. In line with Lewerentz's character and choices, the room was painted black, with an aluminium covering on the ceiling to exploit the natural light from above.²⁵

The same atmosphere permeates the description of Rothko's atelier, tall and dimly lit seemingly to "a preface to transcendence" where "the windows looked out on nothing in particular, but the light from them and from the skylight was coaxed to deposit itself in a crepuscular vibration on the dark canvases"²⁶. Yet the ambiguity of these spaces arises not only from the constant recombination of the epistemological models of thinking-acting-displaying, but also from the relationship established between the inhabitant and the inhabited space, better within the clash between private and public realms. For instance, the tension between private and public takes place in the split enacted by Le Corbusier in his daily oscillating routine between the Parisian mornings in the private art studio annexed to his two-level apartment in the *Molitor* apartment block, and the afternoons within the architectural office in rue de Sèvres²⁷.

25. G. Postiglione, *Sigurd Lewerentz 1885-1975*, in G. Postiglione (edited by), *op.cit.*, p. 227, translation by the author.

26. B. O'Doherty, *Studio and Cube. On the relationship between where art is made and where art is displayed*, Columbia University, New York 2007, p.22.

27. On December 2024 the Atelier at 35 rue de Sèvres has been the focus of the encounters promoted in the occasion of its centenary in the XXII Symposium of the Fondation Le Corbusier, a two-days program on the place, its structure, functioning and agencies, see: <https://www.fondation-lecorbusier.fr/en/news/22nd-rencontres-de-la-fondation/> (accessed October 23, 2025).

Here the large master's wall painting overlooked the drawing room like an upscaled monastic cell and filled with his industrious draftsmen wearing long smocks. This attitude recalls Courbet's conception of the atelier famously depicted in his monumental painting *The Painter's Studio: A Real Allegory of Seven Years of My Moral and Artistic Life* (1855). At the centre, the painter stands as the fulcrum: at the same time craving the hegemony of the cultural context and the desire for withdrawal²⁸.

A closer look at Courbet's painting – or at any of the many depictions of the studio in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century art, as well as historical evidence of modern artists' studio practices – reveals that past artists consciously negotiated the same limits, anxieties, and tensions (...), including art's "relational possibilities" and the link between studio practice and real-world 'agency' and 'action'.²⁹

The studio as a *limen* between private and public also permeates the concept and the long process of construction of the Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin projects³⁰ poised between house, studio, farm, and a learning by doing community of young architectural students and apprentices. Also, the metamorphic character of the studio emerges in the proliferation of the diverse ones Alvar Aalto inhabited along his architect's career and life. From the intimacy of the early home-studio shared with his first wife Aino in 1936³¹, to the second more formal office completed in 1955 and located scarcely five

28. W. Hofmann, *Das Atelier. Courbet Jahrhundertbild*, Verlag, München 2010, it. trans. *L'atelier. Courbet, l'Ottocento e il quadro del secolo*, Donzelli, Rome 2012.

29. B. Alsdorf, *Reviews: Alsdorf on Jacob and Crabner*, in "Art Bulletin", 2013, vol. XCV n. 2, p. 333.

30. The intertwined history of these two projects – Taliesin East in Wisconsin and Taliesin West in Arizona – is gathered in K. Smith, *Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin and Taliesin West*, Harry N. Abrams, New York 1997.

31. "Aalto's private studio, which overlooks the double-height office space, is equipped with a secret staircase that leads to the upper floor's outdoor terrace. These hidden stairs and the balcony – as well as, more broadly,

minutes away from the previous. The *Muuratsalo House*, built between 1952 and 1954, was an open-air display in which experimental ceramic tiles and brick materials were exhibited on the exterior walls. Lastly, almost ten years later, in the city of Jyväskylä, near Muuratsalo, Aalto designed and opened his personal museum, displaying his oeuvre as future legacy. It is no coincidence that almost all these works are based on the L-shaped plan configuration, so central to his research. A kind of parallelism to Queneau's *Exercises in Style*³², transposed into an architectural practice.

In the multifaceted and ever-shifting setting of the studio, the act of exposing becomes in certain cases a predominant factor – especially in contemporary practices – signalling the loss of the studio's everyday utilitarian value. The atelier, as Zuliani observes, “is less and less an alcove or refuge and increasingly, quite literally, a laboratory”³³, even finding new spaces of expansion within museums and exhibition programs³⁴, in a kind of endless mirroring process of resonances that Lane Relyea aptly defines as “unbound”³⁵.

the unique atmosphere of the studio – came to take on a playful dimension in the eyes of the Aalto children and future generations (...), to the point that in every corner of this house one finds that ‘methodical adaptability to circumstances’.” In F. De Maio, *Tra Aino ed Elissa, le case manifesto degli Aalto*, in “La Rivista di Engramma”, https://www.gramma.it/eOS/index.php?id_articolo=6081 (accessed October 5, 2025), translation by the author.

32. R. Queneau, *Exercises de Style*, Editions Gallimard, Paris 1947.

33. S. Zuliani (edited by), *Atelier d'artista. Gli spazi di creazione dell'arte dall'età moderna al presente*, Mimesis edizioni, Milan 2013, p. 189, translation by the author.

34. Beyond the striking musealisation process of Bacon's London studio (see: D. J. Getsy, *The Reconstruction of the Francis Bacon Studio in Dublin*, in *The studio reader, op.cit.*, pp. 99-103), a recent example is the exhibition series *The Architect's Studio* hosted from 2017 to 2023 at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark showcasing the work (and the generative processes) of five international architectural firms of Wang Shu, Alejandro Aravena, Tatiana Bilbao Estudio, Anupama Kundoo and Cave bureau. See also: E. Steierhoffer, *The Exhibitionary Complex of Architecture*, in “Oase”, n. 88 Exhibitions Showing and Producing Architecture, 2012, pp. 5-11.

Precisely, its elusive polysemy constitutes the hard core of the studio historically depicted as a romanticized and idealized place, the same one that, in more recent decades, has been disavowed in vain³⁶. Although today's demands for remote work shed a different light on the needs for a physical workplace, in essence this space – as mutant offspring of knowledge's archetypes – remains constantly vivid within the collective interest. As recent debates note, “contemporary artists and writers have not left the studio or its mythologies behind”³⁷.

35. L. Relyea, *Studio Unbound*, in M. J. Jacob, M. Grabner (edited by), *The Studio Reader: On the Space of Artists*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2010, pp. 341-349.

36. The crisis of the studio as place of authentic, independent, creation runs from 1968, when Robert Smithson argued that liberation from the physical boundaries of the studio partially releases the artist from the constraints of craftsmanship and the compulsion toward continuous creativity. Since then, several voices contributed to the idea of the “fall of the studio”, such as the seminal article *The Function of the Studio* by Daniel Buren in 1979, or even to the emergence of a new entity, the ‘post-studio’. See W. Davids, K. Paice (edited by), *The Fall of the Studio. Artists at Work*, Valiz, Amsterdam 2009.

37. B. Alsdorf, *op.cit.*, p. 335.



Sant'Agostino nello studio, Vittore Carpaccio, 1502. Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, Venice. Source Wikimedia Commons.

Spatial Embodiments: Anatomy of the Studio

“We can read studios as texts that are as revelatory in their way as artworks themselves”³⁸. O’Doherty’s argument rests on the idea that behind the spatial configuration of the studio lies not only the artist’s biography and oeuvre, but also a historically conditioned social contract between the individual and the collective. To move beyond a biographical perspective, he reports the experiment Lowell Nesbitt conducted in the 1960s, drawing upon Eugène Delacroix’s *Corner of a Painter’s Study, the Stove* (1855). Nesbitt, together with a commissioned photographer, visited the studios of several major New York-based painters at the time. From the selected frames, he then painted those same spaces where the author-artist is absent. The result is a series of artists’ studio portraits in which accumulated objects and materials quietly inhabit the space, giving it a sense of autonomous existence. Indeed, following Aldalgisa Lugli, within the studio “certain carefully chosen objects, or a particular decoration, are above all bearers of a ‘concept’, the paradigm of the place”, so that “in every case, it is from the objects arranged on the walls of the studio that identification proceeds”³⁹. In this sense:

Object and subject, viewed and viewer, object and frame no longer reside as dichotomous counterparts. Rather they are co-constitutive elements, evidentiary and embodied, a complex, multivalent event registered within the material properties of things in space through which a set of circumstances and forces – political, social, spatial, historic, economic, legal, administrative, regulatory, art and architectural historical – cohere.⁴⁰

38. B. O’Doherty, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

39. A. Lugli, *Naturalia et Mirabilia. Il collezionismo enciclopedico delle Wunderkammer d’Europa*, Editore Mazzotta, Milan 2005, p. 44, translation by the author.

40. T. Di Carlo, *Exhibitionism*, in “Log”, n. 20 Curating Architecture, 2010, p. 151.

The condition of co-constitutive elements evokes, as Tina Di Carlo notes, Bruno Latour's notion of *quasi-objects*⁴¹, which are "more threadlike, more fragile, more complex, more richly vascularized, more fully able to generate than either the fact or the fetish"⁴². The significance of spatial conditions – their specific arrangements arising from the careful and deliberate elements placing – mediates the relationship between the inhabitant and the inhabited space. It mirrors the personal disposition onto a specific architectural poetics, or more precisely, toward its materialization and spatial transposition. In doing so, it also delineates the 'rules of the game' within which certain actions – no longer purely private, but culturally inflected – are enacted. Embedded within this intricate interplay of dynamics:

A singular museum of architecture emerges. An architecture certainly represented according to the tastes of a single collector and conceived by the pencil of a single architect – yet in this 'museum', uncertainties, broken rules, groundless games, and the extraterritoriality of contemporary architectural languages are listed, recorded, and catalogued relentlessly.⁴³

The space of work – whether personal or professional – becomes the place where work is exposed to scrutiny: questioned in its premises and in its attempts by oneself, by colleagues, and by anyone who happens to enter, even by chance, becoming part of the piece as it unfolds. In this transposition, which operates on multiple levels and simultaneously, the staging of coherent things and actions presuppose the arrangement of specific spatial tropes⁴⁴ – *luoghi retorici* – that emerge as semantic deviations from the constitutive contexts they are used to, such as metaphors and allegories. The use

41. B. Latour, *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1999, pp. 272-273.

42. T. Di Carlo, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

43. F. Dal Co, *La casa dei sogni e dei ricordi*, in "Lotus", n. 35, 1985, p. 124, translation by the author.

44. See G. L. Beccaria (edited by), *Dizionario di linguistica e di filologia, metrica, retorica*, Giulio Einaudi editore, Turin 2004.

of spatial tropes as rhetorical figures for reading the studio's spatial features does not stem from a semiotic tradition or narrative in architectural theory. Following Lefebvre's analogy with Gothic churches⁴⁵, the studio is first and foremost a space meant to be lived in, perhaps without any explicit intention to communicate, or to be dissected and analysed. Yet, in seeking to uncover the implicit logic woven into its arrangements, their metaphorical resonance⁴⁶ acts as a lens through which these spaces can be explored, articulated, and brought to evidence.

Perhaps the observation of things was my most important formal education; then observation turned into the memory of things. Now it seems to me that I see them all arranged like tools in a neat row; aligned as in an herbarium, in a list, in a dictionary. But this list, between imagination and memory, is not neutral; it always returns to certain objects and also constitutes their distortion or, in a sense, their evolution.⁴⁷

Within the architectural studio the archive, the library, the model room, the gallery, and the desk appear both as allusions to the formal and intellectual decoding of the world and as fertile microcosms for the design process, perpetually reshuffling, their positions subtly interchangeable. Assuming the intrinsic kinship between studio and wunderkammer – between production and projection – the *mise-en-scène* of the studio struggles with the challenges of representing the submerged world of references essential to the design

45. H. Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace*, Anthropos, Paris 1974.

46. According to Adrian Forty "There is no reason why a metaphor should be required to reproduce every detail of the object to which it is compared: metaphors are never more than partial descriptions of the phenomena they seek to describe, they are always incomplete. Indeed, were they to succeed in total reproduction, they would cease to be metaphors, which subsist through likenesses drawn between inherently unlike things". In A. Forty, *Words and Buildings. A vocabulary of Modern Architecture*, Thames and Hudson, New York 2000, p. 84.

47. A. Rossi, *Luoghi Urbani*, interview by Cecilia Bolognesi, Unicopli, Milan 1999, p. 27, translation by the author.

process. What kind of relationship exist between a specific poetics and the organisation of the place hosting its creation? What figures emerge, and through which strategies of display are they conveyed?

Indeed, while the relationship between epistemological domains and spatial models has been extensively explored, much remains to be said about how the latter are made explicit through the dynamics they activate, in their becoming spaces of exposure, and moreover, about the instances where the original epistemological significance of these arrangements is either inverted or translated.

The discreet survey of the collected practices offers a set of lenses through which one may perceive – as transversal critical reading – both recurring and specific spatial dynamics, as well as the altered instrumental use of space and its semantic displacement in relation to the architect's generative processes. At first, the embodiment of the space-poetics relationship can be traced within a *core logic*: a hierarchically organised spatial system where a central nucleus provides the dominant features of the studio, and around which the other functions revolve. These peripheral spaces acquire distinct relational qualities – sometimes mirroring, sometimes counterpointing the main one – creating a rhythm of circulation and encounter that shapes both practice and reflection.

The 'shophouse' of Francesco and Alessandro Mendini, as described in the contribution by Filippo Lorenzo Balma and Miriam Pistocchi, can serve as an exemplary case. Although Alessandro Mendini when speaking about his atelier evokes the model of the workshop, his studio is in fact a more complex environment, establishing a vertical spatial dynamic between different semantic realms. From the internal staircase connected to the main living area, one descends into the double-height open space of the studio. Half way, the mezzanine accommodates a couple of small and more secluded rooms, in contrast to the large workspace below.

If these upper rooms appear to align with the spatial model of the studiolo – recalling the beautiful painting *San Girolamo nello studio* (1474) by Antonello da Messina – or with the monastic cell – also a reminiscence of the *loge* device in academic architectural apprenticeship⁴⁸ – their function does not end here. The elevated position,

mid-air suspended along the descending staircase, and their predominantly glazed enclosure grant them an additional, subtle role: that of overseeing the work being carried out below⁴⁹. They resemble a pair of small twin turrets wrapped around the central column that bisects the studio. This image is ironically reinforced by the narrow balcony, which extends the resting platform of the staircase itself. At the same time, the balcony signals an act of control while offering visitors an outstanding view of Mendini's oeuvre, displayed along the entire walls as mimicking a gallery space⁵⁰.

The house at 60 Belvederestraße in Cologne by Oswald Mathias Ungers also reveals a semantic spatial inversion in the two-phase process of its construction, which, according to the architect, correspond to one another as a joint act of “inhalation and exhalation”, as Annalisa Trentin reports in her contribution. Two spaces are of particular interest: the library and the model room. The latter occupies the ground floor of the original house (1958-59), while the library was added during the later extension (1989-90). Although these two spaces appear independent and would be conventionally associated with the material experimentation of architectural work and its technical-theoretical study, their uses are in fact intertwined, if not reversed.

48. See S. Türkkan, *The Architecture of the Making of the Author*, in “Oase”, n. 113 Authorship, 2023, pp. 25-35, <https://oasejournal.nl/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/25-Oase-113-e-book-3.pdf> (accessed October 23, 2025).

49. The presence of devices enabling the control of the studio space takes place in several examples. One is the striking use of more than one hundred round convex mirrors by Soane in his house-museum, or, in Milan, the angle mirror used by Achille Castiglioni in his atelier in Piazza Castello.

50. The gallery model is also a common figure of the architectural studios, also known through different terms such as “wall atlas” or “mood board” – that are the exhibition of tools for the design practice, whether these tools are understood in the traditional sense – as for example the wall of wooden details and models in the Renzo Piano's studio in Genoa –, or whether more conceptual instruments, such as images, references, or objects, as in the case of the Spanish architect Souto de Moura. See A. Tavares, P. Bandeira (eds.), *Floating Images. Eduardo Souto de Moura's Wall Atlas*, Lars Müller Publishers, Zürich 2012.

The model room becomes the site dedicated to theoretical inquiry, housing numerous scale models – 1:20, 1:10, and 1:50 – commissioned by Ungers from the artist Bernd Grimm. They represent architectural masterpieces from antiquity to Italian Renaissance, all rigorously rendered in white, and include some of his own architectural projects. The *Kubushaus* library gathers the striking collection of treatises informing this research through the material reproduction at reduced scale, while simultaneously functioning as a window onto the world: “I have so many memories – Ungers told Annalisa Trentin some years ago – and I want to keep them purified by traveling in books instead of actually going to the places”⁵¹.

Adjacent to the library lies the model room and, at the far end of the plot, a small gallery hosts several white models. Between these, the open-air courtyard amplifies⁵² the collection, displaying works by Bruce Nauman (Square, 1977/88) and Günther Förg (Ohne Titel, 1988). Beneath the two-level library is the archive. Around the two focal points – the library and the model room –, the spaces of the house-studio revolve in a complex yet precise set of connections that form an interior vestibule for the open-air gallery. Here again, the three epistemic domains coexist, yet they are not unified.

Indeed, along the studios’ collection one may notice other forms in which semantic inversions and spatial dynamics are arranged around a centred logic, exhibiting its own “dominant selection strategy”⁵³. This is the case, for instance, with Piero Portaluppi’s display and use of the archive: both literal and material ones. Rather than merely serving as a repository for the architectural projects, the archive of the Milanese architect extends, like a polyform virus,

51. The quote is reported in C. Baglione, *Oswald Mathias Ungers 1926–2007 in memoriam*, in “Casabella”, n. 761-762, December 2007-January 2008, p. 6, translation by the author.

52. M. D’Alessandro, *Oswald Mathias Ungers at Belvederestrasse: Self-portrait in the Studio*, in “Athens Journal of Architecture”, n. 8, Issue 4, 2022, pp. 405-438, <https://doi.org/10.30958/aja.8-4-5> (accessed November 23, 2025).

53. B. Groys, *Art Power*, MIT Press, Cambridge 2008; it. trans. 2010, Postmedia, Milan, p.108.

throughout all the interlocking rooms of his studio, as noted by Lucia La Giusa in her contribution. Portaluppi curated an extensive collection of several thousand postcards, gathered from the early 20th-century through the 1970s, organised in multiple filing cabinets⁵⁴. Complementing these was a vast repertoire of images – likewise related to historic buildings, monuments, interiors, and ornamental details – divided into historiographic sections ranging from antiquity to the modern era. Together, they constituted a living imaginary from which the architect continuously drew inspiration. This archival practice – usually associated with the final phase of knowledge acquisition and design production – thus becomes an active agent within the entire *raumplan* studio's interiors, through the strategic use of cladding and wooden samples, deployed with the same rigor of archaeological remains or constructive material display.

Moreover, the complex articulation of the interior space reveals a different logic, recalling a labyrinth, or 'interlocking rooms' that characterise certain hindering architectural studio. This is based on the juxtaposition of different spaces, each one centred on a specific character and autonomy, sometimes arranged in surprising successions, others in a voluntary opposition. The result is an initial disorientation for those entering, who neither have access to the entire spatial configuration of the studio nor can reconstruct it, except through gradual and partial attempts.

At the XVI Triennale di Milano, Guido Cannella, head of the curatorial committee for the seminal edition spanning from 1979 to 1982⁵⁵, organised the second cycle of the architectural section as

54. O. Selvafolta, *L'archivio di immagini di Piero Portaluppi: percorsi formativi e materiali del progetto*, in M. Docci, M. G. Turco (edited by), *L'architettura dell'altra modernità*. Atti del XXIV Congresso di Storia dell'Architettura, Roma 11-13 Aprile 2007, Gangemi Editore, Rome 2007, pp. 212-224.

55. The XVI Triennale di Milano, titled *Città, architettura, design, moda, audiovisivi* (1979/1982) set out to expand its exhibition activity across the entire three-year mandate, aiming to function as a permanent hub for events dedicated to design culture. To reflect this shift, the program was

a double exhibition exploring the interdependency within architectural practice and theory, between knowledge and ideas.

The first, titled *Architecture and Knowledge*, was entrusted to Roberto Gabetti, while the second section on *Architecture and Idea*, was curated and installed by Ado Rossi. In describing the design choices for this exhibition, Rossi writes:

[My exhibition layout] is a wall with several doors; from each door one enters a corridor, and from there, into one single room. In the room is the sought-after object. This path, which carries both archaeological and psychological resonances and takes the form of a Myth, is also the most logical from a distributive standpoint (...).⁵⁶

The most logical distribution layout is that of the gallery, in the specific case a *quasi-enfilade* like, that Rossi associates with the Greek *stoà*'s archetype and with that of the museum, where rooms replay and mirror the exposed works of art. Within the central exhibition hall, Rossi displays the reproduction of Raphael's *School of Athens* (1509-1511) preparatory drawing, whose spatial features inspired the Boullée's design for the Grand Library (1785). In front of the cartoon stands a model of Palladio's Villa Emo (1559-1565), and nearby a few geometric solids are placed against the light blue of the corridor walls.

Objects, paintings, models, and drawings serve as materials through which the narrative is carefully assembled: a kind of exposed autobiography of the references and imaginative world that shape the author's poetics. This spatial approach, which shifts emphasis toward a performative understanding of space, is also evident in the photographic reportage Luigi Ghirri conducted on Rossi's

articulated into three separate exhibition cycles unfolding over the course of the triennium. See: <https://archivi.triennale.org/archive/archivi-triennale/16> (accessed December 6, 2025).

56. A. Rossi, *Architettura/Idea*, in A. Rossi, L. Meda, D. Vitale (edited by), *Architettura/Idea*. Catalogo della XVI Triennale di Milano, Fratelli Alinari, Florence 1981, p. 15, translation by the author.

Milanese studio in via Maddalena between 1989 and 1990⁵⁷. The intricate relationship between the two started from an earlier collaboration for the “Lotus” magazine, and along two exhibitions dedicated to the architect⁵⁸. His visual recordings map the workspace closely intertwined with Rossi’s drawings, furniture, and artefacts mingling with the personal objects that filled, again, the light blue rooms of the studio. Ghirri himself describes the reason for the intellectual *liason*:

There is also a joyous sense of wondering, magically, inside a wonderful toy, getting lost and finding one’s way amid the gears and little wheels, almost as if it were possible to understand the secret that arouses within us such a sense of surprise and amazement. (...). In the end what fascinates me about his work is all this, but it is not a sweet memory, a happily evocative synthesis, nor are these the clever points of a Great Architect. Rather, they are the memories, stories, connections, inventions, and appearance that constitute the various layers of making things of our perceptions.⁵⁹

The image of a set of rooms to be entered, where is possible to find the “sought-after” object, makes the analogical leap to Giulio Camillo’s *Theatre of Memory*. Alongside the taxonomic list, the archive, the collection, and the library, it represents an established generative model of knowledge process. This is based on the loci technique cherished by the *Art of Memory*⁶⁰, and on the idea of defining “an ordered route of places in the mind.

57. P. Costantini (edited by), *Luigi Ghirri, Aldo Rossi: cose che sono solo se stesse*, Electa, Milan 1996.

58. See G. Braghieri, *Aldo Rossi*, Zanichelli, Bologna 1981 and A. Ferlenga, *Aldo Rossi: Architetture, 1959-1987*, Electa, Milan 1987.

59. L. Ghirri, P. Constantini, G. Chiaramonte, *Per Aldo Rossi*, in Id. (edited by), *Niente di antico sotto il sole: scritti e immagini per un'autobiografia*, Società Editrice Internazionale, Turin 1997, pp. 127-129.

60. A. Yates, *The Art of Memory*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1966.

To each is assigned, through an interplay of associations, an image related to the thing to be remembered”⁶¹. Lina Bolzoni precisely describes the structure of this most renowned example:

The structure of Camillo’s theatre appears to have been based on the form of the classical Roman amphitheatre, although in this case the relationship between spectacle and audience was reversed. The spectator was placed at the centre, on the stage, while the spectacle of all reality unfolded around him along seven axes. Each of these consisted of seven tiers, and was marked at its base by a column representing one of the seven known planets and the classical divinity associated with it. However, the array of columns also corresponded to the seven days of Creation, to the first principles of Pythagorean and hermetic philosophy, and to the first seven divine names in the Kabbalistic tradition. The whole of reality – from its first principles to the arts and sciences – was thus arranged around forty-nine principal loci, each place marked by an image. According to the rules of the art of memory, the spectator could employ each one as an *imago agens*, that is, as an image capable of summoning up a network of associations in the mind. Like the pieces on a chessboard, however, the observer was supposed to take note not only of the image, but also where it was placed in relation to everything else in the theatre.⁶²

The logic of *interlocking rooms*, embodied in the gallery-palace-theatre of memory model, shapes the spatial organisation of many architectural studios, functioning as specific spatial trope. Among the many examples, these include the previously mentioned studio

61. L. Bolzoni, *The Gallery of Memory. Literary and Iconographic Models in the Age of the Printing Press*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2001, p. xvii.

62. L. Bolzoni, *Giulio Camillo and the Theater of Knowledge. A Mind Endowed with Windows*, in “Cabinet”, n. 65 Knowledge, 2017-2018, p. 2; <https://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/65/bolzoni.php> (accessed November 14, 2025).

of Portaluppi and the house-studio of Gae Aulenti in Milan's Brera district, presented by Serafina Amoroso. In Aulenti's private apartment, the interior becomes a complex system of passages and interconnected spaces in which the experience of movement – through both the house and the studio – becomes a characterising theatrical feature. The mezzanine, for example, overlooks the living area below, often a stage for semi-public or public meetings in the cultural Milanese circuits. At its far end, it bends to symbolically connect with the intricate, narrow, and vertically articulated space of the studio. The latter – accessible through an independent entrance and still linked to the house via the living area – unfolds across five staggered levels, organised as platforms of varying sizes. More reminiscent of a womb than a traditional workspace, it offers deliberately constricted and partial views along the path to the upper level: a kind of secret room, her personal studio.

Within a *performative logic* – as Lina Bolzoni asserts – the role of the viewer is inverted. The viewer occupies the centre of the space, from spectator to actor. It is precisely around this relational dynamic that the space is constructed. The mission for OMA, with the project for Marina Abramović's Institute for the Preservation of Performance Art (MAI) in 2012, was to combine two different kinds of spaces, that of performance and that of a living archive, where the artist's personal biography would merge with training activities for artists and public audience. In doing so, according to the limitations imposed by the existing structure – the former Hudson theatre in New York – “a new volume is placed within the existing building's shell. This new space provides a monastic ground that is both highly flexible and controlled”⁶³. The “monastic” volume is posed at the centre of the space and divided into three part that are combinable. Around it delves the space of offices, services, and meeting rooms. The focus – both in terms of size and architectural quality – is the performance arena, which in the design concept

63. See the project's description on <https://www.oma.com/projects/marina-abramovic-institute> (accessed November 21, 2025).

acts as a propeller for the entire institute. A place where agents and spectators coexist in the ambiguity of an a-hierarchical stage. The same concept could be noted when looking at Rem Koolhaas office in Rotterdam, also informally called the *aquarium*. The large office has no secrets, no blind spots. Anything “that does not hide a desire to be seen”, to report Giulia Menzietti’s words in dialogue with Cino Zucchi.

The interior space is subdivided by glass walls exposing the entire working cycle: the teams while working, the building materials, the trials and models of the ongoing projects as a unique platform in which the creative (and management) process is promoted to the eyes of the visitors. The workspace thus provides an opposing model to that of the wunderkammer, while maintaining the same scope: the wonder is the working process itself with its actors and spectators placed on the same stage.

Certainly, the reading of the (architect’s) studio is not always clear or self-evident. Epistemic models and their embodiment rarely present themselves in a stable or univocal form. Rather, they appear ambiguous, layered, and elusive. Such conditions persist through coexistence, as an attentive reading of *Sant’Agostino nel suo studio* (1502) by Vittore Carpaccio suggests. Indeed, it is a *com-posed* space, a structured simultaneity. The studio is ultimately an indulgent space, as Enrico Miglietta also underlines: “where architecture preserves its most intimate traces”. One that admits error, revision, and continuous transformation, within which grace manifests itself as the capacity to “deciding within doubt”⁶⁴.

Precisely this coexistence and graduated ambiguity enables the reader, across the collection of studies that follows, to construct a personal and necessarily shifting narrative. One that is not without unexpected analogies: between Mollino’s house and Rossi’s enfilade,

64. It is undoubtedly a risk to describe the studio as a site in which grace manifests itself. A condition characterized by a sense of benevolence, beauty, and indulgence, as well as serenity. In this context, grace does not refer to a supernatural state; rather, as articulated in Paolo Sorrentino’s film *La Grazia* (2025), it denotes the capacity to choose despite a persistent condition of uncertainty.

for instance, or between the interlocking rooms of Plečnik and those of Ungers. These correspondences do not imply direct lineage but recurring spatial questions that resurface across distinct historical and theoretical contexts.

Yet, within the specificity of the possible readings, this extended sequence ultimately does justice to the evident relationship between space and poetics – or, more precisely, its construction – through the emergence of spatial tropes. These operate as conduits, as mediating devices between intellect and the senses: zones of transition in which architectural meaning is neither purely abstract nor entirely phenomenological, but continuously negotiated. It is through these embodiments of mediation that architectural practice is daily informed, shaped, and recalibrated.

Asterisms.

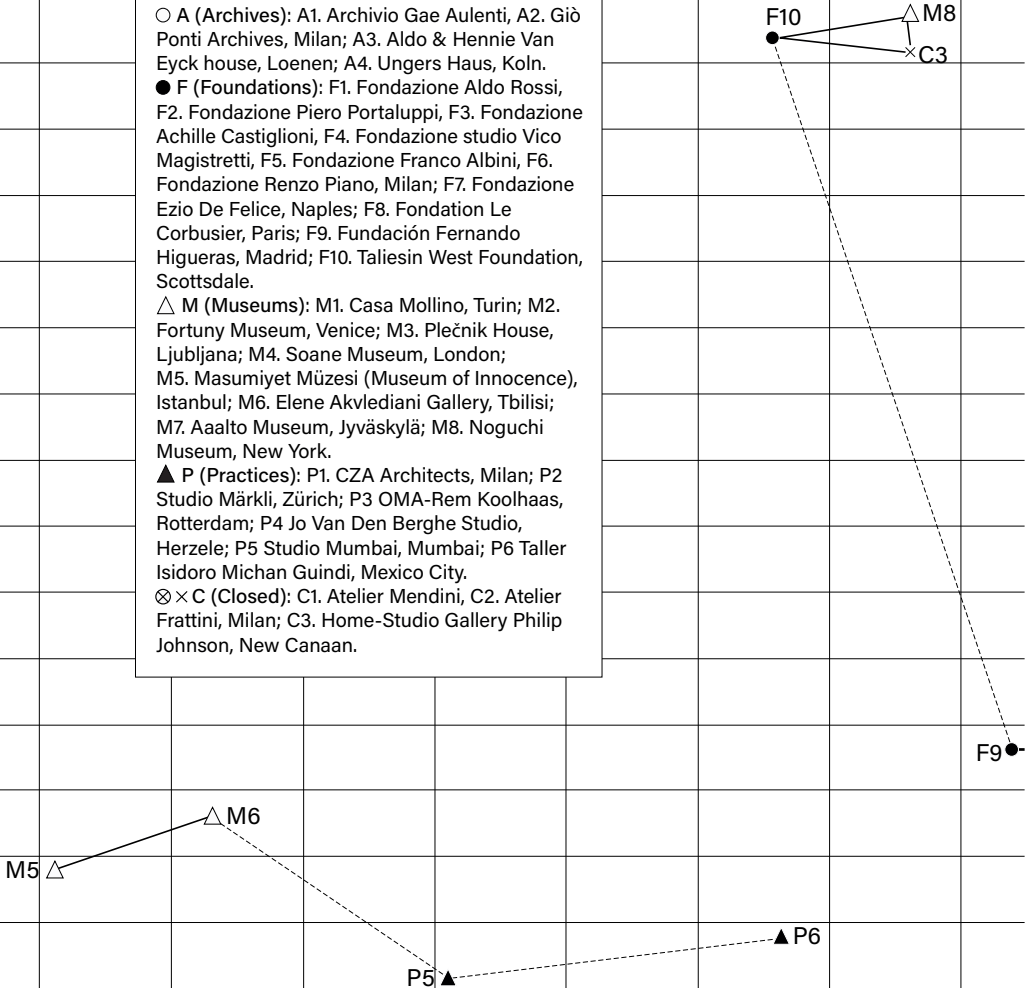
○ A (Archives): A1. Archivio Gae Aulenti, A2. Giò Ponti Archives, Milan; A3. Aldo & Hennie Van Eyck house, Loenen; A4. Ungers Haus, Köln.

● F (Foundations): F1. Fondazione Aldo Rossi, F2. Fondazione Piero Portaluppi, F3. Fondazione Achille Castiglioni, F4. Fondazione studio Vico Magistretti, F5. Fondazione Franco Albini, F6. Fondazione Renzo Piano, Milan; F7. Fondazione Ezio De Felice, Naples; F8. Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris; F9. Fundación Fernando Higuera, Madrid; F10. Taliesin West Foundation, Scottsdale.

△ M (Museums): M1. Casa Mollino, Turin; M2. Fortuny Museum, Venice; M3. Plečnik House, Ljubljana; M4. Soane Museum, London; M5. Masumiyet Müzesi (Museum of Innocence), Istanbul; M6. Elene Akvlediani Gallery, Tbilisi; M7. Aalto Museum, Jyväskylä; M8. Noguchi Museum, New York.

▲ P (Practices): P1. CZA Architects, Milan; P2. Studio Märkli, Zürich; P3. OMA-Rem Koolhaas, Rotterdam; P4. Jo Van Den Berghe Studio, Herzele; P5. Studio Mumbai, Mumbai; P6. Taller Isidoro Michan Guindi, Mexico City.

⊗ × C (Closed): C1. Atelier Mendini, C2. Atelier Frattini, Milan; C3. Home-Studio Gallery Philip Johnson, New Canaan.



Navigating the collection

The atelier, traditionally perceived as a private and introspective space, is here reconsidered as a cultural construct, an active site of production, negotiation, engagement and representation⁶⁵. While aligning with this ambition, the curatorial approach avoids the construction of a clear taxonomy, or a comprehensive state of the art .on the features and the evolution of the architectural studio. Rather than tracing a historical or typological continuum – where such material is, in the specific case of the architectural studio, scarcely available – it assembles a selection of situated cases, conveying a reflection on the material and conceptual conditions of such spaces within the architectural discourse.

As already stated, this inquiry does not claim to be exhaustive, and indeed often proceeds by figurative leaps, fragmented and at times even rhabdomantist. It nonetheless grounds on a defined set of geographic and cultural parameters, with a limited number of criteria guiding the selection. An initial step in the curatorial project, developed within the research framework program of *Display: The Presence of the Future*, focused on considering the specific Milanese context, a particularly rich one offering numerous examples of atelier-museums, foundations, and publicly accessible archives of architecture and design. Within this context, at least twelve cases were identified, most of them still located in the original places, although only in a few instances with the original settings preserved. Thus a preliminary field work served to verify the relevance and consistency of the topic.

Building on some intuitions the survey itself provided while exploring accessible foundations and studios, the research was opened to contributions for the selection of national and international cases through an open call. It was first addressed to colleagues from the research units involved in the *Display* program, with the

65. See T. Avermaete et al., *Authorship as a Construct*, in “Oase”, n. 113 Authorship, 2023, pp. 1-8, <https://oasejournal.nl/en/issue/authorship-authorship-as-a-construct/> (accessed December 2, 2025).

valuable contribution of Marta Atzeni, Filippo Lorenzo Balma, Luca Esposito, Luca Galofaro, Jose Maria Garcia Fuentes, Giulia Menzietti, Miriam Pistocchi and Giulia Setti, with solicited and unsolicited case studies deeply discussed during the writing process.

Progressively, the research took on a more precise and well-defined direction, identifying – through a cross-referenced bibliographic effort between themes and authors – the spatial hypothesis as the foundational research core that would connect the diversity of scientific contributions. This third and longest phase was crucial in refining the spectrum of variations, and spatial possibilities that emerged during the process of selection. It often unfolded through direct dialogue with scholars, whose expertise and deep familiarity with the specific case study proved essential in shaping this constellation.

At that point, the contributions by Marco Addona, Serafina Amoroso, Lucia La Giusa, Gabriele Neri, José Cherem Serur, Duccio Fantoni, Vincenzo Moschetti, Annalisa Trentin, Alejandro Campos Uribe, Jacopo Leveratto and Alessandra Bruno, Lina Malfona, Enrico Miglietta with Jo Van Den Berghe, Isidoro Michan Guindi, Benedetta Patella and Sezin Sarica consistently helped in pushing the research to a certain level of awareness. Many of the case studies submitted as contributions were not necessarily those initially chosen – indeed, some were entirely unexpected – and perhaps for this very reason even more valuable. Assembling the diverse material turned out to be a complex puzzle, and the result is, inevitably, open to debate, as it entails several notable omissions – at times because certain topics, and authors, had already been extensively explored, and at other times due to a lack of sufficient coherence with the research’s aims.

Although the research has consistently maintained a broad openness in terms of case-study selection, certain parameters have gradually consolidated as common features. Indeed, while preserving a wide typological range that explores the various gradations between public and private space – from studio-houses characterised by more intimate or solitary working modalities, to ateliers and workshops where material production becomes a third, more

complex layer of activity – cases were excluded in which the work or study spaces are ancillary, secondary, or lacking distinctive spatial qualities. Across the selected ones, the workspace possesses its own spatial, volumetric, or formal autonomy. In some instances, the studio features are even dominant, overturning traditional domestic hierarchies: the house becomes a space of sociability, an exhibition site, where the private sphere becomes secondary or diluted. Most of the selected examples are situated within a defined historical frame – roughly the 20th-century. There are no canonical or extensively historicised cases, and only a few examples from the contemporary period. In the rare instances where contemporary cases have been addressed, a critical filter has been applied circumventing its immediateness and the lack of critical distance, an approach that often led to stimulating negotiations and discussions among the authors. Finally, as already stated, a necessary condition was a direct and in-depth familiarity between the author and the case study, if not habitual, at least grounded in a solid research engagement and genuine interest.

The collection delves around the two terms of investigation – the spatial features in relation to the architectural poetics and the authorial intentions – entangled in the concreteness of their appearance, atmosphere and materialities. This double fil rouge characterises the two-types contributions. The first ‘spaces/figures’ consists of textual micro-narratives and image-based explanation related to one specific practice. It investigates the spatial features and the relationship between work and space of exposure, posing some questions. For example, is it possible to draw analogies with previous models? And do these analogies reveal other possible deviations?

The second category of contributions ‘dialogues/intentions’ collects longer texts presented through in-depth dialogues. It addresses today’s theoretical questions on the role of exhibiting – and of collecting – within the spaces of contemporary architectural production, understood both as expressions of cultural and operational positioning and as tools for communicating authorial poetics.

Once the ensemble of contributions was defined, the research questioned the ways in which these situated practices could be

effectively communicated within the book's editing. The decision was made to explore their abstraction through drawing. This approach was applied only to the case-studies, which present a tripartite structure, three components that shape the form of the essays. First, a brief text offers a spatial gaze, emphasizing, in turn, the processes, figures, and metaphors that mould the studio through a personal perspective that could often, and perhaps inevitably, misrepresent or betray the original idea, which in most cases remain inaccessible for direct consultation. In addition, authors were asked to provide a selection of photographs of the studio, mainly focusing on its interiors. These images reveal the voyeuristic stance that such spaces evoke – the curiosity, the desire to appropriate privateness, the wish to possess it through the targeted act of photographic recording. The pictures show activities, objects, and modes through which work, study, and the degree of exposure are present and experienced in the space, both using new or archival materials.

The third element consists of a drawing prepared by the curatorship, produced after the first two components and based on objective architectural data – plans and sections – collected for each case-study, even not always feasible. The axonometric drawing offers a scientific lens for dissecting the space again, highlighting, through selected shading, the spatial tropes, invariants, and key devices that transpose specific settings onto a possible classification. It provides both a form of abstraction and a spatial revelation, claiming for links and similarities between the cases. What is proposed here is a form of *critical voyeurism* – a deliberately detached, yet spatially attuned gaze that investigates the studio not through the aura of its inhabitant, but through its spatial logic, its recurring figures, its latent metaphors. In this way, the studio is reframed not merely as the extension of the author's identity, but as a site of generative investigation for the architectural discourse.

Each of the included case-studies contributes to this reframing. They are presented as partial and situated fragments, and at times contradictory. Yet they collectively articulate a field of inquiry, where the discipline rehearses and questions its modes of working, thinking, and communicating.

Organising the material in this volume required a structure flexible enough to reflect the variety of perspectives presented. Instead of relying on fixed or rigid categories, the book uses the idea of *asterisms* – informal groupings of stars that help with navigation – as a guiding model. Unlike official constellations, asterisms are adaptable, overlap with different regions of the sky, and allow for multiple interpretations. This metaphor supports an approach that prioritises connections, cross-readings, and relationships over strict classification.

Following this logic, the contributions have been arranged not only according to geography and spatial characteristics, but also through a retrospective process that identifies shared themes and recurring concerns, while still preserving their distinctiveness. In this way, the curatorial outcome mirrors the complexity of architectural workspaces themselves – shaped by personal experience yet connected through broader collective actions and agencies.

Again: at the same time belonging to the self and to the other.

Figures/Spaces

BY

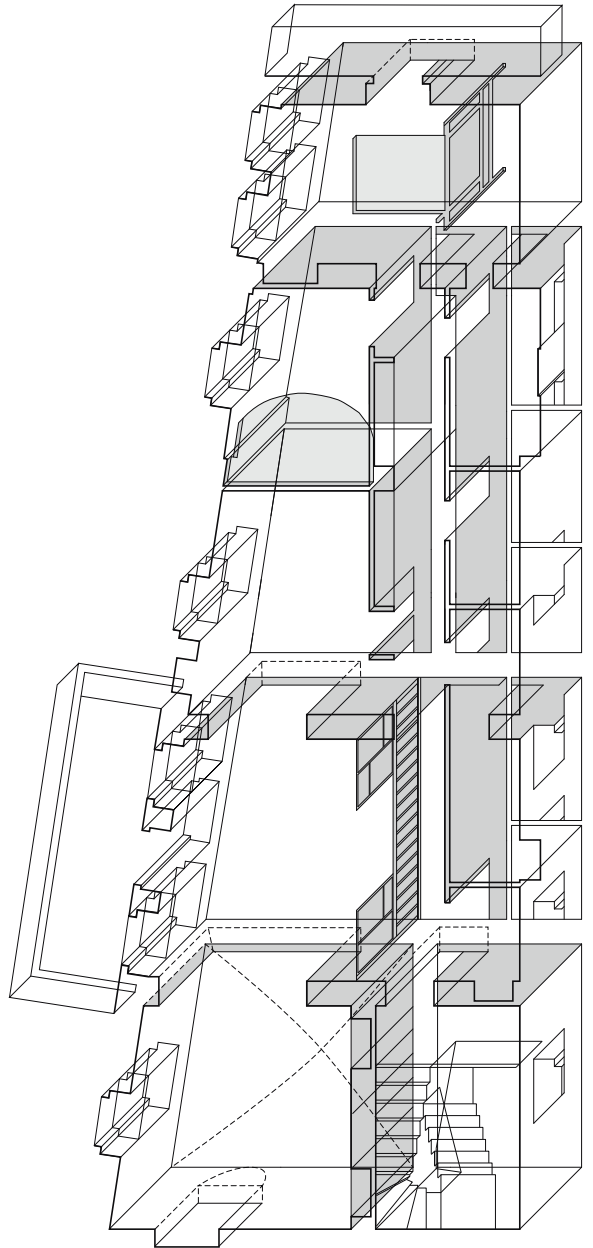
Marco Addona, Serafina Amoroso, Marta Atzeni, Filippo Lorenzo Balma and Miriam Pistocchi, Alejandro Campos Uribe, José Cherem Serur, Luca Esposito, Duccio Fantoni, Luca Galofaro, Josep Maria Garcia-Fuentes, Lucia La Giusa, Jacopo Leveratto and Alessandra Bruno, Lina Malfona, Vincenzo Moschetti, Gabriele Neri, Benedetta Patella, Sezin Sarıca, Giulia Setti, Annalisa Trentin

Not Meant to Be Seen. The Silent Praxis of Casa Mollino

BY

Marco Addona

Casa Mollino house-museum, Turin;
© Fabrizia Berlingieri, Levan Eloshvili.



In this my late maturity, I am preparing, much like a Chinese dignitary who adorns his mausoleum during his lifetime, a sort of Sunset Boulevard in the hallway of my house, where photographs and other memories of my life are arranged in sequence: all beautiful, or almost so.¹

With these words, Carlo Mollino refers to the meticulous collection and arrangement of objects, paintings, and photographs for his apartment at 2 via Napione in Turin.

Casa Mollino, discovered and transformed into a museum only after the author's death, was conceived from the outset as a secret, inaccessible space, intended to contain the narrative of his own life. A narrative that, moving within the walls of the apartment, shapes and inhabits it. As Arnheim writes, "the den, considered in its pure abstract type, is nothing but the physical penetration of the inhabitant into the space"². Drawing on an image recurrent in Mollino's writings – that of the shell – the architectural object is shaped and constructed around the "beast" inhabiting it³. Much like a shell, architecture emerges as an organic extension of the body it shelters, moulded by its presence and needs⁴. From this perspective, the apartment can be read as a space conceived and generated around Mollino himself, a narrative device unfolding across the arc of his life and emphasising its transitory and impermanent nature.

Located next to the Po river, the apartment occupies a liminal position, suspended from the regular grid of the city. Here, the river – an emblem of the relentless flow of time in Heraclitean metaphor

1. F. Irace (edited by), *1905-1973 Carlo Mollino*, Electa, Milano 1989, p. 274, translation by the author.

2. R. Arnheim, *La dinamica della forma architettonica* (1981), Mimesis Edizioni, Milano 2020, p.93, translation by the author.

3. C. Levi, *Casa Miller*, in "Domus", n. 129, September 1938, pp. 1-11.

4. Mollino often employs the metaphor of the shell in his theoretical writings – notably in C. Mollino, *Utopia e ambientazione*, in "Domus" n. 238, September 1949 and Id., *Disegno di una casa sull'altura*, in "Stile", n. 40, April 1944 – as an emblem of the intimate relationship between inhabitant and dwelling. Shells also frequently appear as objects within his interior settings.

– becomes an active agent in the spatial narrative. Even the decision to rent, rather than own the space, reinforces the theme of transience and non-permanence. The narrative intention was thus not to crystallise his image against time, but to entrust memory to time itself, allowing it to be absorbed and ultimately dissolved.

The narrative begins at the point of birth: a polished walnut door conceals another, painted in a pale cream colour, featuring an opaque glass insert framing an elliptical mirror – a direct reference to the symbolic form of the egg. Beyond the threshold, another mirror hides access to the corridor, simultaneously dilating the perception of space and reinforcing the sense of spatial suspension. On the left, a series of Japanese-inspired sliding panels leads to a room with a balcony overlooking the Po, separating the living room from the dining area.

The opening onto the river amplifies the immersive experience of what might be called Mollino's dimension, while the interior walls, covered with curtains, mirrors, and large-scale forest landscapes, seem to blur the edges of the apartment, obscuring, distorting, and expanding its boundaries. This softening of limits allows the body inhabiting the space to be projected into a dream-like, surreal world, a world of *mise-en-scène*.

From the dining room – dominated by an altar-like marble table supported by two classical-style columns and surrounded by *Tulip* chairs – one returns to the corridor, accessible also from the mirrored door. Moving through the bathroom, clad in red, white, and yellow tiles, an elliptical door leads directly to the bedroom, today repurposed as a projection room. From the bedroom, it is possible to return to the corridor and enter the final room, which interrupts and concludes the spatial sequence: the so-called *Butterfly Room*⁵.

Here stands a boat-shaped bed, a clear reference to ancient Egyptian funerary traditions. Surrounding it are the objects Mollino cherished and wished to accompany him into the afterlife. Among

5. Understood, following its French origin, as “beyond the real”.

6. See M. De Giorgi, *Carlo Mollino. Interni in piano sequenza*. Devalle, Minola, Lutrario, Abitare Segesta, Milan 2004.

them, butterflies hold a central role – not merely an homage to feminine beauty, so often captured in his photography, but laden with deeper significance. The word *psyche*, Greek for both butterfly and soul⁷, ties the motif to the psychological and spiritual realm. Mollino chose to surround himself with butterflies, framed and hung on the walls, forming an army of modern-day *ushabti*⁸ – not guardians of physical protection, but rather of the psychological and spiritual landscape, a symbolic mapping of his experiences and inner self.

Casa Mollino emerges as a complex and stratified space, a narrative device and a means of constructing the self. Conceived as a place of retreat and meditation, it echoes the tradition of the Renaissance studiolo: an invisible space, closed to the public, devoted not to daily life or social interaction, but to a silent introspection through architectural project. The prolonged phase of its assembly, extending over eight years, becomes itself an exercise in self-analysis, where the selection and arrangement of objects are acts of interior reflection. This is not a chaotic accumulation, but a carefully curated constellation of material presences, rich with personal and symbolic resonance. Antique, enigmatic objects tied to Mollino's life experience are arranged to form an implicit narrative logic, a modern wunderkammer designed not to elicit wonder from an external viewer, but to engage in a silent dialogue with the architect's individuality – an intimate archive, a deposit of private memories and fragments of a life fixed in space.

7. “The German word *Seele* (soul) is closely related, through the Gothic form *saiwalô*, to the Greek word *aiôlos*, meaning ‘moved’, ‘changing’, something akin to a butterfly – in Greek psyche – fluttering drunkenly from flower to flower, living on honey and love”. C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (1934/54), Bollati Boringhieri, Turin, 1977, translation by the author.

8. *Ushabti* were small mummy-shaped statues, typically made of wood or terracotta. They were placed in tombs alongside the deceased with the hope that they would act on their owner's behalf in the afterlife, thereby sparing them from laboring for eternity. Each *ushabti* bore the name of its owner and was often depicted holding small hoes or other agricultural tools. Known also as “the ones who answer”, they were believed to respond “Here I am” when the gods summoned the deceased to perform any task in the afterlife, taking their place and freeing them from the obligation.

In this sense, the “dimensions” Mollino wrote of in *Vita di Oberon* – “This I do because architecture is for humans, and depends on their dimensions”⁹ – are not to be understood as measurable data, but as other dimensions: surreal, dreamlike, symbolic, capable of shaping an interior landscape.

Casa Mollino, rather than a completed work, stands as a laboratory for these invisible dimensions – a narrative microcosm where architecture becomes a reflection and translation of the human condition in all its imaginative complexity.

9. C. Mollino, *Vita di Oberon*, in “Casabella” n. 10, October 1933, translation by the author.



Casa Mollino, double-door entrance system.
Photo by the author.



Casa Mollino, view of the room with the balcony and sliding panels.
Photo by the author.



Casa Mollino, the living room with fireplace and large-scale wall photographs.
Photo by the author.

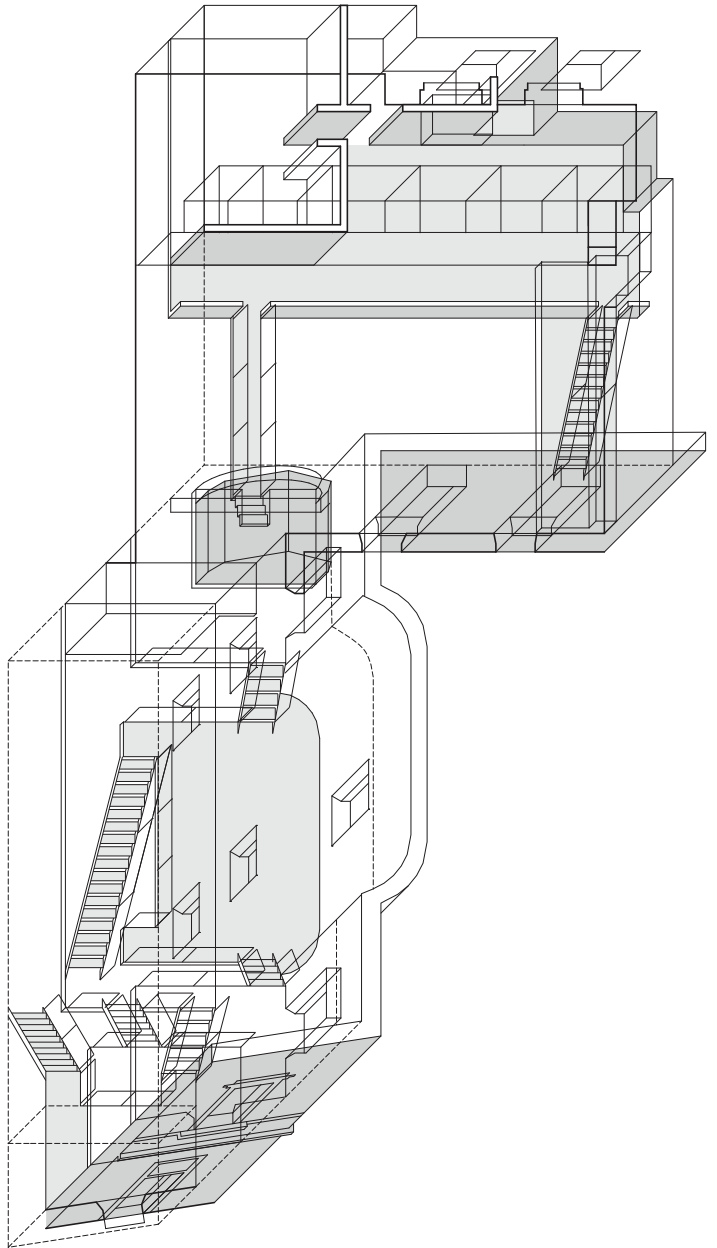


Casa Mollino, the dining room with altar-like table and the connecting door to the corridor.
Photo by the author.

Gae Aulenti's Home-Office: a Spatial Montage of Architecture and Theatre

BY

Serafina Amoroso



Gae Aulenti's home-office¹, where she lived and worked from 1974 until her death in 2012 – and which now houses the architect's archive – is located in a vast 18th-century block and an urban appendage extending from it in the heart of Milan's historic centre. When Aulenti renovated the space, she transformed it into a multi-level environment – “akin to a drawing by Escher”² – with steep metal ramps and staggered floors, merging her living quarters and studio into one dynamic whole. A discreet door links the residence on via Fiori Oscuri to the adjoining building on piazza San Marco. Within the living room, spatial definition is achieved through a strategic arrangement of furniture (mainly bookcases), variations in floor levels and finishes, and a multifunctional “equipped wall”³ that houses ancillary spaces like the bathroom and laundry. This wall is more than just a technical component: it functions as an architectural partition, delineating two distinct zones of the interior – the public and the private – each with its own staging.

The home-office unfolds across three main areas: a double-height living space connected by a stairway and bridge; a vertical, multi-storey studio space accessed through an adjoining door; and a more intimate, cave-like set of rooms that have evolved significantly over time⁴. Along the upper floor's narrow corridor, a bookshelf acts as a spatial threshold, separating the open double-height volume from what was once the master bedroom⁵, now repurposed

1. In 1965, after divorcing her husband Francesco Buzzi Ceriani – father of her only daughter, Giovanna – Aulenti rented a house at 7 via dell'Annunciata, converting its basement into her office. The house was featured in the magazine “Casa Vogue”, n. 11, November-December 1971, pp. 58-63.

2. F. Giudetti, L.C. Szacka, *From My Urban Living Room: Gae Aulenti, Architect, Designer and Public Intellectual*, in “Oase”, n. 116, 2023, p. 95.

3. In the early iterations of the project, dated July 1973, this architectural element – visible in drawings from October 2, 1973 – was not yet present.

4. In the early project versions (July 1973), this part of the house was fragmented into more conventional spaces: a kitchen – compartmentalised but with independent access from outside the apartment – and a service area (a room with a bathroom), accessible from the living room via a small hallway.

5. After incorporating and renovating an adjacent small apartment (accessible from the living room), the bedroom was relocated to this new area and transformed into a double-height space. A beechwood staircase

as a research area for the archive. This corridor leads to a metal bridge that opens onto a private, plant-filled roof terrace, accessed through a small, glazed alcove, it is a transitional space between interior and exterior. In Aulenti's design, the stairways and the footbridge are not merely functional elements; they serve as spatial and architectural devices that disrupt linear perception. These features multiply visual and experiential layers, turning the home-office into a sequence of interconnected scenes, much like a montage of interconnected sequences.

A theatrical sense of space, clear in her architectural work, predates her ventures into stage design. In fact, it was Aulenti's architectural vision that influenced her scenographic work, not the reverse. "In her hands, stage design is in no way simply a backdrop; it is an integral part of the performance. And Ronconi, working with her, has himself become something of an architect, dealing more and more in his theatre with a sense of space"⁶.

During her time with the Laboratorio Teatrale di Prato⁷ – a hub of interdisciplinary collaboration – Aulenti helped pioneer two major research areas: a redefinition of scenic space as part of dramaturgy, and a renewed relationship between actor, word, and character⁸. Her scenography for *Le Baccanti* is a compelling case in point. Presented in the rooms and corridors of a former orphanage, the performance capitalised on the perception of 'transit' – focusing on the movement from one room to another – manipulating space by narrowing or closing openings⁹. This same strategy of spatial transition can be seen in her Milan home-office, where she

– serving simultaneously as a modular open storage below and a bookshelf-lined landing and passage above – led to the master bathroom on the upper floor. This remains its current configuration.

6. V. Gregotti, *Building a Passage*, in "Artforum", n. XXIV/8, 1986, p. 74.

7. In 1975, Luca Ronconi was commissioned by the city of Prato to establish an interdisciplinary research laboratory at the Teatro Metastasio. This experience, which lasted until 1978, involved various prominent figures, including Aulenti, Franco Quadri, Edoardo Sanguineti, and Umberto Eco.

8. M. Giovannelli, *Una scena da riscrivere insieme. Il Laboratorio di Prato (1976-78)*, in "Versants", n. 70, 2, 2023, p. 160.

9. Ivi, p. 163.

reconfigures existing architecture into a layered system of interconnected, yet distinct, zones. She highlights the differences between these areas through clear transitions, using elevated walkways and a careful, deliberate selection of materials. Moreover, Aulenti's use of hinge elements – such as the hidden door connecting the living room and office, the 'thick and equipped' wall dividing public and private areas, the bridge linking interior to exterior, and the metal staircases threading through different levels – underscore her role as a 'stage director': they are not mere architectural solutions but theatrical tools, orchestrating the user's experience as if on a stage.

Her collaborations with artists and professionals across disciplines allowed her to experiment continuously with the integration of the arts. From this perspective, her home-office emerges as a polysemic and richly layered spatial apparatus, where different scenarios and settings are both distinct and interdependent. Her work affirms the profound interconnectivity of artistic disciplines and shows how cross-disciplinary insight can spark architectural innovation. "It was no accident that Aulenti became a stage designer, for this was a logical step in her architectural discourse"¹⁰.

As Vittorio Gregotti noted, Aulenti's projects are especially revealing when she designs for herself. In her apartment in Milan, "begun in 1973, the entire tradition of the modern dwelling seems to achieve a sort of calm maturity, though the apartment retains a qualitative experimental tension"¹¹. Gregotti¹² observed that two recurring themes in Aulenti's work are centrality and the disruption or variation of the vertical plane, each contributing to the internal complexity of her architecture. Centrality is often destabilised by dynamic tensions that distort geometric forms, while vertical disruptions, inspired by the ancient ruins Aulenti encountered in the Yucatán, appear in numerous works, including her contribution to the 1972 MoMA exhibition *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape* and the custom bookshelf she designed for her daughter in her Milan

10. V. Gregotti, *Building a Passage*, cit., p. 75.

11. Ivi, p. 74.

12. Ivi, p. 72.

home-office¹³, echoing her unrealised scenography for *Utopia* (1974–75)¹⁴ at the Haymarket Ice Rink in Edinburgh¹⁵.

As Luca Molinari¹⁶ points out, Aulenti also had a long-standing obsession with the diagonal, whether in plan or volume, as a spatial organiser, an approach that breaks orthogonality and introduces perceptual dissonance. This motif, shared with figures like Claude Parent, Ettore Sottsass, Aldo Rossi, and Carlo Aymonino, runs through much of her work¹⁷. In the Milan home-office, particularly in the studio portion, she creates perceptual sequences that heighten spatial tension, invoking both Piranesi's complex spatial paradigms¹⁸ and Eisenstein's cinematic approach to space¹⁹.

Joseph Rykwert noted that Aulenti, perhaps better than any other

13. The original drawings are dated January 9, 1974.

14. This work resulted from Luca Ronconi's dismantling and recomposition of texts from six comedies by Aristophanes.

15. See A. Coppa, D. Petullà, N. Artioli (eds.), *Gae Aulenti: Lo Spazio Scenico*, Libri Scheiwiller, Milan 2024, p. 41.

16. Luca Molinari, *Gae Aulenti Inesauribile*, in "Doppiozero", June 21, 2024, <https://www.doppiozero.com/gae-aulenti-inesauribile>.

17. See, for example, her designs for the Olivetti store in Buenos Aires (1968), the Fiat store in Zürich (1973), or Claudio D'Angelo's apartment in Milan (1976).

18. As analysed by Tafuri, the evolution of dynamic and fluid space in modern architecture does not derive solely from the revolutionary ideas of the historical avant-garde. It also stems from earlier sources, such as the 18th-century works of Piranesi. In Piranesi's architectural engravings, the centre shifts from the physical core of the composition to a dynamic, moving point. This shift enables the work to be perceived through multiple focal centres, as noted by Ulya Vogt-Göknil. See U. Vogt-Göknil, *Giovanni Battista Piranesi "Carceri"*, Origo Verlag, Zürich 1958.

19. Piranesi's influence is emphasized in filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein's analysis of the *Carceri* series. He identifies a continuous perspective composed of deep spatial layers, not linked through a linear sequence but through sharp spatial juxtapositions. This effect relies on the viewer's eye continuing movement by inertia, similar to cinematic movement and the "montage technique of sequential juxtaposition." See Y.A. Bois, *Introduction to Eisenstein's Essay on 'Montage and Architecture'*, in "Assemblage", n. 10, December 1989, p. 128. Eisenstein reintroduced the physical experience of the viewer into the abstract field of architecture, highlighting bodily movement as a vital and often overlooked architectural material. By emphasising the observer's movement, he bridged the gap between the physical experience of architecture and its representation in cinema.

of her contemporaries,

learned one of the crucial lessons of the masters of the modern movement [...]: the importance of the ‘promenade architecturale’²⁰. Yet she extended its conceptual range to incorporate the complexity of the urban context as well. Aulenti famously declared that everything she designed – whether furniture, interiors, or stage sets – should contain “the promise of a whole city”.²¹

This vision is the connective thread running through all her work.

In her Milan home-office, that promise becomes literal. The system of staggered floors, metal walkways, and staircases²² creates shifting compressions and expansions of space. Aulenti wasn’t concerned with decorating surfaces through fabrics, mirrors, or marble. For her, architecture was about defining space through ‘structures’ that could stand alone, complete and inhabitable, even when empty. These frameworks were intended to be strong yet flexible enough to accommodate personalisation. “Aulenti was very careful not to establish dependencies between objects and pieces of furniture, nor between the and the space [...]. From the beginning, she aimed to design a place that would serve its inhabitants rather than requiring special care and specific usage”²³.

20. “The phrase is Le Corbusier’s, and he meant by it the experience of buildings as a series of obstacles around which, and through which, the visitor makes his way, employing his memory to reconstitute the building in his mind out of the fragments he encounters on his path”. See: J. Rykwert, *Gae Aulenti’s Milan*, in “Architectural Digest”, 47, n. 1, January 1990, p. 94.

21. Aulenti, quoted in J. Rykwert, *Gae Aulenti’s Milan*, cit., p. 94.

22. These ‘structures’ – essentially ‘sculptural architectural’ elements, borrowing from a definition used by Enrico Prandi – resemble temporary or ephemeral architectures, machines, and devices. They embody an attempt to unite the transient with the eternal. Examples include the framed exhibition installations at various Triennials or Edoardo Persico’s metal advertising structure in Milan’s Galleria Vittorio Emanuele (1934). See: E. Prandi, *Lo scultoreo architettonico in Italia come metodo compositivo. Dalle impressioni ai principi*, in “FAMagazine. Ricerche e progetti sull’architettura e la città”, n. 54, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.12838/fam/issn2039-0491/n54-2020/715>.

Ultimately, Aulenti's home-office was²⁴ a space that defied conventional interior logic. It respects the rigors of the above-mentioned 'structural' frameworks while unfolding with the complexity and ascending intensity of a labyrinth. It is a living expression of an architectural thought made personal, a built manifesto of her unique and visionary voice.

23. A. Zabalbeascoa, *The House of the Architect*, Gustavo Gili, Barcelona 1996, p. 18.

24. The studio is currently occupied by the *London Art showroom*. As a result, the original spatial tensions - previously oriented upward, from the basement reception area to the private apartment above - are no longer as perceptible. Nevertheless, the Piranesian quality of the space remains intact.



Gae Aulenti in her office.
Photo by Mauro Calligani, © Archivio Gae Aulenti.



The living room and the flyover passage toward the terrace.
Photo by Carla De Benedetti (1975), © Archivio Gae Aulenti.



The entrance on the living room and the stairs connecting to the second level.
Photo by Carla De Benedetti (1975), © Archivio Gae Aulenti.



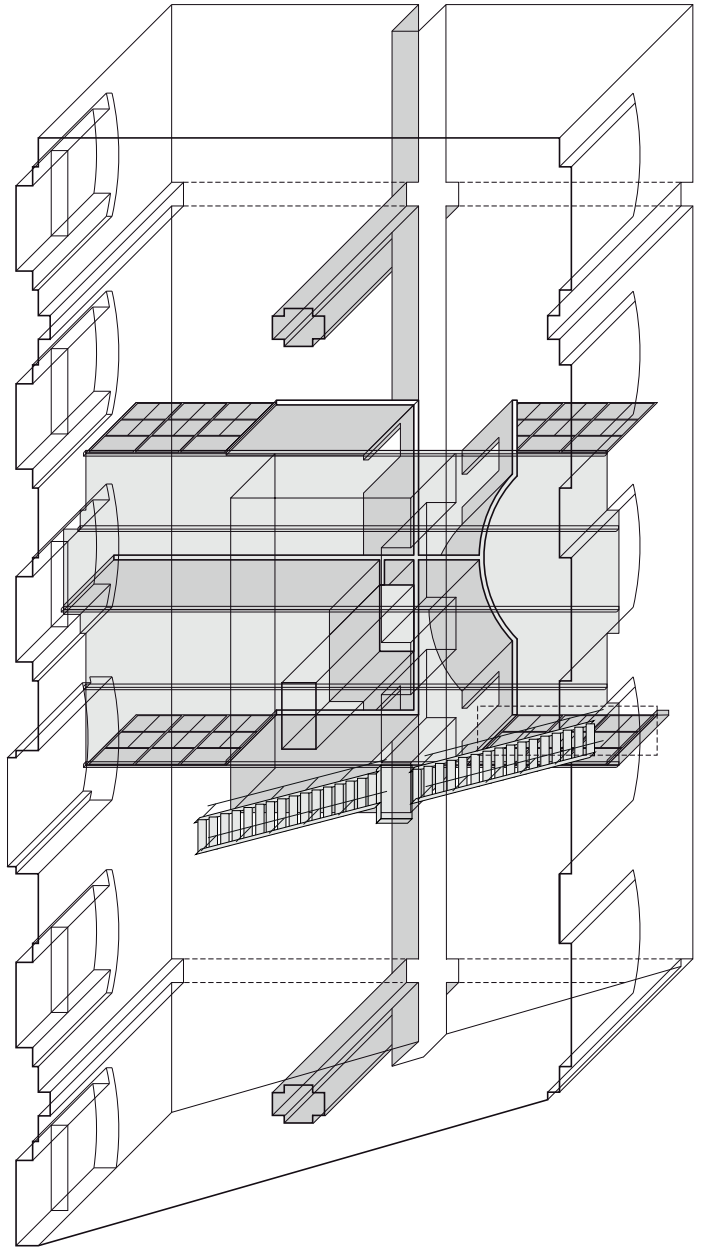
The mezzanine's space of the library, today the office archive.
Photo by Carla De Benedetti (1975), © Archivio Gae Aulenti.

The Shophouse of a 21st-Century Rammendino

BY

Filippo Lorenzo Balma
Miriam Pistocchi

Atelier Mendini, Milan; © Fabrizia Berlingieri, Levan Eloshvili.



When, in 1989, Francesco and Alessandro Mendini decided to open their studio, the ground-floor space in the inner courtyard of 24 via Sannio in Milan still looked like a mechanic's workshop. The building itself, however, had a much older story to tell: originally, it had been part of the Brown Boveri company, whose factory was located nearby in Piazzale Lodi. The structure is a typical Milanese *palazzo di ringhiera*, with workshops on the ground floor and workers' residences on the upper levels. The workshop specialised in small components for train manufacturing, and thanks to dedicated tracks, train cars could enter directly into the building.

The atelier on via Sannio is the last in a series of studios that Alessandro Mendini has led throughout his career. Still a student, together with Ferruccio Villa and Mario Brunati, he opened his first studio on via San Maurilio, which he later moved for a brief period to via Jan, near his birth house. Subsequently, as an associate of the Nizzoli studio, he worked on via Rossini, and later, he opened his first personal studio on the same street. His collaboration with magazines such as "Domus" and "Casabella", as well as with groups like "Alchimia", led him to transform even their offices into spaces for his own creative work.

This continued until 1989 when the commission for the Groningen Museum became the occasion for the Mendini brothers to open a studio together. They acquired two adjoining ground-floor units and chose to preserve, at least in part, the space's industrial past. The large granite columns and steel ceiling beams were left exposed, and a mezzanine made of Innocenti pipes was added. The walls were painted yellow and light blue and gradually filled with large canvases and prints from Mendini's creative universe. The space itself was occupied by large desks and drafting tables, which would soon give way to the first computers.

The atelier is probably one of the numerous rooms that, as Maria Teresa Feraboli notes, have dotted Mendini's life¹.

1. M.T. Feraboli, *Camere Senza Vista*, in F. Irace (edited by), *Io sono un drago. La vera storia di Alessandro Mendini*, Electa, Milan 2024, pp. 83-91.

It is yet another wunderkammer that inspired the designer – just as it was the eclectic living room of his aunt and uncle Boschi di Stefano’s home, which with his furnishing felt “like water for fishes: a vital element” during his childhood, as Mendini stated². In the workspace, in fact, the typical wunderkammer idea of the patchwork, returns. From the house of childhood to his atelier, the juxtaposition of forms, colours, fragments, and *objets trouvés* has characterised his work, becoming Mendini’s manifesto as a designer.

Indeed, as many authors outlined, the poetic of Mendini is recognisable in a Pointillism action, which is evident in works such as the *Proust* couch or the setup *Interno di un Interno* – another room – but is also present in all of his projects from graphic to architecture. It is a mending work that coincidentally recalls his family name. As Mendini himself reminded, the word Mendini derives from the humble Medieval craft of the *rammendini*, which is today identifiable in the English term “to mend”³. As in his famous drawing *I am a dragon*, for Mendini the project is like playing the game of the *cadavre exquis*, in which memories and fantasies merge in a new design with an unexpected and novel meaning.

The same attitude is reflected in his way of working and designing. Probably because of his intense curiosity and familiarity with editorial work in magazines, the designer used to involve a vast number of figures from different backgrounds⁴. In the same way he composed his graphic patterns, Mendini used to combine the various experiences of his collaborators.

Furthermore, in the years following the opening of the studio, Mendini acquired the apartments directly above it and connected the house and studio with a tall staircase, consolidating that relationship between house and workshop, which, in pre-industrial times, had defined the essence of craftsmanship and which Mendini found

2. A. Mendini, *Il mio arredo*, in “Domus”, n. 624, January 1982, pp. 32-33.

3. A. Mendini, *Storielle di design (con morale)*. *Lectio laurea ad honorem*, Politecnico di Milano, 5 April 2006.

4. From the interview to Fulvia and Elisa Mendini, and Beatrice Felis, Milan 27 March 2025.

fascinating. In this sense, the atelier coherently translates the poetic of the mending into his workspace; the birth of the shophouse is again a patching of the different housing units progressively acquired.

In a speech in 2006, Mendini warmly reminded the previous householders of the three houses (a labourer, the widow of a metalworker, and a tiler), maybe as a sign of respect or maybe for his nature of rammendino, the designer did not “violate” their houses with new furnishing. Instead, he attempted to “improve their humble status quo” by “retracing and simulating the acts of dwellings” of the previous inhabitants⁵.

Similarly, Mendini designed the workspaces of the atelier whilst complying with the industrial aesthetic of the garage, although very distant from his notorious design language. He created his last new *wunderkammer* through the collection and, more or less conscious, arrangement of old and new objects inside the former workshop. Preexisting industrial elements, souvenirs, ancient family furniture, and freshly completed projects became fond memories and new sources of inspiration for his team’s design process.

However, the Atelier Mendini, as it appears today, is somewhat different from how it looked when the Mendini brothers opened it in 1989. At the end of 2018, under the direction of Alessandro Mendini, the studio was halved, and this half has remained almost unchanged since then. Nowadays, the space appears frozen as it was seven years ago. Once occupied by his collaborators, the desks now work as showcases for the infinite number of objects produced and binders of documents left by him. As unconscious custodians of his legacy, time and memory have gently transformed once-inspirational fragments into crystallised art pieces – quietly displayed in what feels like a nostalgic museum.

5. A. Mendini, *Storielle di design (con morale)*. *Lectio laurea ad honorem*, cit.

Working on the indexing of the archive with the long-time collaborator Beatrice Felis, Mendini's daughters Fulvia and Elisa are still thinking about the future of this space. In this condition of uncertainty, the atmosphere carries the scent of a Proustian madeleine - an evocative fragrance that consoles Mendini's admirers across generations.



General view of the interior, highlighting the two-level layout with a mezzanine constructed using scaffolding tubes, and the staircase leading to Mendini's apartment above.
Photo by the authors (2025).



View of the workspace at ground level.
Photo by the authors (2025).



View of the workspace from Mendini's office on the mezzanine level.
Photo by the authors (2025).



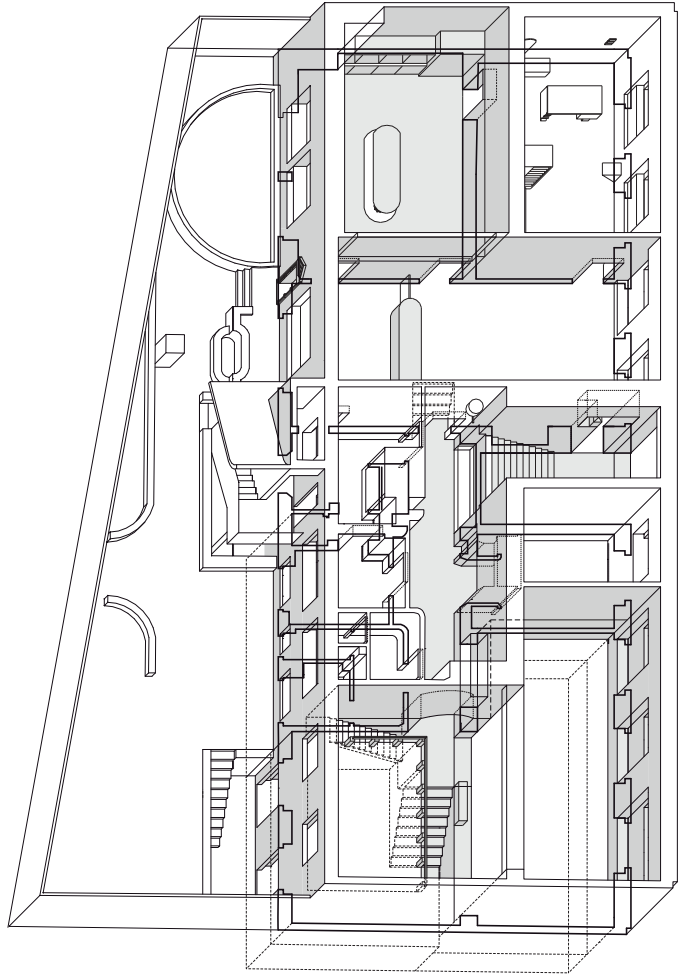
View towards the entrance and Mendini's office on the mezzanine level.
Photo by the authors (2025).

The Back Side of Piero Portaluppi's Studio

BY

Lucia La Giusa

Piero Portaluppi office, Milan; © Fabrizia Berlingieri, Levan Eloshvili.



0 1 5



At the peak of his career, Piero Portaluppi acquired a plot of land in the heart of Milan's bourgeois centre, not far from his own home Casa degli Atellani. There, he set out to design a building that would house both apartments and his personal studio. The site, a triangular block enclosed by via San Vittore, via Bardello, and via Morozzo della Rocca streets, became the canvas for one of his most refined architectural statements. Between 1934 and 1938, the design emerged as a variant within Cesare Albertini's town plan, a quiet revolution drawn into the city's fabric.

The building is wedged between two others, presenting a single public façade on via Morozzo della Rocca, where Portaluppi unveils the experimental spirit of his mature phase. His unique brand of rationalism – poised between tradition and innovation – comes alive here, driven not by academic orders or ornamentation, but by bold material and technological research. This direction, which began in 1933 with his project for Casa in via Foppi, marked a departure from the polished neoclassical language that had defined his earlier work. Now, all embellishments were stripped away – even the eaves disappeared – replaced by clean planes and the invisible logic of function. Every element lies flush to the surface. The crowning is achieved simply by recessing the top floor. Only a few sculptural accents break the flatness: the spouts beneath the windows, and the industrial elegance of metal rivets securing the white chrome panels along the base, some details introduced in the revised plan of late 1938.

The initial design, submitted to the city in May 1938, conformed to the prescriptions of the Commissione d'Ornamento, which had shaped Milanese façades since the 19th-century – clean, symmetrical, and harmoniously scaled. In this spirit, the main façade is composed around a central portal, structured by a strict modular grid, within which every element – windows, cladding, proportions – is precisely calibrated. The original vision called for polished slabs of Montorfano granite or Serizzo Ghiandone. Yet the built version, while still symmetrical and modular grid, introduced striking modifications. The base, now clad in white metal plates, nods to the Viennese Secession and the aesthetics of speed, machinery,

and modernity. Below that, a black granite plinth from Anzola anchors the façade and discreetly opens into window wells lighting the subterranean spaces, while the upper façade is clad in large rectangular slabs of Serpentino stone. Circular windows were introduced to the rear façade after the relocation of the service lift, allowing for a more rational division between service and private entrances. The atrium, spanning two levels, is an opulent threshold: its staircase, walls, and floors are lined in green malachite marble from Challant, while the upper landing – where stairways and elevators lead to the housing units – is clad in luminous statuary white marble, punctuated by horizontal malachite bands.

But the most daring architectural gesture lies in the design of the studio.

Where the apartments above follow a more traditional Milanese layout – with a central corridor flanked by service rooms at the rear and living quarters along the façade – the studio breaks from convention. It occupies the entire basement and part of the mezzanine, unfolding as a sculptural composition of space and light. Here, Portaluppi constructs a spatial narrative of rising volumes, double and triple heights, interlocking rooms, and cascading staircases – a clear homage to Adolf Loos's *raumplan*. And he signals this interior complexity on the exterior too, especially in the asymmetrical design of the studio's rear façade: a poetic play of solids and voids, rhythm and rupture.

The studio entrance is discreet, to the right of the main atrium. A marble portal frames Portaluppi's personal logo – also found on his architectural cartouches – and leads into a soaring reception hall at the street level. From here, one passes into the meeting room and the architect's private office, also located on this level. Descending a short flight of steps beneath the atrium staircase, one enters the draughts' hall: a dramatic, triple-height space animated by the interpenetration of volumes. Stairs wind further down to storage and cellar areas, or rise outward through an external stair to a private rear garden.

That garden – an oasis set with Roman-era busts and columns – is also accessible via a door tucked behind the reception area, or

via a staircase hidden behind the porter's lodge. It's a place of retreat, history, and quiet grandeur.

Throughout the studio, samples of claddings, woods, and glass are applied directly in situ, serving not only a decorative purpose but also fulfilling a function of practical professional utility. What elevates the studio beyond functional design is Portaluppi's masterful layering of surfaces and atmospheres: fine woodwork, polished stone, photographic panels, and archaeological fragments coalesce into a space that is both rigorous and richly personal. The studio becomes a modern wunderkammer, a cabinet of architectural curiosity.



Reception hall; © Fondazione Piero Portaluppi.

In the foreground on the left, set within a niche, is a large-scale photographic reproduction of the Vitruvian definition of Architecture. Also to the left, the staircase leads to the drafters' hall, adjacent to the sundial designed and drawn by Portaluppi. On the far right, one of the two doors to the meeting room is visible. In the background, the door opening onto the garden is clad with samples of wallpaper selected by the architect. The external jambs of this same door are framed by a Roman-era portal, into which Portaluppi had engraved in Milanese dialect: "ride chi sciup'or" (he laughs who wastes gold).



Portaluppi's Private Office.

Photo by P. Paoletti, © Fondazione Piero Portaluppi.

Inside, the architect kept a personal collection of magazines, books, postcards, rare volumes, prints, reels of amateur film, and sundials of his own design. The entrance door is covered with a map of the city of Milan. The flooring is made of burnt-brown Suberit. The furniture was crafted by Molinari. The desk combines modern elements (a top in silver walnut and drawers in maple) with a 16th-century sculpture by Fantoni of Bergamo. On the back wall: to the left, an altarpiece by Agostino da Caversano; to the right, a photographic close-up of the eyes of Portaluppi's three grandchildren.



Draughts' hall; © Fondazione Piero Portaluppi.

In the foreground on the left, a loggia is supported by a pillar inlaid with pieces of glass block. At the far left, the access corridor is paved with samples of Italeum. The back wall features a large-scale photograph of constructive details and elements useful to the draughtsmen. The space contains numerous enlargements of architectural drawings and details, material catalogues, and a collection of ancient marbles known as the Collezione Recani, comprising approximately 1.500 marble and stone samples unearthed from Roman excavations.



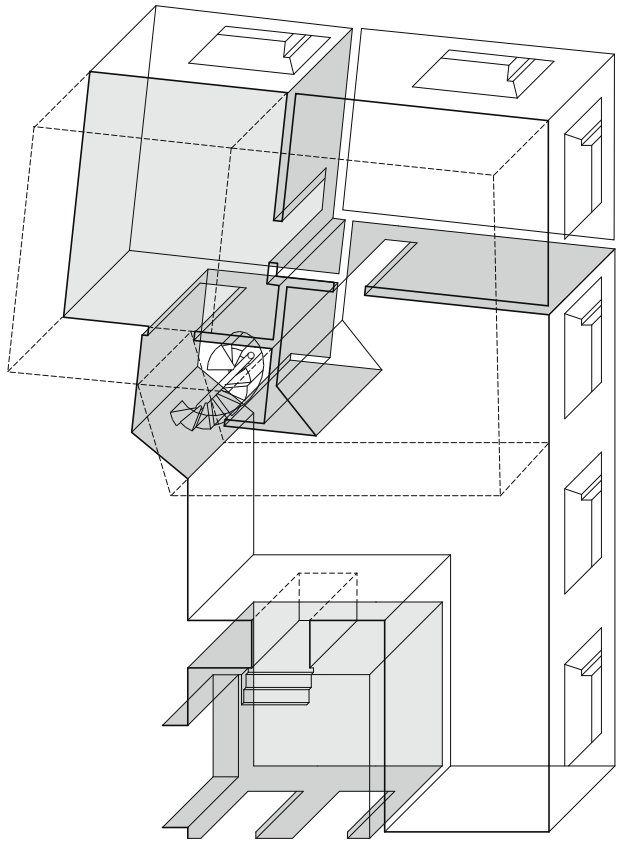
Meeting Room; © Fondazione Piero Portaluppi.
To the left, large windows open onto the garden, accompanied by further furnishings designed by the architect. Statues, photographs, books, magazines, and memorabilia complete the room.



Vico Magistretti Foundation. From Studio to Museum, and Back Again

BY

Gabriele Neri



Unlike the well-established typology of the ‘artist’s house’ – exemplified by numerous cases from Giulio Romano’s residence in Mantua to John Soane’s house in London and many others throughout the 20th-century¹ – where the intent of self-representation and preservation was embedded from the outset, architecture and design studios in Italy have, for the most part, been dismantled following the death of their occupants. For this reason, spaces such as the former studios of Vico Magistretti, Achille Castiglioni, and Franco Albini in Milan – which were preserved and opened to the public after the death of their respective founders – may be considered as ‘unexpected museums’, or even ‘accidental museums’. In these cases, the memory of the past and its re-reading coexist – through strategies that are not merely conservative but also design-oriented – creating a hybrid and experimental typology.

The Vico Magistretti Studio Museum Foundation is a particularly emblematic case. Following the architect’s death in 2006, his family chose to preserve the spaces that had previously housed first his father Pier Giulio Magistretti’s (1891-1945)² studio, and later Vico’s own, with the aim of safeguarding and promoting his legacy. The location is itself quite unique. Situated at the corner of via Conservatorio and via Bellini in Milan, directly opposite the church of Santa Maria della Passione, the studio occupies the mezzanine floor of a building designed in 1933 by Pier Giulio. From its windows, one can see Palazzo Archinto (1837), designed by Vico’s ancestor Gaetano Besia (1791-1871)³, while the adjacent building was

1. E. Hüttinger (edited by), *Künstlerhäuser: Von der Renaissance bis zur Gegenwart*, Waser, Zürich 1985; C. Mazzarelli, *La casa d’artista*, in F. Irace (edited by), *Interni moderni. L’architettura dello spazio domestico moderno*, Carocci, Rome 2015, pp. 229-252, 317-318.

2. Among Pier Giulio Magistretti’s works, the Palazzo dell’Arengario stands out, designed in collaboration with Giovanni Muzio, Enrico Agostino Griffini, and Piero Portaluppi. See G. Neri, *Il Palazzo dell’Arengario: cronologia*, in “Casabella”, n. 799, March 2011, pp. 96-97.

3. Palazzo Archinto on via Passione is one of the last significant examples of late Neoclassical architecture in Milan. Construction began in 1833 and continued until 1837 for the main structural elements, extending further for the decorative program.

designed by Vico himself in the 1960s⁴. He moved into the studio in 1945, the year the war ended, he completed his degree, and – tragically – his father passed away.

In addition to storage and archive rooms located in the basement, the former studio – now the Foundation – consists of approximately eighty square metres divided into three rooms, each treated differently. The first and largest space, where Magistretti worked alongside his long-time assistant (the surveyor Franco Montella), has been completely emptied to accommodate an annually rotating temporary exhibition. The second room, located on the corner and once used as Magistretti’s private workspace, has remained largely unchanged, featuring plywood panels still covered with notes, postcards, and vintage photographs. Today it serves as the Foundation’s main office. The third room remains a meeting space, with its original large wooden table (chosen by Pier Giulio), illuminated by a huge Sonora lamp designed by Vico, accompanied by a variety of mismatched chairs – also designed by him – and architectural models lining the walls. Compared to the scale and corporate structure of many of his contemporaries’ studios, Vico’s space was more of a modest atelier: “I chose to be an architect, not a manager. Just look at my studio: it’s laughable. But I’ve designed important things”⁵.

Since 2010, the main room has hosted annual temporary exhibitions that explore Magistretti’s career from various perspectives. Among these, one particular exhibition in 2021 stood out for its subtle reflection on the nature and transformation of the space itself. While a major retrospective was being held at the Triennale di Milano⁶, via Conservatorio hosted *Magistretti Revisited*, curated by Rosanna Pavoni with Margherita Pellino. This show focused on a specific kind of atmospheric reconstruction. Thanks to the

4. F. Irace, V. Pasca, *Vico Magistretti architetto e designer*, Electa, Milan 1999, p. 73.

5. *Vico Magistretti* in <https://www.vicomagistretti.it/it/fondazione#storia> (accessed June 6, 2025).

6. G. Neri (edited by), *Vico Magistretti Architetto milanese*. Catalogue of the exhibition at Triennale di Milano (May-September 2021), Electa, Milan 2021.

recovery of original studio furnishings, the space was reconfigured (by Valentina Cerra, Chiara Corbani, and Luca Poncellini) to resemble its state when Magistretti and Montella worked there, striking a delicate balance between philological rigor and creative reinterpretation, offering visitors a meaningful flashback rather than a literal reconstruction.

The reinstalled elements included draughting tables, cabinets, drawers, chairs, prototypes, posters, notes, photographs, and even personal objects such as eyeglasses and Montella's cigarette pack (it is said that Vico only smoked to celebrate completing a project). However, bright red lines were drawn across the grey-painted parquet floor, somewhere between a comic book effect and a crime scene diagram. These lines served the dual purpose of undercutting any solemnity or overly pedantic philology, while also transparently indicating – through small arrows – the new positioning of furniture compared to the original layout. Magistretti's own words, drawn from reports, notes, and interviews, accompanied the exhibition, “presented as enlarged notebook pages, as if the installation itself became a giant sketchbook to step inside”⁷.

This scenographic approach was not an end in itself; it functioned as a support structure for a second narrative, consisting of Magistretti's architectural and design projects, which visitors could explore along the way. Both original and reconstructed furnishings were used as display supports and containers. For instance, the old cabinets – dating back to Pier Giulio – could be opened to reveal archival drawings, while a vintage photo of Vico and Montella placed on the drafting table offered further depth to the evocation, even while clearly acknowledging the staged nature of the current setup.

The result was a hall-of-mirrors effect – or *matryoshka* doll – blurring the lines between original atmosphere and new narrative, between container and content, between contemplation and immersion, between ‘didactic’ and ‘experiential’ modes. The particular

7. Fondazione studio museo Vico Magistretti, press kit of the exhibition *Magistretti Revisited* (May 2021–December 2022). The graphic design was done by Studio Bunker.

historical moment of the exhibition further complicated this interplay of doubling and reconstruction. Due to ongoing pandemic restrictions, the show opened exclusively online, accompanied by a dedicated video that allowed a wider, remote audience to participate in the *mise-en-scène*. This added dimension echoed a recent doubling of the archive itself: alongside the kilometres of rolled-up drawings and tons of folders stored in the basement, there now exists a remarkable digital copy, freely accessible to users around the world⁸.

No one can predict how many years, or decades, such spaces, deeply embedded in the city's cultural fabric yet inherently fragile, will survive under current conditions. Precisely for this reason, these 'doublings' – whether narrative devices like exhibitions or dissemination tools like digital archives – seem to capture, with precision and sensitivity, the ongoing challenges that the memory and future of the architectural and design project entail.

8. See <https://archivio.vicomagistretti.it/magistretti/> (accessed June 6, 2025).



Magistretti Revisited, Vico Magistretti Studio Museum Foundation.
Photo by Alessandro Saletta, © Vico Magistretti Foundation.



Magistretti Revisited, Vico Magistretti Studio Museum Foundation.
Photo by Alessandro Saletta, © Vico Magistretti Foundation.



Magistretti Revisited, Vico Magistretti Studio Museum Foundation.
Photo by Alessandro Saletta, © Vico Magistretti Foundation.



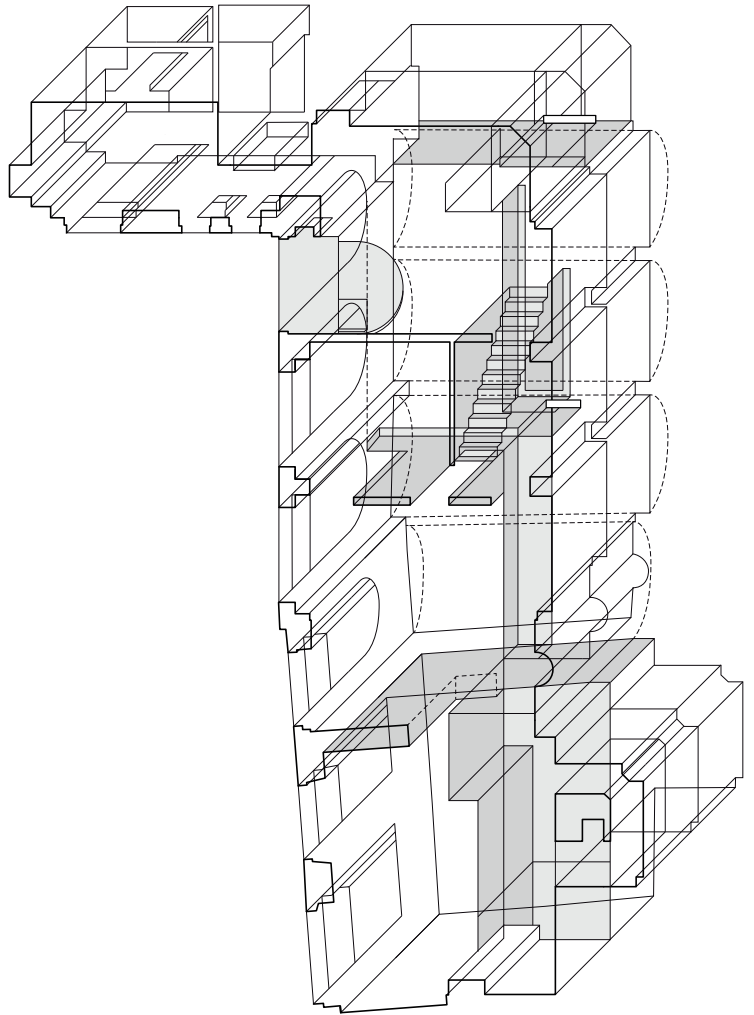
Magistretti Revisited, Vico Magistretti Studio Museum Foundation.
Photo by Alessandro Saletta, © Vico Magistretti Foundation.

Gianfranco Frattini: an Atelier-Manifesto

BY

Benedetta Patella

Gianfranco Frattini atelier, Milan; © Fabrizia Berlingieri, Levan Eloshvili.



In an era of radical transformations, such as the post World War II period, Gianfranco Frattini emerged as a visionary of living, capable of transforming the everyday into a design language that seamlessly blends tradition and modernity. At the core of his work lies a holistic vision of space, conceived as a fluid and integrated entity, evolving and refining with the maturity of his creative journey. Frattini embarked on a decisive professional path in 1953 when, even before graduating, he was invited to join the prestigious Studio Ponti, located on via Dezza in Milan, within the same residential complex that would later house their respective families. This marked the beginning of a pivotal collaboration for the young designer, who was captivated by the innovative vision of Gio Ponti, his professor of Interior Architecture, Furniture, and Decoration during his final years of study.

At Studio Ponti – a vibrant environment of dynamism and innovation yet firmly rooted in a classical tradition reinterpreted as a bridge to modernity – Frattini absorbed essential stimuli for his training. Encouraged by Ponti's trust in him, he gradually shaped a design ethos rooted in rationalism yet open to experimentation and practice. In 1956, prompted by Ponti himself, he cofounded a studio on via Lanzone in Milan with his university colleague Franco Bettonica. While their collaboration marked an important chapter, it was with the opening of his own independent studio that Frattini fully embraced his professional autonomy, aligned with his determined personality and rigorous design vision.

The studio, active until 1978, was then relocated to the evocative 18th-century spaces on via Sant'Agnese, marking a new phase in his career. The energetic and vital atmosphere of Studio Ponti inspired Frattini to cultivate an equally stimulating environment within his own atelier. In doing so, his studio became not only the place where his ideas and projects took shape but also a laboratory where he experimented and refined his personal conception of living. Located in the former stables of General Radetzky, the atelier embodied his design philosophy.

Overlooking the inner courtyard with expansive arched windows, the studio featured harmonious proportions and high ceilings,

enabling a two-level layout. The renovation of the space by Frattini reflects his meticulous and integrated design approach. Notable interventions included the expansion of the existing mezzanine with a redwood structure, accessible via two staircases: a stone spiral staircase and a rectilinear wooden staircase with a rubber finish, enhanced by a wall-embedded lighting system. The mezzanine housed several functional areas: a small meeting room with a square table, a private workspace for design or client meetings, and a small lounge acting as an antechamber to a more intimate area, including a bedroom and private bathroom. From the mezzanine, one enjoys an overview of the large volume below, home to draughting tables and cabinets characterised by central cuts. The corridors created through the subdivision of space were turned into scenic walkways, displaying design prototypes, cherished objects, and personal collections that inspired Frattini's work – ranging from Ferrari models to antique tools. Every detail, from the stone spiral staircase to the integrated bookcases, dark green iron beams, and birch wood surfaces, reflected a compositional rigor imbued with warmth and humanity.

The atelier was not merely a workspace but a craft workshop where research, design, and personal life converged. It was an open space that united without confining, defining without restricting. In his projects, Frattini championed flexibility and continuity, eschewing rigid compartmentalisation in favor of fluid environments. In his studio, these principles reached their zenith. Furniture transcended mere functionality, becoming integral elements of a harmonious spatial system where aesthetics and dynamism coalesced. The studio became a site of perpetual experimentation, embodying the same materials, furniture, and solutions Frattini integrated into his residential projects. Modular bookcases, dynamic cabinets, precise light cuts, and contrasting textures engaged in a harmonious dialogue with the architectural context, transforming the atelier's space into a reflection of his design philosophy.

Each element represented an archetype of the compositional grammar that defined Frattini's coherent, rational, yet poetic language.

Not an artist's atelier, but an artisan's one: a living gallery where Gianfranco Frattini staged himself, proving that the spaces he designed were the very ones he would choose to live in. Here, at his drawing table, Frattini expressed his creative abilities before retreating to his private room, sealing an intimate and unbreakable bond with this environment. The rigor and passion with which he oversaw each project were mirrored in the slow, mindful rhythm that defined his daily life and that he would never abandon – as if the need to live where his ideas took form was stronger than time itself and its demand to slow down with age. In the atelier, his philosophy found its synthesis: an existence intertwined with design, a poetic daily life, an idea of living that was never just about form, but about life itself – measured in the impact of his work on his own existence, as both a memory of what had been accomplished and a promise of what was yet to come. All encapsulated in a single, *sublime* formula.



Entrance of the atelier; © Studio/Archive Gianfranco Frattini.



Gianfranco Frattini at the drawing table of the mezzanine; © Studio/
Archive Gianfranco Frattini.



The mezzanine; © Studio/Archive Gianfranco Frattini.



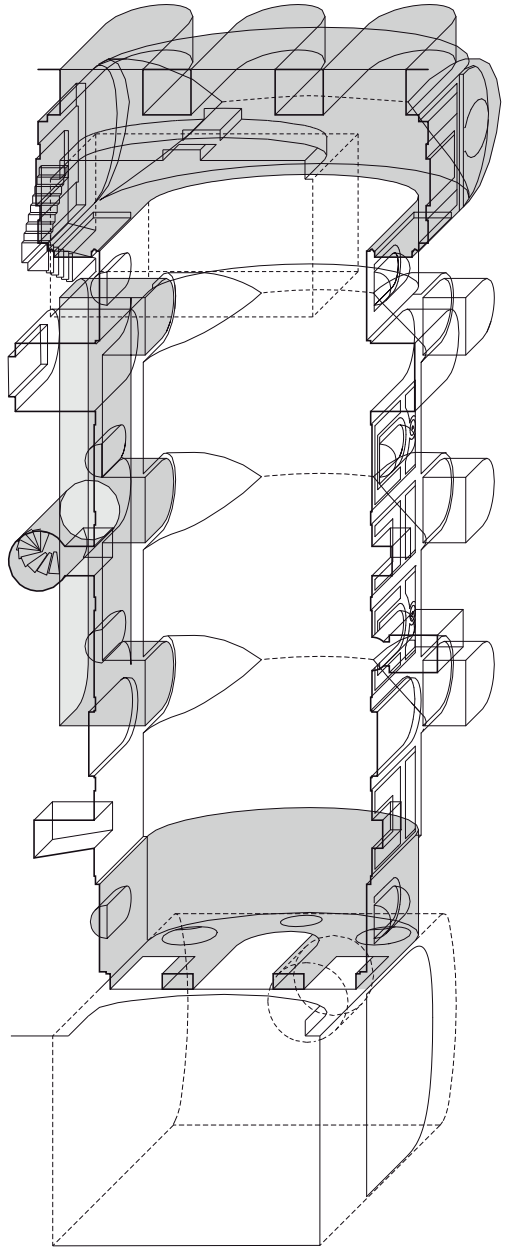
Working area on the ground floor; © Studio/Archive Gianfranco Frattini.



Ezio Bruno De Felice. An Architectural Office on the Edge of the Mediterranean

BY

Luca Esposito



0 1 5



There are spaces capable of condensing practical functions and underlying intentions through their built forms, working clearly toward the construction of a precise narrative. In contrast, there are spaces – architectural places – for which it is impossible to construct a singular narrative. These spaces are flexible and porous, capable of being many things but, above all, capable of holding together numerous stories of private experience until the narrative expands to embody an entire piece of the city. It is among the banks of tufo, the stone that characterizes the majestic coast of the Posillipo in Naples, that Ezio Bruno De Felice found such a place, which he later established as his personal studio. It was once the theatre of the Palazzo Donn'Anna¹, a never-quite-finished historical palace in Naples whose yellow walls rise directly out of the sea.

Built at the behest of Donna Anna Carafa in the 17th-century, the historic residence was erected using material excavated from its own site. The lower half of the palace is an articulated system of cavities that dialogue directly with the sea, housing a boathouse and small shipyard. The upper half, built from the tufo quarried on-site, is where majestic and noble rooms of the palace are located. And at this intersection between cavity and construction lies the theatre of Palazzo Donn'Anna, a large vaulted room, half excavated and half built. De Felice purchased this theatre in 1958 and, after careful restoration, made it his studio.

The place sits wedged between opposing conditions: the sea and the land. On the side facing the sea, a system of tripartite windows frame expansive views of the Mediterranean, looking out on the Vesuvius volcano and the island of Capri. On the other side, a monumental window offers a direct view into the hollow cavern below. But the palace is also a cross-section the society that inhabited it: nobles on the upper floors, of whom visible traces still remain, and gradually, descending towards the sea, one finds the bourgeoisie and commoners, humble workers and labourers. The palace serves as an analogy of Neapolitan society, and at its heart lies

1. P. Belli (edited by), *Palazzo Donn'Anna. Storia, arte e natura*, Allemandi, Turin 2017.

the architecture studio of Ezio De Felice. It was in this spatial condition of the *limen* – the threshold – that De Felice chose to make his studio. He worked and produced his architecture in a basilica-like space filled with drawing tables, scrolls of paper and scattered archives, as photographed by Mimmo Jodice. Objects found and reassembled, like the architecture itself, took on new life under De Felice’s hands. Today, the studio is home to the De Felice Foundation and these sculptural constructions remain, standing guard in the guise of *patron lari*.

These alien objects speak to the architect’s porosity, to being malleable and open. The studio condensed and clustered the traces of this griffin-like being, halfway between architect and artist, all kept beneath the tufaceous vault of the hall. Sculptural wood, smoothed by the waves of the sea below, and metal gears of various kinds are arranged vertically as pinnacles scattered across the vast studio, which was once densely filled with models, prototypes, drawings and materials. In this transitional space – one that has served many functions and uses over time, including as a tennis court – Ezio De Felice contributed to shaping the modern conception of museography and contemporary exhibition design. It also housed a quantity of heterogeneous collections that, perhaps most of all, tell the story of the synergy between the studio and the city, between enhancement and transformation, the guiding principles of his work and his architectural and restoration theory.

He worked with extreme caution, always respectful of the existing architecture, but without the fear that so frequently results in transformations to historic architecture that aim solely to preserve what already exists, and offering the visitor “the physical experience of the fruition of the work”². Perhaps it is this hybridisation of workspace and display space that made De Felice such an attentive reader of the poetry inherent in the simplest and humblest materials—materials that, once employed in museographic projects and in interiors, were capable of “singing”.

2. Cafiero G., *Ezio Bruno De Felice. Allestimenti domestici*, LetteraVentidue, Syracuse 2021, p. 27.

De Felice's multiple interests were thus condensed in the Donn'Anna Palace Theatre, a space that functioned as "a studio, workshop, wunderkammer, a generative space for meetings and a place for cultural exchanges. Here De Felice collected tools, compasses, art, material and tangible pieces of man's passage, and found space to design and create"³. Having ceased to serve as a studio, the space today continues to embrace the material that was dearest of all to the architect: the joyful gathering of people in the act of spreading cultural and architectural thought.

The space chosen by De Felice as a studio is unique, embodying the porosity dear to Walter Benjamin and Asja Laci: "the eternal passion for improvising"⁴. It is a place of surprising, never-finished beauty in which nothing is permanent, never fully concluded and never fully understood. It speaks to the Neapolitan poetics of being suspended, much like the palace that continues to host it.

3. *Ezio De Felice. Vita*, Fondazione Ezio De Felice, <https://www.fondazione-defelice.it/vita/> (accessed August 4, 2024).

4. Benjamin W., Laci A., it. trans. edited by Cicchini E., *Napoli porosa*, Libreria Dante&Descartes, Naples 2020, p. 20.



Interior space of the atelier Ezio De Felice, former theatre of the Palazzo Donn'Anna.
Photo by Mark Smith (1999), © Fondazione Ezio De Felice.



Interior space of the atelier Ezio De Felice, former theatre of the Palazzo Donn'Anna.

Photo Archivio Mimmo Jodice, © Fondazione Ezio De Felice.



Interior space of the atelier Ezio De Felice, former theatre of the Palazzo Donn'Anna.
Photo Archivio Mimmo Jodice, © Fondazione Ezio De Felice.



Palazzo Donn'Anna.

Photo by Simone Florena (2007), © Fondazione Ezio De Felice.



Back to the Future, Fortuny's Search for Lost Time in Venice

BY

Josep Maria
Garcia-Fuentes

Mariano Fortuny was twenty-seven years old when, in 1898, he purchased the attic floor of Palazzo Pesaro degli Orfei to establish his personal studio. From that point onward, Fortuny gradually acquired additional parts of the building until he ultimately attained full ownership by 1911. Throughout this process, he undertook a series of transformation works, which he later continued over the course of his life. As a result, the original medieval structure of the building was entirely metamorphosed, eventually becoming known as Palazzo Fortuny.

Fortuny's family moved to Venice in 1889 and settled in Palazzo Martinengo, where they curated their vast art collection and opened it to friends, guests, and visitors. Their *salotto* became a hub for distinguished personalities to discuss art, literature, and music. A few photographs reveal a richly interior furnished with tapestries, paintings, sculpture, rare books, and textiles arranged at varying heights, on shelves, furniture, and pedestals. They created a layered environment covering all walls completely. The floor was entirely covered by luxurious carpets, and white sheets suspended from the ceiling formed a continuous surface pierced only by a few electrical lamps. The light in the space was strikingly uniform, evoking the feel of a timeless artist's studio or a theatrical set. One might feel as if they had stepped into one of Fortuny's father's paintings: an enigmatic and undefined oriental space. This immersive space provides a profound insight into the ideas and anxieties that later bloomed in Mariano Fortuny's transformation of Palazzo Pesaro degli Orferi.

The attic that Mariano purchased initially served as his personal studio. It was a creative laboratory where he conducted innovative experiments in painting and photography¹. He later expanded his work to include lighting, set design, and textile design. During these early years, he continued residing at the family home in Palazzo Martinengo, even after marrying Henriette Negrin in 1902. The couple shared a profound connection, collaborating on various textile

1. See G. De Osmá, *Fortuny. Mariano Fortuny: His Life and Work*, Aurum Press, London 1980, pp. 24-27.

design experiments and business ventures. By 1907, after acquiring additional parts of the building beyond the attic, they established Palazzo Pesaro degli Orfei as their permanent home and studio².

Mariano and Henriette transformed the building continuously for over fifty years without following a precise plan. Still, the Fortunys were somehow guided by the wish to restore an idealised Venetian palace organised around the vast central hall spanning the whole building depth. This space was recovered to its full size on the first and second floors from the palazzo's front façade in the campo to the back elevation along the little canal connecting the building to the Canal Grande. Smaller rooms were organised along the two long sides. These included Fortuny's studio and an enfilade of bedrooms on the right wing. Other servant spaces, a courtyard and staircase, and most notably, a magical winter garden with walls covered in Mariano's paintings, were placed on the left wing along the central hall.

The central hall on the first floor was a vast single space furnished with luxurious tapestries and sensually textured curtains suspended throughout to define changing areas within the interior. The floors were covered with carpets of various sizes, while assorted seating arrangements and movable furnishings subtly outlined different spaces. The room was richly populated with artwork, including paintings, engravings, sculptures, and models from various historical periods, including those coming from the Fortuny family collection. Intermingled among these were Fortuny's painted reproductions of masters such as Tintoretto, Tiepolo, Velázquez, or Goya. Other artistic creations by Mariano were on display, including photographs and research models related to his scenography and theatrical inventions, and to lighting experiments. Other valuable artefacts dating back to the Renaissance and other historical times were also on display. The *salotto* on the first floor was used for receptions and to entertain guests, so most sensitive materials were kept in the hall on the second floor, adjacent to Mariano's

2. The couple lived and worked there until Mariano's death in 1949, after which Henriette remained until her passing in 1965.

personal studio. The hall upstairs echoed the one downstairs despite its rather private use as an intimate experimental workshop that extended into the attic. The atmosphere of both halls echoed that of Mariano's family in Palazzo Martinengo, as the reader may have fathomed at this point.

The Fortunys' palace left guests with lasting memories. Even Marcel Proust directly referred to the Fortunys' creations and to Mariano as "the artist" who "has recovered the secret of the craft"³ in a rare acknowledgement⁴. Indeed, the Fortunys intertwined art and science in a uniquely approach to conceive their creations, as exemplified by the famous pleated fabric for the Delphos gown. The aesthetic concept and the complex technique developed for crafting the garment's cloth were inspired by the Fortunys' creative engagement with ancient Greek art and the most recent archaeological discoveries. This historical and artistic inquiry was compounded with a rigorous, scientific, and technical investigation into innovative methods for pleating silk that culminated in a patent registration. The resulting garment was an iconic, atemporal creation that achieved enduring acclaim. An attire capable of transcending time itself. One that might have travelled through history. Or one that might have emerged from lost time.

This same creative process underpinned the Fortunys' rolling transformation works in Palazzo Pesaro degli Orfei to become Palazzo Fortuny. Their approach was, in fact, a truly experimental preservation of the building. The result was not a restoration or reconstruction, nor the construction of an idealised pristine building. Somehow it was a brand-new palace, somehow the preservation of an ancient one. New and old materials were mixed as new and ancient artworks were blurred in the Fortuny collection or in

3. See G. De Osma, *op.cit.*, and M. Proust M., *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu, Tome VI, La Prisonnière (Sodome et Gomorrhe III)*, Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Française, Paris 1923.

4. Proust was renowned for his deliberate avoidance of including references to living artists in their works, so this acknowledgement reveals the profound impact that Fortuny's creations and the palazzo had on their contemporaries. Turin 2017.

their artistic creations. The secret of their alchemy involved a complex set of techniques and skills, with the use of light being the most important. Indeed, Mariano also explored and studied light in his paintings and photographs, but also in his scientific investigations for set design and theatrical lighting. Because, as he himself revealed, the mastery of light is the means to achieve a feeling of authenticity.

Mariano carefully planned and designed both natural and artificial lighting throughout the continuous works in Palazzo Fortuny. The attention to windowpanes as the filter of natural light entering the interior spaces became a crucial strategy. Windows were restored and fitted with new stained-glass surfaces composed of small, circular, textured glass resembling the base of a bottle. The resulting glazing prevented direct sight through them, with rare exceptions such as the view from Mariano's desk in his personal studio. In this way, a softly diffused interior light was achieved that shifted with the changing sunlight and weather, and with the mysterious shadows and soft illumination of bright nights. They obscured the view and created an atmosphere of enchantment, bathing interior spaces in a magical, aquatic light that seemed to come from a lost time, animating the artworks within. The effect was reversed at dusk when the entire palazzo glowed from within, becoming an enigmatic urban lamp.

The interior atmosphere was further enhanced using experimental electrical lights designed by Mariano. The palazzo became a testing ground for these lamp explorations, crafted from silk fabric or glass, which were the outcome of Fortuny's theatrical indirect lighting experiments, combined with his research into textiles and garment design. Lamps were standing and suspended from the ceiling, either individually or in small clusters. Only a few direct light sources were positioned strategically where necessary, such as over desks. Fortuny's lights quickly became iconic, as his renowned studio standing lamp from 1907, which seems to evoke the symbolic "lamp of reason" illuminating the imaginary John Soane's interior room in Joseph Gandy's famous 1818 watercolour. Intriguingly, both Soane and Fortuny shared a profound interest in using light

to shape architectural atmospheres, employing it to instil a sense of authenticity and emotion within their interiors, and to provoke wonder and suspend the perception of time.

Soane's home famously became the first in London to be lit by a pioneering gas lamp. Fortuny probably knew nothing about Soane despite this astonishing lighting resonance. Many decades later, Enric Miralles and Benedetta Tagliabue conceived their home through an incorporative process "of infinite integration" within a historical palace in Barcelona⁵. They sought out Fortuny's lamps for their home and intuitively sensed their role in Fortuny's Venetian palace. As a collector himself, Miralles was a forerunner in rediscovering Fortuny's lamps in the late 20th-century, when they had long been forgotten. Somehow, Soane, Fortuny, and Miralles all operated like collectors assembling their cabinets of wonders through a constant and patient process of incorporation, of capture, and tireless infinite variations like did Heinrich Kürz, the fictional painter of the cabinet of the amateur Hermann Raffke by Georges Perec. They all shared a deep passion for collecting art, mixing objects, layering, and rearranging them to discover new affinities and forge fresh connections within their collections.

In all these cases, the constant recontextualisation of objects and artworks and the emotional impact they provoke take precedence over their authenticity. Whether they are true or false becomes irrelevant. Yet Mariano Fortuny takes this further in his *palazzo*, showing how natural and artificial light play a central role in creating the illusion of authenticity. Light breathes life into the building's spaces and collection, blurring the lines between ancient and modern, originals and copies, uniting them into a single, cohesive, and magnificent ensemble where they all become authentic.

Through his unique use of light, Fortuny created the illusion of authenticity in the transformation of the former Palazzo degli Orfei into the Palazzo Fortuny: a timeless palace overflowing with wonders from the past and the future. Archaeological artefacts and

5. See E. Miralles, A. Zaera, *Una conversación con Enric Miralles*, in "El Croquis." Miralles / Pinós 1990-1994, 1995, n. 72, pp. 260-275.

modern inventions gathered into a single space bathed by a carefully orchestrated light. The result was that Palazzo Fortuny itself felt like a time machine transporting him, Henriette, and their guests to magical places and to a lost time, echoing the fantastical voyages machines in Jules Verne's novels, the temporal leaps of H.G. Wells' *Time Machine*, or even anticipating the electrified time journeys of the DeLorean time machine in *Back to the Future*.



Detail of Mariano Fortuny's personal studio on the second floor of Palazzo Fortuny.
Photo by the author.



The central hall on the first floor of Palazzo Fortuny, following the renovations by Mariano and Henriette.
Photo by the author.



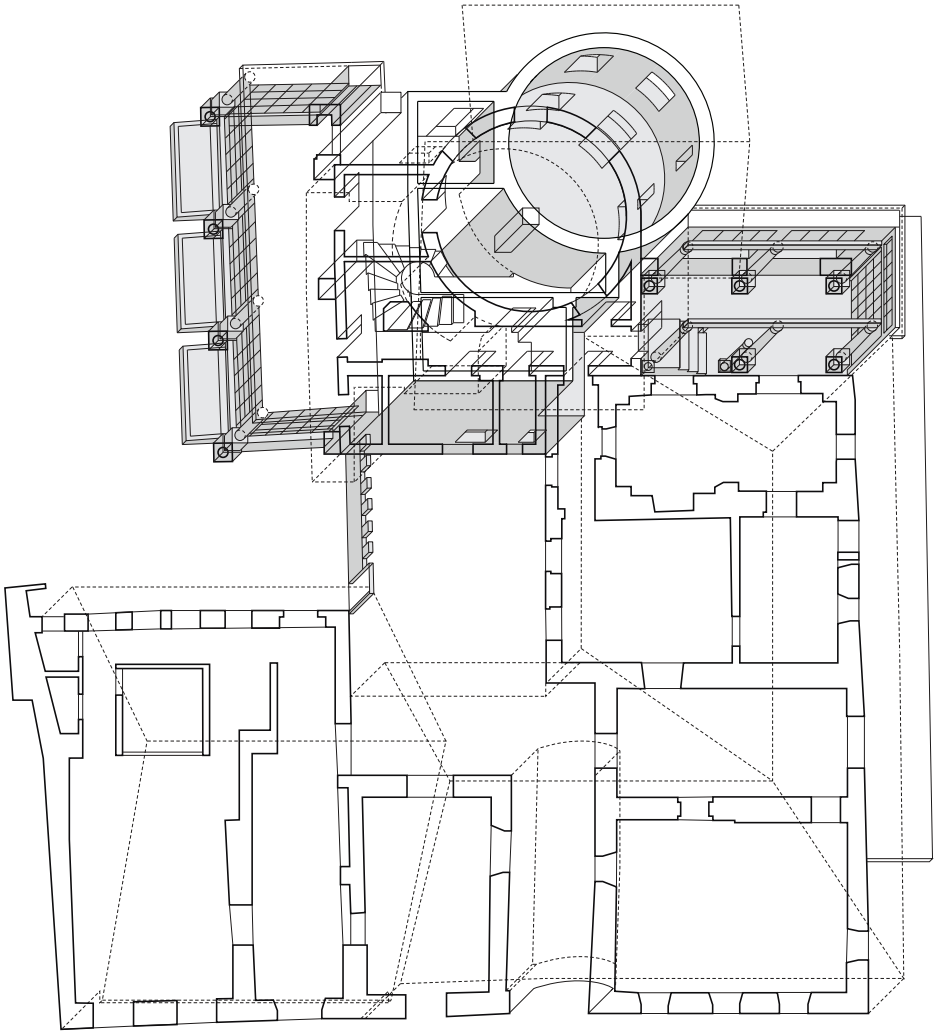
A detailed view of one of the experimental electrical lamps designed by Mariano Fortuny, intended to cast an indirect, warm light atmosphere, as used in their palazzo's architectural works.
Photo by the author.

Constructed Provocations

BY

José Cherem Serur

Plečnik House, Ljubljana; © Fabrizia Berlingieri, Levan Eloshvili.



0 1 5



Between 1921 and 1957, Jože Plečnik (1872-1957) gradually transformed his modest home behind the parish church of Trnovo, Ljubljana, initially thought for him and his brothers, into a calibrated field of spatial provocations. An architectural office, sometimes a classroom, all disguised as domestic life spaces, where discomfort was not an oversight but a tool: self-imposed, precise, and ritualised. Revealing his fixation on work.

From the moment one enters, the existential character of the building, indistinguishable from that of its architect¹, discloses almost devotional attention to patterns of behaviour. The vestibule a cold, stone-paved and semi-enclosed space with three pairs of columns along the longitudinal walls, hosts scattered column capitals and a narrow bench along the wall. Formerly uncovered from rain, angled just enough to discourage prolonged sitting – a pause where guests would wait before reaching the second door to the house. This character is visible in the series of stairs that lead up to the entrance, subtly elevating the host above any visitor, as if wary of who could go inside.

In the kitchen, accessed by a small, long hallway alongside the main entrance, a collection of specific objects is found that purposefully define Plečnik's everyday routine: the stone wash basin, a pair of wooden creature-like chairs. A third chair, designed by Plečnik for this corner alone. Its back tilts forward just slightly, requiring the sitter to stay upright. Here, he would prepare Turkish coffee with a pot modified to suit the reach of his seated posture. The discomfort is deliberate. It prompts a kind of alertness.

The chair would not allow him to linger – an early morning suggestion to start work as soon as possible. Perhaps, it shares something with ancient public theatres or contemporary stadiums, where the chair is not meant to be restful but to provoke, as in Plečnik's domestic theatre, an attempt to contrast 'comfort' by "distancing and involving"² – not just seating.

1. A. Caruso, *Sigurd Lewerentz and a Material Basis for Form*, in "Oase", n. 45-46, January 1997, pp. 88-95.

2. L. Bo Bardi, *Lina Bo Bardi*, Edizioni Charta, Milan 1994, p. 226.

Upstairs, the circular annex to the old house displays sleeping and working spaces. The room is divided in half by a wooden beam supported on each end by the bathroom and wardrobe doors. This classical allusion, taken from Etruscan architecture, is not merely symbolic. It echoes a body of work in which classical form is internalised, personalised, and reactivated. In words of Paolo Portoghesi Plečnik's classicism:

is the development of (his professor) Wagner's hypothesis in Vienna, in a direction however of renunciation of originality and invention and fidelity to the classical ideal of different repetition, that is, to the method of drawing inspiration in design from the most proven typologies, intervening only at the level of their interpretation and classical definition of detail.³

Plečnik's days began in this room, often with a cold-water wash (he followed the hydrotherapy principles of Sebastian Kneipp)⁴. The decision was not romantic, it was procedural. It was a way to wake up properly. A narrow wooden single bed, tucked against the curve of an oval wall, faces east. A massive drawing table in front reveals fragments and small instruments: drawing tools, models, lamps, old stones, and a crucifix. There is no symbolic separation between rest and labour. Sleep was minimised, willingly contained, and placed beside the working table.

The few guests and visitors who could enter the house, as hinted at in the vestibule, played an important role in defining the room's characteristics. The guest room, an irregular rectangle in plan, is small and pine-panelled. Probably the only attempt at harboring a sense of comfort for guests in the house. Here, a water heater is built into the wall so the architect does not need to invite visitors

3. F. Burkhardt, C. Eveno, B. Podrecca (edited by), *Jože Plečnik Architetto 1872-1957*, Palazzo della Permanente, Centre Pompidou, Milan 1988, p.

4.

4. H. Plečnikova, A. Porok, *Plečnik. Guidebook for the permanent exhibition*, Muzej in Galerije Mesta Ljubljane, Ljubljana 2021, pp.18-20.

into the kitchen. Natural light is filtered with tinted circular glass, and above the table, a lamp can interrupt any attempt at cosiness by glaring at guests, depending on how long one stays. Every object has a threshold function: to keep, recall, or release.

The architecture of the house – or, perhaps, in Plečnik’s oeuvre –, through its classic language serves as the background for experiencing space in different ways. The individual characteristics of the elements lose importance, and instead, the regularity of their relationships emerges. This is the case in the circular drafting room, adapted in the years of war as the faculty of architecture or the conservatory, where four pillars are placed in front of the glass wall. Both contrast with his bedroom and the vestibule, respectively.

Its daily discomforts – the tilted bench, the stiff chair, the narrow bed – are not eccentricities. In the most architectural sense, they are encouragements, gestures to inhabit iterations of space: rituals of engagement with the task at hand. As Bernard Rudofsky reminded us, many of the forms we associate with comfort have historically evolved from perversions – functional distortions we no longer question⁵. But in Plečnik’s case, the fixation is concealed not in space but in the objects that fill them. Perversions become a routine. Discomfort is a tool.

Hermann Czech distinguishes between discomfort as a care-less outcome and discomfort as a “valid aesthetic means of artistic communication”⁶. When comfort is treated simply as an aesthetic liability, its opposite becomes equally empty. Nevertheless, when discomfort is used precisely, it becomes architectural material—something shaped to provoke behaviour and sharpen attention. In Plečnik’s house, that communication is inward: it reminds the architect what he is doing, why he is here, and what must happen next.

5. B. Rudofsky, *Are Clothes Modern? An Essay on Contemporary Apparel*, P. Theobald, Chicago 1947, p. 155.

6. H. Czech, *Cleaning Up the Tools for Design*, in T. Fecht, D. Kamper (edited by), *Umzug ins Offene*, Springer Verlag, Wien-New York 2000, pp.286–287.



Plečnik House. Kitchen chair placed in the corner by the stove.
Photo by the author.



Plečnik House. The conservatory, southern addition to the house built in 1929.
Photo by the author.



Plečnik House. Reception room veiled by round stained glass.
Photo by the author.



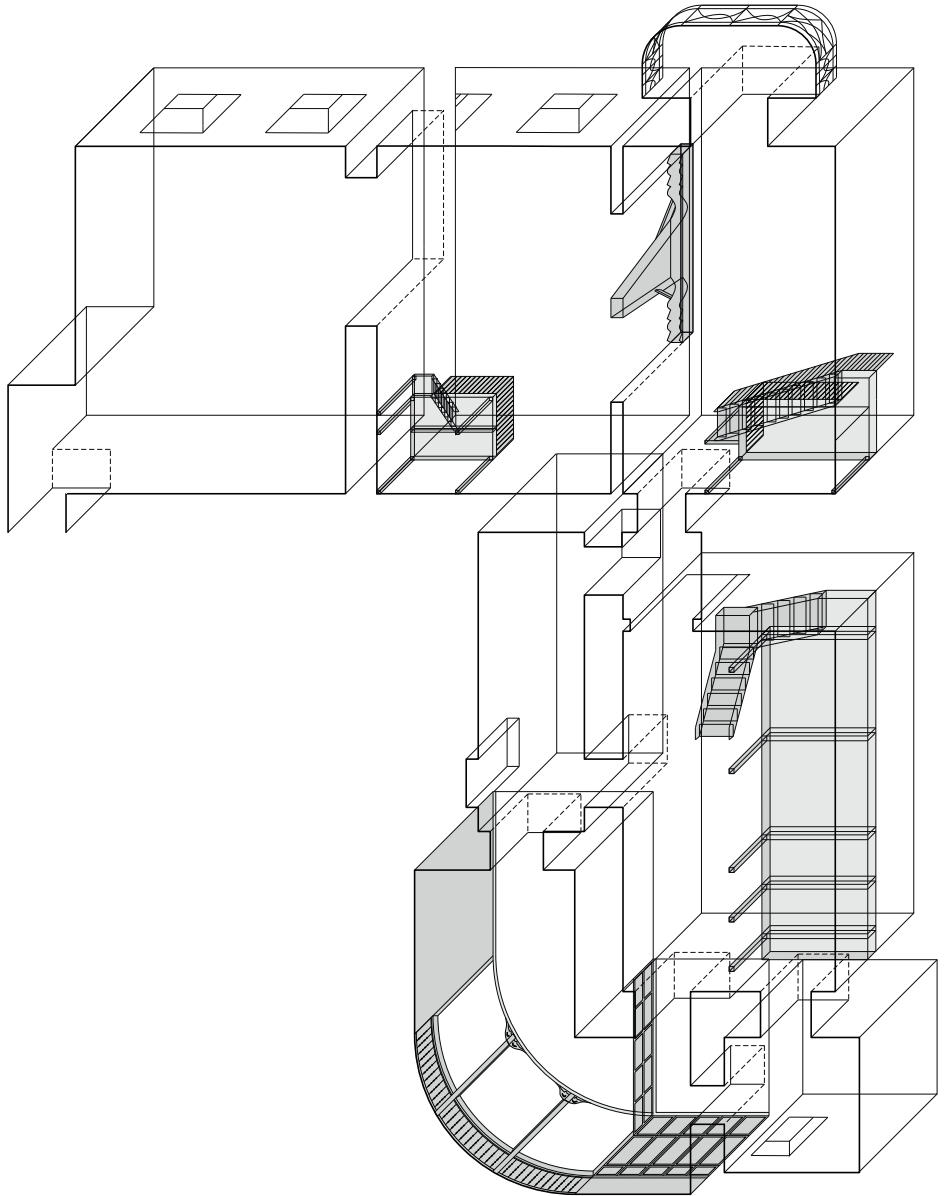
Plečnik House. The Bedroom Hall
Photo by Andres Gaviria.

The Atelier as an Urban Microcosm

BY

Duccio Fantoni

Elene Akhvlediani house-museum, Tbilisi; © Fabrizia Berlingieri, Levan Eloshvili.



Elene Akhvediani's atelier-house in Tbilisi is more than a place of residence or artistic production; it is the construction of a microcosm of the city itself. Within its interiors, fragments of urban architecture are carefully reassembled in wood and fabric, echoing the balconies, verandas, and courtyards that still define Tbilisi's character. As one moves today through the space, the boundaries between home, studio, and museum blur, giving rise to an intimate urban scenography. The atelier represents a place of urban imaginary that results in a hybrid environment in which domestic life and artistic vision merge, constructing a deeply personal translation of urban space through spatial memory and emotional resonance. In fact, her flat holds, amidst everyday objects, the traces of her artistic life in their intertwining with the life of the city.

Elene Akhvediani achieved recognition as a prominent modernist painter of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic only in the last period of her career, in the 1960s, especially for her impressive iconographic consistency in depicting a multitude of urban landscapes of Tbilisi.

The representation of this specific subject increased particularly in the final decades of her career and reached the point of resembling an infeasible personal obsession.

Nonetheless, painting remained for a long time a secondary activity compared to her official work as a stage designer and theatre decorator, particularly during the period when Stalinist purges severely curtailed artistic production across the Caucasus. Undoubtedly, her pictorial research into cityscapes resonates with her long activity as a scenographer; in fact, the theatrical character of her paintings emerges in the repetition of urban planes in a sequence that usually excludes the presence of both sky and foreground. Despite this planar compositional structure of her landscapes, which tends to annul depth in favour of saturating the surface of the canvas, the subjects are never reduced to abstract symbolic schemes; instead, they seem to vibrate with life through the depiction of specific atmospheric and lighting conditions. The art critic Irina Arsenishvili defined this approach as the distinctive trait of her painting, aimed at defining a "sharp perception of time"¹.

Initially, the role of her atelier, now transformed into a museum, represented the protected space where artistic ambitions, tireless observation of the city, and poetic sensibility condensed into the place where her works took shape. The sequence of the cityscapes on the walls throughout the apartment reproduces the visit to an imagined and imaginary city through different temporal conditions. As the canvases saturate the walls, the private environment multiplies, transforming its perimeter into a diorama of urban landscapes. Despite its domestic character, even before its conversion into a museum, the atelier already served as a gathering space for friends and intellectuals who were drawn into this constantly evolving scenario. Within these interiors, there is no strict division between domestic life and the atelier: each room is simultaneously a site of everyday living and a space for displaying her paintings. After the national recognition of her career, the atelier increasingly operated as a porous threshold between private space and the city, where intimacy, artistic production, and exhibition continuously merged and intertwined: the domestic interior is not merely a retreat for private life but a site of performance and image production². It is emblematic that this very apartment appears in the final scenes of the film *Mze Shemodgomisa*³, directed by Temur Palavandishvili, as a conclusion of a narrative celebrating the old city, depicted as an idyllic and harmonious environment in contrast with Soviet modern life.

Akhvlediani's work participates vocally in this broader polemic against the transformation of Tbilisi, sometimes projecting an alternative present in which modernity is absorbed into the existing urban fabric, sometimes satirising the brutality of the city's

1. I. Arsenishvili, *Georgian Easel Painting. Second Half of the 18th Century to the 1920's*, Nova Science Publishers, New York 2009, pp. 132-133.

2. The intersection of domestic and public spheres, particularly in relation to visual media and architectural representation, is developed in detail in B. Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity. Modern Architecture as Mass Media*, MIT Press, Cambridge 1994.

3. T. Palavandishvili (dir.), *Mze Shemodgomisa*, Kartuli Pilmi, Tbilisi 1973.

transformations. In the interiors, the paintings define a perimeter of panoramas that transforms the interiors into a space to wander through Akhvlediani's personal Tbilisi.

The scholar Giuliana Bruno has suggested a precise museographic genealogy that bridges the experience of the wunderkammer, in this case, the diorama of urban landscapes covering the walls of the atelier, with urban exploration and cinematographic production⁴, as in the case of Palavandishvili's movie.

However, the resonance with her personal imaginary of the city exceeds the subjects of the paintings. The atelier's interiors also re-enact the specific spatiality of the city; the interiors incorporate structures that echo the city's architectural elements at the intersection of her scenographic practice and the spatial prototyping of her urban landscapes.

The various wooden structures within the interiors recall the verandas and balconies typical of Tbilisi. In the corner of the first room, a light structure leads to a mezzanine, probably used as a guest area, with storage space beneath it. In the adjacent room, another slightly larger structure was used for storing painting materials. Near the kitchen, a linear construction evokes the form of a balcony, intended to store canvases not yet displayed on the walls. A large, richly decorated central pillar, an archetypal element of Georgian architecture, symbolically separates the main hall from the smaller rooms, aided by the presence of a small curtain that occasionally filters the view of guests from the work in progress. Every element is simultaneously an explicit reference to the city, almost caricatural, and a prosaic functional fragment of the interiors. At the edge between representation and real life, the ambiguity of each element of the outside world contributes to the construction of this hybrid environment.

In this regard, the scale is significant in the role of these artefacts in the relationship between the outside and the inside. They are slightly smaller than urban architectural structures and slightly

4. G. Bruno, *Public Intimacy. Architecture and the Visual Arts*, MIT Press, Cambridge 2007, p. 17.

bigger than pieces of furniture. In this sense, they are real scenographies, inhabitable representations enclosed in a defined perimeter. The light reduction in the scale of these structures accentuates their ambiguity as domestic and intimate artefacts that, nevertheless, constitute an alternative urban imaginary. The poet Susan Stewart refers to the downsizing of objects to the condition of *reverie* and daydream: “The reduction in scale which the miniature presents skews the time and space relations of the everyday lifeworld, and as an object consumed, the miniature finds its ‘use value’ transformed into the infinite time of reverie”⁵.

Since this reduction is only faint, certainly not to the scale of a miniature, this ambiguity is even more significant in producing a state of imaginative uncertainty. These domestic architectures recreate within the atelier Akhvlediani’s imaginary through small, inhabited scenography that constructs a tangible urban microcosm. For example, during parties and exhibitions, the mezzanines probably also serve as stages for spectacles enacted in this hybrid situation. At the same time, the artist’s bed, a simple low platform similar to a trunk, is located precisely in the main hall, surrounded by paintings and a multitude of other objects. On the one hand, the space of the atelier absorbs the material culture of the city into the daily life of the house, nourishing her artistic production; on the other hand, these objects, figures, and fascinations return to the city as different representations that generate a new narrative about urban life.

As Gaston Bachelard suggested, every home reflects a microcosm for daydreaming that consists of layers of material, narratives, and memories⁶. The presence of artefacts and paintings, as reductions and reproductions of the city, saturates the domestic spaces with an imaginary that is simultaneously collective and personal.

In the coexistence of the atelier and the apartment, the spatial re-invention of the city represents the consequence of a practice of translation: from the reality of the city, even the most brutal

5. S. Stewart, *On Longing*, Duke University Press, Durham 1984, p. 65.

6. G. Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. M. Jolas, Beacon Press, Boston 1994.

transformation, into an emotional imaginary of juxtapositions and vibrant daily life scenes, and then again into the re-enactment of this urban microcosm into artistic production, embedded in the environment of her personal domestic space. The position of these artefacts emphasises their role as outgrowths of the perimeter rather than as objects isolated in the space: they remain in the corners, adjacent to the walls, as the mezzanines, or in the depth of a partition wall, as the decorated pillar. These elements are not merely representational, as sculptures to be admired; they are symbolic objects, at the disposal of everyday life, yet in resonance with the architecture of the real city.

They act as emotional membranes, absorbing and reprojecting the city within a personal spatial language, turning the atelier into a representational apparatus, where the act of dwelling merges with that of visual and spatial authorship. Here, Tbilisi is not simply depicted but lived, reimagined, and reconstituted through a deeply personal vocabulary of spatial inventions that unfold in the sequence of rooms of the apartment. This place becomes a subtle stage where the act of dwelling is inseparable from the act of representing, as a scenographic machine projecting a spatial imaginary of Tbilisi. In this sense, Akhvlediani's atelier stands as a fertile threshold where intimacy and urban poetics converge, producing an affective spatial narrative that is simultaneously intimate and collective.



The decorated pillar in Akhvediani Museum.
Photo by Nikoloz Naskidashvili (2025).



The mezzanine structure in the second room of Akhvlediani Museum.
Photo by Nikolozi Naskidashvili (2025).



The mezzanine structure in the third room of Akhvlediani Museum.
Photo by Nikolozi Naskidashvili (2025).

The Museum of
Innocence.
Writing a Museum

BY

Luca Galofaro

Many writers have built novel-museums. García Márquez, with his work¹, succeeded in creating a place that is both unique and universal, where the visible is conveyed only through words, a space where storytelling is tied to objects capable of evoking places. In Calvino's books, parts, objects, ideas, and images are assembled into an imaginary museum that stimulates the senses and the mind, a museum that might risk being lost if not preserved by the reader's gaze.

Paul Auster² transforms wandering through the city into an exhibition that contains the very essence of New York.

In these literary museums, words replace objects, and narration replaces the exhibition layout.

But there is one writer who has managed to build through his novel, despite everything, a real one. Orhan Pamuk, Nobel Prize winner for literature in 2006, fulfilled a promise he made to the character of his novel *The Museum of Innocence*³.

On one hand, Pamuk reflects on the meaning of a museum, as a complex narrative of the lives of men and women inhabiting the city, a physical space where the history of Istanbul accidentally overlaps with the history of the novel's characters. On the other hand, he constructs a magical place where objects and the cityscape mirror each other, transforming the museum into a space of emotional resonance, a place where we reflect on time and our personal histories. Every object held within it is a gateway to the world, through which the visitor rediscovers memories of other places and spaces, experienced in different cities and at different times.

Acting on the intentions of Kemal, the novel's protagonist, Pamuk buys a house within a working-class district of Istanbul, where the female protagonist, Füsün, is imagined to have lived, and

1. G. Garcia Marquez, *Cien años de soledad*, Editorial Sudamericana, Buenos Aires 1967; it. trans. edited by I. Carmignani, *Cent'anni di solitudine*, Mondadori, Milan 2017.
2. P. Auster, *The New York Trilogy*, Faber and Faber, London 1987; it. trans. edited by M. Bocchiola, *Trilogia di New York*, Einaudi, Turin 2014.
3. O. Pamuk, *Masumiyet Müzesi*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul 2008; it. trans. edited by B. La Rosa Salim, *Il Museo dell'innocenza*, Einaudi, Turin 2014.

he physically transforms it into the site of a house-museum. The collection of objects housed within serves both the writing, since every item appears in the novel, and also represents Istanbul and the transformations it underwent during that historical period. The Museum of Innocence thus becomes a place where one can discover the power of magical zones evoked by all kinds of objects, from Füsün's smoked cigarette butts to recovered family photographs. These and other objects, found and catalogued by the author, are assembled into wooden display cases with glass fronts, creating three-dimensional spaces.

Each display case of the museum reminds of the work conceived and built by Joseph Cornell, an American artist who collected all kinds of objects in shadow boxes, objects placed in poetic dialogue with one another.

Cornell's cases, like Pamuk's museum ones, define new horizons of meaning. In *The Life of Images*⁴, Charles Simić wonders whether Cornell was aware of what he was creating, day by day. Simić writes:

Dada and Surrealism gave Cornell both a precedent and freedom. I'm thinking above all of the astonishing discovery that lyric poetry can emerge from random operations expressed through the magical power of objects... All art is a magical operation—or, if you prefer, a prayer for a new image. (...) The city is an immense image machine. A slot machine for the loners.⁵

This image machine, the city, is something Pamuk understands deeply. The apparent banality of common objects, of as-found ones, becomes wonder the moment they become recognised and moved from real spaces into the rooms of a place designed to house them. The evocative power of postcards, photographs, and paintings becomes

4. C. Simić, *Dime-Store Alchemy: The Art of Joseph Cornell*, Ecco Press, New York 1992; it. trans. edited by A. Cattaneo, *Il cacciatore di immagini*, Adelphi, Milan 2005.

5. Id.

tangible, as does the soul of fetish objects, that are traces of the memory of the woman loved by the novel's protagonist.

The writer, in order not to interfere with the viewer's imagination, chooses not to reveal the characters' faces. He is not immune to the influence of the visual arts and explains that, in arranging the display cases, he focused on finding "the beauty born from the accidental encounter" of each element in the collection. This arrangement allows the objects to transcend the limits of their physicality and to express complex emotional sensations through abstraction. The final result is the construction of a private and intimate world, the same kind of world each of us keeps in a drawer at home. This intimate space, heavy with the signs of time, is a museum space rich in traces and memories, where all the elements we encounter throughout our lives take on a special value, transforming into *mirabilia* to be exhibited.

The Museum of Innocence display cases are arranged according to the chapter divisions of the novel, making visible the objects that belonged to Füsün and were collected and preserved by the protagonist as though they were a part of her. The fiction of the novel is nothing more than a system capable of anticipating the reality of the museum, which becomes another narrative guiding us through the city, its streets, its history – a blend of autobiography and social analysis.

Here it is: the innocence of objects representing the everyday life of a community, where reality and fiction are not necessarily separated, and where the museum finally becomes a frontier place where to search for the meaning of the split between visitor and the space of narration, an infinite act of love toward Istanbul and the sense of loss we feel whenever the space we observe coincides with memory. The set-up of a museum is the result of the constant dialogue between different expressive codes, staging an imaginary dialogue with memory which, being the child of modernity, has a tendency to collect fragments to be preserved and observed: an infinite number of fascinating objects in an infinite number of unlikely places to be told.



Interiors from The Museum of Innocence, Istanbul.
Photos by the author.





Interiors from The Museum of Innocence, Istanbul.
Photos by the author.



Rooms with a View. The House-Atelier of Bijoy Jain, Studio Mumbai

BY

Giulia Setti

The poetic of Bijoy Jain, founder of Studio Mumbai, is captured in his intimate and sensitive connection with materials and an artisanal approach to architecture, characterised by the production of unique, often unrepeatable, objects and spaces. The design research of Bijoy Jain is centred around the role of the architect as a sensitive artisan; it is a practice that should be intimate and attentive to environment, materials, inhabitants and the possibility to build an architecture that is as inclusive as possible¹.

In 2011, Bijoy Jain began the construction of *Saat Rasta*, a typological experiment built in the heart of Mumbai, which reclaims an old and abandoned warehouse experimenting with new ways of collective living². *Saat Rasta* is not only Bijoy Jain's house, but it is also his atelier: a collective workspace, a space for building and imagining architecture, but also experimenting with materials and objects. In this hybrid place, Bijoy contaminates the living personal spaces, with the ones for the making of and the more public for the display of models, architectural pieces, and objects directly made there, in his atelier. Thus, the architecture becomes a space devoted to exhibit the outcome of a craft work, often incomplete and partial, scrupulously followed by Bijoy Jain who lives in one of the housing units obtained from the existing structure where private domestic environments alternate with more collective spaces. *Saat Rasta* hosts, in fact, seven houses, designed to be independent and flexible thanks to the presence of movable partition walls.

The domestic space, each developed on two levels, reinterpret the typology of the house-patio and overlook an intimate garden, an internal tree-lined road, that ends in the largest space of the intervention: Bijoy Jain's atelier. The atelier is a double-height space, with large windows that open onto the courtyard and from which Bijoy can continuously observe and direct the production

1. F. Serrazanetti, M. Schubert (edited by), *Studio Mumbai. Inspiration and process in architecture*, Moleskine, Milan 2013.
2. S. Dalvi, *Bombay mix: Saat Rasta housing, Mumbai, India*, by Studio Mumbai, in "Architectural Review", 1443, 2017; <https://www.architectural-review.com/buildings/bombay-mix-saat-rasta-housing-mumbai-india-by-studio-mumbai> (accessed April 29, 2024).

and activities of his workshop³. The sequence of courtyards, which overlook the various spaces, creates an ‘open-air museum’, where the results of ongoing projects, study models and fragments of materials, that have been partially worked on or discarded or that still need to be discussed with the architect, are exhibited. It is an informal, unorganised and constantly evolving exhibition space, where models and objects sometimes pile up, sometimes, instead, are arranged in a more regular manner. The materials exhibited in the courtyards of Saat Rasta show the direct association between the artisans, who make them, and the design poetic of Bijoy Jain, becoming the most direct expression of the *modus operandi* of Studio Mumbai and of the intimate vocation of Bijoy who never separates himself from his obsessions: architecture and matter⁴.

The atelier and the surrounding spaces are well-lit and, at the same time, protected by the system of courtyards that bring light and air inside, and collect water from the monsoon rains. In the atelier of Studio Mumbai one can grasp the desire to build a continuous link between soil, light and air, bringing nature inside the house and workspaces: an oasis of peace in a dense and chaotic city like Mumbai. Bijoy Jain returns to the city, to Mumbai, after more than twenty years of work and life in Alibag, a remote place, not easily reachable and immersed in nature; it is in Alibag that Bijoy Jain’s design research takes its first steps, developing a delicate and personal way of treating materials and of bringing architecture back to an authorial and artisanal fact⁵. However, while returning to the city, Bijoy Jain tries to preserve the poetic and suggestions of Alibag’s office, contaminating this knowledge with the most frenetic aspects of city life.

3. G. Setti, *Domestic Commons in Mumbai and Auroville*, in “Techne”, n. 24, 2022, p. 99.
4. C. Fernando Márquez, R. Levene (edited by), *Studio Mumbai (2012-2019). In-Between Spaces*, in “El Croquis”, n. 200, 2019.
5. M. Zardini, *Rooms you may have missed: Umberto Riva, Bijoy Jain, Canadian Centre for Architecture*, Lars Müller Publishers, Montreal, Zurich 2015.

The atelier thus becomes a place much more dedicated to production than to contemplation⁶; it is a visitable space, where Bijoy welcomes visitors and enthusiasts of his idea of making architecture. Walking through the alleys of Saat Rasta, in fact, one meets students, artisans, designers, architects, scholars and collectors, people who observe what is produced and exhibited here and who can see directly the works of Studio Mumbai in the intimacy of the place where they are imagined, conceived and built. Projects, models, semi-finished materials are often displayed on the threshold between outside and inside, some of these objects are exposed outside in the open-air courtyards because they need air to dry, other materials or small maquettes are, instead, arranged inside, leaving free only the spaces necessary for the passage between the worktables. In the courtyards there are objects in clay, plaster, but also wooden study models, while on the walls of the atelier are displayed prototypes woven on site, with rudimentary looms, which explore the consistencies and transparencies of different yarns. Particularly, the models are not only reproductions of projects developed by Studio Mumbai but are the expression of a formal research on the relationships between lights, textures and surfaces⁷.

The poetic and practice of Bijoy Jain and Studio Mumbai was recently displayed in a solo exhibition dedicated to the architect-artist, and curated by Bijoy Jain himself, at the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporaine in Paris opened on 9th December 2023. The spaces of the Foundation were conquered by objects, drawings, fabrics, materials and shapes made with different techniques and, in some cases, designed specifically for the Parisian exhibition. An invaluable work, to which Bijoy Jain has dedicated so much energy and passion, with the aim of showcasing the care, precision and devotion of his design production⁸. The exhibition *Le souffle de*

6. C. Van Gerrewey, T. Vandeputte, V. Patteeuw, *The Exhibition as Productive Space*, in "Oase", n. 88, 2012, pp. 1-4.

7. R. Pommer, K. Frampton, S. Kolbowski (eds.), *Idea as Model*, Rizzoli International, New York 1981.

8. B. Jain, Studio Mumbai, *Le souffle de l'architecte / Breath of an Architect*, Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporaine, Paris 2023.

l'architecte / Breathe of an Architect reconstructs, on a 1:1 scale, the idea of atelier-workshop that the architect founded. The projects, and all works made of Bijoy Jain, studies the relationship between man, nature and environment, exploring the links between art, architecture, matter and building a poetic world, while visitors could contemplate the objects produced in his atelier. Perhaps, more than many words, the film *The Sense of Tuning* shot in occasion of this exhibition by Ila Bêka and Louise Lemoine tells the magic about the figure of Bijoy Jain, his way of understanding architecture and the care and attention he puts into the genesis of his works. The movie, in fact, takes us back to Saat Rasta and plays on the dichotomy between the suspended time, that is perceived inside the house-atelier, and the contrast with the incessant noises that the city of Mumbai produces⁹.

Bijoy Jain's sensitivity shines through the essentiality of his projects, where the architect decides not to add but, on the contrary, to subtract to emphasie the pure and necessary elements of his poetic. Subtraction is the key factor to understand Bijoy Jain's design and it is also applied in the definition of his domestic spaces; the construction process is reduced to its main elements, the frame or the skeleton, renouncing to decorations and ornaments. A fascinating and mysterious journey where the house-atelier becomes a place to display, to study and to live, where research is combined with the definition of an attitude and a way of shaping the art of construction.

9. I. Bêka, L.Lemoine, *The Sense of Tuning*, video, 1 hour, 39 min, 2024. Trailer available here: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/thesenseoftuning> (accessed April 29, 2024)



Saat Rasta, Mumbai.
Bijoy Jain fonds; © Canadian Centre for Architecture; photo by Srijaya Anumolu
(2014), courtesy of Bijoy Jain.



Saat Rasta Building.
Photos by Giovanni Hanninen.





Saat Rasta Building.
Photo by Giovanni Hanninen.



Seamless. Peter Märkli's First Room

BY

Vincenzo Moschetti

The most familiar things are often shrouded in the deepest mystery.¶

In 1978, starting with volume 48, the journal “AD. Architectural Design” was preparing to host a series of essays curated by Robert Evans; the first of these, titled *Figures, Doors and Passages*, was dedicated to the history of the house in relation to “human issues”, that is, those concerning people’s lives. The notion of life, in fact, evokes images and tools from a territory likely abandoned in the practices of the Modern Movement, which now, conversely, in Evans’s words, seems to return to the spaces of architecture and its design. The author captures accumulations and overlaps of lines in several peculiar cases of Renaissance architecture, such as in the unfinished project of Villa Madama in Rome, a work by Raphael, in order to highlight, even within the apparent symmetry of the plan, the absence of duplications.

In the same year, Swiss architect Peter Märkli opened his studio in Zürich. A recent interview conducted by David Chipperfield describes Märkli’s spaces and his need to inhabit two distinct workplaces that oscillate between the terms *studio* and *office*:

Märkli’s personal studio sits in a small courtyard close to the historic centre of Zürich (his office is located a ten-minute drive away). Occupying three small rooms, this private working space appears at first to be that of an artist. On closer inspection, they are in fact cluttered with the creative mess of an architect who has no time for the superficial vanities of a normal architecture practice. They are a haven from distraction, a place to focus. His modus operandi is made explicit by the drawing board with Mayline parallel motion, familiar to my generation but banished from most architects’ offices many years ago. Books lie open on the floor, sketches and drawings are pinned to the walls.¶

1. R. Evans, *Figures, Doors and Passages*, in “AD. Architectural Design”, 48, n. 4, April 1978, p. 267.

One aspect, however, that will emerge in Chipperfield's text a few lines later, escapes this initial description: the atelier is complemented by a submerged world, not in focus from the visited rooms, namely the "remarkable archive of his work"². Thus, the term archive underscores the intentions of a project, which is that of a life, in which Märkli identifies the conditions of a discipline, that of architecture.

In the *Vocabolario etimologico della lingua italiana* (Etymological Dictionary of the Italian Language), the term archive corresponds to "the modern Greek *archèion* [...] from *archè* meaning antiquity and also authority, government. [...] Place where ancient papers and documents concerning the interests of moral bodies, such as the State, congregations, and families, are preserved"³. In the English language, the term appears only around the 17th-century and, while etymologically the root is the same, it is crucial to clarify that the lemma in this case indicates "records or documents preserved as evidence". The evidence is a testimony of a thought that does not linger solely on words but traces signs, thus the archive that contains them and constitutes the foundation of the entire atelier.

Peter Märkli's archive, the backbone of his work, cannot, therefore, be dissociated from the *studio*; it is a space that accommodates figures, that opens or closes doors, that clarifies passages in which to trace the tools of the trade in the referenced text by Evans. In this sense, drawings, models, and sculptures transcribe in the language of architecture, in the grammar of design, the principal lives of the cited spaces. Bodies that are only seemingly inanimate surround those of individuals who transit, think, or work in those rooms that are, on one hand, the *studio* and, on the other, the *office*.

The small-scale models are the physical result of a mode of

2. D. Chipperfield, *La buona pratica | Good practice*, in "Domus", n. 1043, February 2020, p. 22.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Archivio*, in P.O. Pianigiani (edited by), *Vocabolario etimologico della lingua italiana, A-L*, vol. 1, Dante Alighieri, 1907, p. 76.

thinking translated through numerous drawings that investigate disciplinary statutes and transform history into stories, keeping it alive. Architecture is articulate, that is, it dialogues through elements that come from the archives without concern for immediately becoming construction sites. The absence of statics in the produced images underlines the existence, in reality, of a personal construction site that is always in operation and displayed in the dimension of the workspace. The sculptures of Hans Josephson, along with the teachings of Rudolph Olgiati, figures of reference for Peter Märkli, simultaneously describe the times and translatability of some of those signs.

The studio is, therefore, the physical result of an experience not yet aimed at the dematerialisation of architecture, its “digitalisation”, although necessarily taking place in practice; rather, it demonstrates a territory that experiments with the fantastic to reach the real. Thus, the space is destined to identify and collect, in a sort of collection without discontinuity, the evidence of the author, that is, of one who:

thinks spatially and thus talks about these personal coordinates as ‘rooms’. These ‘rooms’, representing different cultural or professional conditions, are only partially enclosed. They overlap and radiate in different directions, while he who stated their existence preserves an admirable ambiguity about further definition.¶

Drawings, models, sculptures, notes, describe the authorial instances showing the questions to be answered. Archived or framed, the drawings translate into the language of architecture the research of a craft founded on thought, while the sculptures placed on the shelves or tables, or even placed next to the author’s images, together with the models, materialise the time of an open work striving for exactitude in which large *test* columns signal future presences.

That is why, when asked about the possible significance of the *studio*, the answer one receives is precise even if unspecified: “Peter

5. I. Davidovici, *Rooms. Notes on the sources of Peter Märkli’s art*, in F. Don, C. Mion (edited by), *Peter Märkli: Drawings / Zeichnungen*, Quart Verlag, Luzern 2015, p. 32.

says that you could start with the *Atelierhaus für zwei Musiker* in Rumisberg as a framework”⁶. The image received by email from Studio Märkli, informed by the writing of this text, depicts the space of a project completed about a decade ago (2013) near Bern: an inhabited interior. Used kitchen utensils, a working table with notes and chairs out of place, behind it the musical instruments of the two inhabitants (*zwei Musiker*), in the background a fireplace and another shady room, describe the plan sequence of an exercise that recomposes the images recalled in this text. The *Atelierhaus* translates the instances of an author’s position in which first the *studio*, then the *office*, represents the first room of a building site waiting to become a home. It is in these architectures, the photo sent by Peter Märkli bears witness to this, that the working methods are completed; on the walls of that house in the deepest mystery, as in the studio, some of his drawings find a place to show us the possibilities of the world that awaits us and the strategies to cross it where the reference, at the beginning and at the end, is life.

6. Excerpt from the Studio Märkli’s mail received on October 3, 2024.



Säule, Atelier Peter Märkli, Zürich 2022; © Studio Märkli.



Atelierhaus für zwei Musiker, Rumisberg 2013; © Studio Märkli.

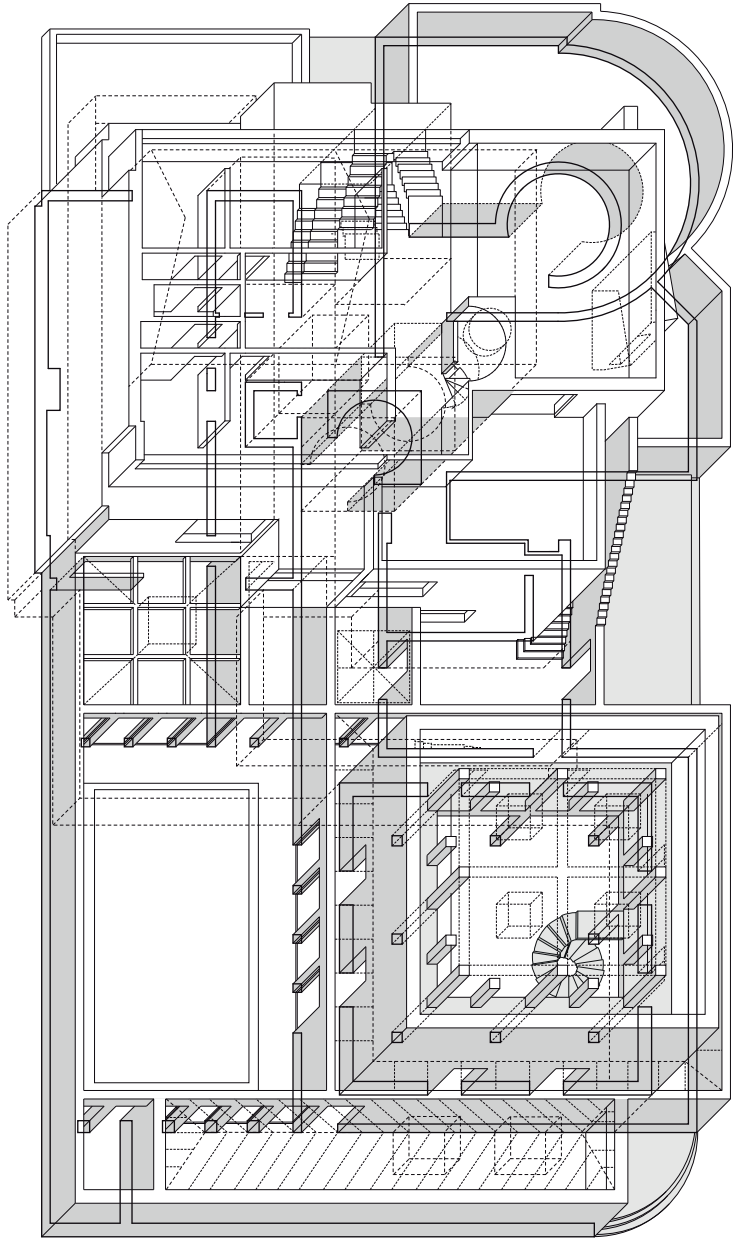


Oswald Mathias Ungers. House in Belvederestraße

BY

Annalisa Trentin

Haus Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft, Cologne-Müngersdorf;
© Fabrizia Berlingieri, Levan Eloshvili.



0 1 5



Between 1958 and 1959, Oswald Mathias Ungers designed and built the Belvederestraße house in Cologne-Müngersdorf, which was to be not only a home for himself and his family but also for his professional studio and two small apartments. The corner plot between Quadratherstraße and Belvederestraße presented several particularly restrictive characteristics that influenced the design: the adjacent building was characterised by a pitched roof with a timber tympanum, there was a need to respect the alignment of the façades, the orientation was defined as well as the prescribed height of the eaves and the depth of the construction. The conscious acceptance of all these limitations led to the realization of a strongly articulated house, mainly composed of independent elements. The new construction thus stood alongside the existing buildings, continuing the façade and following the visual image of the street, taking up the shape of the plot with a rounded structure on the corner and standing in continuity with the roof of the adjacent house.

The house on Belvederestraße is not, however, a construction determined by chance: Ungers aimed to define a new form of settlement, with a construction that was intended to transform the anonymously traditional surroundings – houses with pitched roofs, bow windows, cornices, graduations, accidental divisions of building lots – into an accentuated order, which is centred on itself with great strength and autonomy¹.

What Ungers built, expresses its essence not as a construction-object, as a simple block house, it is not only revealed by its façade, by the external view; only in being inside, in the celebration of living, is the significance of what is facing outwards revealed². “[...] Instead of being in front, being inside”, these are the words Ungers used to explain the spatial value of his architecture.

The location of the plot and the density of the construction of the adjoining houses precluded connecting the living spaces with

1. *Ein Werkstattbericht, Bauten und Projekte von O.M. Ungers*, in “Bauwelt”, n. 8, 22 February 1960, pp. 204-217.

2. U. Conrads, *FOCUS: Oswald Mathias Ungers*, in “Zodiac”, Edizioni di Comunità, n. 9, 1962, pp. 173-181.

the outside. The design therefore focused on minimising the outer space in favour of inner spatial compositions. Spaces are enlarged with inner courtyards and roof terraces, not visible from the outside; narrow and wide, high and low, closed and open spaces are here intertwined. From the outside, this spatial organism appears as a composition of cubic bodies, where the offsets and windows, as negative forms, are of equal importance to the positive bodies.

The detachment from the 'graphic' façade, with its voids, is constantly emphasised. There is no self-explanatory idea in this house, everything is related to the whole body. This multiplicity is also defined by a uniformity of material: red clinker and exposed concrete³. The Belvederestraße house is a massive, bodily architecture; a few years after the realisation of the house, Ungers, during the lecture he gave for his appointment as professor at the TU Berlin, stated that architectural conception revolves around two poles: body and space, that is, the making of spaces and the construction of bodies, which bound spaces; both of these processes are fundamental prerequisites of building. Building requirements may be different, whether we are talking about individual constructions or an entire city, but in any case, body and space always form the basic elements of architectural activity. Space in its formless reality, as a space of overall air, is something immaterial and has no visible expression in itself. A certain spatial form only occurs in the corporal demarcation. In the most general sense, architecture is nothing more than the demarcation of air space, visible from the smallest cell to the most complicated spatial construction⁴.

Some scholars, including Pevsner⁵, harshly criticised the design for the house in Belvederestraße, considering it to be without intellectual discipline and lacking in any connection, confusing

3. *Ein Werkstattbericht, Bauten und Projekte von O.M. Ungers*, op. cit.

4. O. M. Ungers, *Prinzipien der Raumgestaltung, Berufungsvortrag TU Berlin 1963*, in "Arch+", n. 65, October 1982, pp. 41-48.

5. N. Pevsner, *Moderne Architektur und der Historiker, oder die Wiederkehr des Historizismus*, in "db. Deutsche Bauzeitung", n. 10, October 1961, pp. 757-763.

freedom with arbitrariness. Ungers would reply that holding the principle of strict logical order as the only right one corresponds to the rationalistic way of thinking of our century and to an exaggerated aspiration for security, whereas:

The confusion of the impressions of reality, however, and the alarming contradictions of our environment dissolve traditional and classical thinking and feeling. The multiple externalities of individual objects manifest itself in an articulated, multi-layered and eventful architecture. In an architecture, which is in the condition of becoming and which rises, as it were, before our eyes, sketched and fragmented. It represents a process and not a result. Rather than proportion and symmetry, rhythm and movement take over.⁶

The house, that has now become an architectural museum⁷ included in the list of iconic 20th-century houses⁸, continues to transform itself: after the construction of the Kubus library, an addition of the nineties in the garden space to host the architect's extensive collection of volumes, it continues to fulfill different functions and uses, demonstrating its potential to be constantly exemplary and continuously in the making.

In the "Lotus International" article *From the Square to the Cube*⁹, Ungers writes that the brick house from the 1950s, with its plastic movement, and the new radical cube in black stone are connected

6. O. M. Ungers, *Aus einem Vortrag vor dem Akademischen Architektenverein in Hannover*, in "Baukunst und Werkform", Verlag Nürnberger Presse, Nürnberg, XIV, n. 8, August 1961, p. 426.

7. The UAA - Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft with the House in Belvederestraße is member of ICAM The International Confederation of Architectural Museums.

8. The House in Belvederestraße is part of the international network ICONIC HOUSES connecting architecturally significant houses and artists' homes and studios from the 20th-century that are open to the public as house-museum.

9. O. M. Ungers, *From the Square to the Cube. Oswald Mathias Ungers's Home Library*, in "Lotus", n. 72 Architecture of Criticism, 1992.

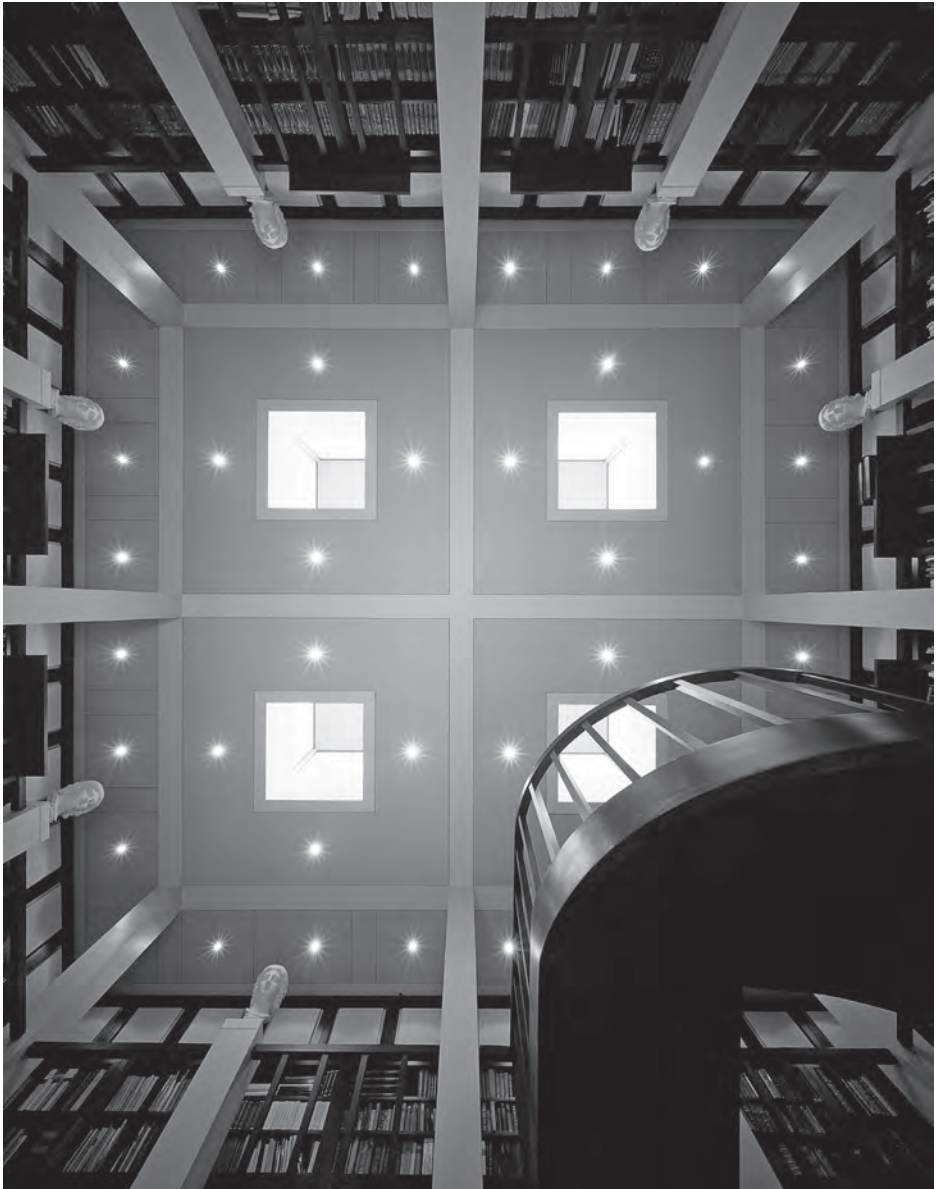
to each other like inhalation and exhalation. They exist together as part of a single process. One is a commentary and completion of the other. Together, the two architectures constitute an architectural microcosm with complex relationships where spaces and bodies complete and contradict each other. Here we find the concept of *coincidentia oppositorum*: a system of two buildings serves as a paraphrase of city construction that developed throughout history through a discontinuous growth process, and therefore inherently contradictory, yet going on to constitute the urban unicum, with its axes, its insulae, and its monuments.

We can consider the Kubus library an experiment with different recurring themes in Ungers' work: the building represents the theme of incorporation with a precise reference to an urban structure that can contain buildings and squares within itself, which in turn contain internal courtyards and spaces that articulate into increasingly smaller units. The immediate reference is understood as an expression of the house-within-a-house phenomenon. In this sense, Ungers references history, returning to construction principles, to the archaic hut, to the temple where the sanctuary cell was found in the innermost core, then surrounded by a colonnade which in turn was in a consecrated area defined by external perimeter walls. In Ungers' latest architectures, there is a desire to make evident the elementary concept in a direct reference to Arthur Schopenhauer's (1788-1860) metaphysical idea regarding reality and worldview, the *Weltanschauung* as a will to make visible and evident the profound meaning of things. Architecture is reduced to the mere idea of building, stripped of any adjectives, finding a simplified language to return to the pure essence of geometric form. Ungers seeks to unite in his architecture the primacy of idea with the primacy of form. The Kubus is a library that contains the architectural knowledge of the West: rare books, museum pieces, theories and images of architecture, and is simultaneously an image and reproduction of perfect geometry. A black cube divided into four parts like the Roman castrum and the idea of the city intersected by main road axes, cardo and decumanus. The Kubus contains the stratification of things: in the basement is placed the archive with all of Ungers' writings and

projects, on the courtyard level is the personal study of the architect and his wife Liselotte, onto which four doors open representing the four cardinal points, above which are placed the plans of as many symbolic cities. The walls are marked by the square rhythm of bookcases. Supporting the gallery is a naked skeleton of architecture, a 6 x 6 x 6 metres lattice that takes on universal meanings, a white structural grid repositing the horizontal and vertical lines of universal order. From the gallery, eight identical heads bearing the names of as many Enlightenment figures from the French Revolution guillotined on the same day, work by Ian Hamilton Finlay (1925-2006), look toward the central space. This library contains the idea of architecture according to OMU, that architecture that was reducing itself to pure essence, like Samuel Beckett's last written work: *Quadrat I+II* (1981), where four figures move along imaginary diagonals, from light to dark. James Knowlson writes in *The Life of Samuel Beckett*¹⁰ that a non-verbal work for four dancers was the natural development of Beckett's interest in choreography and his radical distrust of language. Beckett indeed spoke of his "difficulty in writing any word now without having the profound impression that it was a lie". Ungers' interest also pushed with Kubus and five years later with the house in 58 Kämpchensweg, toward increasingly radical choices. The forms have become pure volumes of neutral objectivity, defined as non-sentimental, reducing architecture to pure intellectual sign linking architecture to art. An experimentation of sculpture as architecture, in reference to artworks hosted in 60 Belvederestraße, *Lines in four directions* (1982) by Sol Lewitt or *Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue* (1927) by Piet Mondrian whose words could have been pronounced by Ungers himself: "contemplating, seeing plastically is truly very important: the more we are able to see plastically the immutable, the universal, the more insignificant the mutable and individual becomes for us"¹¹.

10. J. Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett*, Touchstone Books, New York 1997.

11. H. Holtzman, M. S. James, *The New Art, the New Life: The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian*, G.K. Hall & Co, Boston 1986.



The Kubus library.

Photo by Stefan Müller, © UAA Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft.



The atelier's activity in the 1960s.
Photo by Walter Ehmann, © UAA Ungers Archiv für
Architekturwissenschaft.



The workspace; © UAA Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft.



The workspace; © UAA Ungers Archiv für Architekturwissenschaft.

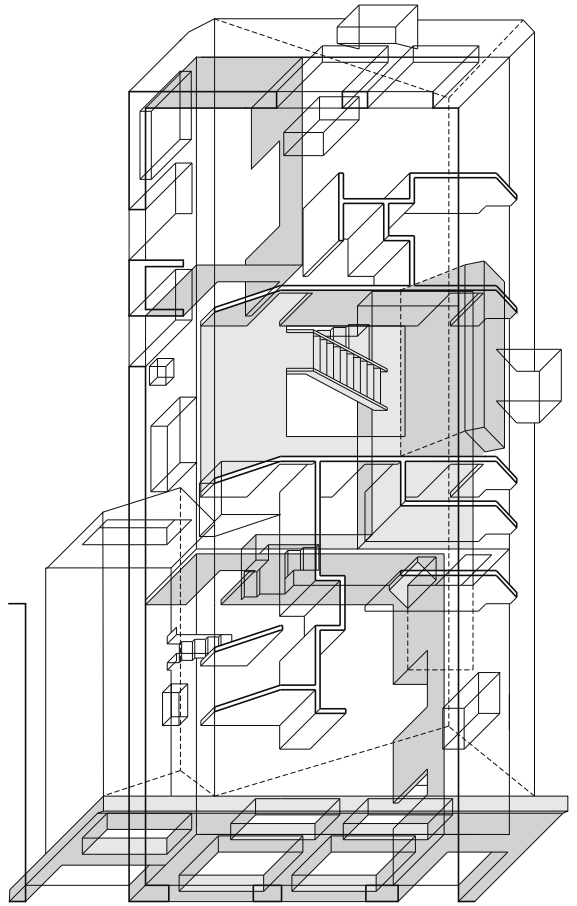


The Archive and its Affects

BY

Alejandro Campos Uribe

Aldo and Hannie van Eyck home-archive, Loenen;
© Fabrizia Berlingieri, Levan Eloshvili.



From Klee's painting to the collection of African figurines, from the Antillean Indian rugs to the worn, vaguely kindred multiform seats, from the boldly structured staircase to the overflowing bookshelves, in a vast, ever-shifting space, everything is veiled in a grayish patina, the quiet trace of a careless attention.¶

These were the words used by Fernando Correa to describe his first encounter with Aldo and Hannie van Eyck's family house in Loenen aan de Vecht, a home that today remains largely unchanged, still an ever-changing interior that recorded the Van Eyck engagements with architecture as architects, writers, and dwellers. I still remember my first encounter with the place in 2015 as broadly similar. However, at that time, I had not yet realised that what I had experienced was not the emotional impact of visiting an unknown, private space inhabited by the very architects I was researching, but the affective power of an archival habitat that had the potential to evidence interwoven and complex histories. Since 2015, I have written about this house-archive from manifold perspectives: as a design by the Van Eycks¶, as a collection and exhibition¶, as the very place where Aldo and Hannie developed their practice¶, or as an intersection of problematic histories. In *Engaging the Archival Habitat*, Rachel Lee has noted the affective potential and performativity of the objects and artefacts that construct archives, what she calls "archival actants": objects that enable the spatial intersection of archive, research subject, and researcher, collapsing chronological boundaries.

1. F. Correa, *Aldo van Eyck: una conversación biográfica*, in "Arquitecturas Bis", n. 19, 1977, pp. 17-21.
2. A. Campos-Uribe, *Aldo van Eyck: Le Musée Imaginaire*, PhD Dissertation, Universitat Politècnica de València, 2018.
3. A. Campos-Uribe, *Inhabiting the Exhibition: On Architecture, Collecting, and the Everyday*, in P. Sparke, J. Scholze, F. Fisher, E. Ioannidou, P. Kirkham, P. Lara-Betancourt (eds.), *Exhibition as Interior, Interior as Exhibition*, Bloomsbury Publishing, London 2025.
4. A. Campos-Uribe, P. Lacombe-Montes, *Embodiment Takes Command: Re-Enacting Aldo and Hannie van Eyck's Homelife*, in "The Journal of Architecture", n. 28 (3), 2023, pp. 482-509.

Lee argues that archives work affectively on their users, “shifting their emotional registers, influencing their thoughts, and ultimately co-producing what is written”⁵. I would like to expand on Lee’s observations to domestic archives and, most importantly, to the persons who originally instituted them in a natural enactment of their ways of living: Aldo and Hannie van Eyck, in this case.

Over the last decades, architecture historians have noted the entanglements of bodies, ideologies, and space. Places acquire, transmit, and reproduce cultural values, spatial ideas, ways of doing, making, and living. In other words, we construct interiors as gatherings of our experiences. Still, we are also shaped by these interiors themselves, enacting values and expectations that accumulate on, in, and through our bodies. Following such traces within domestic interiors implies not only looking at functions and layouts, but particularly at the materials with which we surround ourselves and the stories they tell. The Van Eycks surrounded themselves with a large number of things; they lived immersed within those things for decades, things that were bodily and real, heavy and material. As Merleau-Ponty often noted, that which is in front of us, around us, slowly transforms space-time⁶. It is not only the walls, doors, and windows that build their home’s spatial relationships and affects, but things themselves that charge the empty spaces: a charged void. Their interior was produced by a constellation of figurines, pavements, paintings, textiles, nooks, shadows, and smells that charge space with the potential to house activities. This constellation, I argue in my writings, ultimately reflects a particular understanding of time, space, and architecture. Yet, how does one capture such an understanding? How can we trace the ways in which objects, textures, and spatial constructs perform memory, history, and inhabitation?

Such an attempt to understand the house as a living archive

5. R. Lee, *Engaging the Archival Habitat: Architectural Knowledge and Otto Koenigsberger’s Effects*, in “Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East”, 40, n. 3, 2020, pp. 526-540

6. M. Merleau-Ponty, *Eye and Mind*, in Id., *The Primacy of Perception*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston Illinois 1964.

representing Aldo and Hannie van Eyck's poetics of architecture needs to start from the encroachment of their activities. The Van Eyck Archive contains many negatives of Aldo and Hannie within their house, reading, talking, cooking, reorganising their collection, and meeting their peers. These activities did not merely happen inside the house, but actively transformed it, manifesting through its surfaces laden with objects. Activities and surfaces do more than just document the house: they interrogate, through framing, layering, and sequencing; they reveal spatial tensions, affective densities, and the transactions between material presence and absence. Transactions that are most visible where these two intersect, in the very boundaries, between matter and action, which Aristotle called place or *topos*, that define the rooms as the space in-between. The interior is produced through boundaries, enclosures, and activations: a mass of air that was once homogeneous but now, activated by things, the sun, windows, shadows, and bodies, becomes real. With these, I aim to throw light on the Van Eycks' relativist spatial logic: place as an accumulation of meaningful objects and occasions where spatial relationships are continually negotiated, an in-between that is an active realm where encounters, dialogues, and transformations occur.

If, as Rachel Lee argues, and as Achille Mbembe's work⁷ on the postcolonial archive suggests, archives have no meaning outside the subjective experience of those individuals who use them, and in turn affect their users – shifting their emotional registers, influencing their thoughts, and co-producing what's written –, then this house, in its charged materiality, has worked upon me as well. But just as the house acts upon me, it is also transformed by my own shifting perspectives. As my research has moved to the problematic histories embedded in many of these objects – their colonial entanglements, the tensions of collecting and exhibiting –, I have come to see the house as a space where narratives are reconfigured, and meanings unsettled.

7. A. Mbembe, *The Power of the Archive and Its Limits*, in Id., *Refiguring the Archive*, Springer, Dordrecht 2002, pp. 19-27.

This lived and living archive is not only a site of memory but a generative force, one that continues to affect my understanding of dwelling, architectural history, and design practice.



Dining and living space, interior of Aldo and Hannie van Eyck's house in 2018.
Photo by the author.



Another room, interior of Aldo and Hannie van Eyck's house in 1968.
Photo by the author.



Dining and living space, the podium, interior of Aldo and Hannie van Eyck's house in 2018. Photo by the author.



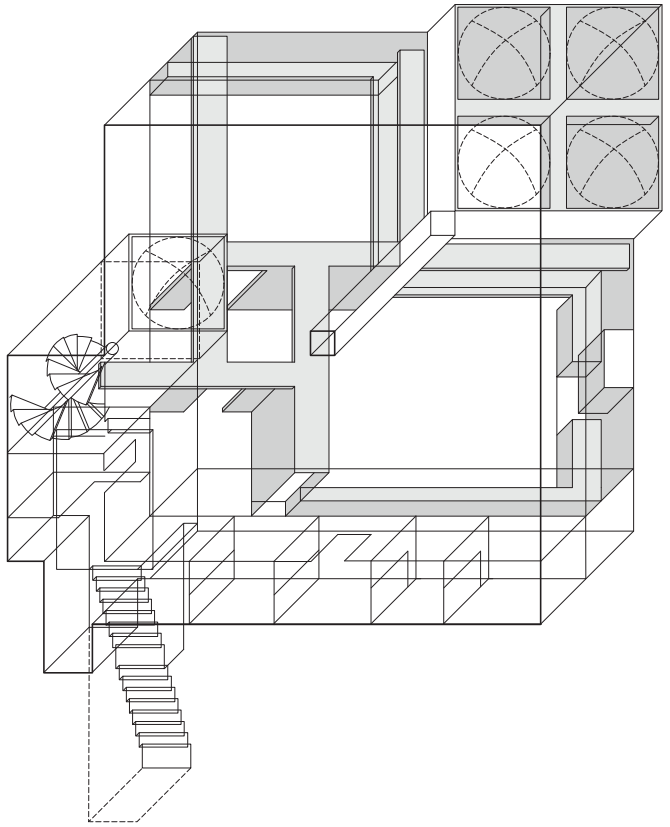
Hannie van Eyck in Loenen.
Undated photo by Peter Smithson, © Collection Nieuwe Instituut, TTEN
n. 7-5.

Between a Quadreria and a Man's Cave. On Fernando Higuera's Rascainfiernos

BY

Jacopo Leveratto
Alessandra Bruno

Fundación Fernando Higuera, Madrid;
© Fabrizia Berlingieri, Levan Eloshvili.



The idea came in the early 1970s, with the improbable event of the Death tarot card appearing four times in a row and on four different occasions. Which, according to the card reader, Francisco Nieva, was not necessarily a sign that the querent, Fernando Higuera, was going to die soon. But which nonetheless had to imply that, in three years, in one way or another, he, Fernando, would have inevitably been underground with a cypress on top of him. An outlook that, no matter how irrational it might sound, began to make the Madrilenian architect, willingly or not, understandably concerned about his safety. To the point that immediately after the reading he decided to devise a way to save his life by simultaneously complying with his fate, to be put it into practice by means of design, as he was used to, as soon as the right opportunity had arisen¹.

Fortunately, almost as predicted, this opportunity did not take long to come, even though probably not in the most pleasant way. Early in 1972, in fact, just after having bought a nice small house for his family, at 36 Maestro Lasalle Street, in Madrid, Higuera was struggling with a turbulently collapsing marriage. And despite having two different professional studios, he was still in need of a proper space to work. Hence, after yet another argument with his wife, who wanted him definitely out of home, he decided to occupy the patio, just out of spite, to build his new home-office. And since the house was listed by the current urban planning, which prevented it from any addition or expansion, he was left with no choice but to think of a downward extension of the space. Which he, recalling Nieva's prediction, imagined as the underground negative of the other construction.

The problem, however, was that the patio was so small and the passages so narrow that no construction machinery could be brought there. But he was so determined not to leave the house, and moreso

1. The story of the idea, as reported by Lola Botia, personal and professional partner of the architect until his death, can be found in F. F. Muñoz Carabias and F. J. Moreno Cañete, *Higuera y su rasca infernos: Otro lenguaje, otra estética, otra ecología y arquitectura*, in "Revista de Arquitecturas Modernas", n. 1, 2024, pp. 208-227. For further references, see the bibliography presented here.

to annoy his wife, to do everything with shovel and wheelbarrow. Arriving, in three years, to have a nine-metre cube dug in the garden, which he first consolidated with a brick wall as a lost formwork. And which he then covered with a reinforced concrete layer equipped with direct drainage and a ventilation chamber. Divided in plan into four identical smaller squares by a central pillar, and into two storeys in section. With a bedroom, a toilet, and a living room with a kitchen on the open mezzanine, occupying three of the four squares directly linked to the garden. And a large open-space studio taking the whole surface of the lower floor, generously lit up by a skylight covering the double-height square.

A cave, in other words, as he often referred to it. Or better, a hellscaper, or a *rascainfernos*, as he immediately called it, just out of superstition, after having had the idea. A personal shelter built around himself, characterised by a constant temperature, whether it was winter or summer, and a diffused and smooth zenithal light in almost every hour of the day. And in which any sound from outside would come muffled and the only relationship with the world was that with the sky. At the same time inspired by the excavated villages of Maghreb and realised in adherence to the strict geometrical rules derived from the most rational of the organisational and structural schemes. Both organic in its conception, representing a timeless, minimal, and expandable spatial module, and rigorous in its construction, dictated by a classical composition full of symmetries and axialities. But with no rigidity at all, at least in terms of use.

This was because the space had to be a continuous and flowing one where the ideas of working and living could come to terms with no friction, as part of a way of dwelling that knew no formalities in this sense. Thus, apart from the bedroom, no room was closed, but they were all designed in direct communication with the others to blur the boundaries of the two functions. With what could be considered the living room, for instance, always invaded by a bunch of papers and models, often used to discuss with clients and colleagues. With the studio, presided by a large hammock stretched just under the skylight and the vegetation cascading from the skylight, usually meant for relaxation. And with this blur further testified by a

horizontal line running throughout the whole space, set a little over two metres in height, representing the main equipping element of the house, be it a cornice, a bookshelf, or a hanging device.

The design of the interior space, in other words, was more connotated by the idea of exhibiting than by a traditional domestic or working character, and its progressive process of occupation only confirmed this initial characterisation. After a few years, in fact, there was no more free space on the walls. Paintings by Antonio López and Joaquín Sorolla, sketches by Eduardo Chillida, and memories with friends Gloria Fuertes, César Manrique, and Soledad Lorenzo were mixed with Higuera's own design panels, drawings, and exhibition posters. And also tables, shelves, and floors were all covered by books, maquettes, ornaments and plants among which it was impossible to distinguish what belonged to his professional life or to his private one. For they were all personal memories indifferently collected and accumulated, and randomly placed as almost in search of unexpected elective affinities.

This is to say, in summary, that Higuera's home-office was neither a house nor a working space, at least in a functional sense, but the projection of his personality, as an individual and an architect, directly built, as an act of liberation, by his gestures, habits, and tastes. A projection imprinted by excavation, both in literal and figurative terms, which was reflected not only by its architectural structure but also by the objects, the artworks, and the memories in which he recognised himself, and which eventually represented its very significant apparatus. All arranged, like in a classic *quadreria*, by making use of a tight layout based on the physical size and consistency of the exhibits rather than on conceptual ordering criteria. With the final effect, halfway between a wallpaper and a mosaic, of rendering the evolutive complexity of his personal and professional individuality in the process of its deliberation.



View from the mezzanine of the studio.
Photo by Lola Botia, © Fundación Fernando Higuera.



View from the mezzanine of the double-height wall.
Photo by Lola Botía, © Fundación Fernando Higuera.



View from the underground floor of the double-height wall.
Photo by Lola Botía, © Fundación Fernando Higuera.



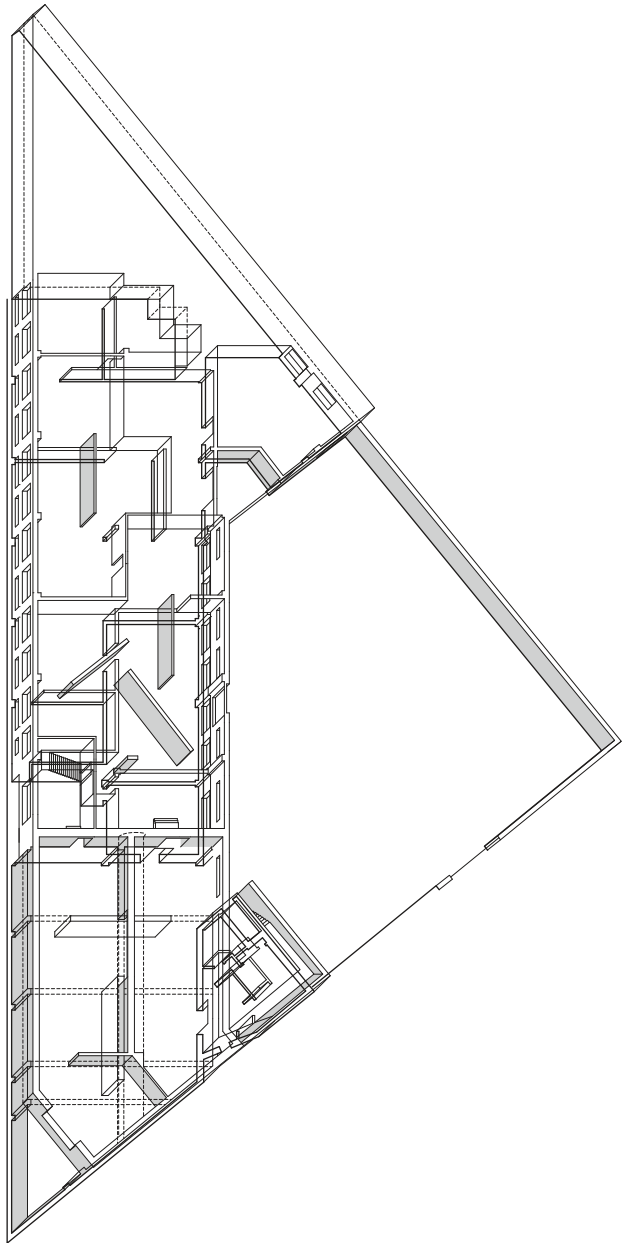
View from the mezzanine of the studio.
Photo by Lola Botía, © Fundación Fernando Higuera.



Bridging Cultures and Time. The Noguchi Museum in New York

BY

Marta Atzeni



01 10



In 1961, Isamu Noguchi left his Manhattan studio and relocated across the East River to Long Island City. Among the quiet avenues and low-rise buildings, the Japanese American sculptor and designer transformed a former single-story industrial building into what he described as “a semi-storage-place, semi-a-place-to-come-back-to”¹ between his stays in Japan and Italy, where he devoted himself to the production of his artworks². Thus, the red brick building on 10th Street served a dual purpose: it acted as an archive, where Noguchi brought together his artworks that had been stored in various locations, as well as his collection of *memorabilia*. Additionally, it functioned as a modern studiolo, providing space for studying, writing, sketching, designing, and modelling. Developed in collaboration with carpenter Yukio Madokoro, this private refuge reveals fragments of the artist’s deep inner world and poetic sensibility.

As in his sculptural practice Noguchi refrained from imposing a predetermined form on the materials, celebrating instead their essence through minimal cuts and incisions, so in his intervention on the former warehouse in Long Island City he established a dialogue with the context, respecting the character of the place. Embracing the openness and generosity of the steel and red brick structure, along with its large windows, Noguchi kept the building largely unchanged, filling it with hundreds of his sculptures. With minimal intervention, he suspended a small volume within the space to define a two-level home studio.

In this area, slightly separated from the rest of the building by a cement brick partition, the complex sense of identity of Noguchi, born to an American writer and a Japanese poet, raised between the two countries, and self-identified as a citizen of the world, clearly emerges. His hybrid artistic language, which combined the formal abstraction and industrial innovation of modernist Western

1. *Isamu Noguchi interviewed at his studio in Queens, c. 1970*, The Noguchi Museum Archives, AV_F16_067_c1970 (synced to audio file AV_MAR_001A_1971).

2. Noguchi maintained another studio in Mure, on Shikoku island, Japan. See: I. Noguchi, *Isamu Noguchi Atelier*, in “The Japan Architect”, vol. 61, n. 353, September 1986, pp. 40-43.

art with the spiritual, nature-oriented sensibility and artisanal traditions of Japan, finds expression in the home studio through the choice of industrial materials and their assembly. Made of plywood boards and Masonite panels joined using traditional Japanese joinery techniques, the floating volume contains a Japanese-style bedroom featuring shoji screens made of fibreglass and a dropped ceiling constructed from cardboard tubes; the space below, organised in an open-plan layout, includes the living and kitchen areas, with exposed surfaces made of cement bricks, pegboards, and asphalt flooring³. Furnished with a mix of Noguchi's iconic design objects and more commonplace pieces, the minimalist living area contrasts with an eclectic array of objects hanging on a pegboard that spans one entire wall. Composed of artefacts collected during Noguchi's travels and interspersed with his prototypes, this cabinet of curiosities is not only a testimony of the breadth of the sculptor's influences but also serves, as Kate Wiener explains, as a material manifestation of his ambition "to find art's broader purpose, to understand its relationship to society, and to find examples of living traditions he could use to reinvigorate and remotivate the practice of sculpture"⁴.

This belief in the social and civic role of art, one that led Noguchi to expand the medium of sculpture into space and to venture into product design, motivated him in the 1980s to gradually open the storage of his Queens studio to the public⁵. By this time, he had expanded his storage facilities, by purchasing a former print engraving factory with a courtyard in 1974, located directly across from his studio⁶. With the assistance of architect Shoji Sadao, Noguchi

3. For documentation see: G. O'Brien, *Factory into Home*, in "New York Times Magazine", 8 April 1962, pp. 10-11.

4. K. Wiener, *Noguchi as Collector, The Noguchi Museum*, <https://www.noguchi.org/isamu-noguchi/digital-features/noguchi-as-collector/> (accessed July 8, 2025).

5. Noguchi was the first artist in USA to establish, design and install his own museum.

6. The museum opened in 1985. For a detailed reconstruction of its history see: A. Hau, *The Making of a Museum*, in T. Barney, S. Shore, *The Noguchi Museum. A Portrait*, Phaidon, London 2015, pp. 122-129.

designed an entry pavilion connected to the existing building: drawing from his vocabulary of elementary forms while honouring the industrial character of the site, Noguchi created a simple structure made of cement bricks with an exposed concrete frame and corrugated steel slabs, featuring floating galleries on the upper floor and an exhibition space at ground level. In this area the enduring connection between human beings and nature, which forms the basis of the sculptor's poetic, is evident. High-level strip openings without windows and a roofless triangular corner of the plan allow natural light, wind and rain to enter the space, interacting with both the sculptures and the public; while a large full-height opening provides unfiltered access to a classic Noguchi garden⁷, where the concrete floor of the gallery continues to trace a path among the trees and sculptures. The museum complex is completed by the existing building, which Noguchi preserved almost unchanged from its previous use as his storage facility. His only intervention was the repositioning of the artworks, which, even in their new arrangement, maintain the informal character of the previous display⁸.

Alongside the architecture, the exhibition design itself contributes significantly to making the museum the ultimate expression of Noguchi's poetics. Convinced that sculptures were not isolated objects but rather found their true meaning when positioned in spatial relation to one another and the public, the artist rejected the use of pedestals⁹, integrating them into the sculptures themselves or allowing the work to rise directly from the ground.

7. For a documentation on Noguchi's gardens see: A.M. Torres, *Isamu Noguchi: a study of space*, Monacelli Press, New York 2000.

8. Following renovations in the early 2000s the second level galleries were reconfigured.

9. "This indeed is the direct function of the base; it frames and creates an object of importance. And yet i am bothered by it. It tends to remove sculpture from man's own proportion and contact. It supplies a fictional horizon. This is the chief reason why I have attempted an integration of sculpture and base: bases that bite into the sculpture, sculpture that rises from the earth". In I. Noguchi, *A Sculptor's World*, Harper & Row, New York-Evanston 1968, p. 39.

Similarly, in the museum, the display apparatus is minimised. Free to move without a predetermined path through the galleries devoid of wall labels or texts¹⁰, visitors encounter the artworks placed directly in the space. An unmediated, intimate experience that reflects Noguchi's distinctly approach to museography – one that, as former director Allen Wardwell observed, sought to offer visitors a contemplative encounter akin to that of “small, private Japanese museums”¹¹.

10. In place of them, Noguchi wrote a personal guide to the museum. See: I. Noguchi, *The Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum Catalogue*, Abrams, New York 1987.

11. J. Hakanson Colby, *Noguchi's little paradise*, in “The Detroit News”, 28 October 1986, p. 2E.



10th Street, Long Island City, Queens Studio, undated. The Noguchi Museum Archives, 03274; © The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York ARS/SIAE.



Sculptures at Isamu Noguchi's 10th street Studio, undated. The Noguchi Museum Archives, 03270.
Unknown photographer, © The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York/ARS/SIAE.



Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum, Area 1, c. 1982. The Noguchi Museum Archives, 142488.
Photo by Philip Galgiani, © The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York/ARS/SIAE.

Collecting as a Design Strategy. Philip Johnson's Glass House

BY

Lina Malfona

Designing and building an archipelago has something similar to the act of creating a collection, a constellation of pieces held together by a series of relationships, often set up by a collector. According to the curator Hans Ulrich Obrist:

a collection is a way to conceive the world: the relations and the principles that inform a collection comprise assumptions, juxtapositions, discoveries, attempts at possibilities and associations. Hence, one might state that collecting is a method to produce knowledge.¶

But if the act of collecting can be considered as a method for producing knowledge, can it also be seen as a project? In my perspective, collecting is both a hermeneutic lens to critically read an archipelago, and a design strategy. It is enough to think of the drawing *Ichnographia Campi Martii antiquae urbis* (1757) by Gian Battista Piranesi, which can be read as the expression of a design method that emphasises the typological delirium of isolated buildings and, at the same time, celebrates the preciousness of the unique piece, the one coveted by every collector. Another project involving the use of collection as a methodology of design is Villa Borghese in Rome, Cardinal Scipione Borghese's garden of delights. One of the largest public parks in the city, it can be seen as a collection of museum buildings, fountains, small temples and pavilions located at the streets' junctions, forests, parks dedicated to peculiar animals and large valleys¶.

With reference to certain 'suburban encyclopedias' of buildings, such as Villa Adriana in Tivoli, collecting can be even seen as a settlement methodology. A grand residential complex which the emperor Hadrian built for himself in Tivoli, Villa Adriana is a collection of 'places', the reproduction of the masterpieces that the emperor Hadrian saw in Greece and in the East colonies. The composition of this large museum conceived as a collage has become

1. H. U. Obrist, *Ways of Curating*, Penguin Books, London 2014, p. 57.
2. L. Malfona, *Residentialism. A Suburban Archipelago*, Actar, Barcelona-New York 2021, pp. 82-97.

the inspiration for many architects, including Louis Kahn, James Stirling, Oswald Mathias Ungers, and Philip Johnson, who have carefully studied the imperial villa intended, we might say, as a collection of ‘rooms’.

The idea of creating a collection of masterpieces led architect, curator and essayist Philip Johnson to conceive his Glass House in New Canaan as a ‘constellation’, a system of pavilions. The Glass House is a sort of a widespread museum located on a hill within Johnson’s estate in New Canaan, a stone’s throw from the Metropolitan Railway to New York. There, in addition to his own house, Johnson designed pavilions built at different times – some residential, others dedicated to study and to house Johnson’s various art collections – and immersed in a meticulously arranged landscape system. Similarly to Hadrian’s Villa, the Glass House is the home of a collector but also an autobiographical essay that stems from the accumulation of artefacts, conducted through eclectic experimentalism. As in Hadrian’s Villa, these objects seem to come from afar and appear as unique pieces, purchased at an auction by an expert collector.

Johnson described his own work and declared his references in a ‘visual’ article published in “The Architectural Review”. The article dates back to 1950, so it only focuses on the first two buildings, the Glass House and the Brick House. However, the accuracy of their location in the area confirms the placement of the small constructions built later³. However, although designed by Johnson himself, these pavilions appear to be sketched by different authors. Johnson planned the whole Glass House as a sort of open-air wunderkammer where visitors would be able to admire buildings that record different seasons of his production. Upon closer inspection, this appears to have been a programmatic choice, in order to build his own legacy in the form of a manifesto of his chameleon-like

3. P. Johnson, *House at New Canaan*, in “The Architectural Review”, 108, n. 645, September 1950, pp. 152-159.

and inventive personality. Thus, the Glass House appears – according to Francesco Dal Co – as “the place where the collector protects his diversity, guards the fruits of his curiosity, studies the world [...] letting it filter severely through the barriers that protect his laboratory as a historian”⁴.

In addition to the well-known glass house, the complex of pavilions designed by Johnson consists of the *Brick House*, the *Lake Pavilion* (1962), two galleries designed to house the architect’s private collections, his studio-library (1980), the *Ghost House* (1984), the more recent entrance pavilion, named *Da Monsta* (1995), and finally the vernacular buildings, which later became the house where Johnson and his partner actually lived.

Among the pavilions built in the property, the Lake Pavilion is the most conceptual. The result of the distortion of harmonic proportions, Johnson conceives this object as a harmless and pleasant joke on serious architecture. Indeed, according to the author’s words, “it is pleasant to be in a false scale—to feel big or feel small. How small you feel in St. Peter’s false-scaled nave in Rome; how big in a doll’s house”⁵. The pavilion had a well-defined place in Johnson’s overall design for the Glass House. Placed within the woodland below the Glass House, the pavilion is a small sculpture to look at from the house but also a small gazebo from which to look at the glass house. In designing the pavilion, Johnson was inspired by a precedent he found in the Dwarves Apartments in the Domus Nova at the Palazzo Ducale in Mantua. But unlike its predecessor, Johnson’s pavilion on the lake was a provocation, a “slap in the face of the puritanism of functionalism prevailing in the architecture of the time”⁶, a folly, a whim.

4. F. Dal Co, *La casa dei sogni e dei ricordi. Philip Johnson a New Canaan*, in “Lotus”, n. 35, 1982, pp. 122-128. Cited in D. Whitney and J. Kipnis (edited by), *Philip Johnson. La casa di cristallo*, Electa, Milan 1996, pp. 115-22.

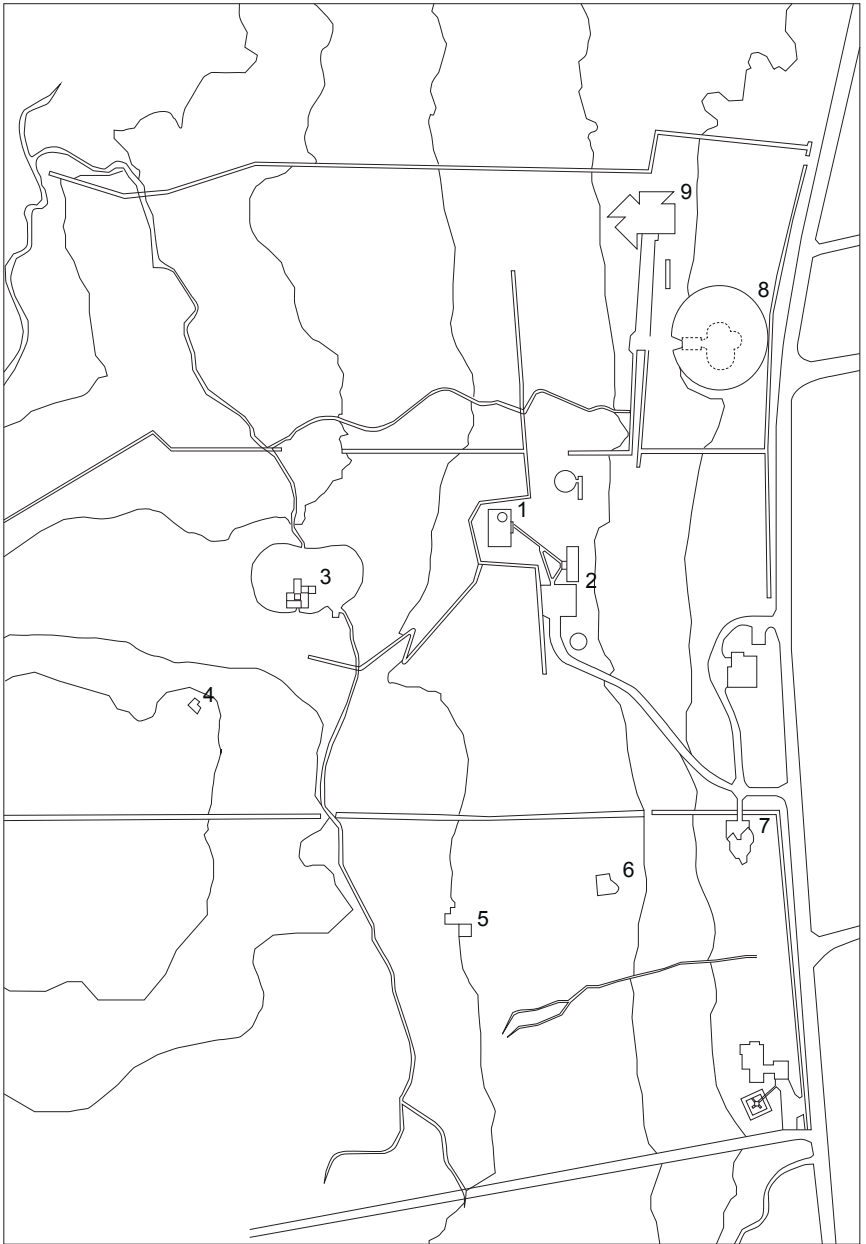
5. Cf. P. Johnson, *Full Scale False Scale*, in P. Eisenman and R. Stern (edited by), *Philip Johnson. Writings*, Oxford University Press, New York 1979, p. 251.

6. J. Kipnis, *Introduzione alla Glass House. Gli effetti incidentali di una casa di vetro*, in D. Whitney, J. Kipnis, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

It was the architect's reflection on the dissolution of human measure and on the futility of conventional canons such as habitability, indeed the arches that support the pavilion are only five-and-a-half feet high!

This pavilion holds the reason for the construction of the entire constellation of buildings. Being a fundamental ganglion of the pavilion system, it allows to understand the true nature of this private museum, conceived to become, at the death of the author, the museum of thought and creations of an "extraordinary" man, who at that time had the power of an emperor.

On the right page the plan of New Canaan, redrawing by F. Berlingieri based on the work of Alessia Giuffrida, Hafsa Chafra, *The Collector's Home* (2020), 1st-year BArch Design Studio, Università di Pisa, supervisor: professor Lina Malfona). In the plan: 1. Glass House; 2. Brick House 3. Lake Pavillion; 4. Lincoln Kirstein Tower; 5. Ghost House, 6. Studio; 7. Da Monsta; 8. Painting Gallery; 9. Sculpture Gallery.



0 50





Philip Johnson Glass House.
Photo by Mark B. Schlemmer (2012), CC BY 2.0. Source Flickr.



Philip Johnson Glass House. The brick, circular column contains the bathroom.

Photo by Mark B. Schlemmer (2012), CC BY 2.0. Source Flickr.



Philip Johnson Brick House. The Brick House, completed in 1949, sits in contrast to the Glass House facing it.
Photo by Mark B. Schlemmer (2012), CC BY 2.0. Source Flickr.



Philip Johnson Lake Pavilion and Lincoln Kirstein Tower.
Photo by Mark B. Schlemmer (2012), CC BY 2.0. Source Flickr.

Collecting on Cloud/s. Architectural Imaginaries and the Archive of Affinities

BY

Sezin Sarıca

Collecting is an inevitable part of architectural thinking and making. Historically, the act of collecting has encompassed a variety of spaces that reflect both personal affinities and collective memories revealing layers of architectural imaginaries. These spaces range from curiosity cabinets – wunderkammern – and personal archives to scrapbooks, teaching collections, and institutional repositories. Examples such as John Soane’s house, Aby Warburg’s *Bilderatlas* and Alison Smithson’s scrapbook or the CCA collection and university museums illustrate this anachronistic spatial diversity in collecting practices. In the 21st-century, the development of digital databases to provide access to digitised versions of drawings, photographs, and other materials, have provided another layer of multiplicity to the spaces of collecting. This digital integration has not only broken institutional boundaries but also fostered new freedoms in the acts of collecting and architectural thinking, particularly those shaped by personal affinities. Andrew Witt underlines the similarity between the contemporary ideas in computational architectural thinking and the ‘analogous’ roots of cabinets, uncovering multiple interconnections¹. He says:

Architects register cultural affinities in part by furnishing their physical workspaces and social conversations with specific artefacts. Amalgams of artefacts shape the creative horizon of the designer as a repository of ur-forms and desire-objects which inevitably inflect the acts of visualising and making.²

This text is part of the author’s Ph.D. thesis, supervised by Prof. Dr. Ayşen Savaş, and includes a case study on Andrew Kovacs’ project, conducted with his knowledge. The author would like to thank Andrew Kovacs for the inspiration along the way.

1. A. Witt, *Formulations Architecture, Mathematics, Culture*, MIT Press, Cambridge 2022, p. 26. He mentions “Tactics of cabinets”, which is based on collecting and creating a cabinet of encoded forms. He reads the spatial inputs of the computers through the analogous tactics of cabinets, that “creates a wunderkammer of algorithms, a cabinet of form- and space-making tactics”.

2. Ivi, p. 20.

With this perspective, a continuous strand may be followed from 19th-century teaching collections to the scenographic methods of architectural making in the latter half of the 20th-century until today's works, illustrating how historical practices of collecting continue to inform and inspire new approaches to architectural creativity and knowledge production³. The *Archive of Affinities* by Andrew Kovacs, as a contemporary project, can be linked to this trajectory, bridging the 19th-century practice of copying with the (post)modern techniques of pinning and collaging. This text focuses on the specific case of Archive of Affinities to understand creative architectural potential of collecting and also explores how the act of accumulating and organising objects serves as a generative input for revealing architectural knowledge across various media.

Andrew Kovacs highlights that the practice of collecting images and objects has long been integral to architectural production. He references notable image collections, including Sol Lewitt's *Autobiography*, Gerhard Richter's *Atlas*, and Alison Smithson's scrapbooks⁴. Kovacs poses the question, "How do you collect things?" and emphasises that the answer varies across physical and digital spaces. In digital collecting, the absence of scale introduces a new dimension to categorising collections, allowing for the creation of expanding folders and subfolders⁵. He describes his project Archive of Affinities as "a constantly updated collection of architectural images that exploit the dual meaning of affinity: personal predilection and the resonant relationship between images"⁶.

3. The 19th-century modeling movement (*Vorbilderbewegung*), which includes teaching collections and coded lexicons that combine different fragments within the spaces and pages, is significant in this context. Also, the influential work of Denise Scott Brown, Steven Izenour and Robert Venturi is particularly noteworthy. They view images not merely as representations but as tools for proposing methodologies in architectural design. The inventories of billboards, façades, surfaces emphasise images and their non-coming together with the existing architectural volumes.

4. A. Kovacs' *Archive of Affinities*, presentation in the scope of the events Inspirational Talks at METU Graduate Program in Architecture, December 2023.

5. *Ibid.*

The archive constitutes an expanding inventory encompassing various scales of architectural parts, elements, and compositions. This ongoing project serves as an intriguing example of hybrid spaces of collecting that combines cloud and physical space. Kovacs defines his collection as an image bank with additional qualities:

Archive of Affinities is similar to, but different from, an image bank. An architect's image bank is a way of gathering inspiration and measuring their output with that of the past. At a certain volume of images, the bank inevitably begins to chart lineages between architects and architecture.⁷

The collection includes a variety of objects and images, scanned or copied, and described by Kovacs as “a pile of architectural trash”. Some examples from the collection are architectural plans, photographs of models, dice, badminton ball, pipe joint, ionic column, etc. He outlines three phases in the process of collecting and creating this inventory: “search, selection, scanning”⁸. The first step is search: elements, forms and notations are browsed through the old media and collected without predefined criteria such as movements or theories, creating an open-ended inventory within the limitless space of the archive of affinities⁹. The second one is selection, which oscillates between the collection and production processes. The content of this inventory is defined as selected fragments, removed from their original context and reassembled into the archive, where they gain new potential meanings¹⁰. Accordingly, the last step is scanning, in which “the original context is fully erased”. Thus, the form, element or composition is decontextualised to allow the objects to be fully ready for new relationships, combinations, and

6. A. Kovacs, *Archive of Affinities. Making Architecture from Architecture*, in “Architectural Design”, 89, n. 4, July 2019, pp. 54-61, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ad.2457>, 56.

7. Ivi, p. 61.

8. Ivi, p. 57.

9. *Ibid.*

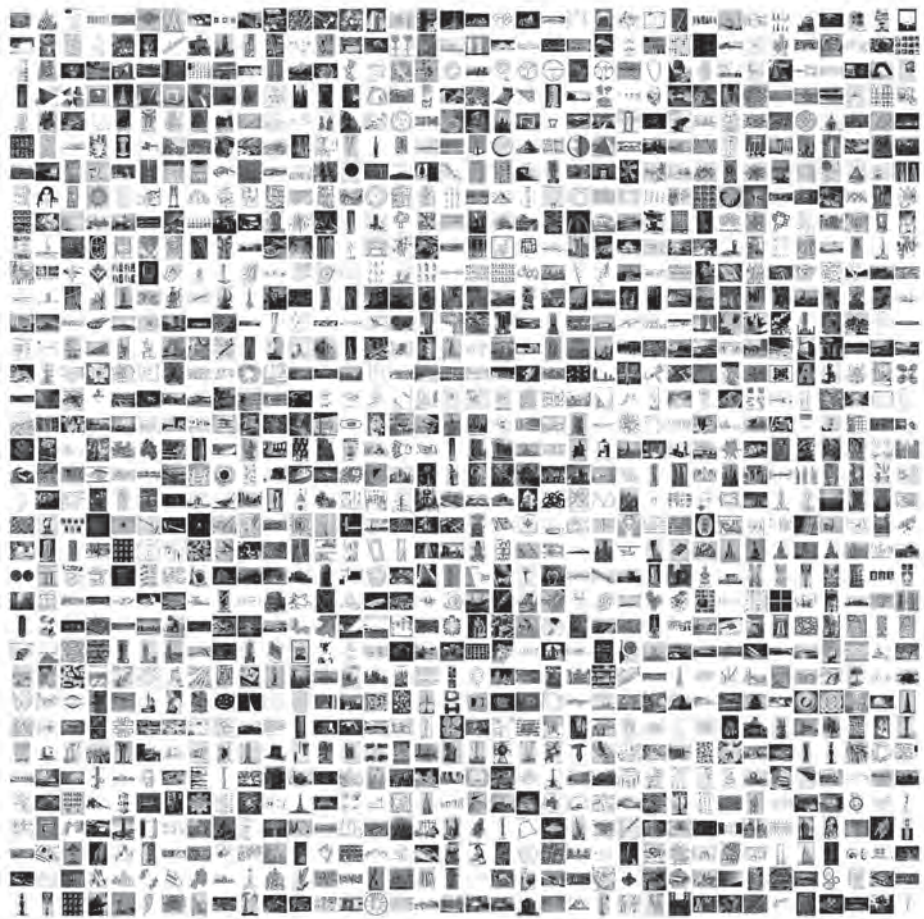
10. *Ibid.*

design explorations. To mobilise and define new relations between the objects of the collection, Archive of Affinities suggests a production methodology that is “making Architecture from Architecture”:

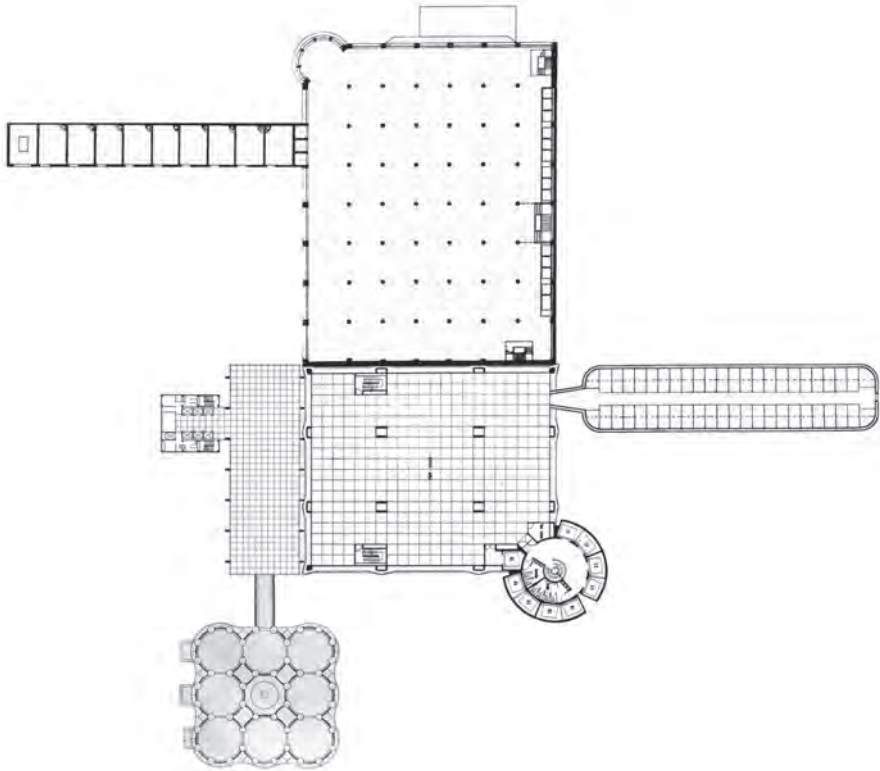
Archive of Affinities operates on two levels. The first employs procedures of browsing, searching, tracking, gathering, grouping, organising, comparing, collecting and selecting. The second is the constant production of new images and objects through procedures of flattening, copying, scaling, assembling, combining, compacting, mixing, reorganising, altering, recasting and proposing. What is produced might simply be architectural thought experiments, playful provocations or speculative proposals.■

The earlier paragraphs detail Kovacs’ methodology in the Archive of Affinities – search, selection, and scanning – and how these processes enable the creation of new architectural ideas. The *Floor Plans* project exemplifies how these collected fragments (plans) are reassembled into fictional spaces. The plans are crafted using the existing plan collection within the archive, and the various combinations suggest fictional spaces proposed through the collage of these plan elements. All in all, Archive of Affinities exemplifies how the act of collecting can redefine its traditional role of preservation to become a generative process for architectural thinking and, consequently, making. By merging historical practices with contemporary digital methodologies, it reveals the potential of archive spaces not just as repositories of past knowledge but as infinite clouds and active tools for thinking and making processes.

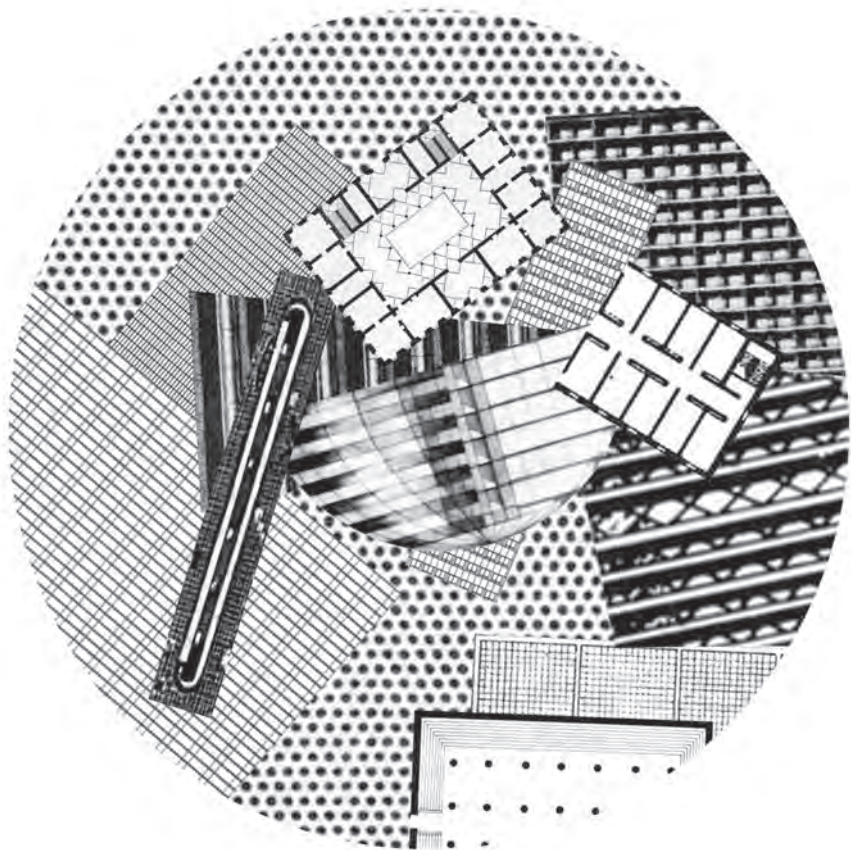
11. Ivi, p. 61.



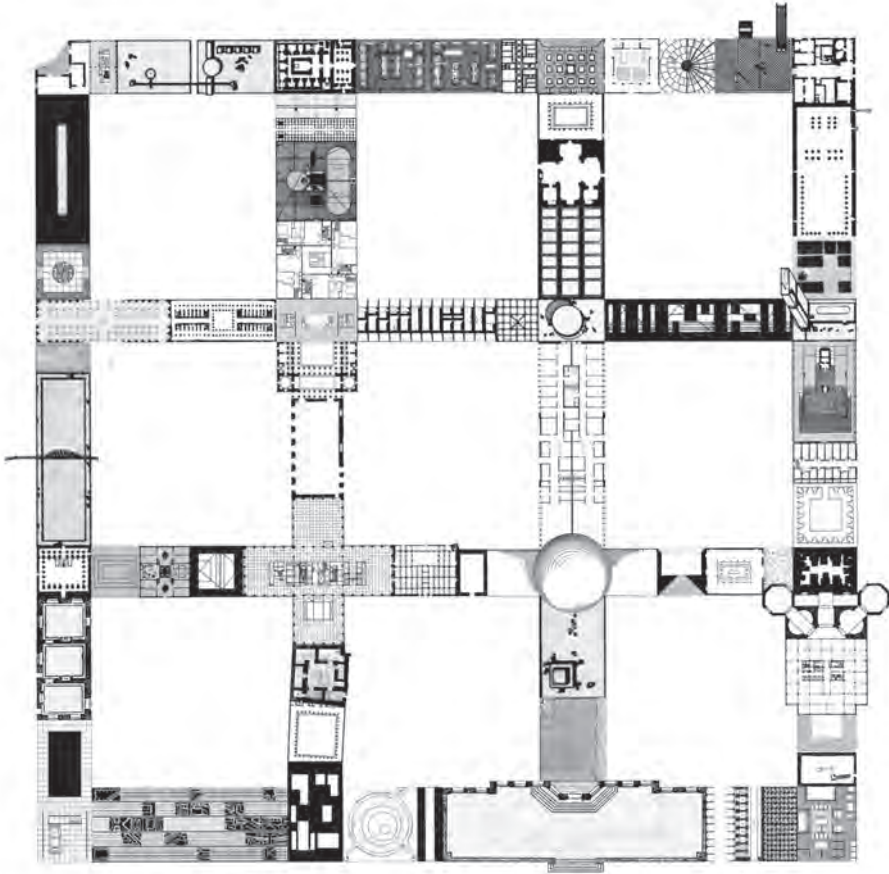
Archive of Affinities, collection and partial objects (2010-present); © Andrew Kovacs.



Archive of Affinities, Floor Plans project (2012); © Andrew Kovacs.



Archive of Affinities, Floor Plans project (2012); © Andrew Kovacs.



Archive of Affinities, Floor Plans project (2012); © Andrew Kovacs.

Dialogues/Intentions

BY

Enrico Miglietta and Jo Van Den Berghe, Giulia Menzietti and
Cino Zucchi, Fabrizia Berlingieri and Isidoro Michan Guindi

From Room to Room: Portraits of an Architect through the Thickness of Time

BY

Enrico Miglietta
Jo Van Den Berghe

Every atelier – every artist’s studio – is, in some way, also a self-portrait.

It is with this idea that I also approach the visit to every architect’s home¹, and with the same awareness that I have crossed, on several occasions, the threshold of Jo Van Den Berghe’s house-atelier, set within the landscape of Sint-Lievens-Esse, Belgium.

The house was completed in 1898 and has remained in the family ever since. Once a small farmstead, its stables were converted into two ateliers for the production of Brussels lace, made by craftswomen from the nearby village. In the 1950s and ’60s, the activity shifted to mass clothing production, knitwear at first, then sportswear in the 1970s and ’80s. In the early 1990s, the activities were reconverted once again, this time into a centre for research and development in collaboration with high-end fashion designers from Belgium and abroad. Since 2001, it has also been home to Jo’s atelier.

The house, as Leon van Schaik once remarked, has a “René Magritte-like [...] normalcy”². It is a solid brick body with thick load-bearing walls and clearly defined rooms arranged in a rational scheme. The apparent neutrality of its spaces invites projection, stirs speculation. The house, its gardens, its orchards, and the surrounding landscape form what Jo calls “a residence of dreams”. More than a finished piece of architecture – understood here not as the result of a top-down conceptual framework, but as the outcome of an additive, never-ending stratification of thought – the house appears as a mutable organism: an environment composed of accumulated objects, layered drawings-as-designs, and materials held in a fragile equilibrium between gesture and memory. A constellation of rooms inhabited by the project of a working room in *diaspora*, where architecture preserves its most intimate traces: trials, hesitations, epiphanies. It is not an atelier in the functional sense, nor merely a domestic interior. Rather, it acts as a device of

1. An insightful study on this theme was conducted by Gennaro Postiglione’s research group in the project *100 Houses for 100 Architects*, later published by Taschen (2003).

2. L. Van Schaik, *The Practice of Spatial Thinking: Differentiation Processes*, RMIT Melbourne 2014, p. 39.

involuntary display, a wunderkammer not intended to be seen, but to be worked in. And yet, through its very composition, it exposes a way of thinking, a poetics, a form of living time.

Jo has never stopped drawing, whether for commissioned projects, institutional contexts, academic research, or the development of his own studio practice and spaces. And yet, some of his most intense drawings – as he says with a smile – are not the ones that were commissioned or expected. They are the ones produced in the margins, drawn during important meetings or in between other tasks: sketches made in stolen time. They often appear on small, easily handled sheets that allow for freehand gestures, or on unexpected surfaces. As in the case of Umberto Riva, the margin often becomes, for Jo, the true centre of thought³. In a similar way, his atelier has migrated from room to room in his house, following a logic of atmosphere, intuition, and affect. Each room was fully inhabited until thought, like a restless organism, required “an elsewhere”. Each move was anticipated by drawings, speculative sketches of the studio-to-come. “The dreamed room is the drawing”, Jo says, “and the drawing is the dream”. In *Autoritratto nello Studio*, Giorgio Agamben writes that:

A form of life that remains in relation to a poetic practice, whatever it may be, is always in the studio. [...] the studio preserves the minutes of creation, records the traces of the laborious process that leads from potential to act, from the hand that writes to the written paper, from the palette to the canvas. The studio is the image of potential—of the potential to write for the writer, to paint or sculpt for the painter or sculptor. To attempt to describe one’s studio is therefore to attempt to describe the modes and forms of one’s own potential – a task that is, at least at first sight, impossible.⁴

3. A. de Curtis, *Figurazione. Alla Ricerca della Forma. Dialoghi con Umberto Riva*, Marinotti Edizioni, Milan 2015, pp. 93-117.

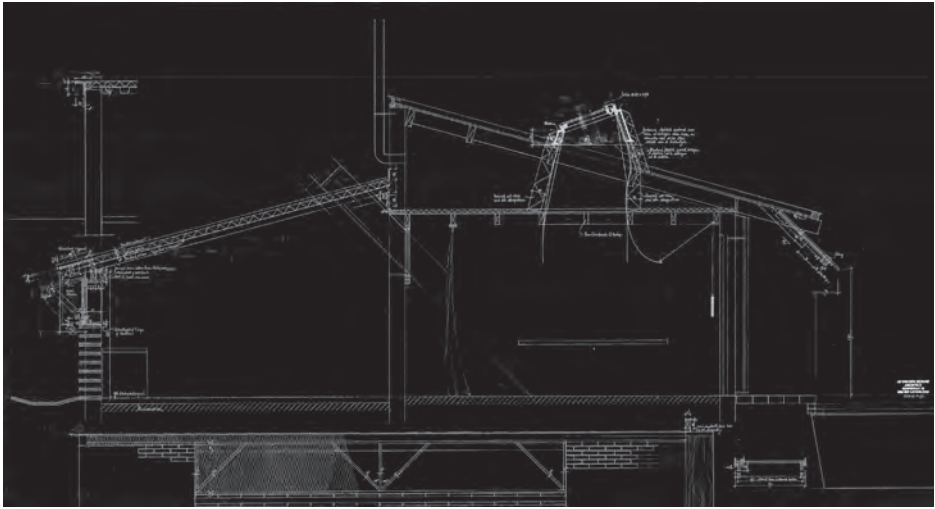
4. G. Agamben, *Autoritratto nello Studio*, Nottetempo, Milano 2017, p. 13. English translation from the Italian by Enrico Miglietta.

The term ‘studio’ in Italian refers both to a place of work and to a condition of thought. While it is often rendered as studio in English, in this context

The atelier reveals and withholds, receives and resists. It is in this suspended condition – Jo calls it *Moratorium Space* – that thought takes form. And if every atelier is a self-portrait, it can also be understood as the epigenetic image of the architect, not an idealised representation, but a layered and provisional sedimentation, always open to transformation. Jo's atelier, in its mutable state, is precisely this: a portrait in progress, where objects do not reflect a fixed identity, but actively construct it. A room thick with time.

This essay arises from a series of conversations, never quite concluded, woven across several months. Rather than recounting a specific project, these dialogues explore a way of inhabiting thought, and the drawing that provokes it. What follows is not an interview in the technical sense, nor a systematic exposition. It is an attempt – hence: an essay – at listening and montage. A montage of words and objects, of thoughts and rooms. The dialogue with Jo has been arranged thematically rather than chronologically, preserving his voice while intertwining it with reflective commentary. Just as his atelier is never fixed, neither is this portrait. Rather than offering a theory, this essay presents an example, a trace, a form. It does not propose a study about the atelier, but a study within the atelier. A partial cartography of a thought in movement, traced from a room that, once again, Jo is preparing to leave.

it can meaningfully be translated as atelier, especially when referring to the working spaces of architects or artists.



My Black Maria: the architect's room of praxis, 2013-2017.
Vertical cross-section scale 1:10. Technical detailing, dimensions, proportions. Pencil 3H on thin white paper, scan processed with Photoshop, drawing by Jo Van Den Berghe.

Rooms of Praxis – A Typology of Desire

Enrico Miglietta Every room you've worked in seems to mark a different state of attention, a space fully inhabited, then left behind, as if consumed. The movements between these rooms do not appear dictated by necessity or plan, but by something more internal: a form of domestic nomadism shaped by atmosphere, saturation, and desire.

This process could be seen as a kind of atelier-making: not a matter of collecting, but of holding together and reactivating what sustains thought. Books, artefacts, models, drawings, and fragments of material don't just surround the work, but participate in it. They evolve alongside our formation, and in doing so, they shape the way we think, trace, and inhabit. These objects carry something forward: not memory alone, but the continuity of a thinking process in transformation, what might be called a kind of "happy epigenesis"⁵.

And sometimes, this transformation precedes the move. It emerges subtly: through drawings, through gestures, through things beginning to cluster elsewhere. One could say that the next room is not chosen, but drawn into being, like a mental construct taking spatial form.

How do you relate to this rhythm? Does each space mirror your evolving way of working or does it shape it? And what, if anything, does it persist from one room to the next?

Jo Van Den Berghe The movement from one room to another has never followed a precise plan. There is no master sequence, no strategy behind it. The shift always happens slowly, and from within. A new room doesn't arrive as an abstract idea, it emerges from the saturation of the current one and the desire signalled by the next one. Books begin to pile up somewhere else. A drawing table starts to lean toward the light in a different direction. A certain object feels out of place. These are signs. Subtle, atmospheric, not always recognisable at first. But they accumulate. They ask to be elsewhere.

By the time I move, the room is already happening. I often say: I don't go to the next room; the next room pulls me. It's seductive in that way. It anticipates me. Drawing entices this process. It doesn't follow the move, it predicts it. It appears unexpectedly, during or after something else, often in the margin. It doesn't describe the room. It helps it come into being. And so, the drawing becomes not a plan, but a precursor. A way of listening to that shift before it manifests fully.

These rooms, as they come and go, form a sequence, but not a linear one. They are not identical, and not planned to be different either. Still, they resonate. They behave like objects. More precisely: like types. I find Carlos Martí Aris's reflection on typology useful here. He writes that typological ideas:

blur the fictional lines imposed by chronological

5. The definition is again from G. Agamben, *op.cit.*, p. 42.

ordering, division into styles or classification into categories in order to show, instead, the dense web of correspondences that link objects previously considered unconnected, disparate or incomparable.⁶

That's exactly how I experience my *Rooms of Praxis*. They don't belong to a style, a function, or a programme, but they belong together. They are variations, each one autonomous, but deeply interconnected. A typology of desire.

This is how I think of the objects in the rooms too. Samples, models, drawings, books, found things, and objects with personal resonance like my grandfather's camera. Many of these are types, in the best sense: representatives of a kind, but also more than that. They speak not only to my architectural mind, but also to my architectural soul. There's a dual perspective at play: mental and emotional, and that's what gives them their position in the space.

Each room then is a composition, not a container. Or better yet: each one is a *Capriccio*. Like Canaletto's imaginary views of Venice, where Palladian architectures are assembled into new, fictional wholes. I place objects beside each other in a way that constructs relationships – provokes frictions – rather than illustrates order. In Canaletto's case, the *Capriccio* is grounded in Venice. In mine, it is grounded in my own house and garden. And the sequence of rooms itself becomes a second-order *Capriccio*: a constructed observation of what these assembled fragments can generate. New constellations. New thoughts. Unexpected intensities.

So, what remains from one room to the next? Not the same setting, or use, or layout. What persists is a method. A rhythm. A way of working that is not fixed but moving. The room is always provisional. It is a station, not a destination. A situation to be inhabited until it begins to fold in on itself, and points to the next.

6. C. Martí Arís, *Variations of Identity: Type in Architecture*, Cosa Mentale, Dijon 2021, p. 136.

The Atelier as Living Archive

EM Some spaces are structured to display, others to preserve. Your atelier seems to do neither. It accumulates. Not for the sake of collecting, but because things stay: fragments of material, prototypes, drawings, books, found objects, each one charged with a specific relevance that may shift over time. The space is not organised around a logic of use, but around the slow sedimentation of what matters, what resonates.

This accumulation is not inert. It's what gives the atelier its density, and its restlessness. Every object, every model, every scrap of material can become active again: reinterpreted, moved, cut, reassembled. There's a tension between the physical presence of things and their conceptual role, as if the work of architecture were not only projected, but found again, among what has already been touched, drawn, or thought.

What is the role of these objects in your way of working? Do they anchor you in a certain continuity, or are they part of the transformation? Is the atelier a space for keeping things still, or for keeping them available to be reactivated?

JVDB There's a specific kind of density I seek in my atelier. It's not order. It's not clarity. It's something more atmospheric, more unpredictable. A room becomes alive when things begin to interfere with each other, when objects are no longer silent, but start forming temporary constellations. These constellations don't illustrate thought. They generate it. They create the friction needed to think.

That's why I never aim for tidiness. The idea of a 'clean desk' feels fundamentally false to me. It excludes too much. In my rooms, nothing is final. A model may be cut and reused. A drawing may disappear beneath something else. A sample may suddenly gain new meaning. What matters is that everything remains available, not as tools, but as presences.

The atelier is not a place of preservation. Nor is it an archive in the traditional sense. It's a space of sedimentation and drift. Things gather here not because they are part of a collection, but because

they survive. Because they still do something. I don't keep things intentionally. I don't select them. They stay because they are not yet finished with me.

And this staying is not passive. It's dynamic. A certain book leans into a model. A fragment of aluminium reflects the light in a way that disturbs a drawing. A found object becomes a surface for a note. These are not coincidences. They are events. They are part of the way I observe. The way I think.

When I arrange or shift things in the atelier, I often feel close to the method of *Capriccio*, where architectural elements from different origins are brought together into a fictional landscape. My rooms do something similar. They bring things together in ways that are not literal, but meaningful. Not coherent, but operative.

Each object becomes part of a slow combustion. A latent volcano of associations. Some are old. Some are charged with memory. Others are new, accidental, anonymous. But if they belong, they stay. That's the only criterion.

Sometimes I speak of the atelier as a "room of desire". Not in the romantic sense. But as a space where desire is directed outward – towards objects, materials, arrangements. It's a form of silent thinking. And at the same time, a refusal to explain too much.

I do not curate these objects. Whilst living among them, they curate me. I collaborate with them. I am shaped by their presence. They are not trophies. They are companions. And like in any real companionship, some grow quiet over time. Others speak louder. But none of them ever truly falls silent.

Drawing, Withdrawing, Resisting

EM In your way of working, drawing often seems to move tactically: appearing, disappearing, surfacing on the edge of things. It doesn't settle into a single routine or location, but finds its place where it needs to. Almost as if drawing itself was part of a wider movement: a spatial drift, a shifting occupation of rooms and surfaces, a form of resistance.

You once described this as a kind of *architectural guerrilla*, a refusal to be fixed, to be pinned to one place or idea. A gesture that disappears into the thickness of the house, always slightly elsewhere.

How do you see this relation between movement and resistance? Does drawing take part in this? And if so, what kind of presence does it leave behind?

JVDB Drawing, for me, is rarely a scheduled act. It doesn't happen because I am expected to do it. It happens because it needs to, often in moments that were meant for something else. In between meetings. During a lecture. At the edge of a page, or on a surface that wasn't meant for it. These moments are marginal. But the drawing that comes from them isn't secondary. Quite the opposite: it often holds more truth than what was planned.

These are not drawings for clients, or for competitions. They don't represent a regular project. They are not illustrations. They are gestures. Fragments. The visible trace of a moment of attention, or resistance. I think of them as acts of resistance, because they oppose the idea that drawing must serve a purpose, or prove something. They escape categorisation. They escape use.

There is a kind of withdrawal that takes place here. Not as retreat, but as repositioning. I move inward, but not to hide. I withdraw to stay free. To stay illegible. Drawing becomes the means by which I remain in motion. Not outwardly, but contemplatory. It allows me to shift, to not be fixed.

Indeed, in our conversation, I called this a form of *architectural guerrilla*. Not in the heroic sense. But as a tactic. A way of navigating rooms, thoughts, and roles without being pinned down. "They think I'm here, but I'm already there", that's how I feel when drawing finds me in these margins. It's a refusal to be located. A refusal to perform.

This also relates to my position within academic culture. I've often resisted the formats that ask for clarity, legibility, polish. I don't want to be readable in that way. I prefer opacity. Contradiction. Movement. It's not about being obscure. It's about keeping seemingly contradictory thoughts in the loop, negotiating with one an-

other. It's about staying alive. Sometimes, drawing becomes a line only. Nothing more. Like the time I contributed a single sentence to a book filled with dense academic essays. That sentence was: "Life is a narrow passage between an endless sea and an endless sea"⁷. That line wasn't about saying less. It was about saying only what was needed. And leaving space around it.

There's a similar silence in many of my drawings. They don't shout. They linger. They point elsewhere. They don't always become buildings. But they remain necessary. Drawing, for me, is not a noun. It's a verb. It's something that happens, looking for a trace yet leaving a trace. But it never settles.

The Room: Atmosphere, Threshold, and Centre

EM Some rooms take on a particular intensity. Not because of what they contain, but because of how they allow thought to unfold. These are not simply functional interiors, they become a kind of gravitational field. They support certain rhythms, habits of thought, forms of attention. Their effect is not immediate, but builds over time, through repetition, material presence, light, sound, proximity.

To inhabit such a room means to settle into its atmosphere, not as a backdrop but as something active, even if difficult to define. When it happens, a room becomes central, not in a symbolic or compositional sense, but in the way it holds together different aspects of one's life and thinking.

But this condition is never permanent. Over time, a space can become saturated, or lose its tension. Something begins to shift, slowly, almost imperceptibly. Focus disperses. The alignment between thought and space fades. When this happens, another room may begin to attract attention. Not by contrast, but by offering a different kind of orientation. And eventually, without fully planning

7. J. Van Den Berghe, *Life Is a Narrow Passage Between an Endless Sea and an Endless Sea*, in D. Boutsen (edited by), *Corps*, Sint-Lucas Departement Architectuur, Brussels 2011, pp. 57-58.

it, one moves.

You've described this process as a kind of internal necessity. A quiet drift from one room to another. What marks the moment when a space stops functioning as a centre? What allows another to take its place? And more broadly, how is the atmosphere of a room constructed, in your view? Is it the result of spatial features, objects, gestures, or time?

JVDB The room is never the centre. I am the one who remains close to a centre that moves – silently, insistently – from one room to another. That centre is not architectural in a compositional sense; it is inner, affective. A kind of gravity held together by attention, by the proximity of certain objects, by the pull of materials that begin to demand something new. Not a need for space, but a need to respond to something: to continue thinking, making, drawing. It is existential.

Each move begins with drawing. Not drawing as planning, nor as conceptual rehearsal, but as an immediate and material act, an act that constructs the room before it exists. This drawing does not emerge from abstraction. It emerges from what is already near: the presence of a material, a form, an object. Often, a single element – a model, a leftover fragment, a line, a tool – begins to press on me. It asks for something. It insists.

I believe I am a phenomenological architect, guided by the desire for the substance of the world: wood, brass, brick, screws, bolts and nuts. Not as metaphors, but as the matter of the world. Drawing, for me, is a way of addressing these substances, of imagining their application in architectural terms, in detail, in construction. Often, what pulls me toward the next room is precisely that: a detail. Not a concept, but a precise joining, a sharp articulation that opens a passage. The drawing of that detail becomes the breach, the moment of entry into another space.

Atmosphere, in this sense, is not something added to a room. It is what emerges from this process, from the act of drawing, from the transposition of material into form. And when the atmosphere begins to disperse, when the alignment between body, thought, and

space begins to loosen, another room begins to attract. Quietly, insistently. The previous room does not vanish, it becomes part of the archive, a latent layer. And the next one, almost without warning, begins to unfold.

This movement is not linear. It doesn't follow a programme. It follows a rhythm of saturation and necessity. A quiet drift. But once it begins, it is irreversible. The previous room does not disappear. It becomes part of the archive: an eidetic layer, a mental stratification. And the new room begins with the line, with the gesture, with the need to inhabit again.

There is a line from Brecht and Weill that comes to mind: "for if we don't find the next whisky bar, I tell you we must die"⁸. That's what it is, in a way. The next room is not just another space. It's what allows the work to continue.

The Atelier as Non-Intentional Self-Portrait

EM Every working space tells something about the person who inhabits it, regardless of whether that was the intention. Over time, objects accumulate, gestures repeat, certain habits take hold. Even if nothing is fixed, traces remain. What may begin as a neutral place to work becomes, gradually, something more personal. Not a narrative, not a design, but a sedimented form of presence.

In this sense, the atelier might be thought of as a kind of self-portrait not composed through representation, but through inhabitation. A portrait made of tools and leftovers, of open books and stacked models, of fragments whose value is not symbolic but operational.

8. *Alabama Song* was originally published by the German poet and playwright Bertolt Brecht in his 1927 poetry collection *Hauspostille*, as part of the section titled *Fourth Lesson: Psalms and Mahagonny Songs*. The music, particularly the refrain, was later adapted by Kurt Weill for the opera *Mahagonny: Ein Songspiel*, first performed in Baden-Baden at the Deutsche Kammermusik festival on July 17, 1927. The piece was later reinterpreted by various artists, including The Doors and David Bowie.

Yet this portrait is never finished. It shifts with the work, with the seasons, with the room. It exposes, without meaning to do so. The more carefully we build a space to support our work, the more it begins to reveal something else, something not planned, not composed, but unmistakably personal. This exposure is not performative. It is not display. But it is real. And it carries a certain vulnerability. It might even recall that quality which, in photography, marks the transition from image to presence: a detail that speaks directly, silently, without explanation⁹.

How do you see this relation between space and self? Do you think of your atelier as a kind of portrait if not of who you are, then perhaps of how you think, or how you work? What kind of identity is constructed in and through place? And what role does risk play in this process of exposure?

JVDB Yes, I do believe the atelier acts as a kind of portrait. But not one that's drawn intentionally. It's not composed, not staged. It emerges through repetition, through what stays, what accumulates, what gets used and reused. I never curated my atelier. I live in it. I work in it. I am shaped by it. The objects are not trophies. They are companions. And like in any companionship, some fall silent over time, others speak louder. But none of them is ever entirely mute.

The identity that takes shape in the atelier is not constructed through narrative. It is built atmospherically through presence, proximity, rhythm. It settles through years of drawing, arranging, testing. One doesn't realize it while it's happening. But eventually, you see it: a pattern, a tone, a texture. And it's unmistakably yours.

This process exposes, without meaning to do so. It is not exhibition. It is not display. But it is still a form of exposure. The space begins to reveal something about you, not in images but in fragments, tools, lines, gestures. It's a space of sedimentation.

And sedimentation is not linear. It doesn't accumulate evenly. It gathers in waves, some visible, some buried.

9. See the notion of 'punctum' in R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Hill and Wang, New York 1981, pp. 42-43.

And yes, sometimes, as you mentioned through the work of Barthes, there is that one thing – a detail, an object, a fragment – that suddenly speaks with more intensity than the rest. Not because of what it means, but because of how it stays, how it insists on being there. It opens something. It touches something that can't be framed or explained. These are rare moments, but when they occur, they mark the space. They punctuate it.

And yes, this exposure carries a risk. Because it's never filtered. It is not protected by intention or theory. It's just there, quietly accumulating. But I think that risk is necessary. Architecture that avoids risk avoids life. I prefer to remain open, even when it means being vulnerable. The atelier holds that vulnerability, and in doing so, it becomes the most honest place I know.

On Leaving, and Returning Again

EM Leaving a room that has been fully inhabited is never just a matter of space, it is also a question of time. Not time as a linear progression, but something more cyclical and layered. Each room marks a phase, a rhythm, a specific alignment between thought, body, and environment. And when that rhythm shifts – due to saturation, fatigue, or a change in intensity – a new phase can begin elsewhere.

But something always remains. Objects migrate. Drawings are carried over. Tools, notes, fragments of previous work find their way into the next space. The atelier does not restart, it reconfigures. One could say that the studio is not a single room, but a mobile structure of attachments. With every move, something persists, something is left behind, and something is transformed.

This continuity complicates the idea of the atelier as an exhibition space. It is not a stage for completed works, but a site of ongoing negotiation between permanence and displacement, between concealment and exposure. What becomes visible is not curated, but sedimented. A praxis that moves, returns, recomposes itself over time. Now, once again, a new move seems to be ahead. And perhaps, the next studio might include a space not only for working, but for

showing: an opening towards others, towards dialogue and critique. How do you imagine this future atelier? What would it mean to shift from a space primarily shaped by interior resonance, to one that also allows for moments of exposure and exchange?

What remains, for you, from a room that has been lived in to its limit? What migrates, and what transforms? And how do these iterative movements – across rooms, across time – continue to shape the construction of your thought?

JVDB Leaving is not really about closure. Nor is returning about nostalgia. What moves me from one studio to another is the desire not for space, but for alignment. A need that surfaces when something no longer resonates, when the atmosphere of a room no longer supports the work it once allowed. And yet it's not dissatisfaction that drives the shift. It is something quieter, and stranger. A desire that insists without resolution. That doesn't ask to be fulfilled, only to be followed.

Desire, as I experience it, has its own logic. It's not rational, but it's not arbitrary either. It forms what I would call a coherent emotional structure, a kind of affective *perpetuum* mobile. It moves through contradictions and doesn't try to solve them. I follow it from one room to another, often slowly, sometimes abruptly. Not according to a schedule, but according to an inner necessity that emerges over time. Thought accumulates. And at a certain point, it needs a new form, a new space to inhabit. That's when the next studio begins to take shape.

But this movement doesn't erase what came before. Each room remains active as a mental construct, as a lived *stratum*. They don't disappear; they 'archetypalise'. Each becomes an eidetic layer, informing the next. The rooms build on one another like geological sediment, each one adding a particular density to the practice. The current studio always carries traces of the previous ones, not out of habit, but because the logic of the work requires it.

Time, in this process, is not linear. It's whimsical. It follows no external order. It shifts, folds, loops back. I might leave a room physically, but I return to it in thought, in memory, in fragments,

in (past) drawings. Objects reappear. Gestures repeat. Sometimes I find myself building the same shelf, the same drawing table, but in another material, another alignment. The new room doesn't begin from scratch, it begins from accumulation.

Studio no. 6 – the next one – is a response to that accumulation. It will be a space of silence. A black room. A *Camera Obscura*. Not in a metaphorical sense, but physically: closed, internalised, dense. No windows. Only hatches – small, operable cuts in the envelope that allow light to enter, or to stay out. These are not symbolic gestures. They are instruments of precision. They determine how the room breathes, how it focuses, how it lets the work unfold.

But here lies the paradox. The more the room withdraws from visibility, the more it seems to demand a form of exposure. Not exhibition, not display, but a way for others to sense the atmosphere in which the work takes place. I feel the need not to show the results, but to make the conditions perceivable. Not through openness, but through calibration. Not as a permanent condition, but through rare, deliberate instances. That too is a threshold: to remain open while remaining closed.

Solitude is part of this. I have never feared solitude. I choose it, deliberately. I believe in its architectural necessity. There is a project by John Hejduk that I've always felt close to: *The House for the Inhabitant Who Refused to Participate*¹⁰. I understand that refusal. Not as isolation, but as a method. As the condition required to see what is otherwise invisible. Thus, the atelier becomes both a sanctuary and a machine. It shelters, and it generates.

Each time I leave, I do so because the next room has already started to form, somewhere between a remembered object and a new drawing. And when I return, I do not return to the same place. I return with the next layer. The portrait, if it exists, is never still. It thickens. It continues.

10. John Hejduk (1929–2000), *House for the Inhabitant Who Refused to Participate*, 1979.

Collecting Objects, Designing Unveilings

BY

Giulia Menziatti
Cino Zucchi

Intimate and hermetic, or rather open to visitors and eager to show itself off, the architect's studio, in addition to being a workplace, often proves to be a deeply meaningful space. Particularly interesting are those cases in which the atelier is able to open up wide narratives not only about what is produced there, but also about the personality and worldview of its inhabitant. A particularly significant example in this context is the studio of architect Cino Zucchi, *CZA Cino Zucchi Architetti*.

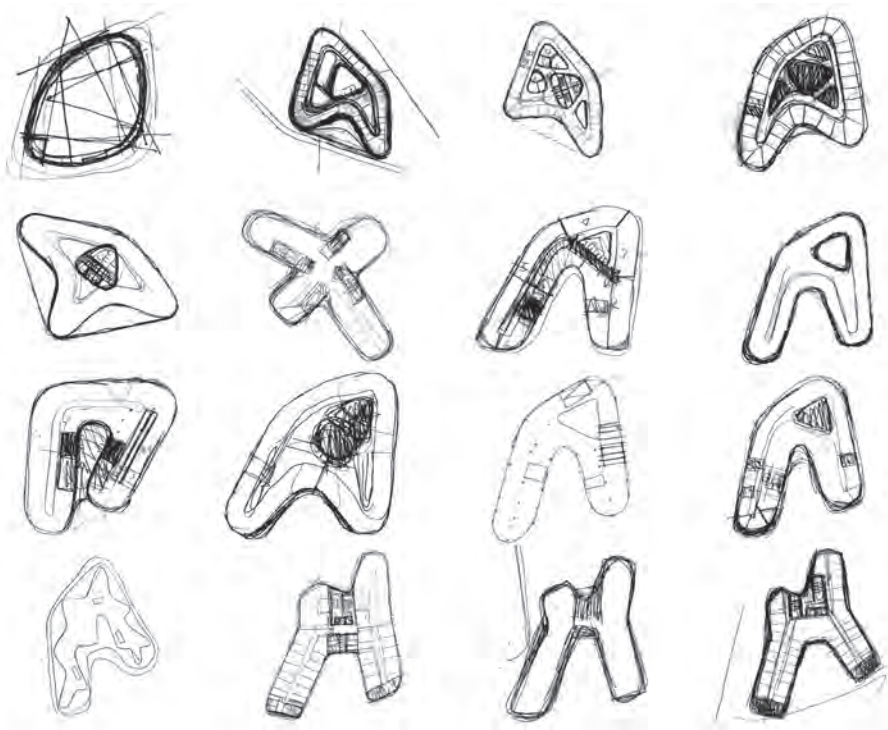
Located in an early 20th-century building in a very central area of Milan, this studio is organised into a series of rooms: computer stations, model-making space, meeting rooms and spaces that range from more public areas to more intimate ones, such as the architect's private office and small studies for his collaborators. While the layout of these spaces may be quite typical of an atelier, what is less conventional is the array of scattered objects throughout, which immediately impart a personal touch potentially disorienting for those expecting a traditional work environment. Rulers, protractors and vintage drafting tools, oriental wooden dolls, sex toys, famous building souvenirs, rolling pins, small Pinocchio and so on are arranged throughout the studio. Some are displayed in seemingly custom-made cases, others are scattered in an apparent disorder, but one that doesn't hide a desire to be seen. In this sea of collections and exhibited objects – interspersed among computers and meeting rooms – one quickly feels immersed in a hybrid environment where professional life and the personal sphere coexist in an unusual, at times curatorial dimension. A cleverly designed space makes the studio feel both sober and seductive, making us feel as though we are in a museum and, at the same time, in the most intimate room of the architect's home. This dual role of visitor and voyeur is immediately apparent upon crossing the threshold. The architect's skill lies in his ability to draw us into a carefully curated representation of his passions and impulses, elements that clearly find their way into his architectural work.

It's impossible not to be captivated by these presences, letting oneself be drawn into seductive journeys through the psyche and exploring the personality of the one who has chosen to welcome

us in this way. Then one snaps back to reality, from time to time, feeling almost guilty for the sudden intrusion into the architect's intimacy, yet reassured by the creative nature of the space and the type of work that takes place within it. This is an unusual overlap of workplace, wunderkammer, museum, and private collection, transforming the studio into a space where the line between public and private is extremely blurred, and the perception of the setting becomes deliberately enigmatic.

On several occasions, Zucchi's studio has hosted exhibitions, something now fairly common among architectural offices. However, these were not necessarily architecture exhibitions, but rather works or artists that fascinate Zucchi, heterogeneous narratives drawn from the art world and other spheres that contribute to shaping his imaginary. The studio, in this sense, becomes the perfect *mise-en-scène* of that personal vision. What emerges as particularly interesting is the spatialisation of his personality in his work environment; it tells of a deeply human approach to design that draws nourishment from broad openings, willing to go beyond the boundaries of architecture and engage with both the external world and inner realms, by using the inner world as productive material, even in its most hidden dimensions.

Cino Zucchi's own words, below, describe the aspects and dynamics that shaped his workspace, and the possible relationships between this space and his approach to design.



Sketches for the *New Eni Exploration and Production Center* design competition, Milan 2011, drawing by Cino Zucchi.

Giulia Menzietti Your studio is full of all kinds of objects you've collected. These presences reveal stories from an intimate and personal sphere that doesn't slowly unfold, but welcomes visitors from the very first steps. Do you display your collections only in the studio, or also at home?

Cino Zucchi I am, in fact, a collector even though I do so in a restless way, not always methodically, and I sometimes abruptly change the object of my obsession. Collecting is a sort of mania, like many others, more or less beneficial to humankind or us. In my home in Milan, my wife Francesca and I have a collection of small

metal buildings, what in English are called “souvenir buildings”: six hundred small-scale models of monuments from around the world that adorn our shelves and bookcases.

As a young man, I used to visit flea markets, and over the years I’ve collected many early 20th-century postcards depicting the Blue Grotto or, in line with my taste for repetition with variation, postcards of Vesuvius erupting and Pompei frescoes, now displayed in our hallways and bathroom. I often ask myself why these collections are present in my workspace, a place not just for me but also for the many people I work with. Over the years, the space has gradually been filled with things more closely tied to my personal sphere. Our studio has traditional workspaces: computer stations, meeting rooms, a model-making room. Then there are the San Gerolamo-style studioli, smaller non-assigned spaces. Finally, there’s my office, which is crowded with all the objects I’ve accumulated, including Françoise Hardy records (a muse of my adolescence), figurines from strange rituals ranging from Catholic martyrs to Orixás from Brazilian Candomblé etc.

The studio is visited by many people, and I hope I don’t overwhelm my collaborators with my bizarre items. If we had a Geiger counter, we’d probably find the object density increasing the closer you get to my desk. I fear I may have already expanded too far, and sometimes I wish I could contain myself more. The problem is, I almost have no physical space left, sometimes I have objects or paintings on the floor because I don’t know where to hang them. At times, the disorder borders on the pathological.

I almost always work with headphones, listening to music in the background. I can barely produce anything without music, and maybe I couldn’t do so without all the things I collect and scatter around the studio either. These objects, however, create a dialogue with people in other parts of the world who share the same tastes. For example, I discovered that Charles and Ray Eames had koke-shi dolls (abstractly shaped wooden dolls from Japanese tradition) in their Case Study House in Los Angeles. I have a collection of them in my studio, too. Paul Valéry used to say “taste is made of a thousand disgusts”. Sharing a passion for the same thing connects

people. Many years ago, I attended a lecture by the brilliant Dutch architect Dick van Gameren (of Mecanoo studio), where he focused on Hardwick Hall, an Elizabethan mansion with an extremely modern tone, almost like Louis Kahn architecture. After the lecture I told him “Dick, I’ve always loved that building, I’ve been studying it for years!”, I was almost moved because he had chosen it, dedicating nearly the entire lecture to it. That moment made us feel instantly connected.

GM The collections and other objects displayed in your studio seem to blur the boundaries between public and private space. What are your thoughts on the relationship between personal and professional spheres?

CZ It’s a very complex relationship, which obviously varies depending on the profession. There are jobs that follow a procedural, almost mechanical approach: starting from a problem, one formulates responses in a process similar to a flow chart. In such cases, psychological and emotional conditions have little impact on the outcome: a good electrician, for instance, can do their job even during difficult personal times, as their work doesn’t engage their full emotional self.

The situation is different when it comes to ‘creative’ professions. Many contemporary artists, Marcel Duchamp, Maurizio Cattelan, or Damien Hirst, for example, have often delegated the physical creation of their works to others, thus affirming the primacy of the conceptual process in art. Starting from Modernism, the technical dimension, while still important, has been somewhat overshadowed by the formulation of the idea, casting the artist primarily as the ideator. This aspect, which can be dangerous, is evident today in many creative professions, where the artistic concept can resemble a marketing slogan.

In this context, which includes my own profession, architecture, the creative personality can fully enter into the production process, leading to a blurring of boundaries between life and work, not unlike the fusion between art and life seen in figures like Salvador Dalí or

Andy Warhol, who sometimes went so far as to exhibit themselves.

However, I believe that work must patiently seek its own coherence, what the English might call ‘consistency’, and that the artist or architect must serve the final form, rather than display their personality. I do not believe in a fully semiotic vision in which the creator needs to express themselves through the work, quite the opposite. Gustave Flaubert once wrote to the author Louise Colet something like “You’re making a mistake, you speak too much to your audience, you show off too much. The writer must be in the novel like God in the universe: present everywhere but visible nowhere”.

I am a huge admirer of Stanley Kubrick. His films *Barry Lyndon*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Lolita*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Eyes Wide Shut*, *Shining* are all incredibly different from one another, and the technical approach always adapts to the subject matter. In *Barry Lyndon*, for instance, he used only candlelight, no artificial lighting, because it was a historical film; while in *2001: A Space Odyssey* he used extremely sophisticated effects.

In the same way, I admire architects who don’t try to express themselves constantly, who don’t ‘play the same tune’ in every project. Herzog & de Meuron, for example, always manage to surprise me, with projects that differ widely in form and are strongly tied to their specific context. They can move from expressionism to pure restoration, from monumental complexity to the elementary tectonics of a barn. Their design intelligence always leaves me in awe.

GM How does your studio contribute to the relationship with your clients? How do visitors react to it?

CZ I’m not sure that this display of objects I collect always has a positive impact on clients. I get the impression that they’re fascinated by it, but also a bit intimidated. Sometimes, half-jokingly, I say that they come in, seem to appreciate it, but then leave and turn to more reassuring studios of friends and colleagues, such as Park Associati, Lombardini 22 and others. Of course, an architecture studio is a service-oriented space where aesthetics matter and are part of the experience, and the atmosphere an office communicates

is certainly significant, it reveals something about the person who inhabits it. In an architecture firm, this dimension becomes part of a very complex chain of tasks, from designing technical details, to managing bureaucratic procedures, to dealing with specialist consultant, structures, systems, and so on. Within this process, the artistic, narrative, and sometimes surreal aspect of my collections is not always welcome. So, it's not guaranteed that displaying these collections creates a good impression with clients. Perhaps it's a kind of "luxury" I allow myself, partly extending my personal dimension into my work, like what happens in other archives or ateliers, like Achille Castiglioni's, where he kept design and craft objects that likely served as inspiration for his projects. This character of the studio's director sometimes becomes part of the service we offer.

GM The theme of the collection displayed in your studio evokes the Renaissance studiolo or even the wunderkammer. In those settings, two key dynamics were often present: the desire to gather fragments of the world as a reflection of one's understanding of reality, and the will to create a small cabinet capable of provoking awe. The element of wonder also seems to emerge in your studio: do you think your *mirabilia* are meant to astonish, or rather to communicate your way of relating to the world?

CZ Many books explore the wunderkammer and, more generally, the idea of collecting as a form of art, which I find very compelling. One of the most beautiful Venice Art Biennial I've ever visited was *The Encyclopedic Palace*, curated by Massimiliano Gioni in 2013. It juxtaposed anonymous collections and artists with the work of well-known figures.

The wunderkammer holds an element of wonder that is tied to the richness of the world, expressed in the sheer variety of things and in the overwhelming abundance of responses relative to actual needs. In Geoffrey Miller's book *The Mating Mind*, he notes how some physical traits, contrary to Darwin's theory of natural selection based on survival, are instead connected to courtship, such as the bright colours of fish or bird plumage. These traits serve not

for basic survival, but for behavioural codes related to attraction, seduction, and so on, and they contribute to the extraordinary richness of life on Earth. This same variety was put on display in wunderkammer by collectors who exhibited narwhal horns, shells, or strange artefacts, while also signalling their belonging to a social class that could afford detachment from basic need.

I think, for example, of pastry moulds, specifically pudding moulds, that resemble architectural forms, as a kind of victory over the primal need to eat hot meat from a hunt. Or of Alberto Savinio, brother of Giorgio De Chirico, who spoke of the 18th-century state of culture, in which man transforms necessity into the display of excess. Dollhouses, model collections, etc., represent a departure from nature, from living as a primitive being.

When I display my objects in the studio, I don't have a special message to convey, I'm simply fascinated by the playful nature of collecting. The ability to reproduce this extreme variety in a miniature 'bonsai world' is, in a way, man's triumph over pure necessity.

In *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* historian George Kubler analyses pre-Columbian terracotta objects independently of their makers' intentions, focusing on the items themselves. Similarly, Bernd and Hilla Becher photographed gasometers, industrial structures, and Alsatian houses with scientific precision, in black and white, always frontally, in sequence, as if they were natural historians. I strongly identify with this approach, this fascination with objects for their own sake, without needing to communicate messages to others. In my drawers, for example, I collect chapati rolling pins from Rajasthan, bread rollers that fathers often give to daughters when they marry. They are beautifully decorated with coloured stripes and come in many shapes: some are cylindrical with handles, others are spindle-shaped, depending on local traditions.

Like a palaeontologist reassembling a skeleton *vertebra by vertebra*, a collector brings pieces together, putting them together, minimizing their differences. That's how I collect objects and exhibit them, revealing humanity's inexhaustible capacity to invent an infinite variety of forms. At the Cairo Museum, or in other Egyptian

museums, there are marvellous little bronze statuettes of cats with kittens, some nursing, that are only three or four centimetres long. Things like that make me feel close to the eternal sweetness of the human species which, however, is also sometimes capable of great cruelty.

GM In your collections, large families of objects emerge, within which one can trace subtle variations as different repetitions. Where does this interest in seriality come from? Does it influence your work, does it take form in your way of designing?

CZ Many years ago, Moleskine asked me to create a kind of sketchbook for publication. On that occasion, I asked the curator if I could transform the volume not into a classic album of drawings, but rather into a sort of field survey of the things I had on my desk at that time. I included a series of sketches for a competition project, the ENI Headquarters in San Donato, which was eventually won by Studio Morphosis. I also created two final boards: one mapping my small metal monuments, and the other documenting my CDs (my collecting extends to music as well; my iTunes library has over 120.000 songs). I'm probably in search of a kind of Holy Grail of the perfect pop song, especially in the indie genre.

As for the ENI project sketches, I arranged them in a sort of tree diagram. I included all the project variations leading up to the final version in an image like what Darwin referred to as a 'bush', to show that evolution is not linear but takes the form of a highly branched tree, with lateral offshoots that lead nowhere. In this way, I tried to depict the design process through the lens of Jacques Monod's model, as presented in *Chance and Necessity*, where he relates genetic variation to what he calls the 'teleonomy' of organisms, their tendency toward improvement through evolution. It is within this interplay of chance and necessity that the marvellous complexity of the world resides.

Johann Heinrich Füssli wrote "in art, many beautiful things are found by chance, but kept by choice". I believe that this holds true in life, and it becomes especially evident in the design process

which, as I see it, is a back-and-forth between ideas that emerge spontaneously and the deliberate selection of certain directions. This interplay between randomness and necessity is also present in collecting. An object is discovered by chance, formerly in flea markets, now on eBay or Etsy (which I browse every night), but the choice to acquire it is another matter altogether: it is a deliberate act.

There is an element of overabundance in collecting, and each object can participate in countless groups. For example, owning a single Empire-style clock does not make a collection. But if I buy an Art Deco clock, I'm starting a clock collection, or if I buy an Empire-style armchair, I might be starting a collection of furniture in that style. It is only through sequence that relationships between objects emerge. In this sense, the collection expresses the very mechanism of life. Samuel Beckett said: "Fail, fail again, fail better!", so within the tension between randomness and necessity lies a generator of beauty. I believe this reflects a direct connection between collecting and the act of designing.

GM When visiting your studio, one gets the sense that what's on display is the entire personal universe that fuels your creative method. Do you agree with this interpretation?

CZ At the *Common Ground* Venice Architectural Biennial curated by David Chipperfield in 2012, I presented a small installation called *Copycat. Empathy and Envy as Form Makers*. The reflection on the idea of common ground looked to the Italian city. If we take an Italian piazza, its charm lies in the fact that its elements are not entirely separate from one another, but unified by materials and formal qualities. They may vary slightly in height or detail, but a sense of familiarity emerges between them. Think of certain Renaissance or even medieval urban visions: they offer a more engaging model than some contemporary cities composed only of 'signature' objects, one building by Zaha Hadid, another by Daniel Libeskind, and so on. Cities and social mechanisms are rooted in the relationship between elements, governed by a balance between innovation and tradition, diversity and unity. The instal-

lation featured large metal cabinets, with their backs arranged to form a kind of miniature Italian piazza, mimicking transfigured medieval facades over a paved space. On the other side, these cabinets opened like cabinets of curiosities, revealing inside series of similar-yet-different objects: small submarines, insects borrowed from the Natural History Museum, chapati rolling pins, and more.

This world of forms becomes a kind of shared ground, where codes of innovation and imitation alternate, where ways of speaking and thinking spread like a kind of contagion, an epidemiology of representations that produces culture. My studio, and the collecting of strange objects within it, stems from this idea of variation on a common theme, which can also be read as a kind of social pact: the necessity of agreeing on certain deviations from a recognised and shared unity. In this sense, it is anything but personal expression; rather, it's a form of research into conventions, into identifying the project as a kind of social contract.

What I appreciate is a kind of dandy architecture, one that knows the system of rules very well and therefore dares to disobey them, to subvert and challenge them. This is probably also the root of my interest in series and in groups of nearly identical objects: variation becomes a model for innovation, but it must occur within a regulated framework.

This same idea carries over into architecture and urban design. I believe cities should not be the sum of autonomous, self-referential buildings, but should arise through variation and innovation within recognisable and somehow shared models. The image of the urban fabric should be neither artificial nor overly traditional, but should be capable of revealing this sense of familiarity.

At this point, I must admit that there is a profound connection between my work and the collections and series of objects I keep in my studio.

Taller Isidoro Michan-Guindi

BY

Fabrizia Berlingieri
Isidoro Michan-Guindi

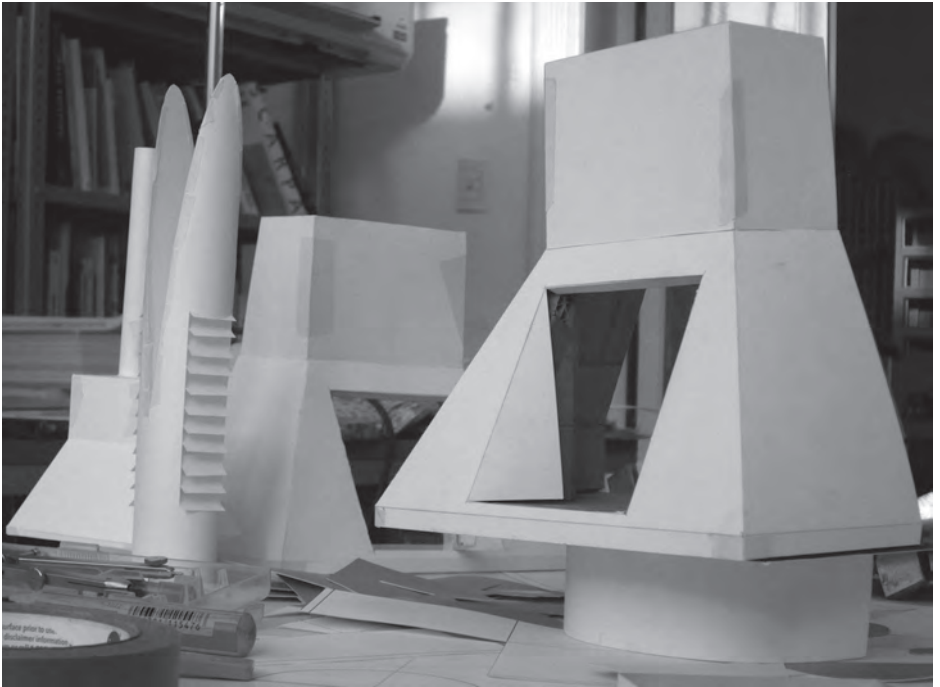
I first met Isidoro Michan-Guindi at the Politecnico di Milano two years ago, on the occasion of his teaching seminar *Half creatures, half something else*, held within the design studio that I coordinate. The lecture addressed the start of his practice (2019) and its earliest design experiences – restless and eccentric, as the title suggested, yet simultaneously intelligent and unexpected. At the end of the speech, I asked him about the reason behind his seemingly obsessive control of the interior spaces of the house that was under construction at the time. His answer was disarmingly concise: “You must be elegant outside, and perverse inside”.

This sentence repeatedly comes to mind when observing the pictures of his studio’s interiors. Much like in the paintings of Lowell Nesbitt, the Michan-Guindi’s officina is portrayed as an accumulation of objects without an operating subject, above all through models. Discarded materials made from waste – ordinary cardboard packaging, papier-mâché glued onto metal structures, expanded polyethylene – are stacked within a grainy spatial field, punctuated by these accumulations. They appear as three-dimensional vivisections of the design process, unfolding across multiple scales and materials, offering precise and localised insights into architectural questions or constructive details.

Moreover, the projects do not present themselves as isolated, monographic entities confined to corners or worktables within the studio. Rather, they intermingle across spaces, likely mirroring analogous migrations of themes and problems that constitute an underlying thread of Isidoro’s practice. Even the project titles themselves perhaps make this clear. They do not reference typology, site, or client, as is customary, but instead articulate architectural operations: Building with a Ramp, Building with Vaults, Building with Two Columns. Or again: Suspended House, Column House, Dome House, Uncomfortable House. In this way, design operations, constructive themes, and prototypal solutions become the primary framework through which both the author and the observer gain access to the submerged realm of Michan-Guindi’s architectural intentions and poetics. Instead of engaging in a conversation, we both agreed to let the space and the objects speak.



Stool with 10 legs II (1); © Taller Isidoro Michan-Guindi.



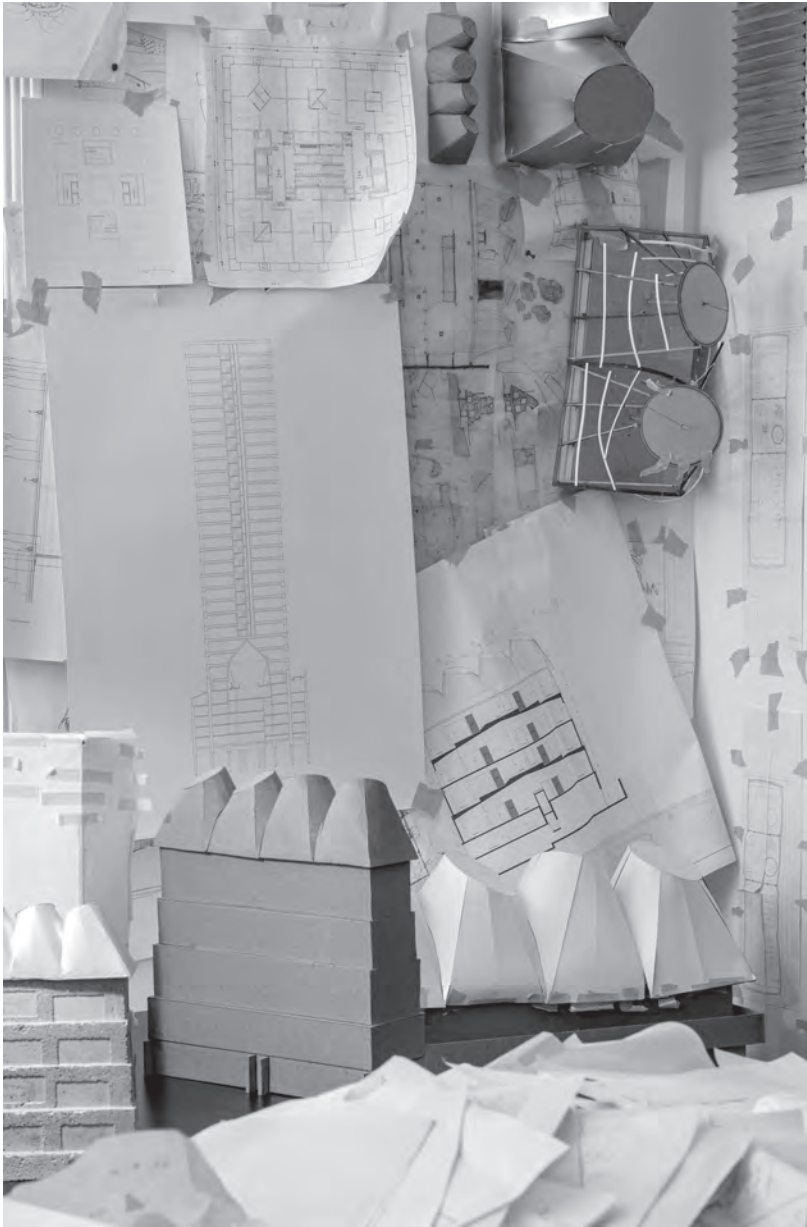
Column house (2); © Taller Isidoro Michan-Guindi.



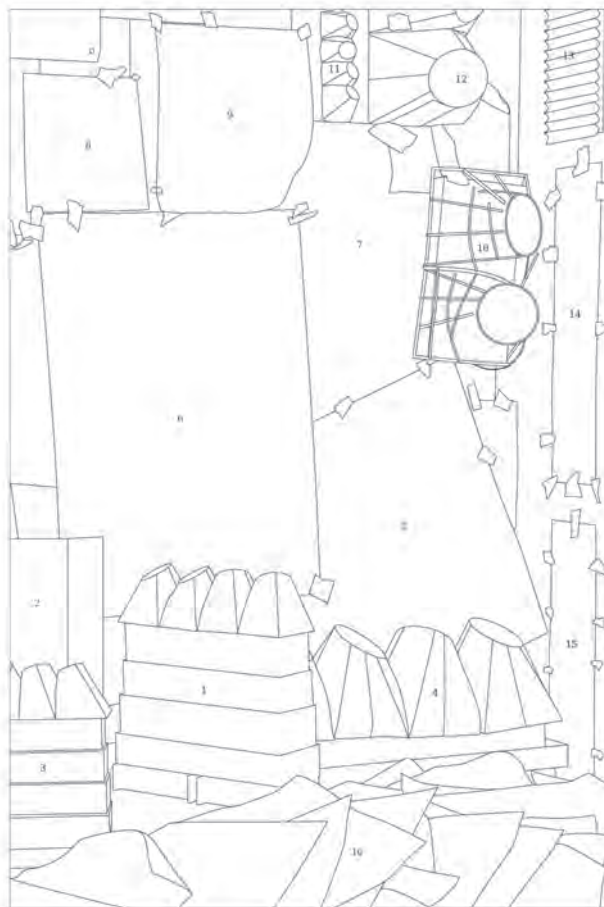
Column house (3); © Taller Isidoro Michan-Guindi.



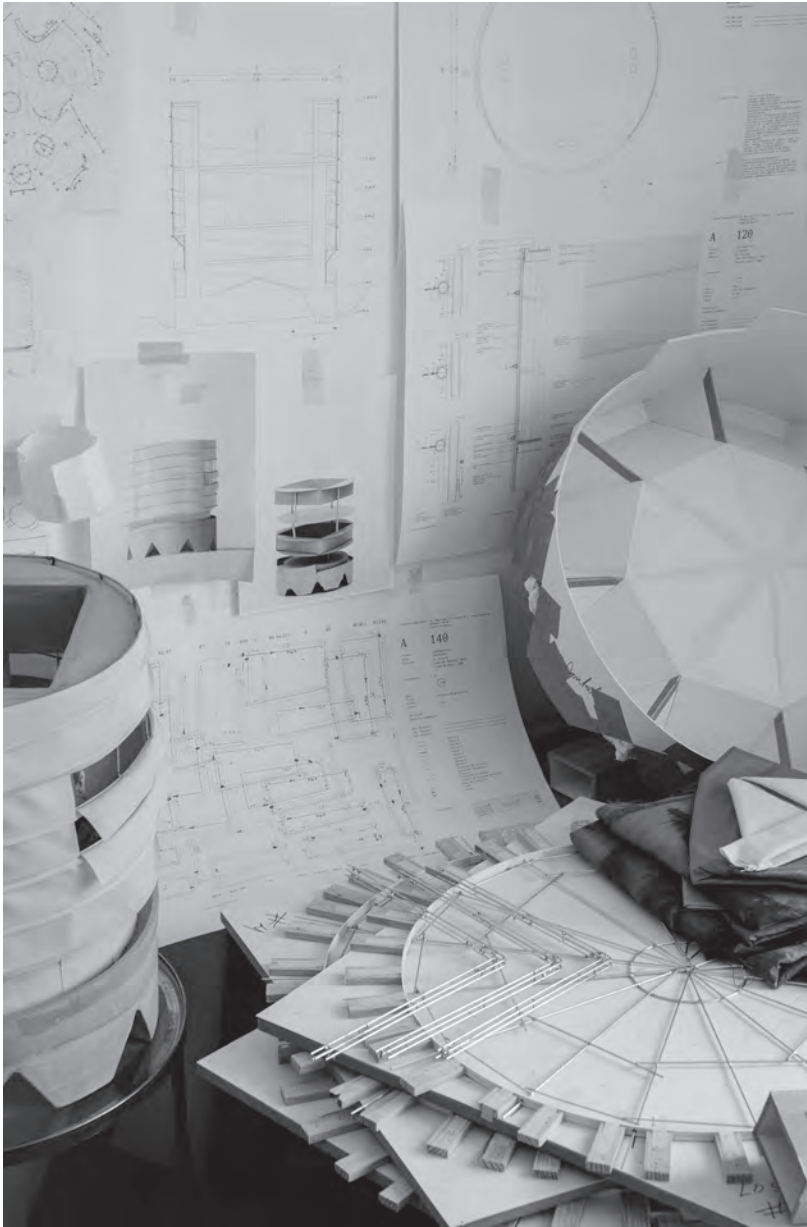
Suspended house w/Productora (4); © Taller Isidoro Michan-Guindi.



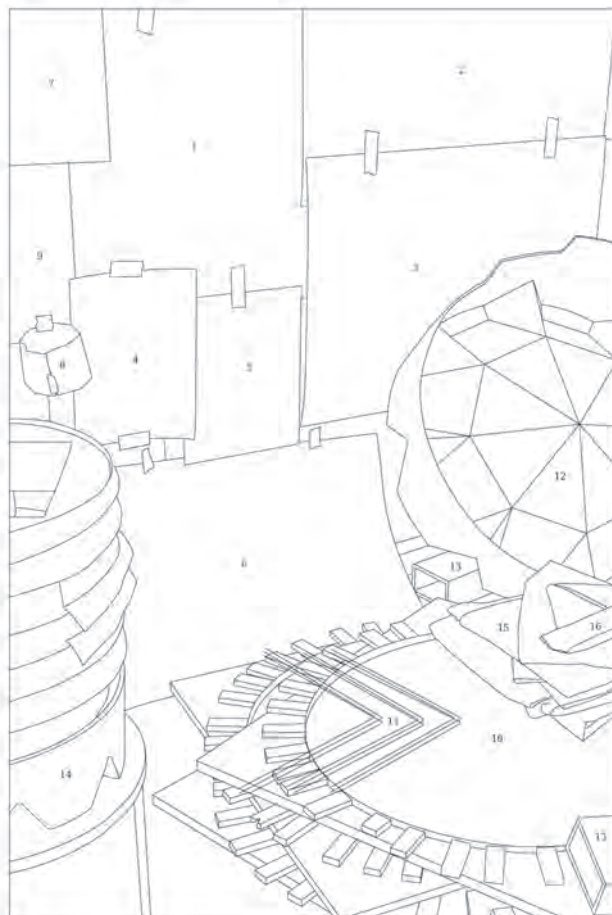
Building with a hat (5); © Taller Isidoro Michan-Guindi.



- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. Maqueta de proporciones
carton corrugado | 1:75 |
| 2. Mod. #4
Papel bond, cinta adhesiva | 1:75 |
| 3. Estudio de materialidad
Concreto martelado, cartulina | 1:100 |
| 4. Maqueta de proporciones
Carton corrugado, cartulina,
cinta adhesiva | 1:125 |
| 5. Plano corte transversal
Papel bond | 1:50 |
| 6. Plano corte longitudinal
Papel algodon 305g | 1:125 |
| 7. Dibujo #6
Papel albaneno, marcador de color | 1:7 |
| 8. Plano PB
Papel algodon 305g | 1:200 |
| 9. Plano N3
Papel maché, cinta adhesiva, lápiz | 1:150 |
| 10. Estudio de estructura
Carton compacto, estirno | 1:25 |
| 11. Estudio de estructura
Carton corrugado | 1:100 |
| 12. Estudio de estructura
Carton corrugado, cartulina,
cinta adhesiva | 1:25 |
| 13. Maqueta de Bodega #5
Carton corrugado plata | 1:200 |
| 14. Plano N4 'A' | 1:30 |
| 15. Plano N4 'B' | 1:30 |
| 16. Montón de papeles
Bond, emaché, albaneno | 1:1 |



Building with a ramp (6); © Taller Isidoro Michan-Guindi.



- | | | |
|-----|--|-------|
| 1. | Plano corte transversal | 1:125 |
| | Papel de algodón 385g | |
| 2. | Plano M5 | 1:100 |
| | Papel bond | |
| 3. | Corte por Fachada | 1:35 |
| | Papel bond | |
| 4. | Imaj A | 1:1 |
| | Papel fotográfico brillante | |
| 5. | Estudio de Geometria | 1:250 |
| | Papel fotográfico brillante | |
| 6. | Plano de Patrones | 1:50 |
| | Papel bond | |
| 7. | Plano de envolvente | 1:200 |
| | Papel bond | |
| 8. | Mod. #12 | 1:250 |
| | Papel albaneno, cinta adhesiva | |
| 9. | Estudio de elevacion #25 | 1:200 |
| | Papel algodón 385g | |
| 10. | Armado de Acero N1 | 1:35 |
| | acero, soldadura, estireno, madera | |
| 11. | Armado Estructura en V | 1:35 |
| | Soldadura | |
| 12. | Molde para patas | 1:25 |
| | Estireno, espuma de poliuretano, cinta para ductos | |
| 13. | Molde para columnas | 1:35 |
| | Mdf 5mm, cinta para ductos | |
| 14. | Mod. #18 | 1:50 |
| | Concreto armado, tela pvc | |
| 15. | Estudio de textil | 1:1 |
| | Seda | |
| 16. | Invitacion mod. #1 | 1:1 |
| | Masta, botones | |



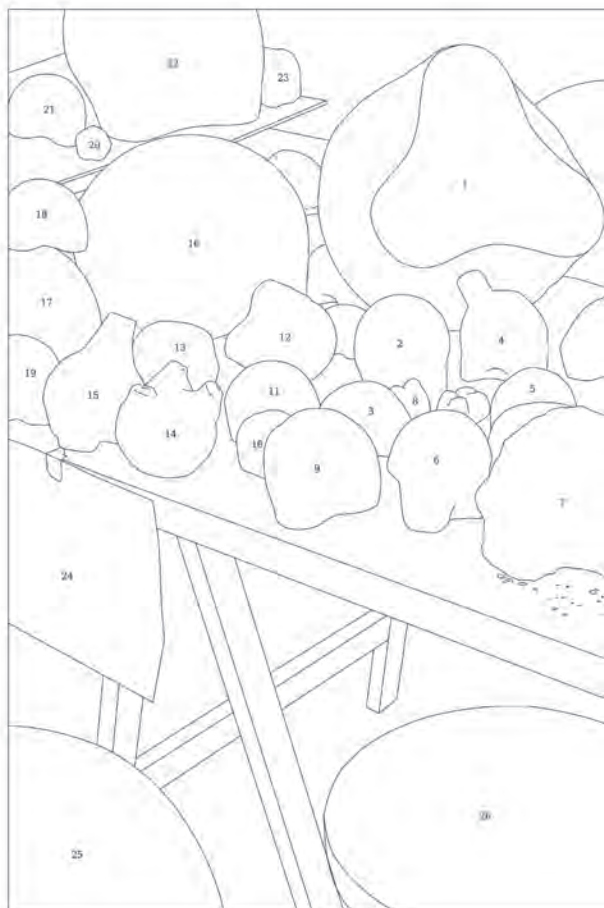
Suspended house w/Productora, 1:1 scale model beam connection (7);
© Taller Isidoro Michan-Guindi.



Suspended house w/Productora (7); © Taller Isidoro Michan-Guindi.



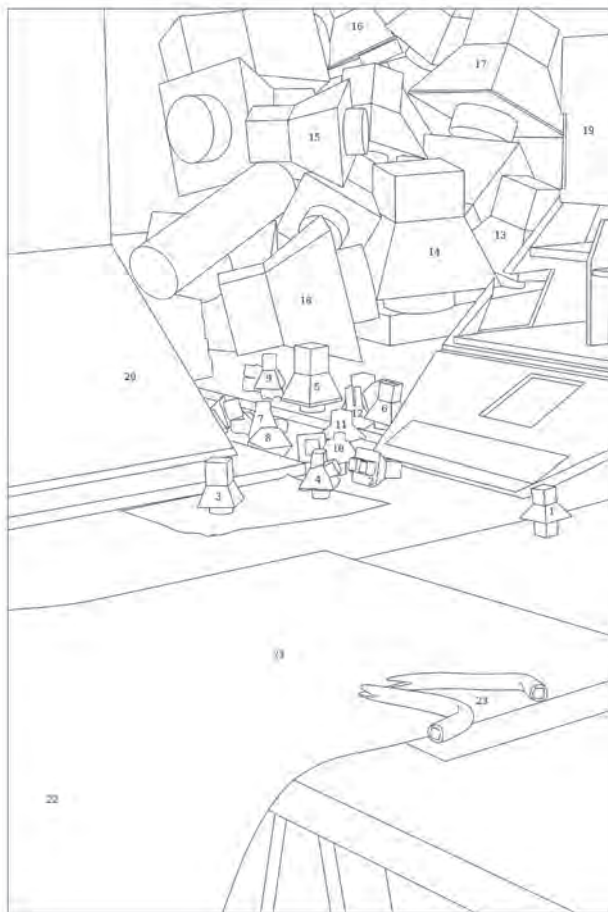
Dome house (8); © Taller Isidoro Michan-Guindi.



1. Armado de acero	1:50
acero, soldadura	
2. Domo dos patas	1:125
Papel maché, cinta adhesiva	
3. Estudio de aperturas	1:150
Yeso entintado	
4. Domo con cuerno	1:125
Papel maché amarillo	
5. Estudio de cimbra	1:150
Cinta de emmascarar	
6. Domo con tres patas	1:200
Papel maché, cinta adhesiva	
7. Domo de pan	1:200
harina, agua, levadura	
8. Mod. #16	1:100
Cinta adhesiva	
9. Estudio de aperturas #2	1:200
Papel maché, cinta adhesiva, lapija	
10. Mod. #14	1:100
Cinta adhesiva	
11. Estudio de aperturas #3	1:100
Yeso, lápiz	
12. Mod. #06	1:150
Papel maché, cinta adhesiva	
13. Mod. #13	1:200
Cinta adhesiva	
14. Domo tres cuernos	1:75
Papel maché	
15. Domo cuerno y patas	1:50
Papel maché, cinta adhesiva	
16. Maqueta de proporciones #1	1:50
Unicel, pegamento	
17. Mod. #26	1:75
Pasta de modelar	
18. Estudio material	1:100
Yeso martelinado	
19. Domo tres patas	1:50
Papel maché	
20. Mod. #25	1:75
Papel aluminio	
21. Estudio material	1:100
Yeso martelinado	
22. Maqueta de proporciones #2	1:75
Unicel, pegamento	
23. Mod. #15	1:200
Cinta adhesiva	
24. Plano N0	1:150
Papel bond	
25. Armado de acero #2	1:25
Unicel, alambre de acero	
26. Prototipo B 'Banco robot'	1:1
Madera primavera, cables electricos, arduino, sensores, motores, switches	



Column house (9); © Taller Isidoro Michan-Guindi.



1. Mod. #13
cinta adhesiva 1:200
2. Casa dos patas
concreto 1:200
3. Mod. #32
aluminio fundido 1:200
4. Casa con brazo
papel, cera 1:200
5. Maqueta de proporciones
carton corrugado 1:150
6. Mod. #31
cartulina metalizada 1:200
7. Mod. #26
yeso 1:200
8. Casa sin cabeza
papel, cinta adhesiva 1:200
9. Mod. #15
papel, cinta adhesiva 1:200
10. Mod. #13
papel, cinta adhesiva 1:100
11. Casa con falda
papel, cinta adhesiva 1:100
12. Casa tres patas
papel, cinta adhesiva 1:200
13. Maqueta de aperturas #3
carton corrugado, lapiz 1:100
14. Maqueta de aperturas #2
carton corrugado, lapiz 1:75
15. Maqueta de proporciones #4
carton corrugado 1:50
16. Maqueta de aperturas #4
carton corrugado 1:50
17. Mod. #42
carton corrugado 1:75
18. Maqueta aperturas
carton corrugado, cera, lapiz 1:75
19. Maqueta de interior #1
carton corrugado, cinta adhesiva 1:25
20. Armado de acero
Metal, sulf, triplay 1:25
21. Plano N1
Papel de algodón liso 1:50
22. Plano N0
Papel de algodón liso 1:50
23. Manijas o pistolas de rayos
Aluminio fundido, soldado en arena 1:1

Credits

Collaborators:

Mads Bjørn Christiansen

Column house
Suspended house
Dome house
Building with hat

Sina Ozbudun

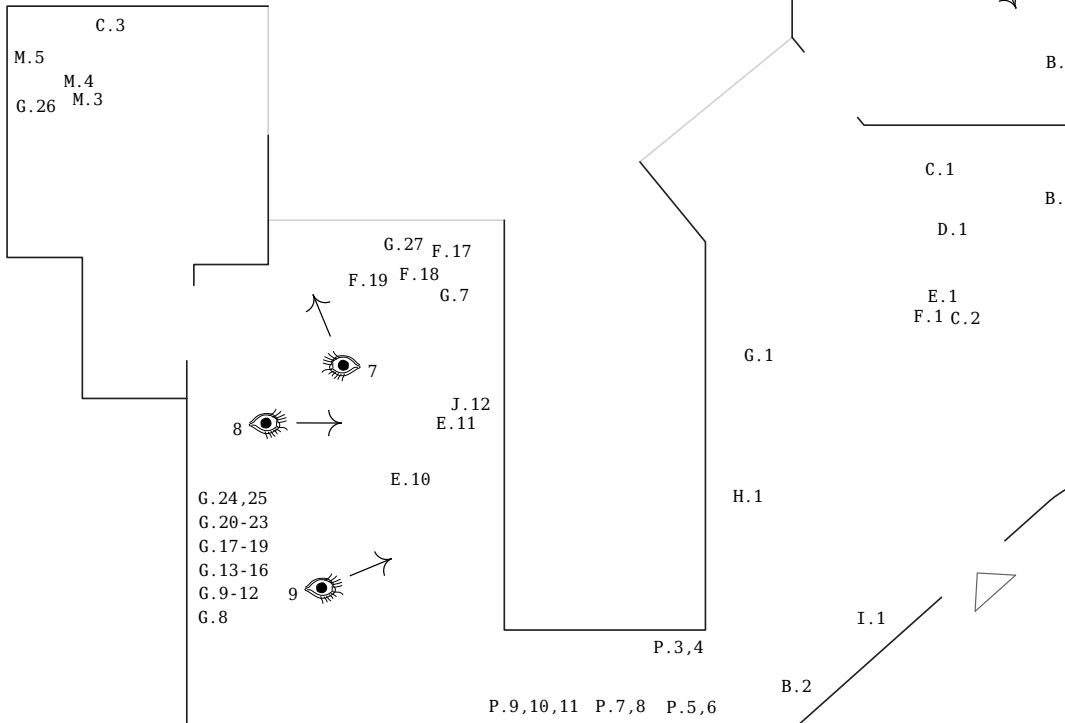
Building with a ramp

Office team:

Luis Iván Méndez González
Mariel Avilés Mariscal
Salvador Gómez Correa
Lou Simonett

* Drawings corresponding to photographs developed for the exhibition:

LIGA 36 "Hybrid Creatures"



Officina studio floor plan; © Taller Isidoro Michan-Guindi.

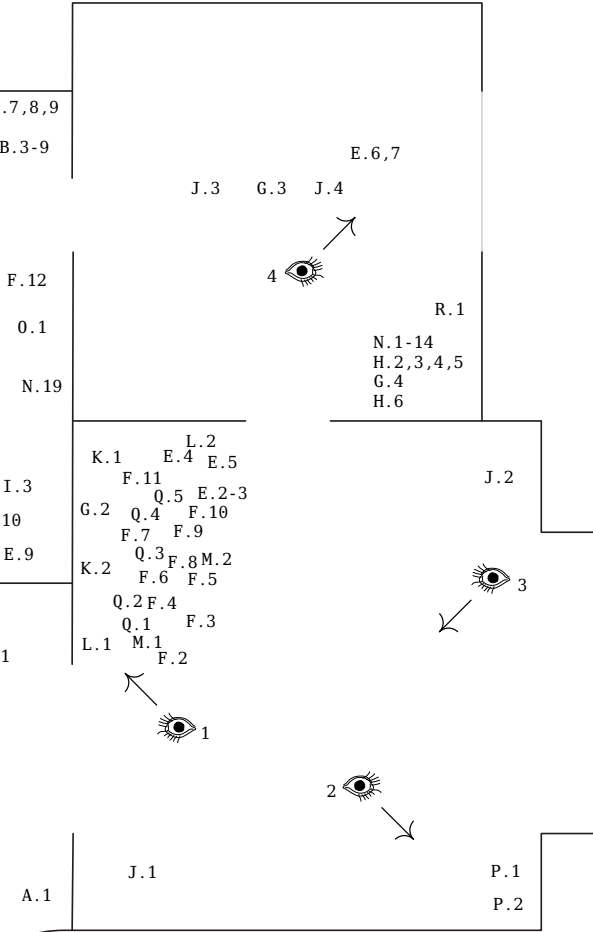
OF 01

Proyecto Oficina
 Fecha 24/11/2025
 Ubicación Av. Mazatlán 5-6, acceso N
 Condesa, 06140
 Ciudad de México

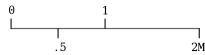
Plano Levantamiento
 Clave OF-01
 Escala 1:50

Revisiones
 Proyecto esquemático

1ra. Revisión _____
 2da. Revisión _____
 3ra. Revisión _____



- A. Uncomfortable house
- B. Building with a hat
- C. Building with 2 columns
- D. Building with vaults
- E. Suspended house
- F. Stool with 10 legs
- G. Column house
- H. Tower with 4 legs
- I. Building with 4 legs
- J. Chair for one person and a half
- K. Building with a ramp
- L. Stool with 10 legs II
- M. One plate for two
- N. Dome house
- O. Building with 3 legs
- P. Varieties of Disturbance
- Q. Toy
- R. Trajinera



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Exposing Praxis. The Problem of the Studio Fabrizia Berlingieri

Aimi A., De Michele V., Morandotti A. (eds.), *Musaeum Septalianum. Una collezione scientifica nella Milano del Seicento*, Giunti Marzocco, Florence 1984.

Bachelard G., *La poétique de l'espace*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1957.

Benjamin W., *Illuminationen*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt 1955.

Biraghi M., *L'Architetto come intellettuale*, Giulio Einaudi editore, Turin 2019.

Bolzoni L., *The Gallery of Memory. Literary and Iconographic Models in the Age of the Printing Press*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2001.

Cole M., Pardo M. (eds.), *Inventions of the Studio, Renaissance to Romanticism*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill 2005.

D'Alessandro M., *Oswald Mathias Ungers at Belvederestrasse: Self-portrait in the Studio*, in "Athens Journal of Architecture", n. 8, Issue 4, 2022.

Davids W., Paice K. (eds.), *The Fall of the Studio. Artists at Work*, Valiz, Amsterdam 2009.

Di Carlo T., *Exhibitionism*, in "Log", n. 20 Curating Architecture, 2010.

Farias I., Wilkie A. (eds.), *Studio Studies. Operations, Topologies and Displacements*, Routledge, London 2016.

Forty A., *Words and Buildings. A vocabulary of Modern Architecture*, Thames and Hudson, New York 2000.

Ghirri L., Constantini P., Chiaramonte G. (eds.), *Niente di Antico Sotto il Sole: Scritti e Immagini per un'Autobiografia*, Società Editrice Internazionale, Turin 1997.

Hall J., *The Artist's Studio: A Cultural History*, Thames & Hudson Ltd, London 2022.

Hofmann W., *Das Atelier. Courbet Jahrhundertbild*, Verlag, München 2010.

Iardino O., *Lo studiolo: uno spazio architettonico tra realtà e rappresentazione*, in "Heliopolis Culture Civiltà Politica", n. 2, 2018.

Jacob M. J., Grabner M. (eds.), *The Studio Reader: On the Space of Artists*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2010.

Lefebvre H., *La production de l'espace*, Anthropos, Paris 1974.

Lugli A., *Naturalia et Mirabilia. Il collezionismo enciclopedico delle Wunderkammer d'Europa*, Editore Mazzotta, Milan 2005.

Manganelli G., *Emigrazioni oniriche*, edited by A. Cortellessa, Adelphi, Milan 2023.

Lévi-Strauss C., *The savage mind*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd, London 1966.

Obrist H. U., Vanderlinden B., *Laboratorium*, Du Mont, Antwerp 2001.

O'Doherty B., *Studio and Cube. On the relationship between where art is made and where art is displayed*, Columbia University, New York 2007.

Panza P., *Museo Piranesi*, Skira, Milan 2017.

Piccichè M. (ed.), *Warburg Updated. Bibliography and Mnemosyne Atlas*, in "Rivista Engramma", n. 217, 2025.

Postiglione G. (ed.), *La casa dell'architetto*, Taschen, Koln 2013.

Queneau R., *Exercices de Style*, Editions Gallimard, Paris 1947.

Racheli A.M., *Il luogo kafkiano, architettura evocante architettura evocata*, Dedalo libri, Bari 1979.

Rocca A., *Lo spazio smontabile*, Lettera ventidue edizioni, Syracuse 2017.

Rossi A., Meda L., Vitale D. (eds.), *Architettura/Idea*. Catalogo della XVI Triennale di Milano, Fratelli Alinari, Florence 1981.

Rossi A., *Luoghi Urbani*, interview by Cecilia Bolognesi, Unicopli, Milan 1999.

Steierhoffer E., *The Exhibitionary Complex of Architecture*, in "Oase", n. 88 Exhibitions

Showing and Producing Architecture, 2012.

Tavares A., Bandeira P. (eds.), *Floating Images. Eduardo Souto de Moura's Wall Atlas*, Lars Müller Publishers, Zürich 2012.

Trione V., *Prologo celeste. Nell'atelier di Anselm Kiefer*, Giulio Einaudi editore, Turino, 2023.

Türkkan S., *The Architecture of the Making of the Author*, in "Oase", n. 113 Authorship, 2023.

Yates A., *The Art of Memory*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1966.

Zuliani S. (ed.), *Atelier d'artista. Gli spazi di creazione dell'arte dall'età moderna al presente*, Mimesis edizioni, Milan 2013.

FIGURES/SPACES

Not Meant to be Seen. The Silent Praxis of Casa Mollino Marco Addona

Arnheim, R. *La dinamica della forma architettonica* (1981), Mimesis Edizioni, Milan 2020.

De Giorgi M., *Carlo Mollino. Interni in piano sequenza. Devalle, Minola, Lutrario*, Abitare Segesta, Milan 2004.

Trace F. (ed.), *1905-1973 Carlo Mollino*, Electa, Milan 1989.

Jung C. G., *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (1934/54), Bollati Boringhieri, Turin, 1977.

Levi C., *Casa Miller*, in "Domus", n. 129, September 1938.

Mollino C., *Disegno di una casa sull'altura*, in "Stile", n. 40, April 1944.

Mollino C., *Utopia e ambientazione*, in “Domus” n. 238, September 1949.

Mollino C., *Vita di Oberon*, in “Casabella” n. 10, October 1933.

Gae Aulenti's Home-Office: a Spatial Montage of Architecture and Theatre
Serafina Amoroso

–, *A Milano la casa esperimento di Gae Aulenti*, in “Casa Vogue”, n. 11, November-December 1971.

Bois Y.A., ‘Introduction’ to *Eisenstein’s essay on ‘Montage and Architecture’*, in “Assemblage”, n. 10, December 1989.

Coppa A., Petullà D., Artioli N. (eds.), *Gae Aulenti: Lo Spazio Scenico*, Libri Scheiwiller, Milan 2024.

Giovannelli M., *Una scena da riscrivere insieme. Il Laboratorio di Prato (1976-78)*, in “Versants”, n. 70:2, 2023.

Giudetti F., Szacka L.C., *From My Urban Living Room: Gae Aulenti, Architect, Designer and Public Intellectual*, in “Oase”, n. 116, 2023.

Gregotti V., *Building a passage*, in “Artforum”, XXIV/8, 1986.

Molinari L., *Gae Aulenti Inesauribile*, in “Doppiozero”, June 21, 2024.

Prandi E., *Lo scultoreo architettonico in Italia come metodo compositivo. Dalle impressioni ai principi*, in “FAMagazine. Ricerche e progetti sull’architettura e la città”, n. 54, 2021.

Rykwert J., *Gae Aulenti’s Milan*, in “Architectural Digest”, n. 47, 1, 1990.

Vogt-Göknil U., *Giovanni Battista Piranesi “Carceri”*, Origo Verlag, Zürich 1958.

A. Zabalbeascoa, *The House of the Architect*, Gustavo Gili, Barcelona 1996.

The Shophouse of a 21st-Century Rammendino
Filippo Lorenzo Balma,
Miriam Pistocchi

Bassoli N., Triennale Milano. *La Casa e il Museo*, in F. Irace (ed.), *Io sono un drago. La vera storia di Alessandro Mendini*, Electa, Milan 2024.

Feraboli M.T., *Camere Senza Vista*, in F. Irace (ed.), *Io sono un drago. La vera storia di Alessandro Mendini*, Electa, Milan 2024.

Gulli D., *L’antropologia dell’oggetto: Alessandro Mendini*, in “Flash Art Italia”, n. 282, April 2010.

Mendini A., *Il mio arredo*, in “Modo”, n. 24, 1979.

Mendini A., *Il mio arredo*, in “Domus”, n. 624, January 1982.

Mendini A., *Atelier Mendini. Una utopia visiva*, Fabbri Editori, Milan 1994.

Mendini A., *Alessandro Mendini. Cose, progetti, architettura*, Electa, Milan 2001.

Mendini F., *Sandro e Io*, in F. Irace (ed.), *Io sono un drago. La vera storia di Alessandro Mendini*, Electa, Milan 2024.

The Back Side of Piero Portaluppi’s Studio
Lucia La Giusa

Bilancioni G., *Aedilizia di Piero Portaluppi*, Cittàstudi, Milan 1993.

Cassi Ramelli A., *Arch. Piero Portaluppi, una villa a Merate, il palazzo dei Fasci e una casa di abitazione a Milano*, in “Rassegna di Architettura”, n. 10, 1940.

Maranghi P. (ed.), *Piero Portaluppi*, Skira, Milan 2023.

Mauti M., *L'Amatore*, docufilm produced by Piero Maranghi, MPI 2016.

Molinari L. (ed.), *Piero Portaluppi. Linea errante nell'architettura del Novecento*, Triennale di Milano, Skira, Milan 2003.

Poli S. (ed.), *Piero Portaluppi*, Ordine degli architetti PPC della provincia di Milano, Milan 2013.

Ponti G., *Lo studio dell'arch. Piero Portaluppi*, in "Lo stile nella casa e nell'arredamento", n. 12, 1941.

Portaluppi P., *Aedilitia II*, Bestetti e Tumminelli, Milan-Rome 1924.

Selvafolta O., *L'archivio di immagini di Piero Portaluppi: percorsi formativi e materiali del progetto*, in M. Docci, M.G. Turco (eds.), *L'architettura dell'"altra" modernità. Atti del XXVI congresso di storia dell'architettura*, Gangemi, Rome 2010.

Valente I., *Casa d'abitazione a Milano di Piero Portaluppi*, in "Domus", n. 768, 1995.

Valente I., *Casa e studio Portaluppi*, in L. Molinari (ed.), *Piero Portaluppi. Linea errante dell'architettura del Novecento*, Exhibition Catalogue Triennale di Milano, September 2003-January 2004, Skira, Milan 2003.

Vico Magistretti Foundation. From Studio to Museum, and Back Again Gabriele Neri

Hüttinger E. (ed.), *Künstlerhäuser: Von der Renaissance bis zur Gegenwart*, Waser, Zürich 1985.

Irace F., Pasca V., *Vico Magistretti architetto e designer*, Electa, Milan 1999.

Mazzarelli C., *La casa d'artista*, in Irace F. (ed.), *Interni moderni. L'architettura dello spazio domestico moderno*, Carocci, Rome 2015.

Neri G. (ed.), *Vico Magistretti Architetto milanese*, catalogue of the exhibition at Triennale Milano (May-September 2021), Electa, Milan 2021.

Gianfranco Frattini: an Atelier-Manifesto Benedetta Patella

–, *Il mondo di Gianfranco Frattini*, in "Casa & Giardino", n. 134, September 1983.

–, *Lo studio di un architetto*, in "Riabita", n. 2, March-April 1985.

Gramigna G., Monetti F., *Gianfranco Frattini. Architetto d'interni e designer*, FrancoAngeli, Milan 2007.

Romanelli M., *Ritrovare Gianfranco Frattini*, Faenza All Media, Milan 2018.

Santini P.C., *Italian Design. Gianfranco Frattini*, Edizioni Biblioteca dell'Immagine, Pordenone 1988.

Ezio Bruno De Felice. An Architectural Office on the Edge of the Mediterranean Luca Esposito

Belli P. (ed.), *Palazzo Donn'Anna. Storia, arte e natura*, Allemandi, Turin 2017.

Benjamin W., Lacinis A., *Napoli porosa*, edited by E. Cicchini, Libreria Dante&Descartes, Naples 2020.

Cafiero G., Ezio Bruno De Felice. *Allestimenti domestici*, Lettera Ventidue, Syracuse 2021.

Cocchieri M., *Ezio Bruno De Felice Architetto*, Alinea Editrice, Florence 2006.

Back to the Future, Fortuny's Search for Lost Time in Venice

Josep Maria Garcia-Fuentes

De Osma G., Fortuny. *Mariano Fortuny: His Life and Work*, Aurum Press, London 1980.

Miralles E., Zaera A., *Una conversación con Enric Miralles*, in "El Croquis." Miralles / Pinós 1990-1994, 1995, n. 72.

Proust M., *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu, Tome VI, La Prisonnière* (Sodome et Gomorrhe III), Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Française, Paris 1923.

Smith W.L., *Fortuny. Time, Space, Light*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2022.

Constructed Provocations José Cherem Serur

Bo Bardi L., *Lina Bo Bardi*, Edizioni Charta, Milan, 1994.

Burkhardt F., Eveno C., Podrecca B. (eds.), *Jože Plečnik Architetto 1872-1957*, Palazzo della Permanente, Centre Pompidou, Milan, 1988.

Caruso A., *Sigurd Lewerentz and a Material Basis for Form*, in "Oase", n. 45/46, January 1997.

Czech H., *Cleaning Up the Tools for Design*, in T. Fecht, D. Kamper (eds.), *Umzug ins Offene*, Springer Verlag, Wien-New York 2000.

Plečnikova H., Porok A., *Plečnik. Guidebook for the permanent exhibition*, Muzej in Galerije Mesta Ljubljane, Ljubljana 2021.

Rudofsky B., *Are Clothes Modern? An Essay on Contemporary Apparel*, P. Theobald, Chicago 1947.

The Atelier as an Urban Microcosm Duccio Fantoni

Arsenishvili I., *Georgian Easel Painting. Second Half of the 18th Century to the 1920's*, Nova Science Publishers, New York 2009.

Bachelard G., *The Poetics of Space*, trans. M. Jolas, Beacon Press, Boston 1994.

Bruno G., *Public Intimacy. Architecture and the Visual Arts*, MIT Press, Cambridge 2007.

Colomina B., *Privacy and Publicity. Modern Architecture as Mass Media*, MIT Press, Cambridge 1994.

Stewart S., *On Longing*, Duke University Press, Durham 1984.

The Museum of Innocence, Writing a Museum Luca Galofaro

Auster P., *The New York Trilogy*, Faber and Faber, London 1987.

Garcia Marquez G., *Cien años de soledad*, Editorial Sudamericana, Buenos Aires 1967.

Pamuk O., *Masumiyet Müzesi*, İletişim Yayınları, Istanbul 2008.

Simić C., *Dime-Store Alchemy: The Art of Joseph Cornell*, Ecco Press, New York 1992.

Rooms with a View. The House-Atelier of Bijoy Jain, Studio Mumbai Giulia Setti

Dalvi S., *Bombay mix: Saat Rasta housing, Mumbai, India, by Studio Mumbai*, in "Architectural Review", 1443, 2017.

Fernando Márquez C., Levene R. (eds.), *Studio Mumbai (2012-2019)*, in "El Croquis", In-Between Spaces, n. 200, 2019.

Holtrop A., Princen B., Teerds H., Floris J., de Koning K., *Editorial. The Idea, the Representation and the Visionary*, in "Oase", n. 84, 2011.

Jain B., *Studio Mumbai, Le souffle de l'architecte / Breath of an Architect*, Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporaine, Paris 2023.

Pommer R., Frampton K., Kolbowski S. (eds.), *Idea as Model*, Rizzoli International, New York 1981.

Serrazanetti F., Schubert M. (eds.), *Studio Mumbai. Inspiration and process in architecture*, Moleskine, Milan 2013.

Setti G., *Domestic Commons in Mumbai and Auroville*, in "Techne", n. 24, 2022.

Van Gerrewey C., Vandeputte T., Patteeuw V., *The Exhibition as Productive Space*, in "Oase", n. 88, 2012.

Zardini M., *Rooms you may have missed: Umberto Riva, Bijoy Jain*, Canadian Centre for Architecture, Lars Müller Publishers, Montreal, Zürich 2015.

Zardini M., *It's about Architecture. But It's not about Architecture*, in C. Fernando Márquez, R. Levene (eds.) *Studio Mumbai (2012-2019)*, in "El Croquis", In-Between Spaces, n. 200, 2019.

Seamless. Peter Märkli's First Room
Vincenzo Moschetti

Azzariti G., *In search of a language. A journey into Peter Märkli's imaginary / À la recherche d'un langage. Voyage dans l'imaginaire de Peter Märkli*, Cosa Mentale, Paris 2019.

Chipperfield D., *La buona pratica | Good practice*, in "Domus", n. 1043, February 2020.

Don F., Mion C. (eds.), *Peter Märkli: Drawings / Zeichnungen*, Quart Verlag, Luzern 2015.

Evans R., *Figures, Doors and Passages*, in "AD. Architectural Design", 48, n. 4, April 1978.

Johnston P. (ed.), *Everything one invents is true. The Architecture of Peter Märkli*, Quart Verlag, Luzern 2017.

Mostafavi M. (ed.), *Approximations: The Architecture of Peter Märkli*, Architectural Association Publications, London 2002.

Oswald Mathias Ungers. House in Belvederestraße
Annalisa Trentin

Knowlson J., *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett*, Touchstone Books, New York 1997.

Holtzman H., James M.S., *The New Art, the New Life: The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian*, G.K. Hall & Co, Boston 1986.

Pevsner N., *Moderne Architektur und der Historiker, oder die Wiederkehr des Historizismus*, in "db. Deutsche Bauzeitung", 10, October 1961.

Ungers O. M., *Aus einem Vortrag vor dem Akademischen Architektenverein in Hannover*, in "Baukunst und Werkform", Verlag Nürnberger Presse, Nürnberg, XIV, n. 8, August 1961.

Ungers O. M., *Prinzipien der Raumgestaltung, Berufungsvortrag TU Berlin 1963*, in "Arch+", n. 65, October 1982.

Ungers O. M., *From the Square to the Cube. Oswald Mathias Ungers's Home Library*, in "Lotus", n. 72 Architecture of Criticism, Electa, Milan 1992.

The Archive and its Affects Alejandro Campos-Uribe

Campos-Uribe A., *Aldo van Eyck: Le Musée Imaginaire*, PhD Dissertation, Universitat Politècnica de València, 2018.

Campos-Uribe A., *Inhabiting the Exhibition: On Architecture, Collecting, and the Everyday*, in P. Sparke, J. Scholze, F. Fisher, E. Ioannidou, P. Kirkham, P. Lara-Betancourt (eds.), *Exhibition as Interior, Interior as Exhibition*, Bloomsbury Publishing, London 2025.

Campos-Uribe A., Lacombe-Montes P., *Embodiment Takes Command: Re-Enacting Aldo and Hannie van Eyck's Homelife*, in "The Journal of Architecture", n. 28 (3), 2023.

Lee R., *Engaging the Archival Habitat: Architectural Knowledge and Otto Koenigsberger's Effects*, in "Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East", 40, n. 3, 2020.

Correa F., *Aldo van Eyck: una conversación biográfica*, in "Arquitecturas Bis", n. 19, 1977.

Mbembe A., *Refiguring the Archive*, Springer, Dordrecht 2002.

Merleau-Ponty M., *The Primacy of Perception*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston Illinois 1964.

Between a Quadreria and a Man's Cave. On Fernando Higuera's Rascaínfiernos Jacopo Leveratto, Alessandra Bruno

Botia L., *Fernando Higuera*, Ediciones Xarait, Madrid 1987.

Botia L., *Fernando Higuera: Desde el origen*, Fundación ICO, Madrid 2019.

Humanes A., *Fernando Higuera: Arquitecturas*, Ediciones COAM, Madrid 1997.

Humanes A., *Fernando Higuera: Intexturas-Exstructuras*, Ediciones COAM, Madrid 2008.

Muñoz Carabias F.F., Moreno Cañete F.J., *Higuera y su rascaínfiernos: Otro lenguaje, otra estética, otra ecología y arquitectura*, in "Revista de Arquitecturas Modernas", n. 1, 2024.

Bridging Cultures and Time. The Noguchi Museum in New York Marta Atzeni

Barney T., Shore S., *The Noguchi Museum. A Portrait*, Phaidon, London 2015.

Hakanson Colby J., *Noguchi's little paradise*, in "The Detroit News", October 28, 1986.

Noguchi I., *A Sculptor's World*, Harper & Row, New York-Evanston 1968.

Noguchi I., *Isamu Noguchi Atelier*, in "The Japan Architect", vol. 61, n. 353, September 1986.

Noguchi I., *The Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum Catalogue*, Abrams, New York 1987.

O'Brien G., *Factory into Home*, in "New York Times Magazine", April 8, 1962.

Torres A.M., *Isamu Noguchi: a study of space*, Monacelli Press, New York 2000.

Collecting as a Design Strategy. Philip Johnson's Glass House Lina Malfona

Dal Co F., *La casa dei sogni e dei ricordi. Philip Johnson a New Canaan*, in "Lotus", n. 35, 1982.

Eisenman P., Stern R. (eds.), *Philip Johnson. Writings*, Oxford University Press, New York 1979.

Johnson P., *House at New Canaan*, in "The Architectural Review", 108, n. 645.

Obrist H.U., *Ways of Curating*, Penguin Books, London 2014.

Whitney D., Kipnis J. (eds.), *Philip Johnson. La casa di cristallo*, Electa, Milan 1996.

Collecting on cloud/s: architectural imaginaries and the Archive of Affinities
Sezin Sarica

Kovacs A., *Archive of Affinities Making Architecture from Architecture*, in "Architectural Design", 89, n. 4, July 2019.

Witt A., *Formulations Architecture, Mathematics, Culture*, MIT Press, Cambridge 2022.

Van Den Berghe J., *Life Is a Narrow Passage Between an Endless Sea and an Endless Sea*, in D. Boutsen (ed.), *Corps*, Sint-Lucas Departement Architectuur, Brussels 2011.

Van Schaik L., *The Practice of Spatial Thinking: Differentiation Processes*, RMIT Melbourne 2014.

Collecting Objects, Designing Unveilings
Giulia Menzietti/Cino Zucchi

Miller G., *The mating mind: how sexual choice shaped the evolution of human nature*, Doubleday, New York, 2000.

Kubler G., *The shape of time: remarks on the history of things*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2008.

Monod J., *Chance and necessity: essay on the natural philosophy of modern biology*, Knopf, New York, 1971.

DIALOGUE/INTENTIONS

From Room to Room: Portraits of an Architect through the Thickness of Time
Enrico Miglietta/Jo Van Den Berghe

Agamben G., *Autoritratto nello Studio*, Nottetempo, Milan 2017.

Barthes R., *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Hill and Wang, New York 1981.

de Curtis A., *Figurazione. Alla Ricerca della Forma. Dialoghi con Umberto Riva*, Marinotti Edizioni, Milan 2015.

Martí Arís C., *Variations of Identity: Type in Architecture*, Cosa Mentale, Dijon 2021.

BIOGRAPHIES

MARCO ADDONA graduated in Architecture in 2016 and earned his PhD in Architecture at Sapienza University of Rome in 2025. His doctoral research focuses on the work of Carlo Mollino, with particular attention to his interior designs and their theoretical implications. Since 2014, he has been teaching as a tutor in architectural design and theory courses at university level. His research interests include domestic, residential, and social space, explored as environments deeply intertwined with the lives of their inhabitants, and considered through philosophical and psychological lenses.

SERAFINA AMOROSO architect (Università degli Studi di Firenze, 2001), PhD in Architectural and Urban Design (Università Mediterranea di Reggio Calabria, 2006), MA in Advanced Architectural Design (ETSAM, Madrid, 2012), MA in Applied Research in Feminist, Gender and Citizenship Studies (Jaume I University, Castellón de la Plana, 2016). She has been working as an adjunct professor at the School of Architecture of Florence since 2007 for almost 12 years. She is currently working as Lecturer in Architectural Design Areas at the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos (Madrid). One of her main fields of research is focused on gender perspectives, feminism, care and their relationships with space and education, as reflected in the production of essays and articles published in such journals as “Bracket”, “CLOG”, “VAD”, “ÁBACO”, “Asparkía”, “ARQ”, “Interiority”.

MARTA ATZENI received her Master's degree in Architectural Design from Università degli Studi Roma Tre. She is currently a PhD candidate in Architecture, Theories and Design at University of Camerino (UNICAM) researching the contemporary evolution of the relationship between architecture and art within the framework of exhibitions. She is a member of the UNICAM research unit in the PRIN 2022 project 'Display: the presence of future. An archive/laboratory of the immaterial heritage of architectural exhibitions'. Since 2013 she has been a regular contributor to design and cultural magazines, and has collaborated with cultural institutions such as MAXXI and the Lithuanian Council of Culture on exhibition and editorial projects. She lives in London.

FILIPPO LORENZO BALMA is a researcher in Architecture with a keen interest in the intersections between architecture, media, and politics. His work primarily explores themes of intimacy, privacy, and surveillance within the context of design culture. After gaining international experience at EPFL in Lausanne and UPC in Barcelona, he graduated from the Politecnico di Torino with a thesis offering a critical reflection on domestic space, later published in the volume *Domestico e Anti-domestico. Il progetto dell'intimità radicale* (LetteraVentidue, 2023). He is currently engaged in research and teaching at the Politecnico di Torino and Milano and is a PhD candidate at the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies, Politecnico

di Milano. His doctoral research, conducted in collaboration with Triennale Milano, investigates the spatial dimension of archival landscapes and data architectures.

FABRIZIA BERLINGIERI PhD architect, is associate professor of Architectural and Urban Design and a faculty member of the PhD program in Architectural, Urban and Interior Design (AUID) at the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DASU), Politecnico di Milano. From 2009 to 2019, she was founder and principal of BAS_Berlingieri Architetti Studio, operating across both national and international contexts and earning several competition awards. From 2011 to 2013, she was a Postdoctoral Fellow within the program 'Excellence Pathways in Research', conducting research at both the Department of Architecture and Territory (DARte) in Reggio Calabria with Laura Thermes and the Department of Architecture at TU Delft with Tom Avermaete and Roberto Cavallo, where she held the position of guest researcher from 2012 to 2013 and from 2015 to 2017. From 2014 to 2016, she was member of the Expert Team for the Internationale Bauausstellung (IBA) Parkstad, collaborating with the curator Jo Coenen on the territorial research project *Mutations*, and co-editor of the *IBA Manual, Summer 2015*. She currently serves as scientific board member for the 'Craft-Competence Center for Anti-Fragile Territories' at DASU.

ALESSANDRA BRUNO architect and PhD candidate in Architectural, Urban and Interior Design at Politecnico di Milano. Her research looks into the atmospheric dimension of architecture, exploring its complexity as a constructed phenomenon. With a background in architecture, interior design, and urban domestic spaces, her work deepens the awareness of how design shapes lived experiences, and how spatial atmospheres can be intentionally crafted and critically examined to question and enhance contemporary architectural practice.

ALEJANDRO CAMPOS URIBE is an assistant professor at the Department of Architecture, Universitat Politècnica de València, specialising in Modern Architecture and the colonial dynamics behind its universalising claims. Between 2021-2024, he worked as a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellow at TU Delft, and Research Associate at the Research Center for Material Culture, where he developed the research project 'Multiculturalism in the work of Aldo and Hannie van Eyck'. He is also a research affiliate at the Jaap Bakema Study Centre within Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam. His latest outcome is the exhibition *Built Homecoming: The house of Aldo and Hannie van Eyck* with Dirk van den Heuvel, shown at the Nieuwe Instituut between September 2024 and March 2025.

JOSÉ CHEREM SERUR, is an architect, holds a Master of Sciences from Politecnico di Milano, following previous education at Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City. Since 2024, he has been part of the AUID PhD program, where he is involved in teaching and research on the topics of adaptability and flexibility as a compositional strategy and theoretical category. Over the years, he has worked in Mexico, Argentina and Italy and collaborated with various architecture practices on a variety of projects and scales of private and public buildings. Most recently he works as an independent architect.

LUCA ESPOSITO is a PhD architect in Philosophy of Interior Architecture at the Department of Humanities, University of Naples Federico II. Mainly engaged in the study of Exhibit Design and Interior Architecture and the phenomenology of living, in the relationship between reuse of existing architectural heritage, furniture and multisensory perception. In the same university, at the Department of Architecture, he is tutor of the Interior Architecture courses, performing teaching support activities. He is a guest research fellow at the University of Hasselt in Belgium.

DUCCIO FANTONI is an architect and PhD candidate at the Politecnico di Milano, Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DASTu) with a research titled *Unscripted Architecture: The Yards of Tbilisi*. In 2024, he was awarded a research fellowship by Fondazione Fratelli Confalonieri. He studied architecture at the University of Ferrara and Waseda University in Tokyo, graduating cum laude in 2018 with a thesis on Ostia Antica Archaeological Park. In 2020, he co-founded NOIA practice, an architecture and landscape studio based in Prato and Tbilisi, dedicated to adaptive reuse and transitional landscapes. He has been a teaching assistant at the Politecnico di Milano, a visiting lecturer at Visual Arts, Architecture & Design School of the Free University of Tbilisi, and a jury member of Tbilisi Architecture Biennial 2024.

JOSEP MARIA GARCIA-FUENTES is an associate professor in the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies at the Politecnico di Milano. His research explores the intersections between architecture, nature, ecology, the environment, and experimental preservation. He has previously held positions at the School of Architecture, Planning, and Landscape at Newcastle University and the School of Architecture of Barcelona (UPC-BarcelonaTECH). Fellow at the London School of Economics (UK) and Visiting Professor at Tongji University and the Universidad de Concepción. In practice, he has collaborated with Juan Navarro Baldeweg and is the co-founder of the Milan-based studio BMBR, alongside Marco Chiodi.

LUCA GALOFARO is an architect and associate professor at the University of Camerino, School of Architecture and Design. He is one of the founders of the architecture firm IaN+, with which he has participated in major international exhibitions, including several editions of the Venice Biennale. In 2006, he was awarded the Gold Medal for Best First Work by the Milan Triennale, and in 2013 he was a finalist for the Aga Khan Award. He

has taught Urban Design at UCL-The Bartlett School of Architecture in London and has been a Visiting Professor at the École Spéciale d'Architecture in Paris and Cornell University. He is the author of the blogs "The Booklist" and "The Imagelist".

LUCIA LA GIUSA is an architect and PhD in architectural and urban design. Until 2019, she was part of the research group Landscape_in Progress (Università degli Studi Mediterranea di Reggio Calabria), working on *Paesaggi in Divenire*. In 2018 and 2025, she participated at the Venice Biennale, exhibiting for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Pavilion. She has won numerous architecture competitions. She participates and tutors in national and international workshops and seminars. Currently she is a research fellow at the Politecnico di Milano.

JACOPO LEVERATTO, PhD architect, is an associate professor in Interior Architecture and Exhibit Design at the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies of Politecnico di Milano. Focusing his research on critical spatial practices, he has authored numerous publications in peer-reviewed international journals and edited volumes. Besides having published different monographs, he is an associate editor of the peer-reviewed journals "Stoa", "ARK" and "iijournal", and he has written on "Architectural Design", "Area", "Interni" and "Vesper".

LINA MALFONA is an associate professor in Architecture, and founder of the research lab Polit(t)ico. She studied in Rome under Franco Purini, and she earned a PhD in Architectural and Urban Design. She has received various fellowships, including one from the Fulbright Foundation to pursue research at the Institute of Fine Arts at NYU, and has been a Visiting Scholar at the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA). She has taught at multiple Schools of Architecture, including Cornell University (Ithaca, NY). Her publications include essays on the history, theory

and criticism of architecture. Among her most recent books are *The Mannerist Phase in Architecture. On Early Style* (Routledge 2025), and *Residentialism. A Suburban Archipelago* (ACTAR 2021). Her essays have appeared in many architectural journals, including “Domus”, “Log”, and “The Journal of Architecture”. The architectural firm *Malфона Petrini Architettura*, of which she was the founder, has received recognition and acclaim.

GIULIA MENZIETTI is an architect and assistant professor at the Eduardo Vittoria School of Architecture and Design in Ascoli Piceno, University of Camerino. She holds a PhD from the International Villard d'Honnecourt Program at IUAV University of Venice and she has participated in several national and international research projects, as well as in numerous conferences with peer-reviewed contributions. She is the author of *La cartiera Mondadori di Ascoli Piceno* (Libria, 2024) and *Amabili resti. Frammenti e rovine della tarda modernità italiana* (Quodlibet, 2017). Her work has appeared in various architecture publications.

ISIDORO MICHAN-GUINDI earned his Master's Degree in Architecture from Princeton University in 2018. He received his Bachelor's Degree in Architecture from Cornell University in 2015. He lives and works in Mexico City where he has had his studio Taller Isidoro Michan-Guindi since 2019.

ENRICO MIGLIETTA is an architect and PhD in Architectural, Urban and Interior Design (Politecnico di Milano and KU Leuven). He is research associate at KU Leuven, Department of Architecture. His research explores architectural detailing as a site of embodied knowledge, cultural continuity, and material expression. In 2024 he co-founded Atelier Vetia with Briselda Calliku, a critical reflective practice bridging professional, academic, and research experiences. Their work focuses on dwelling, exhibition design, and architectural restoration, with particular

attention to reuse and heritage enhancement. Since 2016, he has taught in design studios and international workshops at Politecnico di Milano, KU Leuven, and Università Iuav di Venezia, focusing on preservation and regeneration of the European city's cultural heritage.

VINCENZO MOSCHETTI is a PhD architect and researcher in Architectural and Urban Design at the Department of Architecture and Design - Sapienza University of Rome. He was a research fellow (2020-2023) at the Department of Architecture and Arts, Iuav University of Venice and a lecturer (2022-2023) in Interior Architecture and Architectural Design at the University of Ferrara. His scientific and teaching activity is dedicated to the theoretical aspects of architectural design, and in particular to the relationships between design and authorship, and between architecture, geography and nature.

GABRIELE NERI is an architectural and design historian, curator, and PhD architect. He is associate professor of Architectural History at the Politecnico di Torino (Department of Architecture and Design - DAD). He was the Weinberg Fellow in Architectural History and Preservation at the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America, Columbia University, New York (Spring 2022), Maître d'enseignement et de recherche at the Accademia di architettura in Mendrisio (2019-2022), and adjunct professor at the Politecnico di Milano (2011-2022). Since 2024, he has been a member of the Scientific Committee of the MAXXI Foundation in Rome; he previously served on the Board of Directors of the Triennale Milano Design Museum Foundation (2018-2021). He is also a member of the Scientific Committee of the Vico Magistretti Foundation in Milan.

BENEDETTA PATELLA is an architect and PhD candidate in Architectural Urban and Interior Design at the Politecnico di Milano, her research focuses on domestic interiors, with a particular emphasis on the work of Gianfranco Frattini. She contributed to the

exhibition dedicated to the architect (April 2023), curating the academic section and collaborating on the catalogue *Gianfranco Frattini. Design 1955/2003*, Silvana Editoriale. Her work has been published in “ARK”, “Op. Cit”, and featured at international conferences.

MIRIAM PISTOCCHI is an architect and PhD candidate in Architecture, Urban and Interior Design at Politecnico di Milano. Her research interests stem from the domestic space, exploring the relationship between space and modes of dwelling. Her doctoral research focuses on the representation of domestic space in architecture exhibitions. She has collaborated with various architecture studios in the fields of exhibition and interior design. She writes about architectural projects and books, contributing to “Abitare” magazine and previously to “Artribune” and “IIC”. In 2020, she presented the video *Rituali domestici* as part of the exhibition *La casa non domestica*, curated by Gabriele Mastrigli at Galleria Contemporary Cluster in Rome. She is a member of the research group for the PRIN project ‘Display: The Presence of the Future. An Archive/Laboratory of the Immaterial Heritage of Architectural Exhibitions’.

GIULIA SETTI is a PhD architect and assistant professor of Architectural and Urban Design at Politecnico di Milano, Department of Architecture and Urban Studies. Her research focuses on the reuse of industrial architecture and on new typologies of contemporary public spaces. She participates in the board of ‘CRAFT-Competence Center Anti-Fragile Territories’ coordinated by DASTU as Department of Excellence 2023-2027. In 2014-2015, she conducted research and teaching activities at CEPT University, Ahmedabad, India; in 2022, she published the volume *Stepwell. Architetture per l’acqua nel Gujarat. Tra valorizzazione, progetto e recupero* a typological study of ancient wells in India.

SEZIN SARICA is a PhD architect graduated from the METU Faculty of Architecture,

where she is currently a research assistant. Her research focuses on the interaction of art and architecture, 19th-century German architectural theory, especially the concept of *Bildung*, and methodologies of making and collecting. She is a member of the EAHN research group ‘Building Word Image’. She has been a short-term visiting researcher at the KIT Program in Architectural Theory and the TU Munich Architekturmuseum. She has contributed to various academic platforms and journals, including “JoLa”, and has presented her research at international conferences such as EAHN, AHRA, and DocTalks. She was part of the curatorial team for the Archive Exhibitions (Getty Foundation - ‘Keeping It Modern’) at METU and TU Delft.

ANNALISA TRENTIN is professor in Architectural and Urban Design at the Department of Architecture, Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna, former Coordinator of the PhD program in Architecture and Design Cultures of the University of Bologna. She carries out research and teaching activities, mainly dealing with the relationship between architecture, theory, and practice. Within this line of research, she has organised several exhibitions and seminars, among others, on the work of Pier Luigi Nervi, Aldo Rossi, and Oswald Mathias Ungers in collaboration with CSAC, MAXXI - Rome, Princeton University, UAA - Ungers Archiv. She is author of essays on architecture criticism and theory, has organised and has participated to several conferences, international workshops, Summer Schools, design competitions and EU funded projects, always looking at an innovative and interdisciplinary way of thinking pedagogy and university teaching.

JO VAN DEN BERGHE is professor of Architecture at KU Leuven, Department/Faculty of Architecture. He graduated from the Sint-Lucas School of Architecture in 1984 and has maintained a critical reflective practice since 1986. From 1984 to 2019, he was

intern and collaborator of Juliaan Lampens. In 2012, he obtained a practice-based PhD from RMIT University Melbourne. He is co-founder, with Thierry Lagrange, of the Research Group 'The Drawing and the Space'. At KU Leuven, he teaches experimental architectural design within the ADO Studio Anatomy, where he investigates the tension field between Techné and Poiesis in making architecture – the poetics of making – through innovative drawing formats, with the drawing as the indispensable locus of investigation. He served as Program Director of the Faculty of Architecture at KU Leuven from 2017 to 2022. He has been visiting professor at Politecnico di Milano, EPFL Lausanne, Queen's University Belfast, and RMIT University Barcelona.

CINO ZUCCHI earned a Bachelor of Science in Architecture and Design (B.S.A.D.) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a master's degree in Architecture from Politecnico di Milano, where he is currently professor of Architectural and Urban Design. He has taught in numerous international design workshops and has served as 'John T. Dunlop Visiting Professor in Housing and Urbanization' at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design. He is author of several articles and books on architectural history and theory and participated in various editions of the Triennale di Milano and the Venice Architecture Biennale. His installation *Copycat* received an honorary mention at the 2012 edition, and he was curator of the Italian Pavilion for the 2014 edition. He served as president of the Jury of the Mies van der Rohe Award 2015 and is a member of the international research team ARE_Living, focusing on housing innovation.

I would like to express my gratitude to Alessandro Rocca, the Polimi Research Unit for their support throughout the preparation of this book. Duccio Fantoni, Lucia La Giusa, Filippo Lorenzo Balma, Levan Eloshvili for the contribution to the drawings. Serafina Amoroso, Vanessa Marcella, Ettore Rocca, and Manuela Triggianese for their suggestions.

Mimesis Edizioni
piazza Don Enrico Mapelli, 75
20099 Sesto San Giovanni (MI)
www.mimesisedizioni.it

First Edition
March 2026

ISBN
(Print) 9791222330877
(Online) 9791222330884

DOI
10.7413/1234-1234107

Printed in March 2026

Fonts
Suisse Works, Swiss Typefaces

2026 Mimesis Edizioni
Images and texts
© The Authors
Graphics - Drawings
© Fabrizia Berlingieri, Levan Eloshvili

Funded by the EU - Next Generation EU -
PRIN 2022 call - D.D. n. 104 of 2 February
2022 - M4 C2 Inv. 1.1 Prot. No. 2022XJ8CXS
- Project title: "Display: the presence of future.
An archive/laboratory of the immaterial
heritage of architectural exhibitions" - CUP:
D53D23015660006.

The book is available in open access with Creative
Common Attribution-Non Commercial-No
Derivative 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-
ND 4.0). Each volume in the Display series is
reviewed by referees chosen from members of the
Scientific Committee. For the images contained
in this volume the authors remain at the disposal
of any rights holders that could not be traced.
The rights of translation, electronic storage,
reproduction and adaptation, even partial, by any
means, are reserved for all countries.

Display Books

The series Display Books is a project of the
Research Unit of Politecnico di Milano within
the PRIN 2022 "Display: the presence of future.
An archive/laboratory of the immaterial heritage
of architectural exhibitions" composed by
the Research Units of Politecnico di Milano,
Università degli Studi di Camerino, Università
degli Studi di Napoli Federico II.

Directed by
Alessandro Rocca
Politecnico di Milano

Graphic Layout
Studio Pupilla, Milano

Scientific Committee
Fabrizia Berlingieri
Politecnico di Milano
Pippo Ciorra
Università degli Studi di Camerino
Stamatina Kousidi
Politecnico di Milano
Pasquale Miano
Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II
Carles Muro
Politecnico di Milano
Giulia Setti
Politecnico di Milano



DIPARTIMENTO
DI ARCHITETTURA
E STUDI URBANI

