

In the contemporary age, the city is increasingly seen as an experiential field.

The new transformation processes are asking architects to become more culturally aware and sensitive as well as to read, interpret and implement the system of opportunities offered by the urban scenario.

Participants to the Miaw workshop identify spaces in Milan that either have unexpressed potentialities either lost their characters, for several reasons.

Leftovers which are marginalized and excluded from everyday life. From the smallest corner in the dense fabric to the large areas on the city borders, the Workshops worked to envision possible strategies of re-forming and revitalizing these dormant places. In a century that is overwhelmed by image, information and dynamism, it seems particularly important for architects and policy makers to recognize and assume the special role of the creative recovery of forgotten spaces.

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2014 Re-Forming Milan

MIAW

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SCUOLA DI ARCHITETTURA E SOCIETÀ

Sebastien Marot, Alessandro Rocca, Giovanni La Varra, Jurjen Zeinstra, Gennaro Postiglione, Enrico Forestieri, Héctor Fernández Elorza, Giancarlo Fioridi, Matteo Aimini, Helena Coch Roura, Alessandro Rogora, Claudia Poggi, Renato D'Alençon, Castrillón, Andrea Gritti, Marco Bovati, Franco Tagliabue, Roelof Verhage, Corinna Morandi, Mario Paris, Lina Scavuzzo, Michael Schwarting, Giovanni Santamaria, Antonella Contin, Alessandro Frigerio, Michele Moreno, Haitham Nabil, Sebastiano Brandolini, Nicolas Gilsoul, Günther Vogt, Antonio Longo, Talita Medina



MIAW Series **03**

Miaw (Milan International Architecture Workshop) is the International intensive programme at the School of Architettura e Società of Politecnico di Milano.
Miaw provides an international design forum for schools, teachers and students, and it is also an informal platform to discuss issues and share ambitions that education implies.

Miaw 2014 / Re-Forming Milan

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MIAAW

2014

Re-Forming Milan

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Re- Programming

The Milan International Architectural Workshop (Miaw) 2014 is a series of eight workshops organized by the School of Architecture and Society (Sas) of Politecnico di Milano (PoliMi) with the intention of developing a multiscale and interdisciplinary approach to architectural and urban design. The workshop is based on the leading role of the visiting professors; teachers, architects and planners who, coming from different cultural and professional backgrounds and practices, take in Miaw their personal experience and their specific knowledge. The guest professors are asked to work in a narrow collaboration with the host professors, teachers selected from the Sas faculty, and together they direct the design teams composed from PoliMi students, of the courses of graduate and undergraduate schools, of architecture and of urban planning. Because of the composition of the teams, Miaw acts as an international forum which promotes comparisons between schools, teachers and students, but it is also an informal platform to discuss issues and to share the ambitions that the learning process of architectural design involves.

Coming to the design topics, we note that in the contemporary age, the city is increasingly seen as an experiential field. Its processes of change, its transformation and mutations, have become more mature and architects become more and more culturally aware, and sensitive as well as to read, interpret and implement the system of opportunities offered by the urban histories and prophecies.

In the Milanese scenario, because of a series of different and sequential phenomena, the urban fabric is really under pressure and is changing very quickly. The industrial settlements, which determined the character of the periphery and the suburbs of the last century, in the 80's were completely dismantled and their sites were completely reset with the new big residential and commercial settlements. The first phase was still based on a simple phenomenon of gentrification, but later, this transformation has evolved in a more articulated process which entered in the deep fabric of the city center, altering and transforming historic areas, modern quarters and after war terrains vague. This big change

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affected some main parts of the city center introducing brand new quarters, important public and private buildings, new urban facilities and connections, public space and parks. A large transformation which is still going on, despite of the deep economical crisis which opened in 2008, and includes some of the main developments of the city such as Garibaldi-Repubblica, Citylife, and Expo 2015 which, under many aspects, could be seen as the ultimate phase of the optimistic growth of the last decades.

In this condition, the city grew following the main economical trends mirroring the loss of balance of the new society, characterized by the coexistence of superior possibilities of investment, often related with the new globalism, and the related phenomena of abandon, dismissal, marginality. While a part of the city reborns in a brand new form, other parts suffer processes of decay which hits buildings and entire quarters, following causes that, often, are immaterial, being related to private economical trends, financial strategies, etc..

Registering the complexity and the novelty of these phenomena, Sas started the program "Re-Forming Milan", a frame defined in accordance with the Council of Milan with the mission of gather the ateliers of architectural and urban design around some specific critical areas and sites of the city, looking for approaches and strategies which can dialogue with the real trends and processes. Used as a common platform for several activities, such as ordinary courses, seminars, master degree projects, workshops, "Re-Forming Milan" aims at the recognition of the value and potential of urban fabric and public spaces, through a descriptive approach in reading, decoding and contextually providing new opportunities, proposing projects at the different scales: interiors, architectural, and urban design. For "Re-Forming Milan", dismissed space and abandoned places, careless areas and brownfields, which use to be swamped places neglected by the official maps, become the paradigmatic examples of urban spaces which can be recovered gaining new meanings, values and shapes. These occupation, appropriation and activation actions often tend to draw,

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in the urban fabric, a minor geography capable of giving visibility and responses to the needs, and to the forgotten desires, of that part of the city which doesn't participate at the shimmering Milanese Renaissance of the luxury apartments and multinational factories' headquarters. Participants to the Miaw workshop are invited to act on spaces that either have an unexpressed potentiality either lost their characteristics, importance for the community and have been, for several reasons, marginalized and excluded from everyday life. From the smallest corner to the large areas on the city margins, the Workshop wishes to illustrate possible scenarios of re-forming, capable to revitalize these dormant places. In a 21st Century that is overwhelmed by image, information and fast-changing dynamism, it is particularly important, for architects and policy makers, to recognize and assume the special role of the creative recovery of forgotten spaces.

Adopting the vision and the technical guidelines of "Re-Forming Milan", the Miaw workshops focused on some strategic sites located in the Eastern part of the city, facing very different urban conditions: deserted buildings in the densest urban environment, public spaces, industrial semi-abandoned settlements, brownfields. The workshops hectic activity was followed day by day from the team of Alessandro Rocca, Sébastien Marot and Giovanni La Varra, who recorded it with images, interviews, and texts, which were collected in an instant magazine and are now published in another booklet.

Coming to the results of the design activity, the Jurjen Zeinstra team, composed by Gennaro Postiglione and Enrico Forestieri, worked on a neglected residential block of the 80's, a sample of social housing brutally isolated and affected by the gentrification of that part of the city. The strategies of the project are based on the idea of obtaining a strong recovering of the private space of the complex, developing five concepts, five different options, such as, in example, putting the inner courtyard in direct and fluid communication with the street space through a new portico, with the aim of having less privacy but more social and economical interaction, and a better relationship with the

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quarter. Other proposals suggest the excavation of a deep court, 15 meters below ground level, the construction of parasite structures grabbed to the facades, the insertion of theatrical elements which give a new continuity between the street and the building's courtyard. The workshop held by Héctor Fernández Elorza, with Giancarlo Piretti and Matteo Aimini, was entitled "Urban Voids – An investigation about urban potential of open spaces" and performs some urban infills which completely open the relationship between architecture and public space. All the eight proposals are brilliant investigations on architecture as a main medium in offering another chance to neglected and lost lots. They demonstrate that gentrification is not the lonely actor, but also good, powerful architectural ideas, transferred in convincing and seductive design works, can regenerate the city.

Helena Coch Roura, teaming with Alessandro Rogora and Claudia Poggi, examined the large areas of the abandoned slaughterhouses, proposing urban agriculture and permaculture. Another point of the strategy is a selective demolition of the old buildings and the reuse of the waste materials. Not just re-cycling but also up-cycling, introducing new activities of higher economical and social value. As reported in the workshop introductory text: "These huge areas could be transformed into a productive, urban agricultural factory, significantly increasing the food production and thus reducing the city's dependence on fresh vegetable import. Of course, it will not be enough to feed Milan, but new hypothesis and experimentations should be carried out to deeply reconsider the urban structure towards a more sustainable environment".

Rubbles and debris are the main theme, and architectural material, also in the workshop of Renato D'Alençon Castrillón, who had as co-teachers Andrea Gritti, Marco Bovati and Franco Tagliabue. They write: "In brownfield sites, rubble and debris are constantly produced. Why not reuse them as the main material for the creation of new public spaces at minimum waste? This would be a way to give a concrete response to the negative effects of urban abandonment". Following this idea, the

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six concept projects exploit the possibility of debris as a main material of construction, and explore the idea of using the existing buildings of the former slaughterhouse as generators of a new urbanity. Connecting Hub transforms the slaughter gallery in an urban connection system, Sequences prepares the land for a new, unpredictable, development while Nature Rebirth delegates the naturalization process to give another shape to the entire complex; Net of Flows and Lymph recall the metaphor of the blood circulation system for promoting a regeneration based on slow, resilient processes of soft re-urbanization; Stain of Chain imagines a squatting process which, without any specific investment, reopen the abandoned buildings to social and cultural activities.

The workshop led by Roelof Verhage with Corinna Morandi, Lina Scavuzzo and Mario Paris prepares, for the former Slaughterhouses, not a real, complete masterplan, too rigid for the uncertain future of the urban development of this area, but a set of guidelines, of suggestion and rules to be incorporated in the future projects. Looking at the general layout of Eastern Milan, the projects envision the creation of a large green space, the transformation of some buildings in students' residential units with a formation of a Campus, a mixed use complex which keep together the green and the built, the piazza and the student village, the kitchen gardens with the food market and the art galleries.

The Rubattino workshop, led by Michael Schwarting and Giovanni Santamaria with Antonella Contin, Alessandro Frigerio, Michele Moreno, Haitham Nabil, faced the problems of recovering a huge building, the former Innocenti factory, that is now in a condition of deep decay. This mega-block, a remarkable sample of industrial archeology, is also a huge one, with a size of 280 by 120 meters, and about 15 meter high. In the presented projects, which treat also a military quarter in the nearby, lives some of the more urgent themes of urban transformation, such as "highlight the dialog between nature and the city"; the projects proposing edenic covered landscapes, utopian farms, Superstudio like megastructures, university green campuses and war memorials. Going ahead eastward we trespass the city border and enter in the

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Lambroscape, the Lambro River region which is the subject of the workshop of Sebastiano Brandolini, Nicolas Gilsoul and Günther Vogt, with Antonio Longo and Talita Medina, which programmed a step by step on situ analysis of this singular suburban area, which neither belongs to the city nor to the countryside, and which is defined as “the last corridor of naturality and open spaces in the constructed body of the city.” Following the Lambro river stream, teams explored every detail of that landscape, recording it through the traditional and contemporary media, from pencil to smartphone. The result is a fast growing archive, a gallery of instant images which operate as generators of new vision, preparing the terrain for the project of a new Lambroscape. As Sebastiano Brandolini writes: “The Lambro, from being an urban taboo as it is today, must go back to being a decent piece of our experience, as neighborhood, city, metropolis, territory or geography it does not matter. As a citizen of Milan, I’d love: to notice his presence, to observe it without being ashamed of its smell and color, to stop and to walk along its banks in some parts, to see implemented new buildings and activities that can come into direct contact with its waters, to remain astonished in front of the urban transformations catalyzed by its rehabilitation as well as by its reinvention”.

Gennaro Postiglione, Alessandro Rocca