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ATELIER BRANCO ARQUITETURA,  
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SCHIAVI, FEDERICO TRANFA, VILHELM  
LAURITZEN ARCHITECTS, WEISS/MANFREDI,  
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# CASABELLA

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GRUPPO  MONDADORI

“The Bijlmer offers  
boredom on  
a heroic scale”

— Rem Koolhaas, 1976

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# COBE e Vilhelm Lauritzen Architects. Residenza Krøyers Plads, Copenaghen

1  
—prospetto nord-est dell'edificio  
in mattoni in cui le finestre a tutta  
altezza si alternano alle logge  
—northeast elevation of the  
brick building, in which full-  
height windows alternate with  
loggias

2  
—pianta del piano terra  
e degli spazi pubblici  
—plan of the ground floor  
and the public spaces



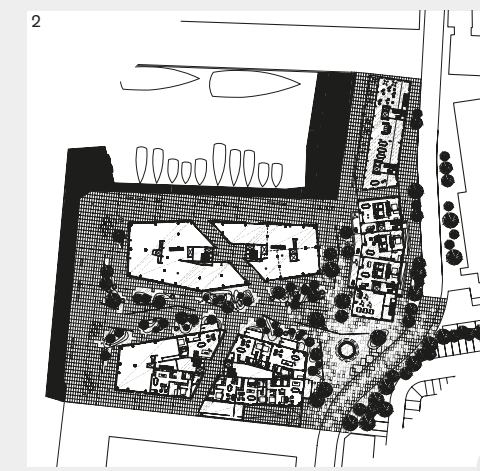
## Manipolare la tradizione

Camillo Magni

A Copenaghen, come in tutte le città d'acqua, gli elementi che compongono lo spazio pubblico (edifici, strade e piazze) costruiscono delle sorprendenti ibridazioni con quelli connessi alla struttura idrica (canali e darsene). Questo aspetto, che rende unici questi luoghi, è diventato a Copenaghen un interessante campo di sperimentazione di cui *Harbor Bath* di *Big Group* e il lungo fiume *Kalvebod Waves* di *Klar architects* e *Jds Architects* sono i tentativi più eclatanti di rielaborare il rapporto tra città e acqua. All'interno di questo solco troviamo il più ponderato intervento residenziale *Krøyers Plads* a opera degli studi danesi COBE e Vilhelm Lauritzen Architects: il primo riconosciuto come una delle firme più affermate del panorama nordico, mentre il secondo rappresenta l'eredità di uno dei maestri dell'architettura modernista danese (Vilhelm Lauritzen, 1894–1984).

Il progetto si colloca in un'area affacciata sul canale principale nella parte nord del centro storico, a ridosso dell'eccentrico quartiere Christianie. L'intorno è formato da un tessuto industriale ex portuale caratterizzato da antichi magazzini e darsene che frastagliano il profilo della costa. L'antico sistema di ormeggio e di stoccaggio delle merci ha condizionato nel tempo sia le geometrie della banchina che i principi insediativi degli edifici destinati al carico e scarico delle merci, delineando una radicale differenza tra la sponda sud (il porto) e quella nord (la città) del canale. Oggi le funzioni portuali sono dismesse (sostituite solo in parte da un sistema di ormeggi da diporto), ma sono ancora riconoscibili nei vecchi magazzini e nelle ampie darsene disposte perpendicolarmente al canale, la cui semplice ripetizione conferisce una sorta di solennità a questo brano di città. Il nuovo intervento residenziale di COBE e Vilhelm Lauritzen Architects ha la forza di coinvolgere alcune preesistenze nel disegno urbano complessivo. Ciò che più convince è la generosità con cui i nuovi corpi edilizi si offrono al servizio della città, al fine di costruire spazi pubblici misurati ed edifici coerenti con il contesto. La darsena orienta la disposizione dei volumi che, insieme

all'antico magazzino, ne costruiscono i bordi, mentre il canale indirizza la giacitura perpendicolare alla banchina reiterando la lunga successione di magazzini esistenti, orientati verso l'acqua. Eludendo forme avulse dal contesto, l'intervento rafforza il carattere urbano esistente e, contemporaneamente, ne definisce la conclusione attraverso un'alternanza tra edifici in linea paralleli e il consolidato perimetro della darsena. L'acqua diventa, nel progetto, il simbolo dello spazio pubblico e la banchina la sua più attenta rappresentazione. Con modalità unicamente nordiche, una serie di attrezzature occupano lo spazio aperto: sedute, panchine, discese in legno verso l'acqua generosamente utilizzate dai bagnanti nel periodo estivo. È interessante evidenziare una sorta di contrasto tra la monumentalità dei manufatti edilizi e l'informalità con cui viene utilizzato lo spazio pubblico. In



questo senso, l'acqua della darsena, occupata da barche e bagnanti, diventa un nuovo elemento di urbanità. L'attenzione ai caratteri esistenti è riconoscibile anche negli aspetti morfologici dell'architettura. Il progetto reinterpreta alcuni elementi che caratterizzano le vecchie costruzioni portuali: l'uso del mattone, la compattezza delle forme, l'altezza di cinque e sette piani, la profondità della campata strutturale, la ripetizione seriale delle finestre, la forza espressiva della copertura a due falde e delle testate rivolte al canale. Questa maniacale attenzione alle preesistenze apre a una serie di manipolazioni che rafforzano l'architettura rispetto al luogo in cui si trova. I tre nuovi edifici sono l'occasione per sperimentare forme espressive inedite, ma al tempo stesso restano

vincolate all'atmosfera della tradizione. Due edifici in linea assumono così proporzioni più compatte con una doppia distribuzione centrale che serve otto alloggi per piano, diventando uno strano ibrido tra una tipologia in linea e una centrale. La struttura è autonoma dal filo facciata e pilastri a sezione tonda caratterizzano gli interni domestici degli alloggi. La valorizzazione del volume assume dei principi scultorei attraverso alcune pieghe, compressioni e dilatazioni e attraverso l'assimilazione materica della copertura alle pareti verticali. Il tetto si piega in più parti modificando i prospetti e conferendo forza all'immagine plastica del progetto. Il risultato sono due edifici non più riconducibili a corpi in linea semplici, ma capaci di evocare e dialogare con le antiche strutture del porto. La terza costruzione è tipologicamente più semplice: un edificio in linea con quattro distribuzioni verticali che servono due alloggi per piano. L'andamento curvo della strada condiziona la geometria a tre segmenti irregolari dell'edificio. I prospetti presentano soluzioni differenti: i fronti sud, est e ovest sono rivestiti in mattoni, mentre il lato nord rivolto verso la darsena mostra una generosa vetrata che interessa l'intera facciata dell'edificio. Il piano terra è occupato da funzioni commerciali connesse con lo spazio pubblico (un bar ristorante), mentre ai piani superiori si trovano le residenze. Anche nell'uso dei materiali si può riconoscere una libera reinterpretazione della tradizione. L'antico mattone viene sostituito da un rivestimento in laterizio a piccole tavole inclinate e sovrapposte, utilizzate anche per la copertura, mentre nell'edificio in linea viene utilizzato un più tradizionale rivestimento in mattoni, ma con l'uso di originali blocchi svuotati nella parte centrale. COBE e Vilhelm Lauritzen Architects sono stati capaci di attingere con attenzione e disinibita libertà agli elementi della storia per dare luce a un intervento schiettamente contemporaneo, ma coerente al contesto e di conferire una nuova urbanità a un brano di città in trasformazione, senza cancellare i caratteri industriali dell'area, ma contaminandoli verso una nuova funzione residenziale. In queste capacità risiede la ricchezza del progetto.



3  
—vista aerea dell'intervento residenziale  
—aerial view of the residential project

4  
—vista dell'intervento dalla sponda prospiciente  
—view of the project from the opposite bank

5  
—prospetto nord caratterizzato dalle ampie vetrate e dal portico al piano terra  
—north elevation with large glazings and ground floor portico

6  
—vista del prospetto sud e del rapporto con l'esistente  
—view of the south elevation and the relationship with the existing context

7  
—particolare della testata con il rivestimento in mattoni  
—detail of the end with brick cladding

8  
—particolare della facciata in stretta continuità con la copertura  
—detail of the facade in close continuity with the roof

9  
—sezione trasversale dell'intervento  
—project cross-section

10  
—vista dell'intervento in rapporto al contesto. I nuovi edifici si collocano perpendicolari alla banchina e seguono il ritmo urbano dei fabbricati esistenti  
—view of the project in relation to the context. The new buildings are perpendicular to the quay and follow the urban rhythm of the existing structures



**COBE e Vilhelm Lauritzen Architects**  
Residenza Krøyers Plads, Copenhagen

**scheda del progetto**

**progetto**  
COBE e Vilhelm Lauritzen Architects

**progetto paesaggistico**  
GHB Landscape Architects

**progetto strutturale**  
COWI

**impresa di costruzione**  
NCC Construction

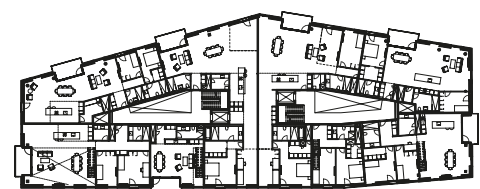
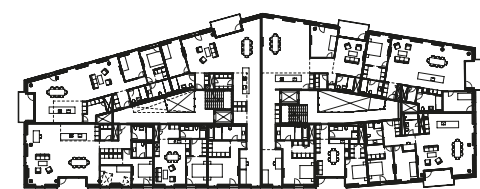
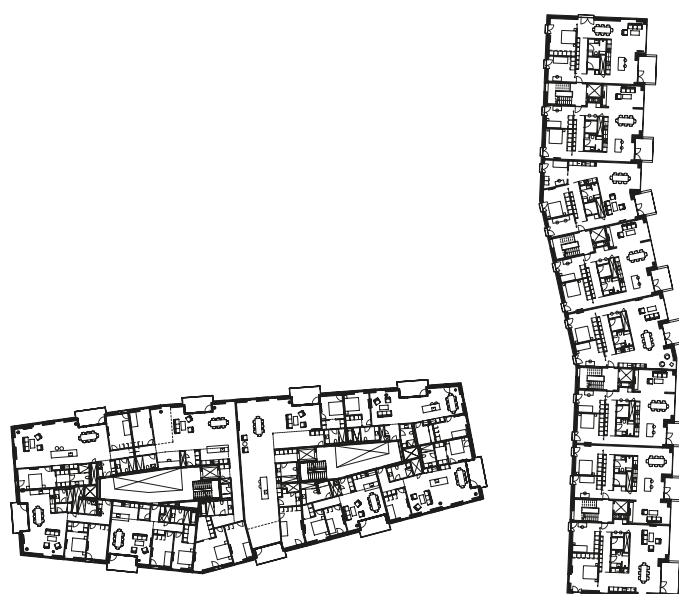
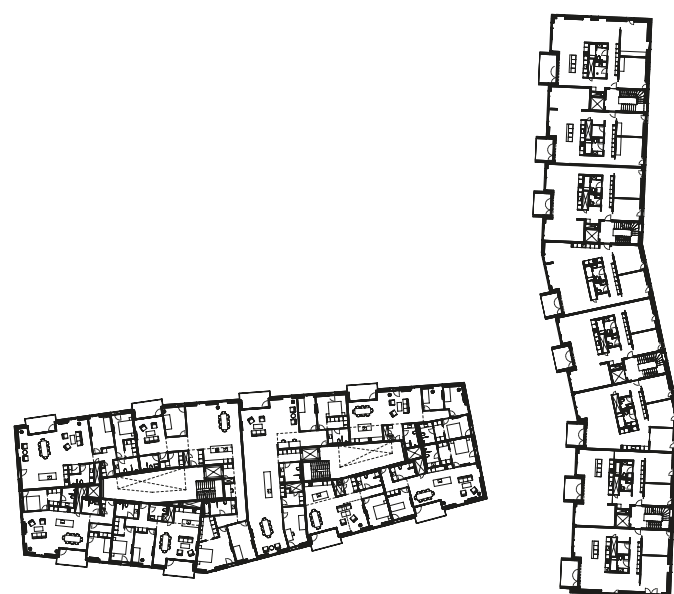
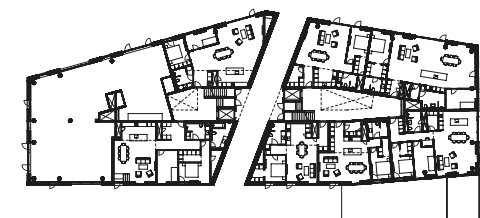
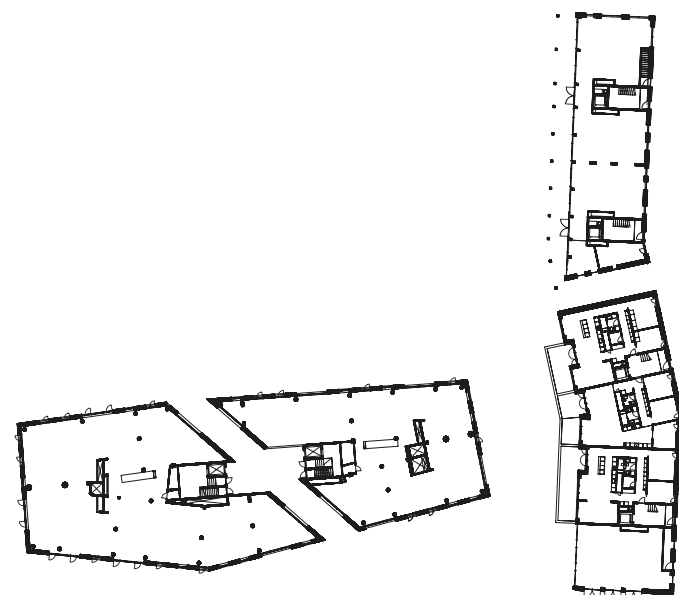
**committente**  
NCC Bolig

**cronologia**  
2011: progetto

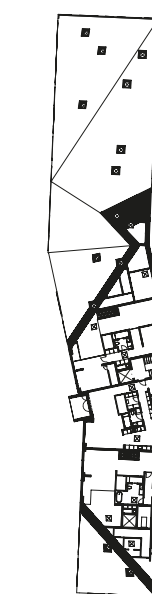
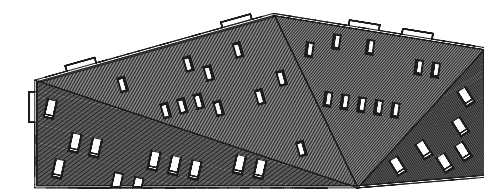
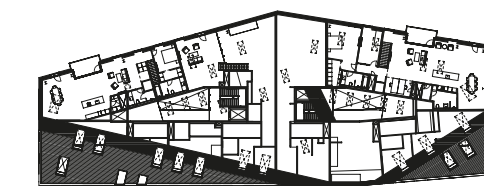
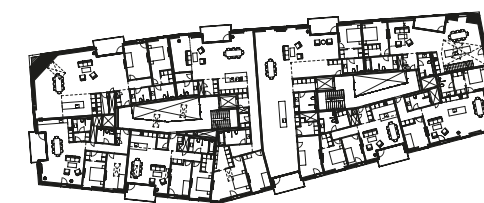
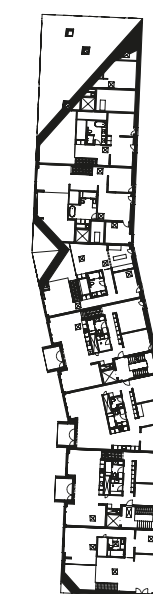
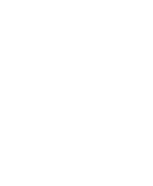
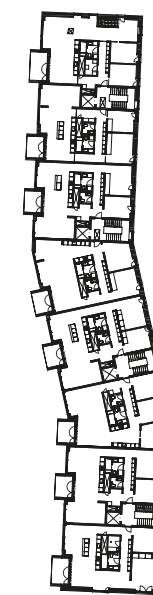
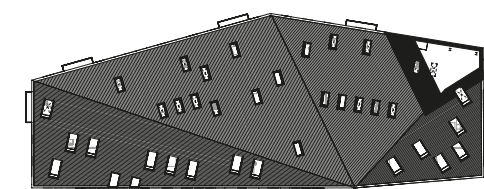
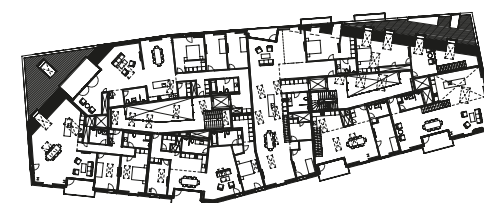
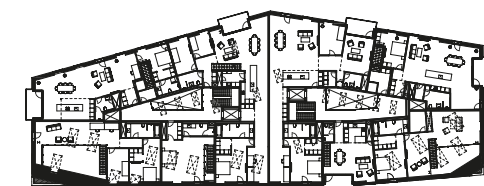
2016: realizzazione

**localizzazione**  
Krøyers Plads, Strandgade, Copenhagen,  
Danimarca

**fotografie**  
Rasmus Hjortshøj - COAST



11 12  
—piane dal primo al settimo piano  
—plans from the first to the  
seventh floor





13  
 —particolare dell'ingresso  
 caratterizzato da vetri a specchio  
 —detail of the entrance  
 featuring reflecting glass

14  
 —vista della strada interna  
 pedonale e dei prospetti  
 prospicienti  
 —view of the internal  
 pedestrian street and the  
 elevations facing it

15 16  
 —vista dell'interno dell'alloggio  
 con la finestra a tutta altezza  
 orientata verso la baia  
 —view of the interior of the  
 residence with the full-height  
 window oriented towards the  
 bay

17  
 —vista del prospetto sud  
 e del rapporto con l'esistente  
 —view of the south elevation  
 and the relationship with the  
 existing context



**Bijlmer lives**  
**Sergio Polano**

«The Bijlmer offers boredom on a heroic scale. In its monotony, harshness, and even brutality, it is, ironically, refreshing» – Rem Koolhaas, 1976.

The Bijlmermeer district in Amsterdam – currently abbreviated as Bijlmer– is a complex of residential buildings constructed from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, theoretically for the middle class: over 13,000 housing units, 90% in tall blocks (over 30 m) with balcony access, mostly having a semi-hexagonal plan (up to 900 m in length), with an exceptional supply of public space and a circulation layout that separates automobiles (and parking, raised at a level of about 3 m) from bicycle and pedestrian traffic, eliminating the “streets” as such. The zone has gone through a rapid process of decay, augmented by unforeseeable events, from the influx of the Surinamers to the impact of a Boeing 747. Since the early 1990s it has been subjected to a difficult program of regeneration implemented in the new millennium through large demolitions (over half the housing units) and densification of the urban fabric, with lower buildings and new neighborhood facilities, for a present population of about 50,000 inhabitants. Previously –to complete this extremely abridged historical profile– Bijlmermeer was one of the many internal bodies of water (*meer*) scattered throughout the Netherlands, reclaimed as *polders* at the start of the 1600s; it remained in a rural status inside the territory of Weesperkarspel until 1966, when this municipality was annexed to Amsterdam, without being incorporated inside its borders, created an enclave in the province of Noord-Holland.

A by-now derelict witness to the epic of mass housing –in a country that was in the avant-garde of low-cost residential development since the start of the 1900s– and an experiment that already stood out for its size, making it become a synonym for decayed urban outskirts and the *banlieue dangereuse*, the original Bijlmer was plausibly akin to the theme of the *Grand Ensemble* in Europe, which has had illustrious and rarely successful examples in France (like Le Mirail in Toulouse) and Britain (Park Hill at Sheffield, in particular); at the same time, its story has developed along a unique trajectory, not without laying claim to an ideal local continuity with the Rationalist research and aspirations of the CIAM congresses. The designer in charge of the team of the Stadsontwikkeling office in the Amsterdamse Dienst der Publieke Werken that from 1962 developed the urban planning of Bijlmer was Siegfried Nassuth, for twenty years, trained at the Delft Polytechnic with Cornelis van Eesteren, author of the famous Algemeen Uitbreidingsplan of Amsterdam in 1934; the design of the buildings was assigned to a small group of architects, including Frans van Gool, Fop Ottenhof, Kees Rijnboutt and a few others. The preliminary plan of 1963 called for lodgings for 17,000 families, mostly in buildings with a height of 6 to 8 stories, with the rest in low patio houses. Published in 1965, the definitive plan of Bijlmer was approved unanimously by the administration in 1966. A glimpse of the political-economic nature of the decisions behind it is offered, among the voices in opposition, by Jakoba Mulder, a collaborator of Aldo van

Eyck and an outstanding figure in the Stadsontwikkeling until 1966, who put it in these terms: “It is a fact that tall, spectacular constructions, with the air of something new, have a particular influence on the image of the city [...]. However, to choose the tall typology based purely on considerations of form and prestige is, in my view, a mistake.” These words came shortly after those of Constant Nieuwenhuys, the Situationist inventor of New Babylon, the anti-capitalist “worldwide city for the future,” who wrote in *De Haagse Post* at the end of 1965: “This Bijlmermeer, with its lack of places of socialization, will soon trigger intense conflict, while I have absolutely no objection to it as a creative phenomenon.” On 13 December 1966 the mayor Gijsbert van Hall, placing the symbolic first pylon of the foundation, declared: “To construct a Bijlmermeer in keeping with the cliché of other garden-cities would already be a remarkable achievement, but were we to do so, we would not be indicating a path for the future [...]. We should not aim at repeating history; we have to write it [...]. To date, there is no place in the world where a more beautiful and modern city of this size is being built”; on 25 November 1968 the first apartment was delivered to tenants in the tall, linear *Hoogoord* block. From 1966 to 1974 about 13,500 social housing units were completed, mostly three-room apartments of over 100 sqm, managed by fifteen real estate companies. But Bijlmer soon revealed a growing jumble of material and social problems that branded it as a precocious failure of Dutch urban planning on a large scale. “According to some, the reasons behind the lack of success of the Bijlmermeer project –wrote Rossana Avena (in “Lo strano caso del razionalismo contaminato,” *Bioarchitettura*, no. 41, February/March 2005)– can substantially be traced back to a dual insufficiency of process and program. We can talk about insufficiency of process because the project was never entirely implemented: it is precisely during the construction that the design scheme is challenged and then altered. The events of Bijlmermeer [...] reflect the unfolding of political and programmatic contrasts, changing plans and decisions, an absence of coordination and management, social divisions. In the original project [...] the] planimetric arrangement and rarely successful examples in France (like Le Mirail in Toulouse) and Britain (Park Hill at Sheffield, in particular); at the same time, its story has developed along a unique trajectory, not without laying claim to an ideal local continuity with the Rationalist research and aspirations of the CIAM congresses. The designer in charge of the team of the Stadsontwikkeling office in the Amsterdamse Dienst der Publieke Werken that from 1962 developed the urban planning of Bijlmer was Siegfried Nassuth, for twenty years, trained at the Delft Polytechnic with Cornelis van Eesteren, author of the famous Algemeen Uitbreidingsplan of Amsterdam in 1934; the design of the buildings was assigned to a small group of architects, including Frans van Gool, Fop Ottenhof, Kees Rijnboutt and a few others. The preliminary plan of 1963 called for lodgings for 17,000 families, mostly in buildings with a height of 6 to 8 stories, with the rest in low patio houses. Published in 1965, the definitive plan of Bijlmer was approved unanimously by the administration in 1966. A glimpse of the political-economic nature of the decisions behind it is offered, among the voices in opposition, by Jakoba Mulder, a collaborator of Aldo van

center, prefers a lower type of residential building.”

To improve the Bijlmer situation, wavering between opposing hypotheses of better management or radical modification of the plan, from 1975 to 1990 various measures of limited success were attempted, and alternative planning proposals were studied, while nearly all of the constructed resources (with 25% of the housing units empty, and a very high turnover in those with tenants) were transferred in 1984 to the Woningcorporatie Nieuw Amsterdam. The protests of the inhabitants regarding the lack of public transportation, outfitting (elevators, *rues-corridors*, cellars), shops and schools, had already begun in 1970, and the hardships only increased over time. The decolonization of Suriname in 1975 brought tens of thousands of immigrants to Holland, especially to Bijlmer (where they represent about 30% of the population, together with about 5% from the Antilles), complicating the fragile social composition of the district crowded with *Gastarbeiders* and immigrants with various ethnic backgrounds (30% circa). “The high rent was no obstacle because rent subsidy had been introduced,” says René Groten-dorst, president of Nieuw Amsterdam until 1996, in the book by Theo Baart, *Territorium. Bijlmermeer Zuidoost*, NAI, Rotterdam 2003. “After the Surinamers and Antilleans came groups of refugees from all over the world. This created management problems. When people moved out, the flats were left in terrible conditions, and vandalism costs millions every year.” By request of the municipal administration, in 1986 Rem Koolhaas with OMA developed the counter-plan *Bijlmermeer Redevelopment, Regeneration of a CIAM Inspired Masterplan* (never implemented), which views the district as a by now historic but incomplete fragment of the city, proposing systematic infill with the *Bijlmer Strip*.

After the preparation of the report *De Bijlmer blijft, veranderen. The Bijlmer will stay, but has to change* in 1990 on the part of the municipal committee Toekomst Bijlmermeer, the decision was made to intervene on the physical structure of the area, absorbed in 1987 by the new urban district Amsterdam-Zuidoost, which now contains about 80,000 inhabitants. The fate of Bijlmer was entrusted in 1992, with an initial time frame of 15 years, to the new Project-bureau Vernieuwing Bijlmermeer, initially directed with polemical vigor by Martin Mulder, which (after long development and assessment) defined an intervention plan in 2001–02. In the programmatic absence of a master plan (to grant flexibility to the process), the PVB outlines and applies –in collaboration with various institutions (including community groups)– a wide range of options, with an impact on over 30,000 residents to date. In short: for the housing units, demolitions (completed in 2010, for a total of 7000 apartments, over half), renovations (the latest is *Kleiburg*, the only tall block still intact in 2013, earmarked for demolition but then successfully renovated by NL Architects) and replacements (about 8000 apartments programmed, 5000 completed as of 2014, 45% in tall buildings and 70% on the open market); modification or insertion of activities (in keeping with a return to the “street”) of commerce, business, education, sports and social-creative pursuits; the return to ground level of 3 km of the automotive network and reduction of the garages (eleven demolished, others reutilized for other purposes); reorganization of public green areas, originally

accounting for 80% of the entire area, halved (with the felling of about 17,000 trees) in favor of private gardens, sports fields and bodies of water, circulation and car parks.

“*Alphaville. Silence. Logique...*” cautioned the initial placard of the film by Jean-Luc Godard in the mid-1960s, presenting a sinister, violent but fascinating *science-fiction noir* image of the future metropolis, of which the grandiose, brutal and disturbing dream of Bijlmer (an Amsterdam alien and tragic in its “monotonous beauty”) might seem like a catastrophic but sincere echo, prior to being corrected, sweetened and embalmed by the *furor regenerandi* of its administrators.

**Essential bibliography**

Penalized in historical terms by the lack of studies in the international literature of urban planning and architecture, the troubled tale of Bijlmer and the “dream of cement” of its semi-unknown creator Siegfried Nassuth has recently received extensive narration (at least in the language of the country) in the volume by Daan Dekker, *De betonnen droom. De biografie van de Bijlmer en zijn eigenzinnige bouwmeester* (Siegfried Nassuth), Thomas Rap, Amsterdam 2016. A detailed investigation of Bijlmer, as a major case study in the context of large residential complexes, can be found in the doctoral thesis of Frank Wassenberg, *Large housing estates: ideas, rise, fall and recovery. The Bijlmermeer and beyond*, los Press, Amsterdam 2013, who the history of the Amsterdam-Zuidoost district is addressed in the book by Dick Bruijne, Willem Kwekkeboom and Anne Luijten, *Amsterdam ZO. Centrumgebied Zuidoost en stedelijke vernieuwing Bijlmermeer 1992-2010*, Thoth, Bussum 2002.

### page 47

**A wander through the woods**  
**Stephen Bates**

The pair of houses in Llafranc by the Barcelona-based practice of Emiliano López and Mónica Rivera are part of a personal and ongoing research into domestic architecture and how to create a sense of home and comfort. Their recent monograph “Domestic Thresholds” reveals a number of important themes through which this condition is explored; the building up of spatial thresholds, for example, and the testing of a plan of connected rooms or almost-rooms. Alongside this, they are investigating material and its expression through construction. Recent work reveals that they are consciously testing modest, known materials to give form to their work. In the Lattice House, Palafrugell they used ceramic, in the House and Yoga Centre, Sant Cugat they used rough plaster and blinds, at Llafranc they use cork. As I have come to know their work over recent years, I observe the interesting, at times challenging tensions and the moments of wonder their work embodies. Instinct plays an important part in their work, but it is subjected to disciplined thought and rigour in the delivery of their projects. And so, while a conceptual and rigorous construction is at the heart of their work, I believe emotional and subjective aspects lie just under the surface. Such things are perceived only by experiencing their work, enjoying the company of friends, sitting in a com-

fortable chair, sleeping, sitting in the bath with a view, resting.

The houses are used as a family weekend getaway and holiday home and a key objective was to create low-maintenance and easy-to-clean houses, and this ultimately influenced decisions on specifications and treatments to finishes.

Early sketches reveal that the initial intention was to make a single multi-occupied house, but during discussion among family members about personal wishes and needs it became evident that preferences would more likely be met with a two-house solution. This required the purchase of a further strip of land to provide the extra footprint required to achieve the two buildings. One house in a space makes an object, but two houses placed carefully in relation to each other make a place and the result of this family agreement resonates in the architectural outcome.

The wooded hillside setting seems to have initiated everything from concept to realization, creating both restrictions and opportunities for the design to develop. Building codes determined the placing of the building back from the road and the desire to touch the ground as lightly as possible led to the final placing of the buildings upon the site. The two houses, each comprising two separate but connected cubic volumes are gently tilted in plan in relation to the road and this contributes to a picturesque composition of elements. The ambition to remove as few trees as possible led to the vertical stacking of the volumes to provide three floors, so that the houses stand as sentinels overlooking the steep, winding road below. This is given more emphasis by the stepping of the linked forms giving a broader facade and shorter return sides. Combining vertical window proportions with a delicately thin projecting roof gives a discernible Italian influence to the composition of the facades and they are expressed, from a distance at least, as two finely clipped villas that have urban rather than vernacular origins. The woodland of cork, holly oak, holly and red and white pine creates a pleasant microclimate, with cool breezes which are distinctly absent when one ventures out and down from the site toward the centre of the village and the sea. Indeed, there is a powerful sense of territory on the site and as the houses nestle within and between the rising branches and trunks, sharing their air space, they become a discernible part of the wider landscape.

The architects approached building in this woodland setting by asking themselves «What is a house in the trees? Should it stand in counterpoint or should it seek a dialogue with the physicality of the trees?». The idea of using cork as the primary material for the facades emerged at an early stage and was primarily inspired by observing the character of the woodland. Despite there being little precedent for using the material as a complete external cladding for a building, the architects developed the system from first principles understanding it both as insulant and external wrapping. The directness of the construction details in which 50mm rough cork insulation panels are screwed back to the structure

and applied with a breathable, hydrophobic lime mortar coating which acts as a bonding surface for the application of the 50mm external cork panels is both surprising and highly effective. The 1000mm x 250mm external panels are laid in vertical strips with staggered horizontal joints, their width adjusted to allow for the inclusion of window openings within the vertical order. Special corner pieces ensure that the edge of the cork panel is never expressed, so that the wall is intriguingly perceived as simultaneously soft to the touch but massive in appearance. When combined with the use of cross-laminated timber panel construction which forms the main structure, the cork facade resembles bark encasing a hollow tree trunk, the cork providing an armature that conceptually and physically protects a softer interior. It prompts childhood memories of a ‘camp’ made within the carcass of a grand old elm tree and of the sense of enclosure experienced looking out from within the hollowed-out space.

The interiors are experienced as a series of interconnected box-like rooms and this impression is heightened by the unadorned pine structure which is left in its raw state, with knots and the occasional characterful split visible. Electrical installations are fixed directly onto the surface and the openings between rooms are left as sawn cut-outs or have solid pine door frames placed directly onto one side of the wall opening, making the door feel like an object which is propped against the wall. The dust-coloured ceramic floors, made by long-term collaborator Toni Cumella offer a subtle counterpoint and are organized in linear patterns which follow the direction of the grain of the ceiling panels, with the exception of the first floor studio. Thresholds between rooms are marked by the tiles turning direction and emphasised by the open joints, which are left to allow for movement between the structural boxes. The continuity of the wooden surfaces on wall and ceiling and from room to room is combined with a generous height-to-width proportion and it is this measured approach that dignifies the interiors giving them a subtle formality. This is most in evidence in the rear reading room of the larger house, which is almost perfectly cubic. Built-in furniture and a series of free-standing chests and cupboards make each room specific, accommodating the personal needs of its occupants, but it is when you find yourself at a desk, which is in fact an extended window cill framing a view, or sitting within a built-in cushioned window seat, somehow half in and half out of the enclosure, that you feel at one both with the structure of the house and the trees outside. These spatial episodes which engender both a feeling of privacy and of belonging whilst being simultaneously part of the life of the interior or exterior are precious. They remind us that architecture is as emotional as it is physical: it can create atmospheres and affect our mood, it can be quiet and still, generous, joyful, playful.

The houses are lived in as a set of open rooms and this is emphasized by the large folding steel glazed doors in the main communal rooms, which feel more natural when open than closed.

The placing of a concrete terrace on the front of the larger house, similar in size to an interior room, encourages natural movement between the inside and the outside. The terrace is a delightful space, enclosed by columns at each corner and accommodating a tree that rises on a lean through the ceiling of the terrace above through a circular cut-out. The dining table is positioned to allow for the tree and makes it feel somehow like an invited guest at a gathering. From this location it is possible to discern the tonal equivalence of all the elements of the facade –the cork panels, pine windows, dark stained roof soffit, concrete base plinth and terrace structure– all of which will in time come to match the quiet bark-grey colouring of the woodland itself. So, while the design is expressed by a careful composition and coordination of construction elements, time will inevitably work them together into a single monolithic whole, which will merge with its natural surroundings.

The title *A wander through the woods* was borrowed from *The Tree* by John Fowles. The book is a humble revolt against man’s “use” of nature and Fowles encourages readers to re-evaluate their relationship to the natural world and their obsession with its quantifiable yield. He describes Wistman’s Wood, an ancient scrap of oak forest on Dartmoor, as «self involved, rich in secrets... [of] such inturned peace, such profound harmlessness, otherness...» And yet, he finds that «all words miss». As an alternative he offers the benefits of a «don't-know mind», free from intellectualization, for which nature just is.

Similarly, looking at another fine and sophisticated work, full of conceptual rigour and constructional care, I feel it is possible, amidst the cool breeze and pine fragrance, to feel the work of these sensitive architects as simply experience and mood; an encounter while wandering through the trees, a place to dwell, a place less about reason and more about wonder and simple pleasures.

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**A glass house in the forest**  
**Fabrizio Ballabio**

When in the summer of 2014, founding members of Atelier Branco, Matteo Arnone and Pep Pons were approached to design a leisurely retreat in the small town of Vinhedo, the brief posited that the house be able to accommodate at least two kind of needs: the need for a place to read, immersed within the site’s vibrant vegetation; the need for a place to think, reposed under the placidness of the area’s boundless subtropical skies. The client, a left block activist against Brazil’s military dictatorship in his youth and now renowned scholar of the history of political thought, had conceived of the house as a temporary haven between São Paulo and Campinas, at which the State University he held teaching posts since the beginning of the nineteen eighties. It was thus neither to be a permanent place of residence nor a holiday home as conventionally understood, but a place of reverie and contemplation, occasionally of work,

away from the bustle of Brazil’s hectic metropolitan life.

The latest of five built works designed by the young Italo-Hispanic duo, Casa Biblioteca embodies the practice’s attentive research into architectural form, matured both during their formative years in Switzerland, where they had been students of the Accademia di Architettura di Mendrisio, and in their professional upbringings under practitioners of the caliber of Christian Kerez, Kengo Kuma and the two Aires Mateus brothers. It is a bold scheme, almost entirely realised in in-situ cast concrete, of which the constructional acumen and attentiveness to detail are somewhat characteristic of all Atelier Branco’s architectural pursuits. Setting up practice in Sao Paulo in 2012, the two have, in fact, built up an enticing and significantly varied portfolio of which the content ranges from the careful crafting of furniture products and fittings, to the design of commercial showrooms and office spaces, to the construction of numerous residential projects scattered throughout Brazil in which their talent has, perhaps, best expressed itself in these few years.

Belonging to this later series, Casa Biblioteca is without doubt the most idiosyncratic of the bunch, both for the eccentricity of its client and the context it was born out of. It is, in fact, set atop of a steep north-facing terrain within a clearing of Vinhedo’s dense “mata atlantica” –the atlantic forest which extends over the larger part of Brazil’s littoral region. Due to the site’s topographical attributes, its design follows a distinctly ‘sectional’ rationale such that the spatial and functional disposition of the project is almost entirely articulated in the relation between two contour lines. In order of relevance, the first of these two lines consists in the line of the ground, of which the sloping profile has been manipulated to form a series of spacious horizontal terraces, fit for inhabitation; the second consists in the line of the roof, which ever so slightly hovers over the terrain’s uppermost retention wall to create a sharp, horizontal datum between the domesticated topography and the sky above it.

Ever a topos of Brazilian postwar architecture under Artigas to Mendes da Rocha, here too the concrete roof takes on a crucial role in the determination of the project both in the articulation of its program as in the characterisation of its outwards (and inwards) appearance. It is a 15 cm thin rectangular slab supported by eight long-limbed pillars which, albeit “basic” in its formal resolution, distinguishes itself for the uncanny slenderness of its constitutive parts. When approaching the house from the main road, it is the upper face of this element that presents itself to the viewer offering access to a monumental viewing platform of ca. 20 by 10 meters, immersed within the foliage of the surrounding tree canopies. In place of a parapet, the deck is circled by a meter wide water bed which, in turn, defines a rectangular central island from which to contemplate the view. This latter is lined with finely cut Garapeira wood boards which meet diagonally against the deck’s symmetry line and point towards the horizon.

A dentil in the in the perimeter of

the roof allows for a staircase to be fitted along its central access, leading down between two concrete walls into the house’s core space. This is an undivided, fully glazed, rectangular room hosting the entirety of the domestic program, of which the height gradually increases as one descends from the most intimate to the more exposed areas of the home. The retention walls which give its section the distinguished jagged profile are unique in height due to the uneven slope of the existing terrain, but spaced equally throughout to create neat tripartite structural system spanning 5.50 meters longitudinally from pillar to pillar, and terrace front to terrace front. Consequently, although equal in depth, the three terraces gain unique floor-to-ceiling heights providing the activities which take place on them with degrees of privacy and natural lighting conditions best suited to their needs. The sleeping areas are thus located onto the project’s uppermost terrace within an intimate and dimly lit, 2.35 meter tall space. This level overlooks the house’s central platform which measures 4.15 meters in height and hosts the client’s studio; it is the area of the house most directly connected to the landscape having two centrally placed glass doors located at either of its short sides (the doors also underline the project’s secondary axis of symmetry). Lastly, the terrace furthest from the house’s entrance is a living and dining area overlooking the surrounding greenery as if a loggia or a viewing deck; this is the brightest and most exposed area of the house, rising 1.25 meters from ground level and measuring 5.15 meters in height.

A similarly methodical approach informs the location of the core services and storage facilities required by the client which are either carved into the project’s retention walls –as is the case with the two bathrooms along first terrace wherein all elements are entirely realised in in-situ cast concrete and which, differently from all other areas of the home, are topit and thus bare no visual connection whatsoever to the exterior– or fitted accurately against them –as with the kitchen elements, bookcases and wardrobes. As such, the space remains untethered from elements foreign to its “disegno”.

The neatness of the architectural layout, is even further corroborated in the positioning of the stairs. These, rather theatrically transverse the space along its central axis to loop symmetrically around the perimeter of the house under a concrete-paved, covered pathway. But perhaps, the most significant aspect in giving the project it’s somewhat rudimentary grandeur is the selection and treatment of the materials deployed. The bare structure is realised entirely out of reinforced concrete and was cast under the direction of the architects within a single working day; the floors, as with the upper terrace, are lined with long and fine Garapeira wood boards placed perpendicular to the project’s longitudinal axis; and the whole is almost entirely wrapped within a single glazed facade of which the iron profiling and design motifs follow the iconic “paulistana” tradition of the nineteen fifties. It is especially the care gone into the design of these latter



elements that have made the fortune of the project of which the noble sparseness could've easily been buried under the hideous chunkiness of modern-day aluminium frames. Instead, with its fine joinery and quasi-etheral openness, the Casa Biblioteca consolidates its place amidst a rich tradition of glass houses and pavilions which since the dawn of twentieth century have almost persistently affirmed themselves as privileged sites of architectural experimentation.

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**Weiss/Manfredi and the design of public spaces**  
**Barry Bergdoll**

*Public Natures, Evolutionary Infrastructures*: both the title and subtitle of Marion Weiss and Michael Manfredi's 2015 compendium of their New York firm's design work encapsulate a philosophy of holding seeming contradictions in simultaneous view and a commitment to engendering productive conversations across concerns too often segregated. Those skillfully engineered phrases set out to naturalize the firm's commitment to blur divisions between nature and building that craft the public realm. And they point not only to a design ethos, but also to a research agenda, one that has only gained in urgency in the destabilized world of 2018 in which even certainties of but a few years ago no longer seem to hold, from agreements on climate change, to the acceptance of globalization, to the very nature of civic discourse.

Weiss/Manfredi's design thinking has lost none of its potential as the firm has taken on sites with ever greater urban challenges and worked with clients with ever more complex, even untested requirements. Discarding any inherited binary of building and landscape such a distinction –formal, programmatic and professional– is today revealed as every bit as thread bare as so many other received oppositions the firm sets out to ignore. Their projects are at once exemplary in the sheer variety of bespoke solutions as in the extent to which each speaks a common language, displays a consistency of approach and engages a unflagging level of commitment. At least since their seminal design for the Olympic Sculpture Park of the Seattle Art Museum, a commission won in 2001 and completed 10 years ago, Weiss/Manfredi have blurred divisions between working with nature and embracing engineering to craft the public realm, and this in a moment in history that often seems an end-game for both public life and for nature as they have sustained society and human life for centuries. Today the public and the natural realm seem equally eroded, even under attack in the highly visible and disruptive realm of much current political discourse.

We might for a moment tease apart the very terms the architects want to join inextricably. **Public** expresses a commitment to work on projects for institutions in which the willingness –even on the part of private institutions– to create a realm for public interaction that extends beyond the most narrowly defined users of a building is the starting point for design. It also expresses a desire to forge an architecture that promotes public interaction and awareness even as these have increasingly been challenged, dislocated, and moved into the

problematic and often naïve assumption that the virtual constitutes a public realm. In some two decades of practice the firm has done only one significant single family house –a rarity for most similarly sized New York firms with one foot in university architectural teaching and the other in their own design office, generally one that resists all of the tropes of American corporate practice. Even this private commission is highly specific, since it is for a site in a storied planned community of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Tuxedo Park, famed for its commitment to a sensitive integration of houses and natural setting all the while refusing most of what were fast becoming the conventions of American suburban development in favor of few distinctions of private property boundaries. It seems the perfect match between a client and this particular office, a rare choice for such a commission. And it brings with it many of the lessons Weiss/Manfredi have both learned and taught in work for urban parks from Brooklyn to Seattle.

With the exception of this foray into the tamed wilderness of a picturesque suburb, Weiss/Manfredi's encounters with nature have been in large cities, originally American coastal cities in the slow process of de-industrialization, and more recently also in global mega-cities from Seoul to Delhi. There they may be said to be reconquering the urban natural, or working with the reappearance of the savage natural that is such a characteristic of the post-industrial American city where the contest for resiliency seems to be won by natural forces despite the heroic evidence of earlier infrastructure. Even more significantly the architects have carved an architecture of spatial richness and public generosity in realms often seen as quite unforgiving: campus buildings for institutions with tight budgets and complex bureaucratic approval processes, public museums and now most recently the United States Department of State in a challenging project for the US Embassy in New Delhi. Institutional work and the crafting of novel solutions for the promotion of public are often hard to conjugate in the present, let alone in the future tense which is the time frame variety of bespoke solutions as in the extent to which each speaks a common language, displays a consistency of approach and engages a unflagging level of commitment. At least since their seminal design for the Olympic Sculpture Park of the Seattle Art Museum, a commission won in 2001 and completed 10 years ago, Weiss/Manfredi have blurred divisions between working with nature and embracing engineering to craft the public realm, and this in a moment in history that often seems an end-game for both public life and for nature as they have sustained society and human life for centuries. Today the public and the natural realm seem equally eroded, even under attack in the highly visible and disruptive realm of much current political discourse.

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great UN summit on climate change, the Rio +20 conference, too quickly slipping out of view is relevant here: namely that we are not destroying nature. Rather we are accomplices in changing the climate in such a way that we are rendering the natural realm inhabitable by humans, we are killing ourselves not the planet. Weiss/Manfredi are part of a growing cohort of designers, often working hand in hand with landscape design colleagues, who realize how dramatically reduced is the margin of error for designing our occupation of the planet. That is precisely the sanguine challenge that Weiss/Manfredi take on without for a moment imagining that achieving sustainability goals and creating a nature for nurturing the public can be anything but compatible goals.

Finally **“evolutionary infrastructures,”** the subtitle of the book, needs also to be parsed before the title's four terms can be inextricably interwoven again to understand the stakes of practice for Weiss/Manfredi. This phrase is, in fact, a key operative strategy, the core of the diagrams that explain the thought of generating each building from the encounter of its site and its internal creation of an extended site. This is spelled out most clearly by the designers themselves in the introduction to *Public Natures*: «Infrastructural systems are the enduring forms of urban evolution, multiplying as cities grow and requiring expanded swaths of territory to accommodate more and more mono-functional requirements. As the very momentum of exchange incrementally overwhelms our urban landscapes, we wonder what new forms of public nature might emerge if highways, communication right-of-ways, flood-resistant structures, railways, subway lines and distribution grids were to become institutions of culture and recreation.» Theirs is the realization that social, natural, and urban infrastructures are deeply intertwined and achieve potential only through architectural and landscape thinking that keeps all scales in dialogue. Each project provides a catalyst at once for local urban transformation and for a broader discussion about public and nature in a period when globalized urbanization, planetary climate change, and international connectivity with its paradoxical effects of social isolation, are all intertwined challenges. Many practices today are working on one or another of these challenges; in the work of Weiss/Manfredi they are taken on as inseparable conditions of intervention into the public realm. Perhaps the most important connection in all of the work to date is the realization that the urban and natural are no longer in opposition, but exist in a complex continuum. Nature is no longer that which is found, the man-made that which is artificial. We have so altered nature that much of landscape work has to do with restoration, renaturing, and fostering new marine and land environments even as the very climate change mankind has induced is leading nature to change before our eyes. Cities are themselves complex ecologies. With the current debates over what are called “novel ecosystems” –changed natural systems directly resulting from human intervention, be it the introduction of invasive species or the effects of global warming– comes the recognition that nature has been altered not only by its own traditionally powerful forces, but also by one of its most willful creations, humankind. What is offered by Weiss/Manfredi are suggestive ways in which those very debates resonate

in designing the novel ecosystems of today's public infrastructures. Tpo enter the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, for instance, via their brilliant visitor's center is to experience at firsthand, viscerally and visually, the stakes of a debate that refuses precedence of any factor. Neither nature nor building in making the city, neither the individual vs. the collective in the creation of space for education and gathering in the museums, parks, gardens, and universities for which they have designed; nor is architecture vs. landscape design conceptualized as an opposition.

In retrospect it seems poignant that the office's rapid maturation as a leading force in reflecting on the vital stakes of place making in the twenty first century should have come in 2001, the year of their selection in Seattle's Olympic Sculpture Park design competition. One can scarcely imagine a less propitious moment, as the dramatic terrorist attacks on 9/11 on key landmarks of American economic and political, as well as urban, infrastructure ushered in a period that seemed to fulfill millenarian anxieties. The new millennium opened in 2001 with every bit as much anxiety as that which famously marked the dread with which European civilizations on the Georgian calendar faced the imminent arrival of the year 1000. Even if in retrospect the Y2K digital neurosis seems risible, and has been all but forgotten, it was quickly superseded by a series of dramatic events that have revealed the fragility of so much of our physical and social infrastructure from the World Trade Center attacks to Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy in New Orleans and New York, to the revelations of systematic surveillance in the wake of Edward Snowden's revelations of the government use of digital surveillance and international malfeasance at previously unimaginable scales. If resiliency is the challenge of the moment, as we think to build not for ephemeral effect but rather for sustainable evolution, the most remarkable development of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century is the resiliency of the design professions in rising to the daunting challenges that make headlines. It is not surprising that the Olympic Park's vision of an urban future embedded between the lapping waves of a rising Pacific Ocean –here Elliott Bay, a major shipping corridor that explains in large measure the rise of Seattle in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century– and the continual vehicular passage of busy road and railroad corridors that had long cut Seattle's downtown off from its spectacular natural setting should have galvanized attention, awards, and exhibitions from the moment it was inaugurated. Highlighted in the Museum of Modern Art's 2005 *Groundswell* exhibition as heralding a new centrality of landscape thinking to urban architecture, the project also served as a testing ground for ideas that have never been confined to landscape as opposed to architecture. In fact, a commonality of approach can be found between projects as seemingly distinct as an open air sculpture garden and a series of institutional buildings on tight urban campuses from the Diana Center at Barnard College, to the Krishna P. Singh Center for Nanotechnology at the University of Pennsylvania to the recently opened building for the Cornell University/Technion joint venture on New York's Roosevelt Island. In each project a zig-zag visual path orders, at least in diagram, complex sectional thinking and creates unexpected and productive connections between disparate spaces and disparate social settings. In

each case this dynamic circulation *parti* –one in which circulation and stasis always co-habitat– serves equally as a device to resolve complicated programmatic needs on a confined site. As in the tradition of the 18<sup>th</sup> century English Picturesque approach to landscape design, the path of the eye and that of the foot are productively dissociated. But the comparison ends there. The aim is no longer the experience of the sole stroller, achieving individual stimulation and enlightenment, but the crafting of a new engagement of individuals with the collective, and of the twin natures, man-mind and natural realm, that vie with one another in cities and regions. Weiss/Manfredi are interested in negotiating the divide between individual and communal work, between solitude for contemplation and the sense of belonging to a community, an interest that was achieved in a consummate way, for instance, in the Diana Center, a building which negotiates continually between spaces of intimacy and the dramatic interplay in diagonal section of discrete spaces viewed one from another. These connections create for the teachers and for students –for whom this building is a focal point of four years living in a community– a sense of their own work and daily actions as part of a larger social group in this intimate and compact college campus divided but by an iron fence and greenery from the indifferent bustle of the city on the adjacent axis of Broadway. And perhaps most suggestively the undergraduate studios of the Columbia/Barnard joint architecture program are housed here. As in Weiss/Manfredi's work, architecture is taught to undergraduates as the crafting of a public realm in dialogue with the rest of the community. It is as though the dynamic interweaving of activities and experiences over and through the existing infrastructure of the Seattle coast line in the Olympic Park has here been internalized in a building. The building is set between a busy thoroughfare, Broadway, and the paths of a college campus, picking up the movement of one and the excitement of the other to create a zone that is at once of the city and apart from it. This interweaving of the seemingly irreconcilable to create dialogues between individual and communal that is the very basis of successful communities are challenges that have been with architecture for centuries –think of the emergence of the public library in which architects designed spaces for reading silently alone in large communal settings– but which take only fully new challenges as well as important meanings for our own time in which the very nature of society is changing radically, as much separated as connected by the digital revolution.

Weiss/Manfredi's innovative approach to merging program with an initial sectional *parti* is also a subtle site strategy. The approach has meshed with the openness of a number of institutional clients eager to innovate in seeking new types of spaces for research and teaching. Their institutional portfolio has grown dramatically since the Diana Center was inaugurated, including with a commission from the University of Pennsylvania, where Weiss is a faculty member in the School of Architecture. Entrusted with a building for one of the University's leading science departments, the architects were able to fulfill all the complex and demanding requirements for highly precise research –work with zero tolerance for vibrations and dust and thus essentially anti-urban– with an impressive creation of space outside the re-

strictive zones of this secure laboratory facility, and with a transparency that makes a brief that sounds like a description of a bunker into one of the most visually connected campus buildings in a generation. Here circulation is moved even more emphatically to the exterior than at the Diana Center or its sister building for architectural education at Kent State in Ohio, in both of which a service stair provided a sculptural sectional ascent worthy of Alvar Aalto at the Baker House Dormitory at MIT. In Philadelphia this circulation is now fully glazed. The designers call this zone the “galleria” –Manfredi grew up in Italy and no doubt harbors memories of the great glazed living rooms of late 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian city centers– and revel in the way it brings all the shared space of the building into dialogue with campus and with the bustling street life of Penn's West Philadelphia campus. The design analysis is typical of the morpho-programmatic research at the outset of every Weiss/Manfredi project, research in which invariably the idea of circulation sponsors ways of enhancing the interaction of users rather than simply the efficient organization of space. Here they claim to begin with a “conventional lab box” the research equivalent of the big box store. Yet this is ways a deliberate rhetorical polemic, since their thinking was from the outset an attempt to subvert, in this case through inversion, any typical solution. Starting with the normative is, for them, productively counterintuitive. The usually internalized, windowless, viewless corridor is brought to the exterior of the box and glazed, even as a site analysis located the “sweet spot” where the lab work needed to be focused at the heart of the site to buffer it as much as possible from both urban street traffic and the vertical traffic of the elevator cores. From this a veritable urban morphology was generated that creates a lab as a counterpoint of protected private spaces and shared spaces that render scientific activity visible to the surrounding city, even as they add vibrancy to the life of the public sidewalk through a dramatically cantilevered set of spaces which end the interior *promenade architecturale*, at precisely the place where users and the city have the greatest visual connections. The scientific lab has become a design laboratory, and one set not in a generic city but this very specific one. As William Penn's famous 1682 urban grid was extended to the city's western extension, the West Philadelphia neighborhood today dominated by universities, it was also given a series of diagonal streets which cut across the grid until most were erased with the consolidation of the growing campuses of Penn and Drexel University. The Singh Center occupies the center of a city block, and its design registers and echoes those nearby diagonals, that have become a veritable unifying theme of the University's campus interwoven with its city neighborhoods. Here the DNA of design solutions that connects Weiss/Manfredi's various projects also reveals traits inherited from two generations of the so-called “Philadelphia School” and its fascination with finding complex building form from the larger context, something celebrated most famously by Robert Venturi or by Romano Giurgola, in whose office Weiss and Manfredi met in 1987.

Similar strategies create a family grouping of university buildings all of which respond to and, at the same time, promote emerging paradigms of collaborative work settings with a pronounced quest for un-programmed encounters as essential building blocks of both the client's and the designer's creativity. While the collaborative nature of the scientific laboratory and the architectural design studio often seemed to be outliers in the normative modes of higher education, increasingly these spaces of interaction are viewed as harboring lessons for more effective teaching and research in everything from the social sciences to professional education, notably in recent schools of business and administration. The current discussion of new types of social interaction in education has extended to a new generation of work spaces which recognizes that the counterpoint to the personal computer are the shared spaces of centers, the blurring of boundaries and lines not only of job descriptions but also of institutional partitions. The sectional connections of Weiss/Manfredi's analytics in which circulation and stasis merge –the stair paralleled by a set of open seating trays or landing platforms is a recurrent theme– meet the University's desires for spatial experimentation as an incubator for innovation.

One of the lines that Weiss/Manfredi has most productively blurred is that between the idea of the program given by the client and the form as the architect's solution to the stated problem. Rather their work emerges through an exploration of the ways in which program and form might develop together. Not surprisingly this functions best in institutions themselves in quest of new modes of interaction from the teaching architecture studio in the age of computer driven design to the fluidity between university teaching programs and business starts up that is the heart of the brief for the Cornell/Tech bridge building. In the Kent State Center for Architecture and Environmental Design the taut program of Barnard College's Diana Center, shoehorned in on a narrow urban site is allowed to relax in a verdant campus setting, even as the sectional transparency extends to encompass a much greater percentage of the cubic meters of space either physically connected or associated through transparent views. The provision of loft space, something that has grown in appreciation with a generation of conversion of older office buildings and manufacturing spaces into spaces for the 'creative industries' becomes here a starting point for delivering high quality institutional space that is as memorable for the immediate users as it is enhancing for the life of a campus. The building in short is a microcosm for Weiss/Manfredi's commitment to decloistering architecture.

Not surprisingly much of the ethos of these spaces for architecture education is infused into one of the most dramatically urban of all the firm's recent educational designs, the building for Cornell/Tech on New York City's Roosevelt Island. For decades Roosevelt Island, a long narrow island in the East River between Manhattan's most desired residential districts and the rapidly changing post-Industrial shoreline of the borough of Queens (where Weiss/Manfredi have been working for several years on the phased development of Hunter's Point South Waterfront Park), has been a laboratory for masterplanning. Once a repository for the unwanted institutions of the city –primarily hospitals– slowly since the 1970s the island has been developed as a city in the city. The island is divided into two nearly equally sized sectors by the Queensboro, or 59<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge, whose

great open steel trusses take heroic steps across the narrow island on towering masonry arches. North of these the island was developed with much acclaim as a residential laboratory and the architectural design studio often seemed to be outliers in the normative modes of higher education, increasingly these spaces of interaction are viewed as harboring lessons for more effective teaching and research in everything from the social sciences to professional education, notably in recent schools of business and administration. The current discussion of new types of social interaction in education has extended to a new generation of work spaces which recognizes that the counterpoint to the personal computer are the shared spaces of centers, the blurring of boundaries and lines not only of job descriptions but also of institutional partitions. The sectional connections of Weiss/Manfredi's analytics in which circulation and stasis merge –the stair paralleled by a set of open seating trays or landing platforms is a recurrent theme– meet the University's desires for spatial experimentation as an incubator for innovation.

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ly emerging urban campus as it will be for the planned hybrid culture of students, faculty, and entrepreneurs. The key move here was the splitting of the box into two and creating a atrium like link between the two that is one of the first diagonal view corridors that link views from river to river, from planned green space to planned green space. Rather than build to the maximum envelope literally, as most real estate driven architecture would do, they contomds was constructed posthumously and opened to much acclaim in 2012. Two years earlier, then mayor Michael Bloomberg, whose administration hallmarked redevelopment of the city's river frontage, announced a competition for the development of the tract in between Kahn's memorial and the bridge, inviting proposals for a science and technology campus, a bid to make New York City competitive with Silicon Valley and other cities whose economies were based in research innovation. The winners were a partnership of Cornell University, already present in New York City with satellite campuses, and the Technion from Israel. They worked with SOM as masterplanners for the site which is to be developed in phases over the next three decades. Weiss/Manfredi's building is the third to be completed of the first phase.

One of the great challenges of the Bloomberg administration's development of the coastlines of New York City have been finding the balance between public amenities and the real estate industry's (as this activity has been relabeled in post-industrial America) eagerness to exploit river views, a challenge endemic to the development of any commercial city to be sure, and one which clearly expresses the dual agenda of New York's financial titan turned mayor and philanthropist. Weiss/Manfredi's brief equally opened a conversation about the balance not only between public and private and between inside and outside, but also between the two components of an experimental structure in which Cornell Tech shares the Bridge –as their building has been named– with rental space for start-up companies. The hope is to capture the synergies between research and innovation which in recent decades has emanated as much from a changing business scene of often small, even transitional, start-up companies and universities.

The behemoth Google has enjoyed great success in occupying one of the largest industrial loft buildings in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan, where many such structures have been redesigned internally by a variety of businesses which pride themselves on “out of the box” thinking. Whereas such buildings when repurposed remain impenetrable urban fortresses, despite ample fenestration –their innovative interior arrangements largely for business use and to be savored in the pages of architecture magazines– Weiss/Manfredi have broken the box open to create a new approach to designing flexible loft space for university and business alike. Noteworthy was their renegotiation of the building envelope for what remains a speculative building –ownership remains with the developer and the University and the start ups are equally tenants– in order to preserve the dramatic views that are the found nature of this site but in constant peril of disappearing from the city's natural densification. The architects have been able to take a number of inherent contradictions of the site and assignment and generate from them dramatic interactive space as rewarding for the casual visitor to this new-

India in its imagery but in its exploration of means of natural ventilation and sun screening. Weiss/Manfredi advocated for the preservation of Stone's twin embassy and ambassadorial residence, which had quickly fallen into disfavor and which the State Department was willing to see altered or even partially demolished. They argued instead for preserving the buildings and restaging them and the site to bring new vitality to this site of interface between the United States and India. To their credit, as well as to the openness of the State Department in the round of embassy renovations and replacements launched during the Presidency of Barack Obama, the State Department agreed to a number of key moves, including the transformation of a shallow reflecting pool into a large round reservoir for use during extended draught as a centerpiece of a new interweaving of gardens and buildings. Here Indian tradition was a source of inspiration for the architect's natural proclivity to carve public spaces through both landscape and architectural moves. Key here also was the creation of a subtly zig-zagging tree lined central pedestrian axis to organize all the zones of this deep site, combining now visually even that which is divided by invisible security protocols to develop both an open vision of the United States' presence in India and a highly agreeable atmosphere for the numerous workers in the embassy. To respect the rooflines of Stone's buildings, with their prominent thin projecting roof lines, Weiss/Manfredi's new buildings are limited in height even as they open in deep cuts in the landscape to create a series of interlocked gardens of rich sectional excavation and diagonal views across spaces. One feels here the maturation of a design approach that has been formed by the continual moving between topographic and architectural work, one in which the visual boundaries between nature and infrastructure have been softened, even when the opportunities for the interaction of invited public and daily user is carefully controlled by security necessities and government policies.

No less has the issue of building in the middle of the East River, whose banks saw the dramatic effects of rising sea levels as recently as superstorm Sandy in October 2012, been an concern as Weiss/Manfredi elevated the ground plane of their building, through water absorption mitigation as part of design discussions with James Corner for the park, and created mechanisms for responding rapidly to flood waters. Perhaps the most challenging assignment to date for the firm is the one that has preoccupied the office in virtual secrecy for the last two years and is only now being revealed, namely the renovation and extension of the United States Embassy in Delhi. Here the challenge is to bring to the ever greater security concerns of an embassy campus something of the openness and the staging of future interactions, which are the hallmarks of all of Weiss/Manfredi's projects in everything from campus interventions to the design of whole landscapes, including the ongoing park work at Hunter's Park South, part of the redevelopment of the Queens waterfront across the East River from Roosevelt Island.

The campus of the US Embassy to India is a 28 acre site in the garden city developed over a century ago by the Edwin Lutyens as a new capital for Britain's then most important colonial holding. After Indian independence a large diplomatic district developed to which the United States contributed a building by Edward Durrell Stone, designed in 1954, whose fascination with perforated screen facades and open colonnaded modernist crypto-classicism produced a design not only suited to

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