

MAY 2023  
ISSN 2974-8216

ADH JOURNAL ISSUE N. 01  
HERITAGE CITIES AS A PROJECT

ISSN 2974-8216



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ADH  
JOURNAL OF  
ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN  
AND HISTORY

HERITAGE CITIES AS  
A PROJECT *ISSUE N.1*

ADH JOURNAL OF ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AND HISTORY  
The Journal of Architectural Design and History is a biannual magazine, undergoing a double-blind peer review process, realized within the framework of the UNESCO Chair in Architectural Preservation and Planning in World Heritage Cities at the Mantova Campus of Politecnico di Milano.



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MILANO 1863



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Politecnico di Milano, Polo Territoriale di Mantova

ISSUE N.1,

Heritage Cities as a Project May 2023

PERIODICITY

Biannual Magazine

ISSN

2974-8216

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY

Publi Paolini Via R. Zandonai, 9,  
46100 Mantova

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# WRITING ON ARCHITECTURE

By Federico Bucci (Politecnico di Milano)

Dimmi: perché giacendo  
A bell'agio, ozioso,  
S'appaga ogni animale;  
Me, s'io giaccio in riposo, il tedio assale?  
Giacomo Leopardi<sup>1</sup>

The Journal Architectural Design and History is the official magazine of the UNESCO Chair in Architectural Preservation and Planning in World Heritage Cities I'm directing at the Mantua Campus of Politecnico di Milano.

Here, in the UNESCO site of Mantova and Sabbioneta, the "sense of history" has a specific characterization and becomes a design teaching and research method within a polytechnical culture.

About our roots, Camillo Boito (1836-1914), founder of the architectural section of Politecnico, was engaged in writing *L'Architettura del Medio Evo in Italia*, to introduce a "style" to be adopted in Italian architecture, soon after the national unity.

But the golden season of the Politecnico School of Architecture is the period in between the Fifties and the Sixties of 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Ernesto Nathan Rogers (1909-1969), professor at Politecnico and an associate of BBPR group, is the beginner of a true "pedagogical revolution", based on an interpretation of history of architecture in relation to design work.

His tracks have been pursued by his followers: Vittorio Gregotti (1927-2020), Aldo Rossi (1931-1997), Guido Canella (1931-2009), Antonio Monestiroli (1940-2019), protagonists of the third generation of the School of Milano.

The architectural magazine *Casabella-continuità*, edited by Rogers between 1953 and 1965, is the instrument through which was accomplished this close link between history and design work, practiced inside Politecnico.

Rogers' history is an "operational history", since he invites his students to study Van de Velde, Loos, German Expressionism, Amsterdam school, and afterwards he reflects his pioneering studies in the affirmation of a critical "continuity" with the Modern Movement. The "sense of history" is for Rogers not only the key to study the Modern Masters, but also a method to confront oneself with the new reality in life.

In the introduction of his lectures, in the academic year 1964-'65, Rogers stated that "history is permanent evolution: history is men's life in their conscious intuition, in their use of life, thus in their values. Architecture represents their use and practice of life, their customs, in a specific and totally extrinsic way, that is expressed and declared. Should there be an art where it is impossible to lie and simulate or deceive in a conceptual sense, this is architecture; and we can say that history expresses itself graphologically, according to its intimate entity and without a chance to escape". But studying history implies, for Rogers, also a political act against the Fascist regime crimes to launch the democratic path of the Italian post-war architecture.

Today, the architecture culture cannot afford a vision of history to draw material from, just to build the new. For this reason, inside the ADH Journal, we will present a wide range of research, as basic elements to develop the education path of an architect working in historical contexts. The aim is to understand the architectural work and highlight relationships established among design and history, buildings, environment, and sustainable urban transformations.

Also, the critical reading of means of communication in architecture is a good field for ADH Journal. Photographs, paper archives, written texts in the form of books or articles, new communication tools, need a critical guide, a guide that can focus the attention on the interpretation of the "architectural phenomenon".

The images from history that Johan Huizinga (1872-1945) evokes as a basis of his research on civilisations, referring to the symbols of figurative arts, are the first reference for our work.

Finally, I hope that ADH Journal could be a new opportunity to improve the sense of history in the architectural design.

## NOTES

- [1] "Please tell me, why lying/there peacefully and idle, /every animal in content, /and I, if I lie restful, tedium assails me?". Leopardi, G. 1859. Canto notturno di un pastore errante dell'Asia. In: Leopardi, G. *Opere di Giacomo Leopardi*. Edizione accresciuta, ordinata e corretta secondo l'ultimo intendimento dell'autore da Antonio Ranieri, Catania: Tipografia S. Giuseppe di P. Giuntini, p. 127. Quoted in the opening of Nietzsche, F. 1874. *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*. Zweites Stück: Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben. Leipzig: E.W. Fritsch.
- [2] Boito, C. 1880. *L'architettura del medio Evo in Italia*. Milano: Hoepli.
- [3] Rogers, E.N. 1958. *Esperienza dell'architettura*. Torino: Einaudi.
- [4] Rogers, E.N. *Prolosure al corso di storia dell'architettura moderna*, Politecnico di Milano, a.a. 1964-65, typescript, p. 1.
- [5] Strupp, C. 2000. *Johan Huizinga. Geschichtswissenschaft als Kulturgeschichte*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.