An architecture imagined by Borges and drawn by Escher, a reminder of those strange object with which the humanist intellectuals amused themselves: the mazzocchi. [..]   They were preferably based on a geometrization of surfaces generated by the rotation of a circumference around a coplanar, external axis. By superimposing a number of mazzocchi of different diameters, Pierro della Francesca designs the complex geometry for a large vase that represents the triumph of reason over matter, that sublime coincidence between poetry and abstraction obtained thanks to rigorous logical concatenation, which is also present in the best projects of Vacchini. The mazzocchi, these 'useless' objects, a mere demonstration of mechanical and perspective skills, represent the dominion of the artificial over nature, but also reveal that abstraction, like beauty, is originally without purpose, and that even mechanics contains a frivolous , irrational soul, a 'bachelor machine'.

° Roberto Masiero talking about the Post Office in Locarno by Vacchini, Livio Vacchini, Works and Projects, ed.GG, p.24

MAZZOCCHIOO

#1 VACCHINI QUESTIONS

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MAZZOCCHIOO

MAZZOCCHIOO is an architectural journal that values the written thought and the authenticity of ideas. In a contemporary world where knowledge is defined by means of quantity and diffusion, **M** acts as a reminder of 'those strange objects with which the humanist intellectuals amused themselves [in Renaissance]: the mazzocchi'°.

Each year **M** will chose two extremely narrow themes. Each one will be explored by a series of various contributions from our guests: professors, architects, critics, intelectuals with other cultural backgrounds. Each of these contributions will be published on the website www.mazzocchioo.com, each Thursday, during two months.

M is an initiative of the joint work of the architectural office Poster and of a group of students from the University of Architecture and Urbanism 'Ion Mincu' from Bucharest. **M** mirrors our understanding that a school of architecture should open up towards the world and problematize the cultural foundations of the discipline in our contemporary society.

M starts on the occasion of 10 years since the death of Livio Vacchini. The unique synthesis between practice and theory, which Vacchini attained in the concrete act of making the project, constitutes the trigger in **M**'s approach: gathering synthetic thoughts answering to the polemic aphorisms inherent to Vacchini's way of thinking when constructing the project.

° Roberto Masiero talking about the Post Office in Locarno by Vacchini, Livio Vacchini, Works and Projects, ed.GG, p.24

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#Vacchini questions. The 2nd of April 2017 marks 10 years since the death of Livio Vacchini (1933-2007). It is the moment of a retrospective look towards his architectural legacy. He was one of the masters of the so-called Ticino School, together with Mario Botta, Luigi Snozzi and Aurelio Galfetti. Even though they came to the public attention as representatives of an architectural school on the occasion of the famous 1975 exhibition 'Tendenzen - Neuere Architektur im Tessin', the work of Livio Vacchini stands as a unique way of conceiving architecture and cannot be comprehended by attributing it to a style, group or architectural movement. Vacchini places his thought in the space opened up by the greatest masters of architecture, from Louis Kahn and Mies van der Rohe and back to the architects of the ancient Greek temples, of the Pyramids and even of the Stonehenge. His legacy is classical in the sense of its timelessness, by resisting to contemporary novelties and always taking the part of the inner logic and coherence of the architectural project. In a contemporary world where knowledge is defined by means of quantity and diffusion, Vacchini's importance is crucial as he operates a vertical cut going to the fundamentals of architecture on the axis of time and logic and being able to see the sacred in a discipline which is informed by the everyday reality. In doing so, he attained an extraordinary synthesis of practice and theory in the concrete act of making the project.
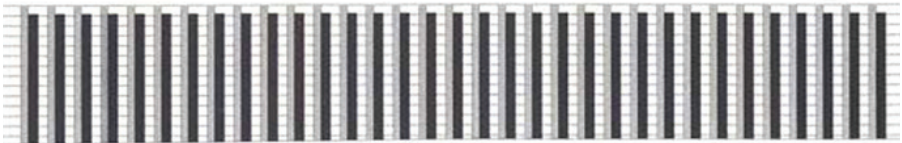
Can beauty be objective?

On beauty… against the kitsch

R o b e r t o   M a s i e r o
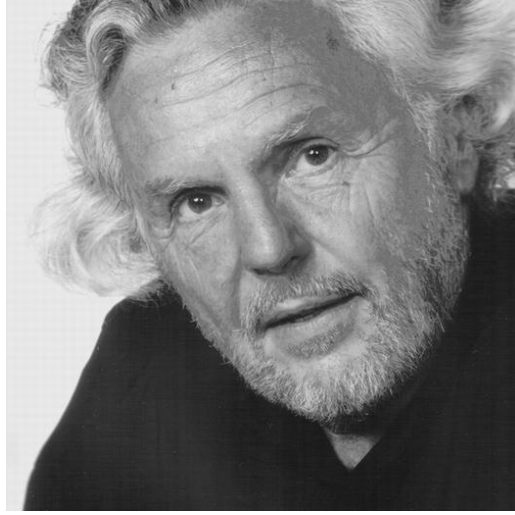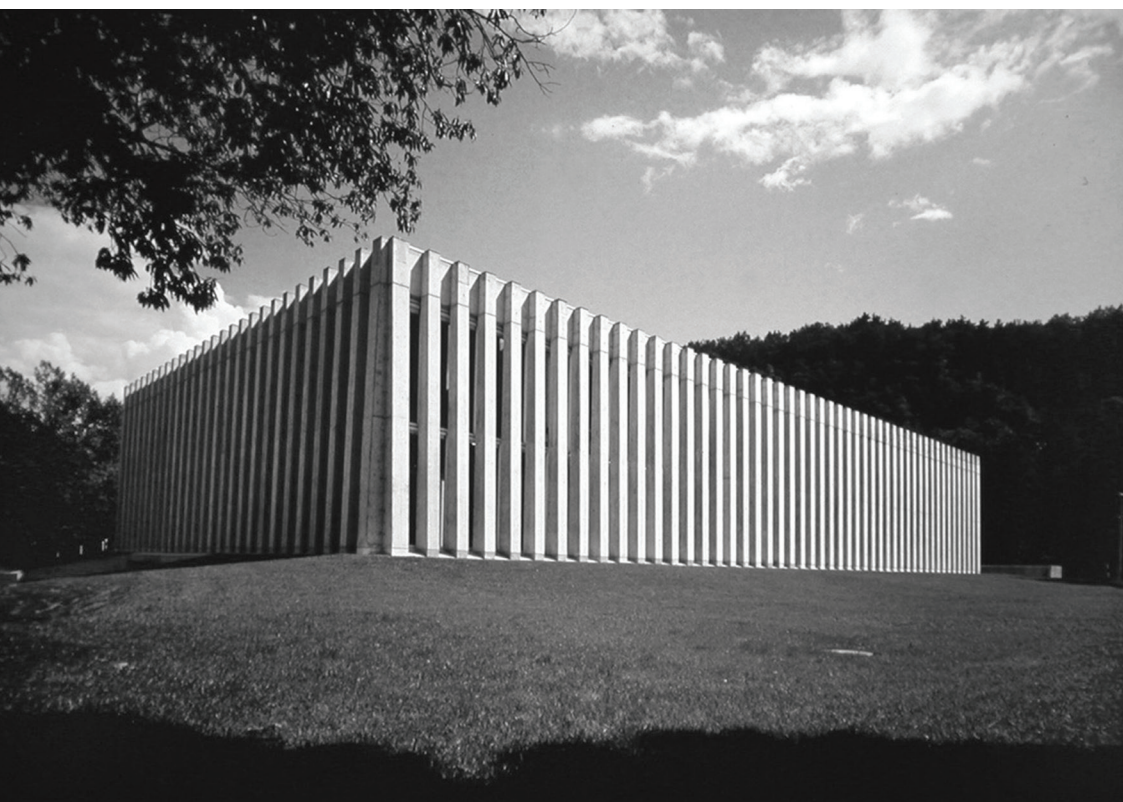
I've been having conversations with Livio Vacchini for a long time now, talking a little about everything. What brought us together was, of course, the passion for architecture but we used to speak about everything: music, food and as the saying goes, about "women and cars" (Bruno Lauzi, Italian poet). It was simply friendship, and this, ten years after his death, still stays with me today, because it's memories, never-ending arguments, emotions that come back. When I see architecture, I'm always wondering what Livio would have said about it.
One day, while working on the book we later named "Masterpieces", he told me: You know Roberto, the basic thing would be to understand what kitsch is all about. It was as if he had suddenly discovered the core issue.
Strangely enough, in that period I was working on a course about the kitsch at The Faculty of Arts and Design of IUAV University of Venice. I didn't say anything. I was searching as well to finally understand not so much the problem of kitsch, but rather the reason why it overwhelms us.

That "You know Roberto…" became a source of torment for me; it helped me, it gave me the key to interpret his work: never fall into kitsch, into the picturesque, into the emotive or expressive, into the new for the sake of new, in the logic of style – be it good or bad, or in the trap of thinking that any random idea could work. A key of great importance as far as his work is concerned.
I used to say to my students that having an idea does not necessarily mean to think and that for a project (not only an architectural one) it is not undamental to have any random idea – it is even dangerous; what is fundamental is to think thoroughly. I wanted to make them understand that they should not trust what is traditionally named creativity and that intuition is useful only if it is completed by reason. Even this was a syntony with Livio Vacchini. In that moment, for me it was obvious that not only the matter of kitsch (of bad taste) was in discussion, but especially the question: How can we define beauty nowadays? And we also have to figure out: is it objective or subjective, and does it have to be valid to everyone or only to me?

What became clear is that the kitsch is always in opposition to the objective beauty and it is to be found where the subjective dimension of beauty is dominant.

So in the end the questions can be:

Has the age of objective beauty ended? Or better said – that of the classical tradition?

When and how was that era born and why did it disappear, if it disappeared?

Are we in an age of subjective beauty? See the pop, postmodernism and de-constructivism

And does this mean that everyone can perceive and live according to his own way of understanding beauty? And in the end, can we make everything we want with the architectural project?

And is this completely relative or does it paradoxically imply the objectivation of the relative? The massification of the subjective in such a way that we are all to be found in an aesthetical unity?

Would it paradoxically mean that we have all become the same because we are all different ?

Now I would like to propose some considerations on beauty (Objective? Subjective? Or beyond the dualistic logic?) and Kitsch. Furthermore, I will reflect upon Livio Vacchini`s way of projecting and building and the reason why he was trying to understand the kitsch or, better said, trying not to be absorbed by it. With a premise: confronting the theme of beauty makes your heart beat out of your chest for its extent and for the issues it brings up. And I do not make the presumption of solving it. I can advance some hypothesis and considerations, all of them to be tested. Finally I settle for "playing" with a series of provocations.

The empiric beauty

If we consult the scientific literature of cultural anthropology, we can see that in the so called primitive communities the idea of beauty was meant for something pleasant, useful, satisfying that made you feel good. For example, the representation of divinity was frequently achieved with forms that we can only describe as ugly or terrible. Even in the culture that precedes the ancient Greek era, which we name Classical, there is a sense of beauty that can be only defined as empirical.

The Greek culture that precedes the beginning of philosophy (not only the pre-Socratic but also the Homeric one), used the term kalos to describe something that was satisfying, agreeable, marvelous, like the Chinese word mei. Therefore, beauty was seen more as adequacy or amazement than as

An illustrious character of the German philosophy, Otto Pöggeler, a longtime director of the Hegel-Archiv of Bochum, while translating Homer discovered that the term kalos is used to describe a state of well-being. Homer uses even the term Karis, which is the root of kalos for describing a garland or crown placed around things, a virtuous twist, a composition where everything is held together. On the other hand, the word kalos is compared with the antic Indian word Kalja that means healthy, vigorous, gifted, excellent, adapted, skillful, useful. It had nothing in common with the beauty considered

transcendental, in opposition with utility or necessity, beauty that should only be contemplated.

At its origins and in Homer`s writings, kalos does not yet have a

transcendental, metaphysical value. Only with the pre-Socratic should the term receive this meaning.

According to the testimony of Aezio, the introduction of the term kosmos is due to Pythagoras. We know little about Pythagoras , but what we know is rather important. We know about his trip to Egypt where he learned about the Canon laws. It is said that in another trip he met Zarathustra. It seems that he had foreseen the sphericity of Earth. Pythagoras affirmed that the soul is immortal, the kosmos is ordered and everything is number. He was able to do these studies on

the movement of stars, on crystallography and especially on the connection between the musical notes and the length of strings of different instruments. How is that possible and what does harmony signify? It is said that after returning from his trip in Egypt he gathered his disciples and built in front of them a musical instrument with seven chords of different lengths, placed in a certain order. He played the chords and asked for his disciples` opinion. They all responded that the sounds they had heard were pleasant. Then Pythagoras replaced one of the chords with a bigger one: there was not an ordered succession of sounds anymore. Suddenly, the apprentices covered their ears and concluded that the sound was unpleasant and created discomfort. Furthermore, he took a shell and cut in half, measuring in a straight line the distance

between the spirals. Then he said that the ratio he had used for the chords of the lira was the same with the ratio of the spirals of the shell: meaning that what corresponded to the laws of nature was beautiful and good and what
was against the nature was ugly and bad. And nature always follows measure, order and proportion (the same as Aristotle would affirm later). Of course that when we look at a starry sky or inside a forest we will see an enormous variety of figures and forms, but our duty should be to discover the laws, the rules and the harmony behind this great variety.

Even what firstly appears as indistinguishable or chaotic can be related to numbers and if the multiple can be reduced to irreducible, there should be a number among numbers, a ratio that determines the most ordered order, the one that will later be called the golden ratio, the divine proportion and that even nowadays we use to call the golden section. This is the core of the world and from this we should be able to deduce the ratios of the human creations and of the human proportions.

The problem of universality was probably questioned for the first time by Pythagoras and the pythagoreans. And they even succeeded in developing a relationship, thought to be logic (and I would say logotechnic) between the visible and the invisible.

In conclusion, it was within the classical Greek-Western culture that this idea appeared – which leads to the objective beauty. Before this moment, in other cultures the idea of beauty was not linked to objectivity. It could have been perceptive, emotional, sympathetic, empathic, functional and others more, but it could not have been conceptualized as transcendental.

The objective beauty
The idea of objective beauty – that differs from the individual perception, took shape in the classical Greek culture in direct correspondence with the birth of philosophy and of the metaphysical universe implied by it.

For assuming this dimension, beauty should be seen as transcendental. There is no other culture that puts the problem of beauty this way.

Therefore, beauty becomes the characteristic of the divine. As I affirmed earlier, the iconography of the divine was firstly characterized by terribleness in the pre-classical period; afterwards it progressively became a search for portraying, for representation, and, in the end, a search for beauty.

Speaking of kalos, the Greek of the beginning of the classical era was designating an overall condition in which what was healthy, complete, ordered became a whole, both in the exterior appearance and in the interior behavior. And this is one of the reasons why kalos aspires to the divine universe.

A mutation took place with the foundation of logos and the fundamentals of metaphysics. This transformation was particularly significant for Platon, when kalos connected with agathon so with the divinity itself. A divinity usually related to light, to sight, to apparition, to phenomenal, to occurrence. To this idea of kalos kai agathos we can link the symmetry and the truth and is pantheon...kalon aitia (res 7.517 c). We can understand here the metaphysics in its vastest and most fundamental meaning, as it was understood by the Greeks: inseparable from "the holy knowledge of the origins of the world" (the myth), and in the vast dimensions of alethe ("open", "true"), of agathon ("good") and kalon ("safe", "sane", "beautiful").

There can be an idea of objective beauty only if we consider the transcendental linked with the universal, with absolute values. On one hand, the transcendental is the characteristic that all things have in common and is therefore the reason why they surpass the diversity of types. On the other hand, the universal has two declinations: in an objective form it is any determination that can be part of or can be attributed to a large number of things; in a subjective way it is the possibility of every reasonable being to make a good judgment.

Putting the problem like this, it is inevitable to think of beauty as something related to good, perfection, order or truth. It is a little like saying that beauty does not belong to this world and that we can only search for it, chase it and if we finally find it we have to cancel, through contemplation, all our needs, interests and passions.

Therefore, the dynamics and the ways in which the objective beauty took form become clear now: it is born of divinity, of a pre-human or non human order (measure or proportion), of the world of ideas, that lie above humankind. [..] The subject that can produce beauty (the artist) is the holder of a substantially mimetic and adaptive ability. He should search to neutralize himself in the work of art. The only thing that should emerge in the work is the absolute.

This way of conceptualizing beauty, that in my opinion evolved within the classical Greek culture, continued to exist, even if in various structures and occasions, in several expressive forms and styles, until the end of the 18th century; at this time debates arose: upon the forms and functions of the transcendental, the mimesis as the base of the same knowledge and the socio-political function and value of subjectivity.

It is therefore necessary to reaffirm that if the objective beauty means transcendence, yet what characterizes it is its appearance. In other words, the beauty is the mediation between the immutable (the transcendental) and the accidental (the immanent), between invisible and visible and eros is the force that allows this mediation. The result of this mediation is unity. This is not available only for the Ancient Greeks but also for the Stoics, for the Theologians of the Scolastica, especially for San Tommaso d`Aquino and for the writers and artists of the Renaissance. For Leon Battista Alberti, the unity of the work of art, similar to its beauty, was achieved when finally nothing could be added or removed.

Appearing happens and presents itself as an event, something that takes form at a certain moment, in the most unexpected way. Heidegger attributed the same meaning to the use of term ereignis: a way of understanding the being not as a static presence but as an eventual becoming. The event, the ereignis connects the being with time and opens up the being to its alterity – to the other. It is Heidegger's attempt to solve the metaphysical contradictions of the Greek thinking. To remain objective, the beauty has to transform itself into phenomenon. In Ancient Greek the word fainomena is born of the root fos, which means light. It is that which stands into the light; having at the same time its root as Theos. The divine is an opening to light. This is the nature of Ancient Greece polytheism. During the appearing of beauty as a bridge between visible and invisible, the truth would also manifest itself, a truth that could not be other but a transcendental one.

It is not by mistake that the ontology of beauty started with Plato. Beauty is per se, in itself, with itself; it is eternally univocal. Beauty born from eros is fatal in the relationship between the accidental and the immutable becoming. To human kind, beauty offers the privilege of being destined to eternity, holding together the truth and the appearing. Truth and beauty merge into the manifestation of idea; they both reveal the being.

A better way to explain the objectivity of beauty is through the hypothesis that both the transcendental and the universal can find their empirical reasoning in nature, better said in the laws of nature, whether thought as implicit or explicit in phenomena. In conclusion, as there is an order in the movement of stars and in the succession of seasons, there should be an order in the human works of art as well. Man can of course go against nature, he has his free will, but then he can fall into what the Greeks thought to be the most terrible thing that could happen: the hybris.

This bond between the laws of nature and beauty begins with Pythagoras and is strongly affirmed by Aristotle.

And so, from an objective perspective we can find the doctrine of beauty as order and symmetry "of a greatness that deserves to be comprised in its integrity by a single glance". Accordingly, now emerges another condition of the objective beauty – that of unity, closely linked to identity. For example, beauty should be identical to itself, recognizable in its own unity and upported by universal composition rules, so as to obtain a timeless condition. What we call the classical and try to place in a period of time or style, therefore in a specific language, was actually born to be timeless and affirms the very idea of identity as absolute form.

Resuming: beauty as good, truth, order is objective and transcends impulses and interests of single individuals. The beautiful works of art should always have specific and metahistoric laws. The premise is the metaphysical. In the history of arts` language this is the classical.

The subjective beauty
The objective beauty can lose its metaphysical horizon for a series of reasons that cannot be summed up here. The crucial one can be pointed out, though: the appearance of subjectivity, the one that we call modern, at the end of the Middle Ages and beginning of Modernity, with the emergence of Humanism (even if here should be made many distinctions).

We can think at the subjective beauty as something nurtured by vanity or by the arrogance of the subject who becomes a judge of himself and of the world, by the "will to power", by the frenetic charm of variety and diversity, by the "It is me who makes it so I make it as I want", by the inclusion and manipulation of temporality. The subjective beauty tends to live the moment and

not the eternity; it falls in love with caducity and the occasional. It is exactly what the objective beauty, which searches for timelessness and absolute laws, refuses.

The subjective beauty does not have an ontological value anymore; it is not anymore the manifestation of the good, like it was for Plato, or of perfection, unity, order and symmetry, like it was for Aristotle.

Starting with the 17th century, while trying to find universal laws not only for the experimental science but also for sensations and perception, philosophers will start questioning the idea of taste and especially the reason why different subjects perceive sensations differently. Is therefore a precise and experimental science possible as far as subjectivity is concerned?

Trying to objectify the sensory perception leads to a contradiction that comes from the classical Greek idealism, that clearly separated the sensory perception (aesthesis) from reason (nous).

The subjectivity, especially the modern one, the vir faber fortunae suae (every man is the artisan of his own fortune) does not accept to subordinate to the universal, without a pact. The most significant result of this pact would be the Declaration of Human Rights and the French Revolution.

The considerations on taste, find their fulfillment with the birth of Aesthetics at the middle of the 18th century and beauty becomes sensitive perfection. This means, on one hand, perfect sensitive representation and on the other hand pleasure that accompanies the sensitive activity.

The attempt to find universal laws in the huge variety of tastes will find no solution: reason and sensitive perception will remain conflictual.

The last attempt will be made by Kant, with the identification of the most important characteristic of beauty: indifference. In doing so, he defines beauty as "what universally and without concepts appeals" (Critique of Pure Reason), insisting on the independence of pleasure of beauty, for every interest, be it sensitive or reason related. He affirms: "Everyone names likeable a thing which is satisfying, beautiful, and good, a thing which is appreciated and approved, therefore a thing to which an objective value is attributed. The pleasure is available even for unreasoning animals; but beauty is only for the human beings that possess reason, not only as they are rational but especially because they are at the same time animals. The good has value for every rational being, in general." (Critique of Pure Reason)

Kant distinguishes between free beauty and adherent beauty. The first concerns natural beautiful things like flowers and does not require a concept for what the object should be like. But this does not happen when evaluating an architectural object: there should be a concern for the purpose of the object. That beauty would be therefore adherent.

In conclusion, with Kant occurs the acceptance of the epistemological impossibility to uniformize the objective and the subjective, the acknowledgement that there are two truths, the scientific one and the artistic one, the general and the singular, the conceptual and the intuitional one, or we can say the objective and the subjective, the universal and the singular truth. In other words, this is the crisis that existed in all metaphysics, be it ancient or modern; a crisis resumed in the Kantian phrase: "the starry sky above me and the moral law within me".

With Kant beauty becomes a value or better said a set of values, but all with an ontological contradiction: they are values that are born from superfluity, therefore from something that should not have value. This is the paradox of our Contemporaneity, and not only as far as art is concerned. According to Kant the human being is that animal that presents himself as such because he is consuming and producing superfluity in a superhuman condition. What defines or represents him is a singular product called work of art not only for its own superfluous nature, related to a finality without purpose, but also indefinable, a machinery that continuously transcends its own existential condition, destined to constantly produce its own hyper affirmation and its own negation. It is called single machinery. The work of art would occupy the space of the event. We can find this concept even in Heidegger.

At its utmost, humanity will then produce a maximum of superfluity where values will continuously be deferred… Mere idolatry. (This should be denied!) Adorno can say that every true work to be as such should have to kill all the others, past, present … leaving the future open, to its possible best. Modernity is confirmed; some will talk of will of will and will of power. This is how there is no art without art history.

The Idealism and the Romanticism will bring the transcendental in the work of art due to the Genius, an individual/subject having exceptional aptitudes. The abilities of the Genius evoke the universal, but shelter the personal, the singular. The duty of the Genius, after Kant, is to give rules to art, connecting

them with nature itself so as to consign them to another brilliant individual that should exceed them. Its talent belongs to nature. It is like the absolute would transform itself from transcendence into immanence, incarnating into the figure of the Genius.

For Schelling, the art of the Genius is the supreme form of knowledge able to spontaneously understand the Absolute, in its unity between nature and spirit. For Schopenhauer the Genius is the objective direction of the Spirit. Of course there will be certain positions, in that historical and social context, like, for example, the one of Hegel that considered the Genius` work of art, animated by imagination and spontaneity, to be just romantic daydreams, while an artwork can become really artistic only by the means of technical aptitudes and rich knowledge and experiences, governed by reason.

In the end, when defining beauty, even Hegel has to measure himself with the objective beauty and ask himself about his own relationship with subjectivity. He writes: "Beauty can be defined as a sensitive emergence of the idea. Beauty and truth are the same thing. They can be distinguished only because — while to truth the idea has an objective and universal manifestation, to beauty it has a sensitive manifestation." (Lectures on Aesthetics) That sensitive determination is nothing more than the subjective perception. The sensitivity is the subject`s own nature. The transcendental does not have sensitivity, it does not perceive: it is or it is not. The sensitive is the history itself or we can say that history is composed and produced by the infinity of sensitive people. This is the Hegelian dialectics.

Even positions like the one of Stendhal induce the transition of beauty towards subjectivity. He writes: "Beauty is the promise of happiness". So to maintain a transcendental horizon, the fact that beauty can be interpreted as universal refers to a perceptive modality (phenomenal) that belongs to subjectivity, to an aesthetical eudemonism experienced by a subject in its own singularity: before being happy together we have to be happy by ourselves.

To sum up, the challenge is the following: for the entire world of ancient classical culture up until the Humanism, the idea of objective beauty is predominant; with the Humanism, the individual pretends a **determinant** role. Furthermore, in Contemporaneity he starts affirming his own supremacy. The Contemporaneity begins with the French Revolution, so with the moment in which a new political subject appears: the mass. Consequently, the

correspondence between subjectivity and massification starts being analyzed. From here on it will begin the idolatry of art and separately the idolatry of science, like enemy sisters, rival metaphysics. But where there can be two conflictual truths, the one that loses its sense is the metaphysical horizon itself. Everything that happens, not only in art and science finds itself in this crisis, to which there can be different responses. I can signal two extremes: rebuilding the metaphysics – Hegel, or learning to surf on the waves of this enormous crisis – Nietzsche. Paradoxically, in the end, these extremes will meet. Going back to the phenomenal, as far as art and science are concerned, they can be interpreted and experienced as something that can both save or lose us; they can lead to liberation or final destruction. This is particularly significant for the idolization of technology. Even today there are people who completely trust or distrust technology.

Also as beauty is concerned there can be found contradictory positions especially in the second half of the 19th century and first half of 20th century: on one hand Fyodor Dostoyevsky, for whom only beauty can save us, and on the other hand Rainer Maria Rilke, who writes in his Duino Elegies: "For beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror, which we are still just able to endure / and we are so awed because it serenely disdains to annihilate us." These two positions are clearly antithetical and they would deserve a larger space for being interpreted. The first has however a unity guaranteed by religion, despite the human depravation and the inevitable conflicts with the evil; the other separates the sacred from every religious justification or places it beyond every possible explanation. Therefore, the beauty cannot offer comfort, on the contrary! It is the terror! What should be considered is especially the non-coincidence between sacred and religious.

And for Rilke, this is given to be asserted as the sacred has the appearance of terror, one that can certainly not characterize the re-ligio: what holds together.

The challenge is attributable to the dynamics that refer to the secularization, meaning the progressive autonomy of politics from religion and the separation of the sacred from religion.

The secularization will be the main feature of Modernity that articulates, on one hand the secularization as emancipation and on the other hand the desecration as the liberator of the nihilism, for some reasons indebted to the

same Modernity, in the good as well as in the evil. The secularization decrees the absolute power of subjectivity and the relativization of beauty or, better said, the victory of subjective beauty. Durkheim believes that the progressive crisis of religion leads to the sanctification of the individual and to the cult of self. At the same time, Max Weber interprets the Modernity as disenchantment and victory of reason that moves as an abstract subject, or better, as a collective subject, for example in the form of bureaucracy. On one side there is the sanctification of the subject, and on the other side the mass as ethical abstraction, validation, collectivization and universalization.

It ss obvious that: a) there is a major difference between the ideas and the practice related to the objective beauty and those that can be attributed to the subjective beauty; b) the objective beauty has been exceeded by the socialization of the subjective beauty; meanwhile the first is normative, the second is dissipative. The first tries to find the essential, the other one to disperse it. The first aspires to universality, the second one to singularity. We are therefore under the supremacy of the subjective beauty or under the relativization of beauty whose phenomenal shape is the kitsch. Or at least for me it is, and it was the same for Livio Vachini.

The theological beauty

For now I would like to return to the previously proposed plot, looking at it from a different point of view: that of those who have not accepted, or do not want to accept the separation between the sacred and the religious, and especially during the secularization between religion and the world. It is amongst those people who nobly (and inevitably) overturn the relationship between beauty, transcendental, human and divinity.

I will consider perhaps the most significant, problematic and philosophically consistent case: Von Balthasar, whom Henri de Lubac described as "perhaps the most cultured man of our times".

Von Balthasar intends to find the unity between theology and metaphysics developing a Christian theology" in the light of the third transcendental, ompleting thus the consideration of verum and bonum through that of pulchrum" .

For Von Balthasar as for Enrich Przywara, theology is "adaptation of mystery",

a mystery that despite remaining the same, it opens up to man through revelation, and comes forward into the light, thanks to beauty. In this way beauty presents itself in the Glory. It is beauty that allows to grasp "the truth of everything, the truth as a transcendental property of being" that is not an abstract element but "the vital bond between God and the world". In his monumental writing The Glory of the Lord he writes:

"Beauty is the last word which the thinking intellect dares to pronounce, for it only dances as an uncontained splendor around the double constellation of the true and the good and their inseparable relation to one another. Beauty is the disinterested one, without which the ancient world refused to understand itself, a word which both imperceptibly and yet unmistakably has bid farewell to our new world, a world of interests, leaving it to its own avarice and sadness". This is what von Balthasar writes, referring to the Greek aesthetics, intended not as philosophy of the fine art, but as aesthesis, as sensory perception: "Before the aesthetic was reduced to a science that was regionally defined, by the late rationalism (Baumgarten) and criticism (Kant), it was – as seen in the entire tradition – an aspect of metaphysics as a science of the being, and up until the moment where "being" was intended as the last element that made up the world's multiplicity, metaphysics was inseparable from theology. Now, for the truth and the fragmentary and transitory good to be comprehensible, they are anchored in the eternal and total truth and good, in the way that the beauty which shines with contingency is anchored in an absolute and immortal beauty that resides in the intact arkai of the being: amongst the "gods", the "divine", in God. For von Balthasar, from Homer and Pindar, throughout Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, the Early and High Middle Ages up until the Renaissance and Baroque, there exists the intuition that calls "transcendental aesthetic", in a sense that kalon (as a reality that is safe, healthy, splendid and beautiful) is one of the transcendental determination of the being as such. The critique to our times and to the idea of subjective beauty is clear, but the alternative is not, in this case, an objective beauty, but a sort of theological-mysterious and pre-objective idea of beauty, a synthesis between the true, the good and the beautiful in the unity between religion, sacred and metaphysics. Capable, moreover, to bind together ancient Greek philosophy and Christianity.

To conclude, there is an aesthetic of the objective beauty, the subjective

beauty and the theological beauty.

Kitsch

The phenomenal form of the subjective beauty seems to incarnate itself in a word: kitsch. The kitsch is of great interest to the visible art, architecture, design, the so called decorative art, literature, cinema, photography, music, the world of television and videogames, comic books, publicity, cuisine (particularly the pastries with which there is much affinity, the kitsch being a world of sweetness), fashion, theme parks, the vast world of tourism and souvenirs and that of religion and politics.

The kitsch is also a "…hidden vice, a tender and sweet vice, permanent as sin", it is a "radical evil" (H. Broch), it is "the art in the era of the death of art", and "mediation between art and non-art" (A. Moles), "it is brought from an aesthetics such as gastronomy, that produces a contamination governed by non-authenticity" (T. W. Adorno). And again, the kitsch is the "reign of the dictatorship of the heart", the "screen that shields the death". In "The Unbearable Lightness of Being", Milan Kundera writes: "… before being forgotten we shall be transformed into kitsch. The kitsch is the passage between being and oblivion". Even a figure that is more focused on questions of ontology rather than those of sociology, like Heidegger finds himself talking about the kitsch there where in "Being and time" confronts the theme of small talk, like non-authentic language, pure fact of communication, deprived of interior reflection; or in "Contributions to philosophy", he states that crescent flattening and emptiness of our times, caused by technology, leads to the fall into the kitsch.

The multiple dynamics of the kitsch must be confronted considering the concept of authenticity, the mechanisms of estrangement, the forms of fetishism, the dynamics that allow the collective identities and the logic behind the concept of belonging, the appearance with force, and mostly in the second half of the twentieth century, of the camouflages, the glamour and the camp and the relationship between the culture of the masses and the culture of the elite, between high culture and low culture.

Returning to Livio Vacchini

Livio Vacchini fought against all of this. It is completely obvious that his

projects are anti-kitsch: there is no stylistic or compositional search; he wants to cancel the presence of the author and therefore of himself, refuses the decoration seen as redundancy; he wants that technology to make its presence felt as structure, knowing that it is necessary but not enough; his relationship with history and the preexistent is based on the autonomy of the work itself; it's a search for the less trying to achieve more.

Starting from a certain point Vacchini refused the traditional use of rchitectural drawing because he realized that he could easily fall in love with it, chasing the shapes produced by it and losing therefore the main reason of the architectural project.

Having in mind the considerations made earlier, can we interpret Vacchini`s work as an attempt to turn back to the objective beauty and the classical canons? Obviously I do not think this is the right way of interpreting it.

I am asking myself why Livio used Le Corbusier's Modulor so many times in his projects. It may seem an implicit borrowing of the corbusian ideology and so of an architecture built at a "human scale", neo-humanist in a way, functionalist, as a machine, at the same time.

I remember the furniture from Le Corbusier`s studio in Paris, designed using the measures of the Modulor. It was clear! Everything was at your fingertips, at your disposition. For this reason we can affirm that Le Corbusier was maybe the last trying to hold together the objective beauty, the universe of function and technology, the last struggle to hold together the measure of the world with the measure of the man. It is not by mistake that Le Corbusier was a careful reader of Matila Ghyka`s texts "The geometry of Arts and Life" from 1927 and "The Golden Number: Pythagorean Rites and Rhythms in the Development of Western Civilization" from 1931. And Vacchini? He used the measures of the Modulor as a pretext but not for an anthropometric reason or to point out a direct relationship between function, human body, geometry, mathematics and a presumed natural order. The system of proportions (for example the golden ratio) serves to Vacchini for "producing", "ordering" the autonomy itself of the architectural work. While Corbusier`s purpose was the heteronomy, so the functions, for Vacchini was important to create an identity for the architectural work. It is however obvious that this is homage to the great Master, but – according to Vacchini – the masters are masters only if we understand where even they can be wrong.

In Vacchini there is such a disenchantment, a radical secularity, an a-theism that does not find solution in nihilism or in the mortification of a creator`s idea, but in the abandonment of presumptions in order to make the opera autonomous. And this should not be available only for the architectural works, but for everything that the human beings need to do. There is not a God that can save us. Our destiny is in our hands and therefore we have to learn to confront the absolute, being aware of our ephemeral nature.

Paradoxically, even if I clearly highlighted Vacchini`s secularity, we can find analogies between his work and the vision of the theological or religious beauty. Why? For the same search of the absolute, of the timelessness, of a subject able to negate itself in the work it creates.

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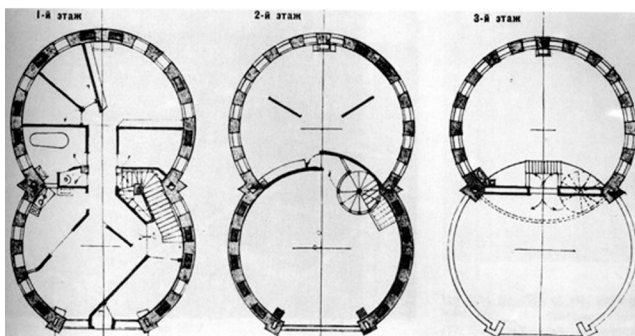
Can architecture be abstract?

Alberto Campo Baeza

I don´t like the word **ABSTRACT**. I prefer the word **ESSENTIAL**. I think Livio tried to make an essential architecture, better than an abstract architecture. As I try.
I am sending a text, in praise of Livio, about Essential Architecture.

When the Russian architect Konstantin Melnikov decided to build his own house, a fascinating white cylinder in Moscow, he wrote these strong words "As I had become my own boss, I begged Architecture to finally take off her marble dress, to wash the makeup off her face, to show herself as she is NAKED, like a young and graceful goddess. And as befits a true beauty, to renounce being agreeable and obliging" (Konstantin Melnikov. "Na Shchet doma".1953. Melnikov archives).

SIMPLE is ESSENTIAL it is not ABSTRACT
SIMPLE is LOGICAL it is not CAPRICIOUS
SIMPLE is RATIONAL it is not RATIONALIST

"Clarity is the philosopher's courtesy", Ortega y Gasset.

SIMPLE is CLEAR it is not COMPLICATED
SIMPLE is PURE it is not COLD
SIMPLE is DELICATE it is not WEAK

"Je pense l'Architecture, donc je suis un architecte" ,R. DESCARTES + ACB
(I think Architecture, therefore I am an architect)

SIMPLE is TRUE it is not FALSE
SIMPLE is HONEST it is not DECEITFUL
SIMPLE is POETIC it is not PROSAIC

I have been trying for many years to create an Architecture that is essential, logical, rational, clear, pure, delicate, true, honest and poetic. I reject the Architecture that is abstract, minimalist, capricious, rationalist, complicated, cold, weak, false, deceitful and prosaic.

"One is tired of seeing those who pursue the Beauty, Goodness and Truth of things with additional ornaments, knowing that the secret does not lie there. My unforgettable friend J.A. Coderch said that if
we assume the ultimate beauty as a wonderful bald head (for instance Nefertiti), then we must have hair by hair ripped out, with the pain of every single tear, one by one. We must painfully pull the hairs out from our works, the ones that prevent us from attaining their simple, simple end".

This desire of Alejandro de la Sota could be a clear expression of that pursued simple simplicity.

Can a project be nostalgia-free?

Yes, sure, but if a project is a project, that is to say, pro-jectum, it is putting-forward, in front, understood here as an authentic future, ex-tasy, it is an answer to a diffuse calling, a throwing towards and anticipation of what is to come (avenir-avenant-Ereignes). And because it is a putting-foward, towards the finite, it is a callback to what has been, to the authentic past. Towards the finite, that is, towards oriented time, linear and finite, towards my end; and precisely because of this impossible possibility can I project myself, thrown before my very self, as one that goes beyond, transcendant to myself. Because I am projected, in fact, towards my end, something similar to a project is possible. That is, I am thrown forward to nothing and nothingness, towards the worlds unfamiliarity, outside, and thrown extatically thrown back towards the things themselves, as one returned, that has come back, nostos. The taste of nothingness makes possible the appetence of looking for things. The time that was, the look back, projecting towards justify putting-forward towards possibility.

When a project is project, pro-ject, throwing forward, it is nostalgic, it is nostalgia itself. There is no throw forward that can be "nostalgia-free"; current nostalgia – pain and suffering for the return home (chez soi, heimat), the pain of being without a homeland, be it the conjugal bed of Odysseus, the new homeland and language of Aeneas, finally, the word (logos) as possible homeland for Hannah Arendt – rests on a more primordial nostalgia, on the suffering and want for something that has not yet come, the return is before and "home" is more primordial, a perpetual non-home, it is the strangeness of (only my) end, my never fulfilled completion.

So nostalgia, projection, are being-on-the-road, outside is my way of being inside, being without home, the incompleteness of in-the-end, and the project, when it is a project, in the limpidity of its tectonicity, celebrates the completeness of the world and, subtly, denounces its making.

That is why when sight is sight it is nostalgia, looking on the world that has already passed, the world seen through the lens of nostalgia has passed and that is precisely why it is acutely visible, outside of presence, in a now of the moment, fleeting. Things are seen nostalgically (if this is not redundant, for how is sight anything but?) from behind, from their strangeness, displaced, far away, essentialised, we are tempted to say. For there is, inside of nostalgia, of projection, this tension of back-and-forward labor, expansion and contraction, sedentary mobility, utopia and rooting, abandonment and fidelity. The artifacts of the city, the city itself, confess it, nostalgically, every time.

Can thinking replace drawing?

Françoise Schatz

As an architect's aphorism, it may be said that "thinking" is for creating, and "drawing" for any device used by a designer to represent its process: verbal, graphic, digital, model, and so on. Bruce Goff, an American architect (1904-1982), is said to have "thought" his design projects in such a way that the first drawings he started with for his customers' houses were the so-called "working drawings"; a necessary depiction of future reality and instructions for craftsmen. In this he avoided the sketching stage, as an unnecessary mechanism for him.

Nevertheless most designers set out ideas and propositions through exploration by drawing, in a practised backward and forward conversation between brain, imagination and delineation. Therefore both thinking and drawing are involved in the creative path and its achievement – from concept to realisation of the real building; even the additive manufacturing asks for representative, explanatory, and other, data, and needs brains as well!

"Drawing, the motive force of architecture" writes [Sir] Peter Cook, whatever the purpose, and the means; not solely visual. A scheme (a representation) can be part of an heuristic process and investigation, it can be determined by the language of orders to give for construction; it may be drawn to convince clients or juries (in a competition), or even be a demonstration for the sake of communication (books and exhibitions).

Vacchini's drawing of "La Casa delle tre donne" is far removed from the depiction of its material external appearance, or from one with technical information and operational instructions, even if the work is built. Neither is it seductive: in a code carefully settled, the mannerism of the drawing shows the rigorous and logical system of ideas that lead to this precise form in the site: rhythm, ordonnance, serial sequence, relevant proportions, etc. The choice of an apparently simple means of illustration is deliberate, establishing clear priorities and narrowing the focus on architectural intentions; it

communicates the "thinking"!

In magazines and books, besides photographs, the latest projects and/or buildings can be seen only in such coded drawings: the drawing is an intellectual reflection, Vacchini's statement upon architecture as a "cosa mentale".

Is architecture logical or ideological?

Architecture cannot be logical and shouldn't be ideological

Horia Marinescu

Whereas current conceptual fixations lead to a pseudo-logical justification of architecture, which is also a convenient strategy for delivering to the client a credible and apparently "unique" story (discourse) about the prospective architectural object (since this is derived "logically", thereby allaying anxieties to do with the artistic vacuousness of our era and with the lack of firm reference-points in a pluralist world…), architecture can in fact only be art.

Why? Because the mechanism of decision in architecture resembles (if we are to stay within the realm of logic) that of finding solutions to a system of equations in which there are more indeterminates than there are available equations. As any mathematician can immediately envisage, such a system is "indeterminate", which is to say that we cannot find for it a unique or unequivocal solution. We can only find for it, through trials, various solutions, about none of which can it be said that it is superior to another, for they depend on the premises from which we start. These solutions presuppose the intervention of the architect as an arbiter and thus imply decisions that can only be of an "artistic" order (unless they are ideological!) as they are made in accordance with aesthetic criteria (the other criteria - functional, rational, economical, optimising - being already included in the system of equations that is used as a metaphor for the solution provided by architecture to a problem). A look at the history of architecture, at the great variety of responses to the same eternal themes and demands, is enough to make clear that a purely logical architecture is impossible; just as an art that is detached from its context, from the fact that it is created by human beings, is impossible (whereas the existence of logic is conceivable even on a planet devoid of life in which the laws of physics hold perfectly!). Art, in essence, is opposed to logic in the sense that it is the manifestation of the artist's personal, profound and sensitive discern-ment in relation to his era (thus to his absolutely personal time and himself!). But to dis-cern is not necessarily a logical operation (as we might be tempted to suppose, thinking for example of Eratosthenes' sieve)

but only one of attentive selection, yet relying upon non-eternal things and thus unjustifiable using pure logic. Aesthetic decision especially (ever present, impossible to eliminate even by the most "rational" of architectures) is non-logical par excellence, but all the more sublime for it and dmirably-humane. It is for this reason that rationalism, having radiated from the enlightenment project, remains a form of architecture, transforming the theme of reason into a source of poetry of the constructed object. Poetry can choose any source, even reason itself, without a loss of the poetic, of its profound and surprising non-rationality, so important for human balance. Architecture shouldn't be ideological but it most often is. Ideology is, in politics but also anywhere else, a type of (most often crude!) simplification of decision-making processes that are much too complicated to be undergone routinely by ordinary man. Just as a politician decides to belong to a political party, thereby removing any doubt that he ought to have regarding the solutions that politics can provide at a given time in a society, so also the architect usually decides to adhere to a style, a fashion, a design recipe - be it that he does this consciously or in the unconscious which guides his aesthetic decisions. Those who can resist the temptation to resolve the problem of the "eternal return of doubt" through various recipes and simplifications are extremely rare. Only these few people can be regarded as not practicing architecture ideologically. They usually cannot reach a status of success, for the complexity of their response to the complexity of architecture's problems can only rarely be singled out as interesting by all that trendsetters and architectural critique might mean, who in turn regard the world of architecture through the simplifying lens/gauge of their own ideology, be it even a very nuanced one. A perfectly non-ideological architecture should, probably, be perfectly invisible, but of good quality, thus serving imperceptively yet harmoniously the life that unfolds within it. The visibility of an architecture has often to do with the adoption of a radical stance in its design, which most often in practice means the ideologising of the design process. Radicalism is most often produced through simplifications proposed by various ideologies.

Visibility has to do with the scale of the architecture and with its political lignment or to the mechanisms of any type of power. How could an

architecture be visible (literally but also in the public conscience of its time) which does not build a cathedral, a skyscraper, an airport?

The human being is only rarely capable of admiring the modestly small in the face of the condescendingly large. Nothing in the preserving mechanisms of artistic models in collective consciousness (in the past or in the digital age!) seems to indicate that humanity has the predisposition or the opportunity to preserve and perpetuate examples of "imperceptible, modest, nontriumphalist" architecture …

Is *genius loci* a fashion?

Architecture and Landscape

E l o i s a   V a c c h i n i

Considerations for the 10th anniversary of Livio Vacchini's premature departure.

Quality building is deeply related to the architect's sensibility, his cultural level and his knowledge of territory and its history.

My father certainly had these qualities. His certainties were few, but clear. Nowadays, due to the congestion of our territory, the relationship between architecture and landscape becomes more and more complex. Sensitivity, knowledge of the territory and talent are not enough anymore. For our generation and for the future ones, being able to build and assure a healthy relationship with the landscape will be possible only if the cultural and educational level of the entire society – and at the same time the quality of its politics - experience a radical change.

Our landscape is continuously tortured by interventions that transform the area into a totality of disharmonious forms, styles and colors. Who is to be blamed for that? Real estate speculation, bad architects, laws and general development plans that make no sense and actually force to opt for questionable choices, to say the least? There are many causes and the theme of building integration and building quality is extremely complex). Within such a complexity of topics, one theme deserves to be debated. We're talking about social politics, fear, egocentrism, the need of cultural revolution: these topics are too often misunderstood, neglected and taken into little consideration. A cultural revolution brings along a different way of living and, as a consequence, a different way of conceiving architecture.

There is need for a turning point – or a revolution. Our territory desperately needs it. Architects have an important role in bringing a healthy balance between architecture and landscape, but they cannot carry the whole responsibility for this. Politics should play a significant role, too. I herewith

mean social politics, not landscaping politics. The reckless exploitation of the territory is a social and educational problem. If good architecture is, first and foremost, the work of a good architect then good land planning depends on the society's educational level and its capability to teach human beings how to share space and live together.

The Southern part of Switzerland where I live and work is sprinkled with individual houses. The great majority of the families dreams to build custom's tailored homes, built according to one's personal taste, important thing is to be "individual" in order to dictate your own taste and feel safe. Some architects prefer that their work gets published. Therefore, the risk of following formal rules instead of rules dictated by social needs is really high. The consequence is that formal rules tend to get the supremacy and the architect's mission are in constant evolution. Sometimes this does not evolve positively.
 Is it just a matter of form? No, without any doubt this is mostly a social matter.

Today, the desire to stand out and be recognized is the main priority, closely followed by the need for security. If we try to translate this concretely, everyone prefers to build his house on top of a cliff rather than build it in the center of a city, where one is supposed to share some of his life with others. Moreover, every day we find out about furious fights between neighbors, protests against the noise in the staircase, in the squares, outside the bars and even in playgrounds. We are not able to live together anymore and as soon as we have the opportunity to isolate, we do it behind walls. We continuously opt for the castle, preferably surrounded by thick walls, bordered by barbed wire fences and with flashing alarm lights.

And this is not enough. Stylistically speaking, our image of the ideal castle should remind us of forms and styles that we met in our childhood, in order to offer us the impression of safety. Further, we are since early childhood bombarded with conventional shapes that are supposed to make us feel safe. Therefore, we grow up believing that they correspond to safety. That tradition which was born and affirmed in social and community practices had

disappeared a while ago, but we pretend that nothing happened and mechanically apply its element (sometimes for a paradoxically opposite purpose: to isolate ourselves from the others). The form remains, but it is empty. Therefore this is the best way of spreading the kitsch: formal opulence, shapes without substance. The result is a totality of buildings conceptually similar to castles, decorated with apparently reassuring shapes, but in reality, disturbing and chaotic.

Fortunately, the idea that our ways of transforming the landscape leads to chaos started emerging in common sense during the last decades. The "genius loci" is brought into discussion again, as well as the relationship with the landscape. People are crying out for more severe and incisive legislation. But have we ever truly reflected on our incontrollable need for building our own fortresses? It is clear that we cannot scatter castles everywhere. First of all, there is not enough space, but even if we had infinite land at our disposal, the idea of individuals selfishly affirming their own visions of the world is repulsive. Not only because in this way the landscape transforms into a tangled, introvert chaos, but also because it leads to future disharmony, lack of listening, absence of sociability and rationality as well as absence of reasoning.

What is architecture if not the answer to a social and educational need, rather than response to a functional one? Today's society is in the run-up for sensational architecture, where the shape, the appearance, the glamour and the personal affirmation is the most important thing. What can we do, as architects, to help the world change direction, to obtain livable cities and harmonious territories?

Listen.
Observing the others, I noticed that listening is not fashionable.
And architecture means listening, not form.
Designing means listening, listening the people, the landscape, the climate.
Silence can be form.
Dialogue can be a silent act.
Architecture harmoniously integrated into the landscape does not shout.
On the contrary, it expresses the desire for sharing.

Let us try to observe the territory using this idea of interpretation and we shall discover that harmony does not depend exclusively on good architecture.

For example, we can say that the clustering of buildings on the Greek islands is a totality of ugly houses, if they were to be taken separately. However, thanks to the fact that they are piled up one on top of the other, all white so therefore all similar, they create a harmonious, serene and silent unity. Even the historic centers are founded of buildings that have no particular individual qualities. Still the harmony of the whole is strongly present. Uniformity of colors and materials is fundamental. The uniformity creates silence, it allows you to think, to watch.

Should therefore all the groups of buildings have the same color, the same materials and the same building techniques? The color can be an answer but not the only one. But to impose materials and building techniques would be insane. It would mean to give more importance to shape, style or to a certain historical moment, than to creativity and the construction of a cultural and social identity, well defined and especially contemporary.

Starting with 1930, Rationalism revolutionized architecture, cutting off every link with the languages of the past. This happened in order to support the social and cultural rebirth after the First World War. The goal was to raise social awareness to the level where everyone could have a house, acknowledging the dignity of the laborers and their families and offering them salubrious and functional spaces. From this point of view, the artistic research gave birth to new ideas: when one is not busy being afraid, one is free to think. This development constructively emerged into a new architecture, whose form was the answer to the need of a new, different lifestyle.

One of the most important technical revolutions was the modern use of erraced roofs. This was a new interpretation of the relationship with landscape: when the man felt the need to elevate himself and get out of his own cage made out of walls, the roof became a terrace. The roof becomes a place for watching the stars and the world, being in relation with the surrounding

landscape and the whole world.

The terraced roof made the traditionalists feel uncomfortable. Therefore they tried to impose by law the sloped roof, as if a form could assure quality and a harmonious integration into the landscape. Fortunately, the beauty of this revolution overcame the formalism.

A desire to live one`s life in absence of fear and in communion: this is the key that allowed the architect from those flourishing ages to insert the building into the context, creating at the same time a new place. The terraced roof is not the result of a formal imitation of the African buildings, but the tangible sign of a social, cultural and pedagogical progress.

In conclusion.

Architecture can fight the increasing fear that characterizes the individuals and the society nowadays; it can teach silence and listening.

It can, for example offer – if the politicians invest adequate resources in education and culture - spaces pedagogically adapted to the children`s rhythm of growth and learning. Architecture itself and an adequate pedagogy, could teach them to listen. Listening leads to respect. Respect for the others and for the environment. Listening means knowing and observing. The architecture of school buildings can be the first step: developing spaces that help one to listen and to show respect, curiosity and dialogue will develop as well. This is the quintessence of intelligence.

In the Technical University Institutes of Switzerland, the Universities and the Academies, professors should all believe that architecture does not mean form or style but silence and listening, functionality and creativity
(understood as the ability to understand a place). Students should finally learn to think of others, not of themselves. Young people usually believe that architecture is artistic talent. In fact, building using the rules of form means deafening the world by shouting out loud one`s own arid desire of supremacy.

With the support of a society used to listening and hospitality, architecture could come back to the concept of humility; humility understood as getting close to the earth again and fertile listening of the land - that humus which, with patience and silence nourishes the world.
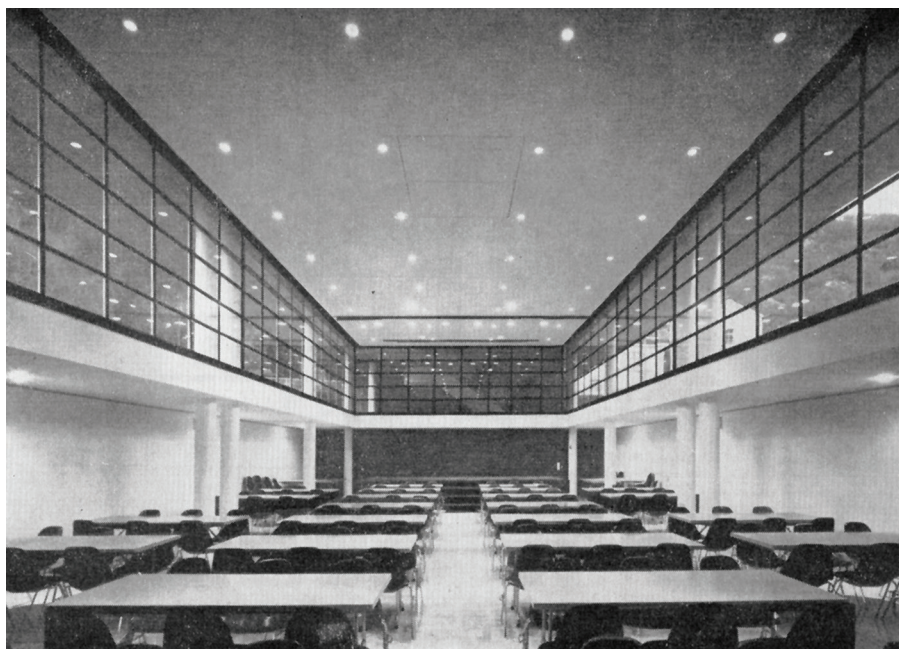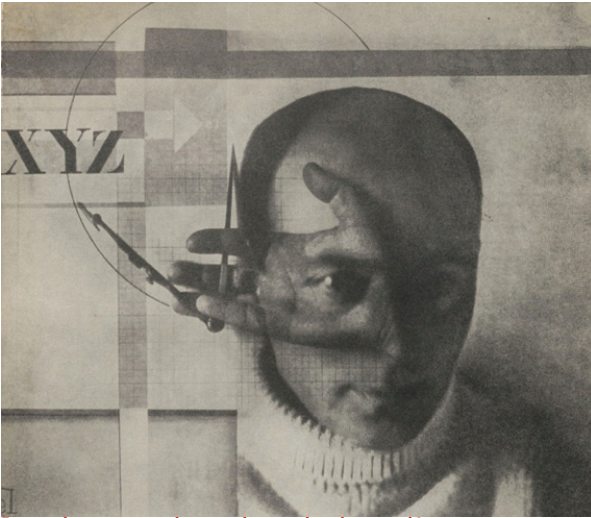
Is architecture logical or ideological?

Architecture should be both logical AND ideological.

L u c a   O r t e l l i

Such a statement is probably ideological and it is also logical in my opinion, even if it is clear that the meaning of the word logical, here, it is not the same than in the title of this text. Furthermore, the disjunctive term "or" implicitly argues an opposition between logic and ideology.
Architecture is logical because there is no other possible way to produce it. Eventually, one could speculate on the role and the weight given to "logic" in design and construction. According to this fundamental meaning, architecture can't be non-logical or irrational. In its two components – design and construction – architecture is an activity based on a rational sequence of choices and selections/eliminations. From this point of view, it would be possible to affirm that all the buildings, nowadays and in the past, are logical, but such a sentence is clearly false. This is due to the fact that logical and rational approach doesn't represent a universal and absolute value.

Nowadays, architecture is supposed to respond to many different, often contra-dictory, logics: economy, energy efficiency, social impact, density, sustainable urban development, aesthetics, public and private expectations, architectural discourse and so on. Beyond the passive a-critical acceptance and celebration of supposed or pretended "masterpieces" (as described in Koolhaas's Junk Space) it is possible and easy to criticize buildings and
projects non-responding to specific "logics". Such a criticism is mainly supported by quantitative analysis, technical factors, urban considerations, social evaluations, just to mention the main ones. As already stated, these parameters are often contradictory: economy versus social needs, energy efficiency versus ancient buildings, new complexes versus the existing city, ethics versus aesthetics (actually reduced to a fashionable slogan), densification versus well-being and many other oppositions. In this disorienting situation, an ideological approach is useful and even necessary, if we give to ideology the task to select and hierarchically organize the impressive number of items and topics architecture has to satisfy. An ideological vision is fundamental from this point of view. In its noblest meaning, ideology is an idea about the

city and its architecture, an idea about the world and how it could or should be. In this sense, ideology is a general principle, the adaptation of an idea to reality, the formalization of a specific possibility among many. Architecture without an ideological dimension transforms itself in a technical act — and in spite of its pretended or supposed neutrality, technology is ideological as well.

Can a project be *nostalgia-free?*

Stefan Simion
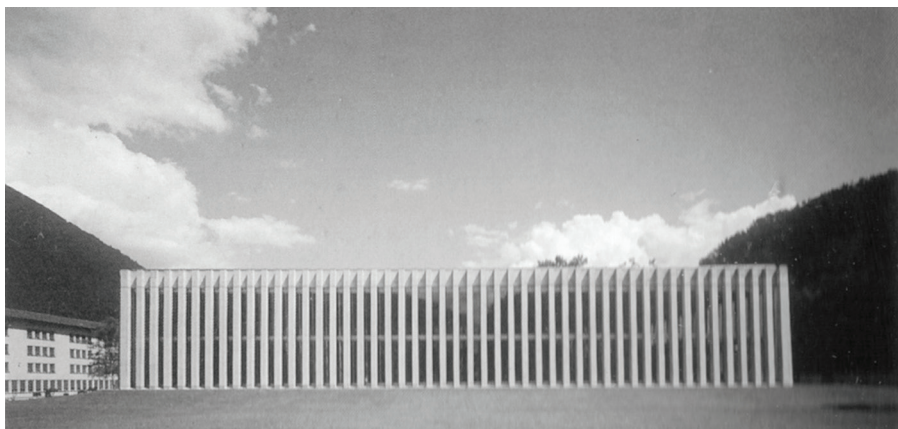
Nobody can escape nostalgia. It is the outcome of past experiences; it gathers habits, prejudices, heritage – all which is contained by our transmissible culture. Nostalgia is to architecture what representation is to arts such as painting or sculpture: at stake is the relation to the model and the emancipation from it. Nostalgia isn't a mere look back, but also an unconscious and unnoticed attempt to blend the promises of the possible with the model of the déjà-vu.

We can only try and resist nostalgia, recognize it, in order to choose another path on the occasion of a new project. Drawing a plan or a façade, a window or a door, relying solely on proportions and composition – on that which esthetics tells us by means of sight, all these belong to the empire of nostalgia. It is the memory of pleasant times reading a book or being absorbed into a late conversation with a glass of red wine in a specific place, with certain qualities which we need to repeat. The architecture of nostalgia is the architecture of the esthetical choices, of hierarchy and composition.

Vacchini left us an alternative strategy that tries to avoid the nostalgic charge. He has brought into light an ancient path to build the future: by means of logic which conjugates the essentials of architecture: light, orientation, type, technique, material. Just as the Egyptians have done thousands of years ago, building the pyramids. In order to do that, he gives up the sketch, the model, all gesture that connects memory to anticipation. In fact, he radicalizes the issue at stake: future cannot be anticipated. You can only act now, when you make the project. Architettura e una cosa mentale, he used to say.

Architecture comprises two fundamental and distinct moments: the project and its realization. Between them there is an unbridgeable gap. So he isolates what he retains as key matters of the project: the accidental can be eliminated. Only the essential, no compromise. Architecture becomes diagram. The best of these diagrams seduce and, more important, resist the passing of time, exactly because they have their own laws built into form by means of rules and principles. It is as close as it gets to the embodiment of ideals.

But afterwards, in Vacchini's inaccessible territory – the built realm, architecture cannot escape its condition. The built work produces its effect. The experiences of inhabitants transform as future nostalgia.

Can beauty be objective?

D a n   M a r i n
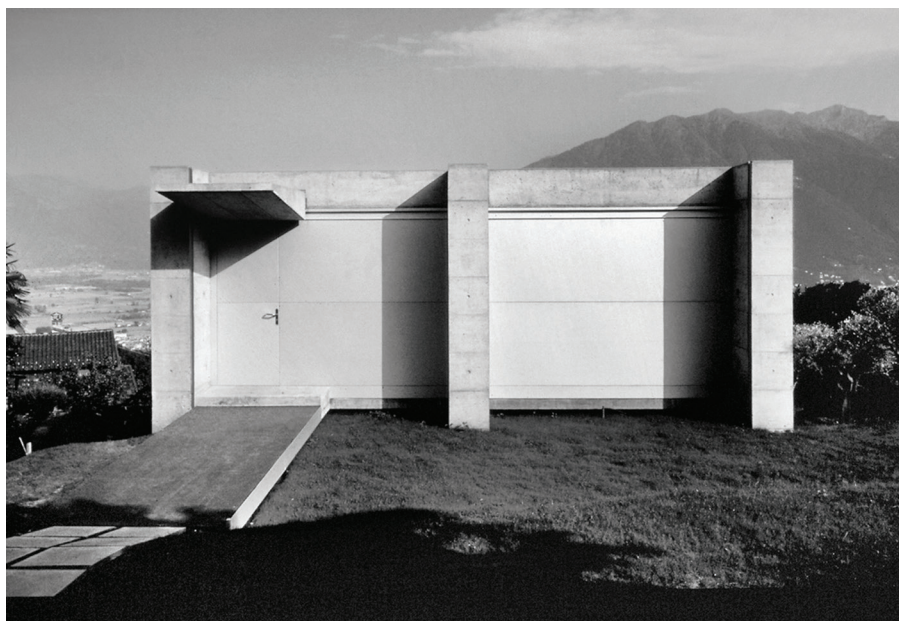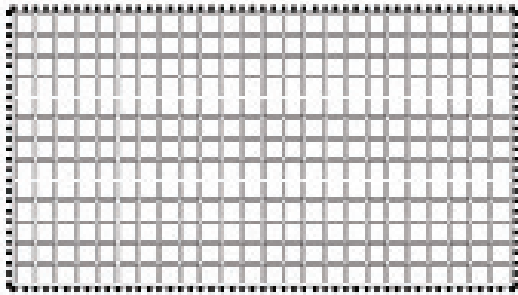
We arrived at Livio Vacchini's studio - a small group of students and assistants from EPFL. It was April 1993. He sat at the work table, focused on some drawings - several sheets of paper each printed with a rectangular interrupted contour, an constant rhythm of small, black rectangles and free spaces: it was the plan of the Palestra di Losone, actually of its punctual structure, with various takes, possibilities of the bay's dimension; at play was the relationship between the void and the built.

He displayed all the drawings and asked us what we think of them. We were taken by surprise and we had been trying to evaluate the imperceptible, the almost indistinguishable variations of proportions, we remained, for a few seconds, speechless. Enough though for him to gather away all his drawings, perhaps disappointed by our silence. -I see… you don't like it. The important part wasn't the choice of one of the alternatives - the differences between them were too subtle to give a prompt answer; essential was the fundamental will they expressed – an indepth exploration of the form in which the theme of its structure and its optical-space effects intersect with a classical ideal, beyond history, centered on tectonic veracity, on clarity and harmonic order.

Starting with the idea of the ambiguity of the structure - serial support or perforated wall - Vacchini's research was placed in a dual and complementary horizon: as he affirmed, the work on proportions was not only about the sensitive quality but also on the intellectual purity of the form. Vacchini hadn't been looking for "the beautiful" form itself, but the absolute form of an idea.

In the classical tradition, architecture was considered an art of construction, defined by the Vitruvian Triad and by an ideal of perfection derived from Plato's cosmogony. Modernity, in its successive phases, abolished this unifying and symbolic vision and relativised Beauty by deforming it ideologically or displacing it to the area of individual projection.

Beauty is both subjective and objective. It is subjective because, although the mechanisms of visual perception are invariable, the interpretation of the result differs: the perceptive comfort, "the good", is not the same for all. At the same time, the beautiful is objective because it is related to "the truth", the

correspondence between idea and form, between the internal principle and its visible expression. And, as long as the architecture can affirm its disciplinary identity - and implicitly, its autonomy - the references of the two plans, conceptualization and formalization, can not be found in the subject itself and in the urgency of the moment, but beyond them …

Is *genius loci* a fashion?

The scene took place at Arc-et-Senans, Saturday, March 9th, 2002, when Francois Chaslin had brought here the microphones from the "France Culture" channel and those of his "Metropolitain" show for a live broadcast. Claude Nicolas Ledoux is the host of a Swiss architects gathering , reunited at the initiative of the producer who is eager to find out more about Swiss architecture.

Around the table, with all the microphones open, one can hear some architects recognizing each other against the noisy and talkative background.. Following the line of the questions brought up by Francois Chaslin, each one of them says something and they express themselves as if , given a few definitely good Swiss architects, one could substantiate the concept of "Swiss architecture"..Or, to paraphrase, as if there were such a thing as Swiss cheese in the absence of high quality standards for the overwhelming majority of Swiss cheese producers. First of all, one of the guests, Martin Steinmann, aloof and seeming above everything, sets the reference beyond the level of the discussion. Francois Chaslin, intrigued by the silence of one guest, gives him the floor. There he is, Livio Vacchini! He is present and he speaks. Or rather he is silent for a long moment and then he speaks, raising the temperature in the room: "Man is born multiple …He dies as one. I am surrounded by noise. I don't want to hear the noise(any longer). I am searching for the one. To become one. To make a building that is one, where space, light, matter, structure become united as one."

Silence follows which he then interrupts to tell the story of the architecture and of the architect: " Formerly the architect was king. Imhotep was king, god and architect. Later, the architect became adviser to the king. Ledoux for example. And then the architect raised against the king/politics. He became a rebel. Today, the architect is the one who won. Politics needs architects, celebrated architects, powerful, …rich and travelling by helicopter. Success is easy. The architect has won. Everything is possible".
But in the end of the day what is the architect's concern? The architect is understood here as Livio Vacchini saw him: free and responsible. He concludes

then the story of the architecture and of the architect "Today, what are the architects' concerns? What really? Not the noise, smells, minimalism, fashion. What is it that he should be concerned with if not beauty, eternity ,the monument … everything that is difficult."

Without arrogance, but driven by those questions which have determined his life, Livio Vacchini, who never wanted to teach, defined what it means to be a professor; what teaching means: basically being elsewhere, different, thus defying the establishment , the convenient, the prince . Opposing silence to noise. He knows, without doubt, that his work is a word he wanted to cross with those of his peers who put out this question: "What is architecture? What is architecture about?" and that it is always about growing. Growing a masterpiece.

A masterpiece of thought which he fortunately produced in the thirteen sections of Capolavori (Linteau publishers), from which I extracted this short conclusion: architecture is made by its own history and at Stonhenge it opens by a masterpiece. What is a masterpiece? It is what all great buildings erected after Stonehenge wanted to be: an approach always closer to perfection.

Farewell, architect! *Ciao*, my friend!

List of illustrations :

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Roberto Masiero teaches Architectural History at the Instituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia and the Facoltà di Architettura di Trieste. He has published many essays and articles in sector periodicals. He has also published many books, including: In un luogo superfluo, Venice 1985 // L'arte senza muse, Milan 1986; Trieste e l'Imperio (with F. Caputo), Venice 1987 // La questione architettura. Teoria, storia e critica (with V. Ugo), Venice 1990 // L'architettura del Ticino 1966-1996, Milan 1998 // Guida dell'architettura neoclassica nel Veneto, Venice 1998. He is the editor of the book by Hans Sedlmayr, Das Licht in seinen Künstlerischen Manifestatione, Mittenwald, Mäander 1979. For Electa he has published Afra e Tobia Scarpa. Architetture, Milan 1996.

Among his extensive writings on Vacchini's works: Livio Vacchini, Works and Projects, G. Gili, 1999 (aussi en italien chez Electa) // La casa delle tre onne, Casabella, nr.681, 09/2000 // Architettura fa il luogo, Casabella, nr.698, 03/2002 // Vacchini e/o Gehry in Anfione e Zeto, rivistadiarchitettu-raearti, theme Armonia, n.16/2003, ed. Il Prato // Spacek Vacchini Vacchini Spacek, ed. Libria, Melfi/Potenza, 2003 // Nel-Il+, Livio Vacchini disegni 1964-2007, ed.Libria 2013.

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A l b e r t o   C a m p o   B a e z a

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Born in Valladolid, where his grandfather was an architect, but from the age of two, he lived in Cádiz where he saw the Light. He is a Professor in the Madrid School of Architecture, ETSAM, where he has been a tenured Professor for more than 35 years. His works have been widely recognized. From the Houses Turégano and de Blas, both in Madrid, to Gaspar House, Asencio House or Guerrero House in Cádiz, Rufo House in Toledo and Moliner House in Zaragoza. And the Olnick Spanu House in Garrison, New York, the House of the Infinite in Cádiz, and the Raumplan House in Madrid. Or the BIT Center in Inca-Mallorca, the public space Between Cathedrals, in

Cádiz, the Caja de Granada Savings Bank and the MA, the Museum of Memory of Andalucía, both in Granada. And a nursery for Benetton in Venice, or the Offices in Zamora for the Regional Government of Castilla y León.
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Florian Stanciu

Florian Stanciu and Iulia Stanciu set up the architectural office "STARH" in 1996. Their works, in architecture, restoration and interior design, have been awarded prizes at the Architectural Biannual (they received the medals of the Architecture Section in 1996 and 1998, of the Interior Design Section in 2000, the President's medal in 2000, and were nominated several times), at the Architectural Annual, Bucharest (prizes at the Restoration Section in 2008 and 2012) and were nominated to represent Romania (in 1999, 2001, 2005 and 2013) for Mies van der Rohe Awards. Their work has been published in the "Phaidon Altas of Contemporary World Architecture" (the 2004 and 2006 editions) and in several issues of "A10 Magasine for European Architecture", Rotterdam. Their works were presented in the Romanian Pavilion at the Biannual of Architecture in Venice, 2000, 2004, 2006
They both have the PHD title in architecture and teach at "University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest. (text from „Tower house" album – „Zeppelin Zoom" 2013).

Françoise Schatz

Former tenured Professor at the École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Nancy (France), she taught subjects like design process, graphic figuration, epistemological issues in modelisation, as well as in design studios. At LAREA (Philippe Boudon, director), she conducted researchs mainly oriented towards the explanation and the didactics of the architectural conception, with regard to the point of view of measurement (architecturological modelisation). With alii she published a teaching book on the process of conception and its specific operations; she is also author of numerous articles. Her own motto about drawing is : « On ne peut figurer que si on renonce à tout figurer » (J. Guillerme, 1975).

Horia Marinescu is shifting between architectural design and its critical observation, searching in classical drawing or written word a balance between the poetics of space and the beauty of bearing structures. He regards, since over 20 years, the Romanian architectural world from Vienna (and vice-versa), noting his observations in essays published by the Viennese and Bucharest press. Studied architecture at Akademie der Bildenden Künste Wien(where he received his magister architecturae), at the Technische Universität Wien and at UAUIM Bucharest.
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Eloisa Vacchini

After graduating the school of achitecture at École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Eloisa Vacchini traveled and worked one year in Australia and one year in Argentina. In 2000 she has become an associate architect of Livio Vacchini and worked on the La Ferriera projects in Locarno, the Nice competition, Secondary school Bellinzona, Inceneritore Giubiasco, the Ascona apartments, the sports complex Mülimatt. She continues the work of her father at studio Vacchini since his disappearance in 2007.
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Luca Ortelli

Luca Ortelli is a professor of architecture and theory at the EPFL. He had graduated the Politecnico di Milano, then becoming assistant teahcer at ETH of Zurich and proffessor at the University of Geneva. He is the author of "Ragnar Ostberg: Municipio di Stoccolma" at Electa publishing house, 1990. He has also been editor at the architecture magazine Lotus International and co-director of the architectural guides Stella Polare in Milan. He is the author of various articles published in national and international magazines; he has also been a jury member for numerous competitions. He has won the competition for building the Cantonal Archives in Bellinzona, completed in 1999.

Vincent Mangeat

Influenced by his work experience in Paris, training under Jean Prouvé and assistant to Hans Brechbühler and Pierre Foretay at the EPF Lausanne, Mangeat's work bridges the gap between two architectural eras, namely the Tessin "Tendenza" of the 70s and 90s architectural styles with their exponents in the German-speaking region of Switzerland. His work has though always remained independent and rooted in western Switzerland. From his first residential building in Evolène (1969) to his current projects, including a house for writers at the foot of the Jura mountains and building for the Cantonal High School in Nyon (1998), his wide architectural achievements form a important a part of his life and work, as does his continuous teaching activity.

Dan Marin

Dan Marin is a Romanian architect, based in Bucharest, currently teaching architectural design at UAUIM (Bucharest). He is also member of the Built Heritage commission in Bucharest and of the Urban Technical commission of the City Hall Bucharest. Among his realizations, stands the extension and rehabilitation of the Paucescu house as the headquarters of the Union of Architects in Romania, together with Zeno Bogdanescu, in 2002.

Stefan Simion

Stefan Simion obtained a degree in architecture at "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest in 2004 and he's the author of the thesis "Vacchini" in 2009. As a laureat of the SCIEX award attributed by The Rector's Conference of the Swiss Universities, he has conducted a post-doctoral research on the work of Livio Vacchini during the academic year 2013-2014 in EPFL. He had teaching experiences at Pratt (New York), EPFL (Lausanne), International University of Rabat (Morocco). Currently he teaches architectural design in UAUIM Bucharest and he's an associate architect of the office www.theposter.ro with Irina Melita.