

## Claudio D'Amato Guerrieri Controspazio as a “little magazine”

### Abstract

«Controspazio» edited by Paolo Portoghesi, was published from 1969 to 1981 with a total of 60 volumes. Three have been the editorial boards. The first one worked in Milan from 1969 to 1972 and edited 26 volumes; the second (1973-1976) and the third (1977-1981) in Rome, and each of them produced 17 volumes. The main topic of the Milanese season was the autonomy of architecture: at that time the magazine spread the knowledge of urban studies elaborated in Venice and Milan, and in particular of the theoretical and design work of Aldo Rossi and the so-called Tendenza. The first Roman season dealt with a critical review of post-war Italian architecture, focusing on the work of masters such as Ridolfi and Gardella, and on the legacy of the Modern Movement. Two interpretations clashed: that of neo-rationalism; and that of the expressiveness of architectural languages and to the return to history. In the last season, the editorial board dealt with directly the topic of architecture coming out from Modern Movement and were anticipated the topics of First International Exhibition of Architecture “The presence of the Past” of Venice Biennale.

### Keywords

Politics and architecture — Autonomy and pluralism of architecture — Drawn architecture

### The “little magazines” in the sixties and seventies of the twentieth century

Starting from the sixties of the twentieth century a typical form in which architects have discussed about theory and criticism of architecture was that of the “little magazines” edited outside the major editorial circuits.

It was a typical European phenomenon (Italy, France, Spain) and North American (New York, San Francisco), in opposition to the world of magazines backed by advertising.

Their life was short, their release uneven. But they have changed the way to think architecture, drawing attention to research rather than to professional practice. Their privileged audience was that of the university world, from which almost all their editors came.

They gave voice to the phenomenon known as “drawn architecture”, which saw protagonists, especially in Italy, intellectual architects, detached from the professional world, and devoted to the teaching and the exercise of criticism.

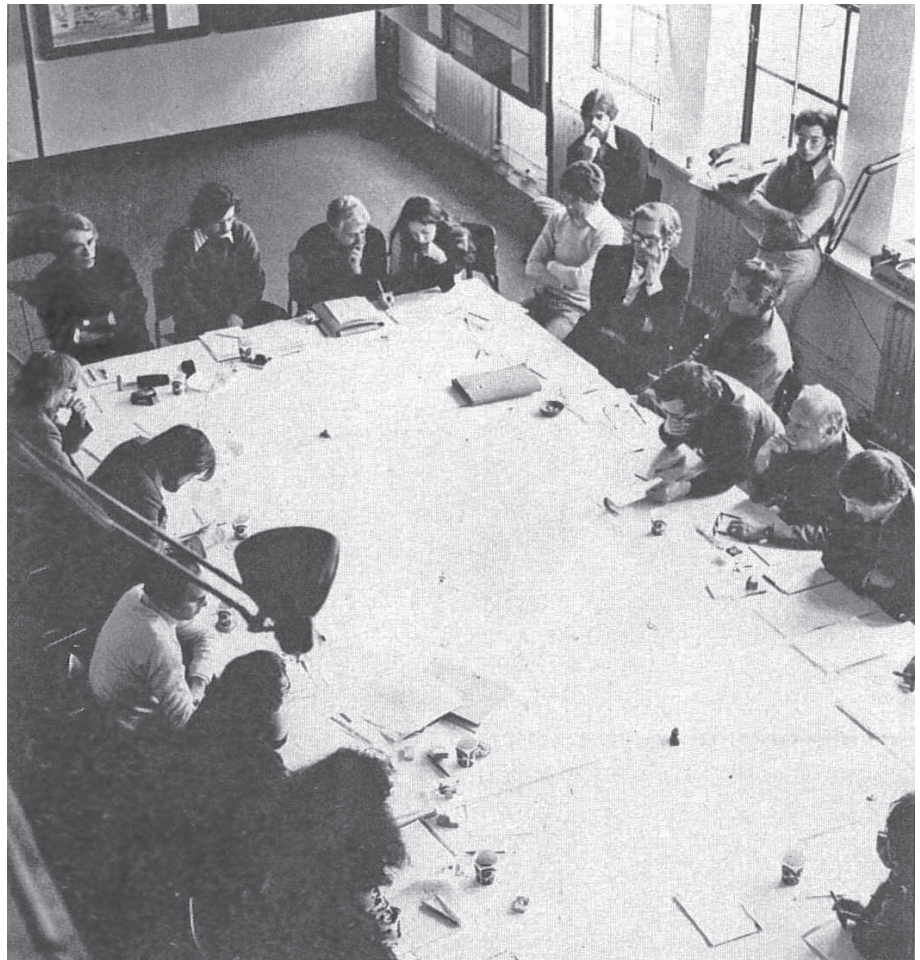
In 1977, from 3 to 5 February, there was a significant debate between these little magazines promoted by Oppositions and MIT Press in New York at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies directed by Peter Eisenman, on the topic “After Modern Architecture” (Figg. 1 -2).

To the meeting was invited «Architese» (Bruno Reichlin, Stanislaus Von Moos), «Arquitectura Bis» (Oriol Bohigas, Federico Correa, Rafael Mo-neo), AMC, « Architecture-Mouvement-Continuite» (Jacques Lucan, Patrice Noviant), «Controspazio» (Alessandro Anselmi, Claudio D'Amato), «Lotus» (Pierluigi Nicolini, Joseph Rykwert)<sup>1</sup>.

Two years later, in May 1979, on the occasion of the decennial of

**Fig. 1**

Little Magazines Conference: After Modern Architecture, New York, 3-5 February 1977. From the left to the right: Edith Girard, Jacques Lucan, Mario Gandelsonas, Anthony Vidler, Stanford Anderson, Peter Eisenman, Livio Dimitriu, Alessandro Ansemi, Alessandro Latour, Lluís Domènech, Oriol Bohigas, Federico Correa, Rafael Moneo, Peter Blake, Kenneth Frampton (photo by Oscar Israelovitz).

**Fig. 2**

Little Magazines Conference: After modern Architecture, New York, 3-5 febbraio 1977. From left to right: Rafael Moneo, Peter Blake, Kenneth Frampton, Robert Gutman, Colin Rowe, George Baird, Peter Marangoni, Diana Agrest, New York, Suzanne Frank, Edith Girard, Jacques Lucan, Mario Gandelsonas, Anthony Vidler (photo by Oscar Israelovitz).







**Fig. 3**

Decennial of «Controspazio» at the National Academy of San Luca, Rome, Thursday, May 10, 1979. From left to right: Aldo Rossi, Carlo Aymonino, Claudio D'Amato, Paolo Portoghesi, Mario Ridolfi, Roberto Gabetti (photo by Francesco Cellini).

«Controspazio», similar issues were dealt with in a debate coordinated by Paolo Portoghesi with Mario Ridolfi, Carlo Aymonino, Aldo Rossi, Roberto Gabetti<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 3). These two meetings - one informal, the other academic<sup>3</sup> - marked symbolically the transition to the significant changes of the eighties.

### The beginning of «Controspazio»

«Controspazio»'s gestation period (1968) was all “Roman” and grew in the cultural climate of student and workers’ struggles very followed in the School of Architecture of Rome from 1963 (Fig. 4) to 1968, till to that point of radical break that was the so-called “Battle of Valle Giulia” (March 1, 1968).

Paolo Portoghesi, young teacher of “Italian literature” (history of criticism)<sup>4</sup> since 1962, was the reference of a group of students, self-called “group of the Fifty one’s”, who was writing on a little magazine of Architecture (*Finalità dell’architettura*), edited by one of them, Michele Pinto. The alliance between Paolo Portoghesi and many of those students will consolidate in the following years when, in 1968, he called many of them to work for the *DAU, Dizionario Enciclopedico di Architettura e Urbanistica*, 6 volumes, edited by the Institute Editorial Romano between ‘68 and ‘69 (then re-edited by Gangemi Editore from 2005 to 2007).

For the first volume of *Controspazio* (never released) the Roman Editorial board proposed to Portoghesi a presentation scheme that exalted the role of “politics” as the true purpose of architecture. In it architecture should have been cathartically dissolve:

“What are the fundamental nodes today for who that thinks to architecture as a political problem? There is no need to explain what ‘political’ means: there is no problem in the architect’s profession, there are no proposals and solutions, there is not any educational problem that somehow does not sink its roots in the overall social contradiction to which every day we are more violently called to attend. [...]

“Why then this magazine? Because at this point the only or at least the most immediate thing to do is create a tool that breaks the particular kind of ‘noisy silence’ that has been created around all this; a tool that stands as a service of a process that is beginning here and there in the Roman neigh-

**Fig. 4**

Rome, School of Architecture, student assembly in 1963. Top: Andrea Silipo (Rome, 1942), second from left. He was one of the extensors of the declaration elaborated for the number 0 of *Controspazio*; Renato Nicolini (third from left); Alessandro Anselmi (fourth from left).

borhoods and popular districts of Milan and ... in the hundred Italian cities scarred by public and private buildings.

"The only interesting information about architecture and its social problems is now being entrusted to the second and last pages of some so called left daily newspapers. On the contrary the big magazines and their editorial boards have been only adapted to increase the ornamental activities of the city and the territory.

"Certainly this problem can not be solved in a magazine: ... But postponing everything to the 'day after the revolution' can not only be dangerous but wrong ..." (Unpublished document)

Faced with an unrealistic approach, Portoghesi decided that the editorial board ought to be in Milan, where, since 1967, he covered the chair of Architecture History and was also the Dean.

The name «*Controspazio*» was an invention of Portoghesi, capable to intercept the rebel sentiment that youth culture expressed at that time<sup>5</sup>, combining the values of the 'space' that the cult magazine *Spazio* of Luigi Moretti<sup>6</sup> had exalted, with the history of ancient and modern architecture. The publisher of «*Controspazio*» was Raimondo Coga (Edizioni Dedalo, Bari) who at that time qualified himself as one of the leading publishers of non-parliamentary culture (his magazine «*Il manifesto*» favored the split of Natoli, Rossanda, Magri et al. from the Italian Communist Party).

Tabloid format, 'stick' font in cover, hand paper and popular price (500 lire = 2.5 €) were the factors that caused the immediate success among the students of the Italian schools of architecture. Brilliant market answer to the glossy paper magazines (Fig. 5).

### **The «*Controspazio*»'s seasons and its editorial boards**

«*Controspazio*», rivista di Architettura e Urbanistica", was edited by Paolo Portoghesi from 1969 to 1981. In it there are three identifiable seasons: a



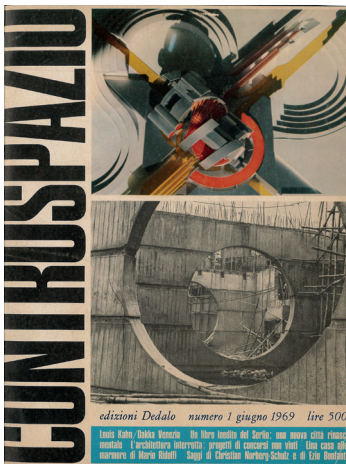


Fig. 5

Cover of «Controspazio», vol. 1, June 1969.

Milanese one and two Romans, linked to so many editorial boards, all composed of young architects-researchers. Their ambition was in designing and writing at the same time. All of them had graduated before the end of the sixties, when the schools of architecture were still structured with the curricula provided by Gustavo Giovannoni in their the very beginning during the twenties (37 examinations); and for them, although with different accents, knowledge of history of architecture was the indispensable foundation of design.

The magazine, though articulated into sections (theory, design, history, etc.) considered architecture a unitary set. And so it proposed a good mix of projects, theoretical ideas, essays of architecture history, establishing a real continuity with the magazines that had come out in Europe between the two wars.

The first season (1969-1972) was the Milanese one. The editorial board consisted of Ezio Bonfanti, chief editor (Milan 1937-1973) and Massimo Scolari (Milan 1943). Along with them: Luciano Patetta (Milan 1935), Virgilio Vercelloni (Milan 1930-1995), Maria Grazia Messina, Benigno Cuccuru. They brought to the renown the Aldo Rossi's "tendenza" in Milan and revealed to the Italian schools of architecture the phenomenon of urban studies that had their stronghold in Venice. It produced a total of 26 issues<sup>7</sup>. After the death of Ezio Bonfanti, Portoghesi moved the editorial office to Rome: this season (1973-1976) produced 17 issues<sup>8</sup> and saw Renato Nicolini (Rome 1942-2012) editor in chief, in place of Bonfanti. With him Controspazio became mostly the voice of the "Tendenza". In 1973 they were part of the editorial board, with Renato Nicolini, Gianni Accasto (Cuneo 1941), Giampaolo Ercolani (Rome 1946), Vanna Fraticelli (Rome 1942), Giorgio Muratore (Rome 1946-2017); and there continued to be in the new editorial board Antonio Monroy, Luciano Patetta and Virgilio Vercelloni of the old Milanese editorial board.

To them were added from 1974 to 1976 Maurizio Ascani, Alessandro Anselmi (Rome 1934-2013), Claudio D'Amato (Bari 1944), Daniela Fonti, Guglielmo Monti (1941), Livio Quaroni (Rome 1942), Giuseppe Rebecchini (Rome 1942), Duccio Staderini (Rome 1941), Laura Thermes (Rome, 1942). Following the ideological tradition of the PCI, a "study center" was created, managed by the hard wing of the "Tendenza": Salvatore Bisogni (Naples 1932), Rosaldo Bonicalzi (Milan 1944), Raffaele Panella (Foggia 1937-2016) Uberto Siola (Naples 1938). The ideological disagreement between communist Nicolini and liberal-socialist Portoghesi came to light in occasion of the first of the two monographic volumes dedicated to Ridolfi. Since 1977 Portoghesi decided that the composition of the editorial board ought not appear in the colophon.

In the last season (1977-1981) Anselmi, Thermes, Staderini and D'Amato take part of the editorial board together with Francesco Cellini (Rome 1944): 17 issues<sup>9</sup> came out, anticipating the themes of First International Exhibition of Architecture "The presence of the Past" of Venice Biennale directed by Paolo Portoghesi (Fig. 6).

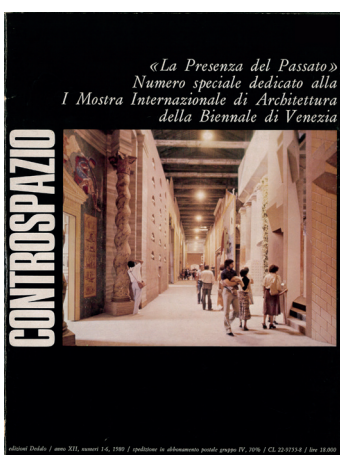


Fig. 6

Cover of «Controspazio», vol. 1-6, January-December 1980, special issue dedicated to the First International Exhibition of Architecture at the Venice Biennale.

### «Controspazio», autonomy and pluralism of Architecture

In the history of the "little magazines", «Controspazio» was the one, in its very beginning, who more theoretically considered the relationship between politics and architecture, which saw the heteronomy conception of architecture in the service of politics opposite to the autonomous one of the architecture that claimed its artistic specificity.

Not casually, in 1963 - at the beginning of the occupations of the Italian Schools of Architecture - two texts imposed themselves in left-wing youth culture. They represented those two souls of the movement well: on the one hand, the speech that Che Guevara held in 1963, at the First International Congress of teachers and students of Architecture in Havana; on the other, *La critica del gusto* of Galvano Della Volpe<sup>10</sup>.

In the following two seasons, Paolo Portoghesi opposed the attempt of intellectual elites who had in «Casabella» their reference, to impose a “single thought” flattened on the orthodox interpretation of modernism

On these topics I interviewed in 2008 Paolo Portoghesi<sup>11</sup>:

“[...] The magazines I have edited had born from the “listening”: after all, when I started Controspazio, you know the initial adventure, what did we want to do? We wanted to give voice to the many objections born within modernity, to deepen to its self-criticism.

“At first, we’ve fully involved politics. Then, after I went to Milan, we realized that this would be damaging because we would ultimately have been forced to adapt the architecture to the ever-changing conditions of political discourse without recognizing the minimum autonomy that architecture always has to have.

“Controspazio was in a certain sense the theater of an excess of autonomy claimed by some, and vice versa of a conscious heteronomy developed by others. And I believe I have given to your generation basically – anyway to the generation of my first students– a stage from which each one could make his sermon. And in this way I did not refer myself to my own architectural idea, but I accepted the magazine like the place of confrontation, requiring only the coherence in the commitment in the discipline. On the contrary there was someone who thought that policy could replace discipline and that, therefore, architecture was good because it was done with good intentions.

“I remember that we fought the famous “engaged buildings”, those made by the precedent generation, who was very busy in politics, but whose architecture was of series B or C, thinking that this sacrifice of quality had great political significance. Like Ridolfi, I was completely contrary to this series C architecture made with very good intentions, but also extremely easy to do. And then the spontaneous question was: “Would they be able to do a series A architecture?” And probably they were not.

“I solved the generational conflicts by giving the word to the generation after mine, and I do not regret it. At that time some people thought that Controspazio was not a magazine directed by me. Gregotti said, “this is more the magazine of Scolari or Nicolini than the magazine of Portoghesi; but I think it has been right to do in this way, also because my generation had not have any message to give [...]”

### **The end of «Controspazio»**

«Controspazio» was therefore the magazine of the generation between that who still represented the class of practitioners who had contributed to post-war reconstruction (the generation born in the 20s and 30s) and that who would be mostly represented by the under-occupied and unemployed architects born after the 1950s.

It was the magazine that gave voice to a conscious generation of the transformation of its role, a generation that was the ultimate result of the academic school founded by Gustavo Giovannoni in the 1920s. His legacy, in the short term, could not be captured by anyone, because the cultural conditions that generated it had completely disappeared<sup>12</sup>.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Many other architects, that wrote on those magazines, were present at the meeting, because they were already in New York or here expressly arrived: Edith Girard («AMC»); Mario Gandelsonas, Anthony Vidler, Diana Agrest, Suzanne Frank, Stanford Anderson («Oppositions»); Alessandra Latour («Controspazio»); Lluís Domènech, Federico Correa («Arquitectura bis»); Peter Blake, Kenneth Frampton, Robert Gutman, Colin Rowe, George Baird, Peter Marangoni, Livio Dimitriu. See «Controspazio», IX, n. 1, June 1977, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> See «Controspazio», XI, n. 3, pp. 63-64. The integral transcript of the introductory intervention of Portoghesi is located at C. D'Amato, *Studiare l'architettura*, Roma, Gangemi editore, 2014 (ISBN 978-88-492-2980-6), chap. VIII, Appendix C, pp. 149-153.

<sup>3</sup> The celebration was held in Rome on Thursday, May 10, 1979 at the National Academy of San Luca, whose President at that time was Mario Ridolfi.

<sup>4</sup> Paolo Portoghesi (Rome, 1931), graduated from the School of Architecture in Rome in 1957, began his academic career as assistant of Guglielmo De Angelis D'Ossat at the chair of «Caratteri stilistici dei monumenti». From 1962 to 1966 he taught «History of architectural theory and criticism». In 1967 he won the chair of «Architecture history» and was called to the Politecnico di Milano.

<sup>5</sup> Of course, there was also a certain suggestion made by the magazine, all political and ideological, «Contropiano», edited by Alberto Asor Rosa (Rome 1933) and Massimo Cacciari (Venice 1944), in collaboration with Mario Tronti (Rome 1931) and Antonio Negri (Padua 1933), printed in Florence from 1968 to 1971 for the types of La Nuova Italia. The title (as Asor Rosa said in an interview in 2001) resumed that of «a Soviet film of the 1920s or 1930s, describing the efforts to realize a development plan of the Soviet Union different from the traditional one».

<sup>6</sup> The magazine «Spazio», edited by Luigi Moretti (Rome 1906 - Capraia Island 1973), was published between 1950 and 1968 (from 1953 with irregular periodicity).

<sup>7</sup> In 1969 (1st year, monthly) 5 issues were released: vol. 1-June; vol. 2-3, July-August; vol. 4-5, September-October; vol. 6, November; vol. 7, December.

In 1970 (2nd year, monthly), 6 issues were released: vol. 1-2, January-February; vol. 3-4, March-April; vol. 5-6, May-June; vol. 7-8, July-August; vol. 9-10, September-October; vol. 11-12, November-December.

In 1971 (3rd year, monthly) 7 issues were released: vol. 1-2, January-February; vol. 3, March; vol. 4-5, April-May; vol. 6, June; vol. 7-8, July-August; vol. 9-10-11, September-October-November; vol. 12, December.

In 1972 (4th year, monthly) 8 issues were released: vol. 1-2, January-February; vol. 3-4, March-April; vol. 5-6, May-June; vol. 7, July; vol. 8, August; vol. 9, September; vol. 10 October; vol. 11-12, November-December.

<sup>8</sup> In 1973 (5th year, monthly), 6 issues were released: vol. 1, June; vol. 2, July-August; vol. 3, September; vol. 4, October; vol. 5, November; vol. 6, December.

In 1974, (6th year, monthly), 4 issues were released: vol. 1, September; vol. 2, October; vol. 3, November; vol. 4, December.

In 1975 (7th year, monthly), 4 issues were released: vol. 1, September; vol. 2, October; vol. 3, November; vol. 4, December.

In 1976 (8th year, irregular), 3 issues were released: vol. 1, January-February; vol. 2, March-April; vol. 3, November-December.

<sup>9</sup> In 1977 (9th year, bimonthly), 5 issues were released: vol. 1, June; vol. 2, July-August; vol. 3, September; vol. 4-5, October-November; vol. 6, December.

In 1978 (10th year, bimonthly), 4 issues were released: vol. 1, January-February; vol. 2-3, March-June; vol. 4, July-August; vol. 5-6, September-December.

In 1979 (11th year, bimonthly), 4 issues were released: vol. 1-2, January-April; vol. 3, May-June; vol. 4, July-August; vol. 5-6, September-December.

In 1980 (12th year, bimonthly), only 1 issue was released: vol. 1-6, January-December.

In 1981 (13th year, quarterly), 3 issues were released: vol. 1, January-March; vol. 2, April-June; vol. 3-4, July-December.

<sup>10</sup> The speech that Che Guevara delivered on September 29, 1963, is in Italian translation with the title *Questa è una generazione di sacrificio* in E.C. Guevara, *Opere*, vol. III, tomo II, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1969, pp. 98-106. They were part of the Italian delegation of FGCI (Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana), Alessandro Ansemi and Renato Nicolini. The meeting took place at the same time of the International

Union of Architects' (UIA) Annual Congress, which had chosen Havana as the venue that year.

The first edition of the *Critica del gusto* di Galvano della Volpe, dates back to 1960 for types of Feltrinelli, Milan. In 1963, students of the School of Architecture of Rome, on a proposal by Renato Nicolini, invited Galvano della Volpe to talk about the "specificity" of architecture.

<sup>11</sup> See C. D'Amato, *Studiare l'architettura*, Roma, Gangemi Editore, 2014, pp. 84 et seq.

<sup>12</sup> In 1982 «Controspazio» became a publicly funded magazine: Edizioni Dedalo sold it to University of Reggio Calabria, which appointed Marcello Fabbri as chief editor.

Claudio D'Amato Guerrieri was born in Bari on December 22, 1944. He lives in Rome since 1959. Here he graduated in Architecture in La Sapienza University in 1971, where he worked in research and teaching until 1986. From 1987 to 2015 he was full professor of Architectural design at the University of Reggio Calabria until 1990; and then at the Polytechnic University of Bari, where he founded the School of Architecture, of which he was the first and last dean. From the second half of the sixties of the twentieth century to 2014, he produced more than 300 publications. He has been in the editorial board of Controspazio magazine from 1974 to 1981. His design production, as author or co-author, is represented by about one hundred works (projects and realizations) carried out from the second half of the seventies. In 2014 he was awarded with the Prize "Presidente della Repubblica per l'Architettura" of the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca.