

Ugo Rossi  
**Bernard Rudofsky. 2+2=4\***

\* Translated by Elena Chiarelli

---

Abstract

In the mid 30' the Austrian architect Bernard Rudofsky (1905-1988) built, in Italy and in Brazil, a number of houses that the critics defined as the best modern houses ever built. In 1941 he moved to the USA. In New York, working at MoMA, he organized some important exhibitions such as *Architecture Without Architects* and in 1958, commissioned by the government, the Cultural Exhibitions at the Brussels World Fair. Despite those important results nonetheless, his work and thought were at the time hardly recognized by any Modern Architecture History book. The aim of my essay is to illustrate the causes of such unfair destiny which delivered his work and thought to oblivion for such a long time.

Key-words

Bernard Rudofsky — Eutopy — Architecture critics

---

In 1949 George Orwell publishes *1984* (Orwell 1949). Set in a dystopic utopia, the novel leads us into a very near future, into a London ripped apart by an ambiguous and eternal war which enslaves the whole of Europe to the nightmare of a totalitarian dictatorship and a policing state, «a magnified projection into the future of a present that contained Stalinism and an immediate past that had witnessed the flowering of Nazism» (Huxley 1958). The scene is set against a perpetual conflict where the enemy is unknown. Its developments are incessantly broadcasted by futuristic technologies completely assertive to power. The main character, Winston Smith, works at the *Ministry of Truth*, his task is to update – rather forging – data, statistics and events in order to keep them always in line with the false propaganda of the Party: production growth, efficiency, improvement of lifestyle and welfare, military achievements. Winston is well aware that the way of life in such a society, in which, paradoxically, *War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, Ignorance is Strength*, is, after all, a miserable one. The information that he forges is pure invention, propaganda fantasies made of statistics incessantly blurted out by speakers placed everywhere only to overwhelm the population with useless data purely to subjugate it. The assertion of power made by the Party is nonetheless true. Two plus two does not always equal four, it does so only when the Party says so! Winston, against any law – even though in such dictatorship of uncertainty, there are no written ones – feels the need to record in a diary his own truth: «Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows» (Orwell 1949).

There are some similarities between the historical time we refer to – the years between WWI and WWII – and the situation described by Orwell

in 1984. The events taking place in Europe in those years are precisely the references on which Orwell bases his novel. The raise to power of the many forms of nationalism, dictatorship and totalitarian regimes, in Russia, in Italy, in Germany and in Spain, represents the scenario for the impending atomic catastrophe in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The event that will determine not only the western cultural failure, but also and more over, the betrayal of the promise of happiness based on industrial, scientific and technological development which made for the foundation of the entire western culture. Just like the Austrian architect Josef Frank writes already in 1914:

«One of the great experiences of the war was the discovery of the machine. Despite all the admiration for these tools in the manufacture of mass-produced commodities, their true power had never been understood until then; it had never been clear that the purpose of our entire scientific enterprise was, first and foremost, to devise weapons of war that are the foundation of our European power, civilisation, and culture» (Frank 1931).

It is precisely in such a context that the writings, the publications and the plannings (from now on the work) of the Austrian architect Bernard Rudofsky (1905-1988)<sup>1</sup> can be introduced (Rossi 2016a). His activity shows the distress felt by those who perceived the danger way taken by Western civilization, and Rudofsky, just like 1984's *main character*, tried to bear witness to his own truth.

Rudofsky's work is a critique of ethnocentric western culture (Rossi 2016). He expresses – many years before Peter Blake wrote his book devoted to the fiasco of modern architecture (Blake 1974) – his skepticism not only towards the technique, the standardization and the uniformity of modern architecture, but above all towards the professional figure and the role of the architect, foretelling the results that, on the long run, civilization and *mainstream modern architecture would produce*.

From a German speaking family originally from the Polish region of Galicia – at that time part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Rudofsky studies at the *Technische Hochschule* between 1923 and 1929. Culturally he is influenced by the *Fin de Siècle Wien*. At that time the city still preserves the role of cultural centre of what had been a great Empire, capable of producing avant-garde architecture (“without shock”), initially represented by the *Wiener Werkstätte*, and by the historical continuity of the Ecletism movement, and after by Adolf Loos, Josef Frank, Oskar Strnad and Oskar Sobotka. Vienna fosters a pluralist and polyglot architectural tradition, as Rudofsky himself indicates:

«My native country [...] was a pastiche of a dozen nations, each with its separate language and the native architecture was just as diversified. Thus I had the chance to learn at first hand that there is not just one way of living that leads to happiness» (Rudofsky 1975. p. 2-3).

Rudofsky education at the Wien *Technische Hochschule* is not very different from the one of any other European polytechnic. The teaching is organized around a number of subjects contributing to further a traditional scientific training that resembles the one of the *École des Ponts et Chaussées*, combined with arts and humanities much like at the *École des Beaux-arts*. At the *Hochschule* too the *Gran Tour* is and fundamental instrument of cultural learning. Rudofsky though, who is most certainly influenced

by the *Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte*, is fascinated by the lessons in anonymous architecture. His school trips are quite different from the ones of his colleagues traditionally devoted to visiting the main monuments of the Western-European history of architecture. In 1925 he does not choose the quintessential *Gran Tour* itinerary, he follows, on the other hand, the Danube to Istanbul. The following year he visits France and Italy and most of his sketches bear witness to his attention for country churches, architecture and landscape.

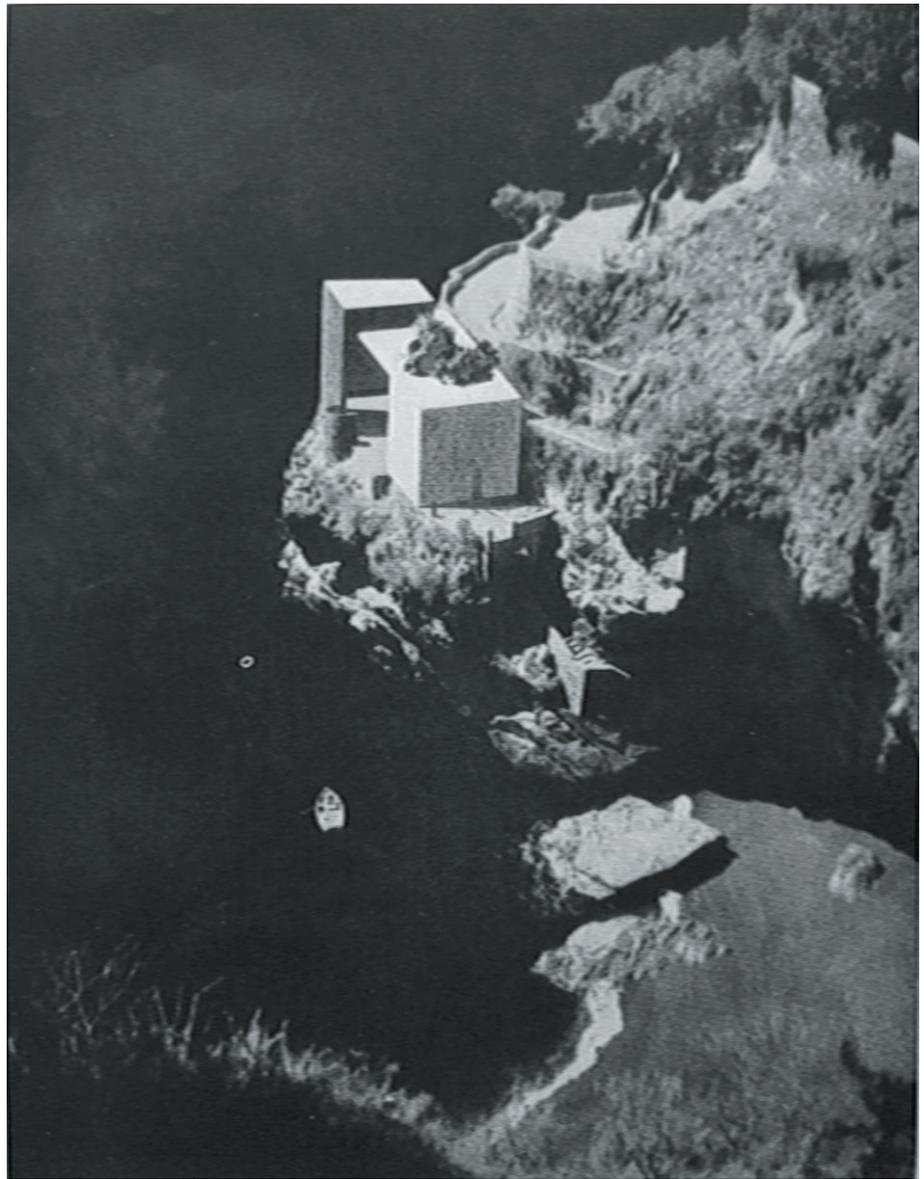
He also goes to Sweden to visit the more recent “architectures” by Asplund and Lewerentz, and to Germany to study the plannings of the *Neue Bauen*. At the first Bauhaus exhibition in Weimar, in 1923, he has the opportunity to see the house *Am Horn* by Georg Muche and Adolf Meyer, built in just a few months for the exhibition. But his search for the modern at the *Bauhaus Ausstellung* will leave Rudofsky quite disappointed. Of that experience he writes:

«One summer, curiosity led me to Weimar where the first Bauhaus exhibition had just opened. This was my first premonition of the ill wind that was to blow over the field of architecture. Weimar, and later Dessau, I found, had all the charm of a reformatory for juveniles» (Rudofsky 1981).

That study trip was followed by many other journeys not aimed thought to the search for model examples of the works of modern architects but on the contrary to investigate more anonymous forms of architecture. That is why Rudofsky chooses for his PhD final project – *Eine primitive Betonbauweise* – the barrel vaulted ceiling houses on the island of Santorini. The research is the starting point for a longer path addressing the concept of primeval architecture (Rudofsky 1938e, p. 16-19), without a classic or modern genealogy but rather inspired by the culture of traditional and anon architecture.

At the end of his studies and after his educational trips and internships, in 1932 Rudofsky settles on the island of Capri. The light, the sun, the life on the island allure Rudofsky to a place suitable to experiment the ways of living put forward by the *Lebensreform* movement, encountered during his apprenticeship years in Berlin between 1928 and 1930, and put into practice by Berta Doctor, the musicologist that he met in Ischia in 1934, whom he will marry. In Capri Bernard and Berta, following on the spirit of the *Lebensreform*, lead a life in harmony with nature, searching for the pleasure of body and mind, fascinated by the *Zurück zur Natur*, (the back-to-nature ideal), by the *Naturgemäße Lebensweise*, a natural way of living that based on vegetarianism, homeopathy, physical exercise, naturism and the seductive allure of clothes.

In Capri, in 1934, Rudofsky develops the planning for a house in Procida (Podestà 1937, Rudofsky 1938c), in which he exposes all of the theoretical contents that later will be the expression of his entire design and planning thought that followed. What sets Rudofsky’s architecture apart is the relationship that each room establishes with the different ways of living and which ways of living he adopts for that specific house, a house in which the patio is a room without roof. Rejecting conventional furniture he favours a household custom that imposes the absence of the bed replaced by a floor of mattresses delimited by a curtain like in Japan. To chairs and tables he prefers rugs to keep the floor clear and he proposes benches and stools, a triclinium. To eat he prefers one’s hands to cutlery. Food, chopped, ready



**Fig. 1**

Luigi Cosenza and  
Bernard Rudofsky,  
House in Positano,  
1936.  
Archivio Cosenza Napoli.

and seasoned in the kitchen, will be served through a collective and convivial rite on a single large plate and, like in Turkey and the Middle East, during the last supper, laying on the floor. To the western bathroom he favours the Japanese one or the one used in ancient Rome, a bathtub dug into the floor, the bathroom fixtures then, have to be placed in a different room because the bath basin is not to be used to wash but simply to bathe. These compositional elements and the cultural relationships involved give form to the design of houses which, each one in a different way, will embody the evocation of the ways of living of the different Mediterranean civilizations (Rossi, 2014a, Rossi 2017). So the planning design for the house in Positano (1936, with Luigi Cosenza) is the metaphor of the building of the modern man. A man surrounded by a friendly nature, master of the landscape, dressed in simple clothes and barefoot, in an environment in which outdoors and indoors correspond, so much so that the only closed rooms are the bedroom the upper floor and the small bathroom on the ground floor. The outdoor kitchen is a simple work top opposite the fire. The place where to wash is inserted into an outdoor niche, or, like suggested by the images on Domus: the sea. *Zurück zur Natur!* Oro House in Posillipo (1934-37, with Luigi Cosenza) sees the light from the study and the bond with the island houses, anonymous and popular oc-



**Fig. 2**  
Luigi Cosenza and  
Bernard Rudofsky,  
Oro House in Posillipo,  
1935-37.  
Archivio Cosenza Napoli.

occupied by Procida's fishermen. The hotel San Michele, on the island of Capri (1938, with Gio Ponti) is the result of the elaboration of the houses and the ways of living learnt in Greece during the time he was doing his Ph.D., and proposed as an Hotel spread throughout the site, which provides a different ways of living, immersed in the Capris' milieu.

Even though Rudofsky's Italian works could be mistakenly interpreted as inspired by the Italian architects active in the 1930's to whom the Mediterranean myth was functional to the affirmation of a modern Italian architecture or as antidote to the regime's academic classicism, or even as the assertion of an original modernity, his work proves a different vision: the *il Mediterraneo* is considered for its own "eutopic" characteristics and as a place of cultural exchange (Rossi 2017).

Rudofsky's activity, aimed at investigating the cultural and mythical sides of architecture, shows that the matter does not revolve around the issue of being modern or not, but rather which ones are the cultures most coherent with modernity. If in one hand he exposes the aporias and contradictions of modernity, and directs his critiques – published on *Domus* – to clothing, footwear and the western way of living all together, on the other he processes a vocabulary to overcome the uniformity of the solutions offered by the mechanized, international modernism (Rudofsky 1938 a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i,l).

Those design plans are conceived and built on geographically specific locations of the Mediterranean: Procida, Positano, Naples, Capri, Rudofsky's design reflection does not change when in 1938 he abandons Italy to go Latin America first – Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo (1939-41) – and then settling down in the United States – New York.

In São Paulo, Rudofsky builds two houses (Arnstein and Frontini) in which the yard is the central element and expresses the way of living. Casa Arnstein (1939-41), with its gardens, shaded porches, and a vegetation selected to attract butterflies and hummingbirds, is made of rooms and open spaces of the same dimensions. All of them, the living room, the bedrooms, the service room, arranged to have each its own garden, open air replicas of the actual indoor rooms with oleanders, bamboo, orchids, camellias, gardenias, vines, ferns and cactuses. It is built on the dialectic relationship between indoors and outdoors, through the budding of the garden-room principle to achieve the hoped for continuity of the garden that enters the



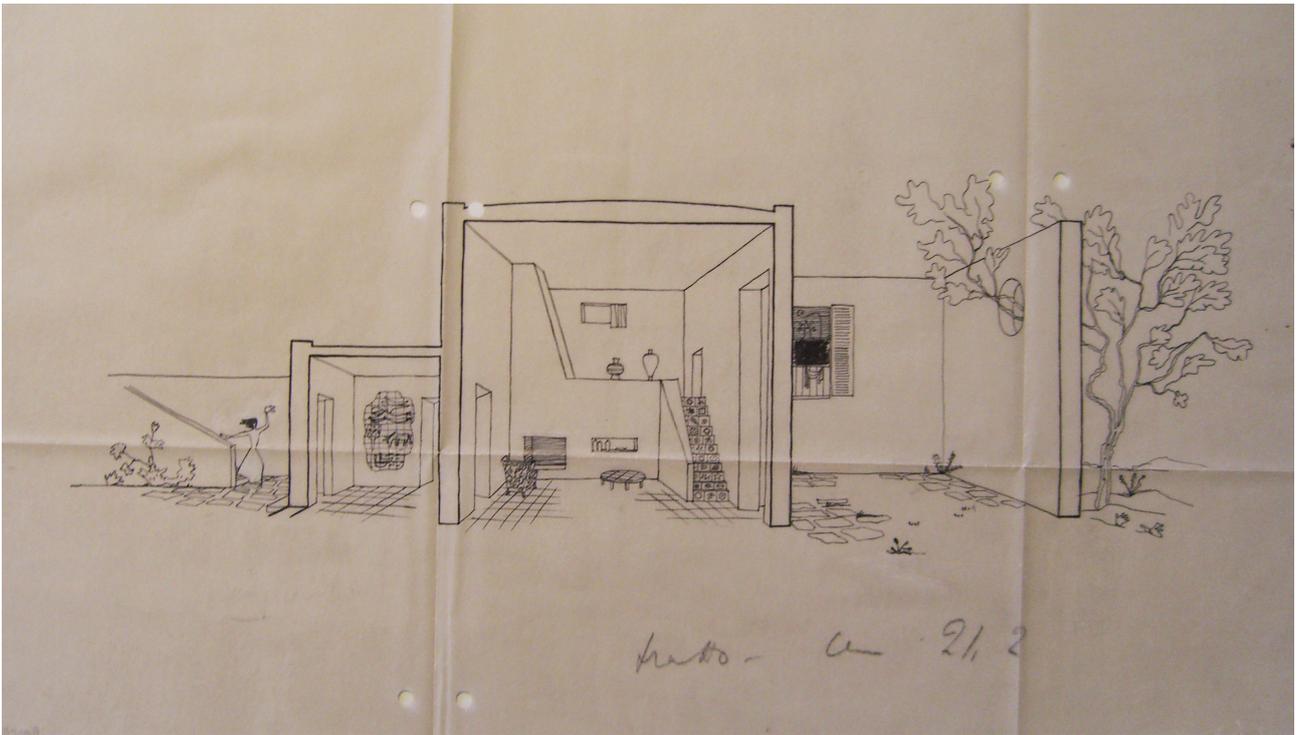
**Fig. 3**  
 Gio Ponti and  
 Bernard Rudofsky,  
 Hotel San Michele in Capri,  
 1938.  
 © Gio Ponti Archives,  
 Milano/CSAC, Parma.

house to find its fulfilment. The elementary constants of his vocabulary are to be identified in the walls, the trellises, the windows, the niches and the fireplaces. Here the design priority seems to measure up to the idea of the ‘garden-house’ that Rudofsky calls Outdoor Conditioned Room. In Casa Frontini the central patio is the repetition of the concept that associates to the idea of the house. The yard is furnished like the living room with a rug, a low coffee table and chairs arranged near the fireplace.

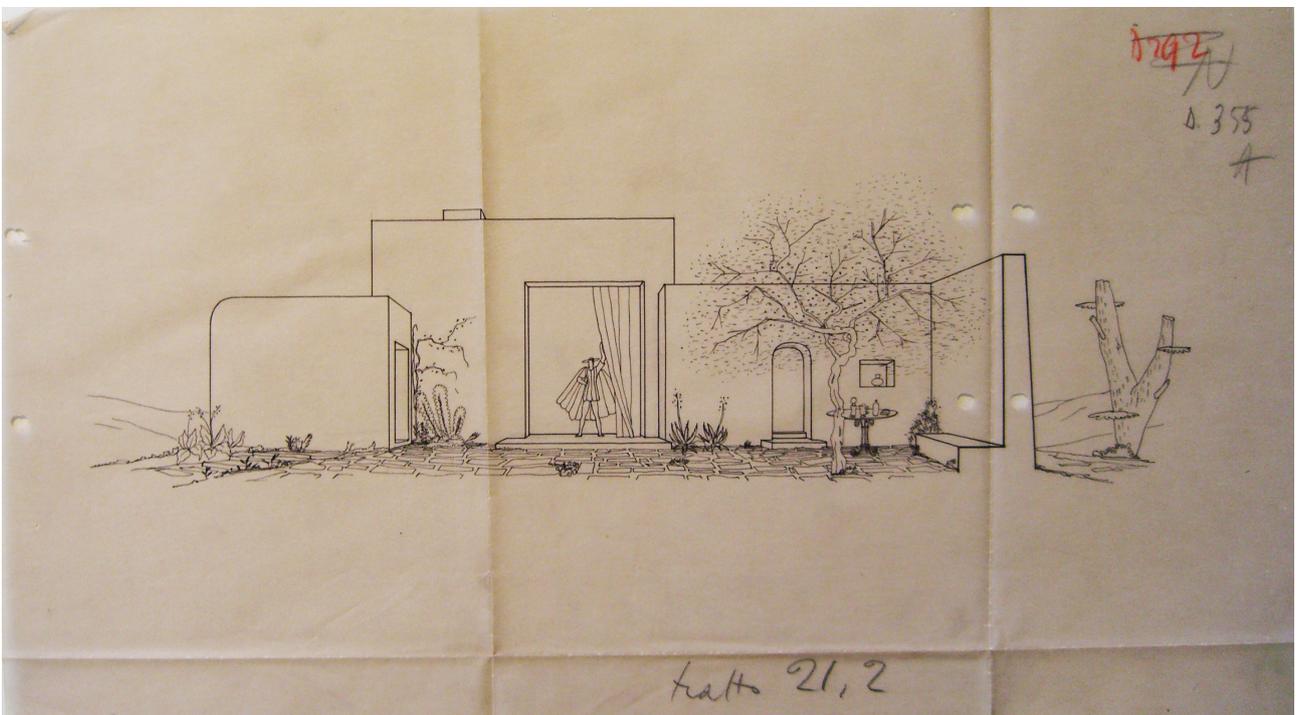
The Latin American experience though will be quite brief due to the lack of the licence to practice the profession of architect there. In 1941 Rudofsky decides to move to the US, sizing the opportunity of the award ceremony for his project for the *Organic Design in Home Furnishings Competition* organized by the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

It will be much more difficult for Rudofsky to introduce his design thought to the United States, a nation that moves on its positive trust in capitalism and through the possibility of distributing a form of welfare derived from industrial products and the circulation of goods. Like Lisa Licitra Ponti writes (Licitra 1988), Rudofsky’s idea of the Mediterranean, based on the patio and on the wall, was the example of a feasible kind of happy architecture and its fate was to teach Americans this idea; Rudofsky, however, will only have three opportunities in this sense. The refurbishing of Nivola’s garden house in Long Island (1949-50), the *Cultural Exhibitions* at the *Brussel World’s Fair* (1958), the building of the house-garden in Detroit, for James Carmel, an admirer and friend (1962-64) and the exhibition *Architecture Without Architects* submitted by Rudofsky in 1941, initially rejected, and then opened in 1964 at Moma, in New York.

Rudofsky tries to introduce a way of living alien to American society. The idea that the luxury of a house is not to be expressed by its electric appliances and its air conditioning system but with the intimacy of the patio, in the opportunity to live with the same ease both the inside and the out-



**Fig. 4, 5**  
Gio Ponti and Bernard Rudofsky,  
Hotel San Michele in Capri, 1938.  
© Gio Ponti Archives,  
Milano/CSAC, Parma.



side environments like in the Mediterranean houses, does not find a correspondence in the American ideal.

Rudofsky conceives for Tino Nivola and James Carmel proper houses to live outdoor, built with trellises and pergola, benches, walls and trees.

Nicola's house-garden (Rossi 2015b), the one that was meant to be a garden refurbishment, is actually a proper house, with its fireplace – an actual chimney, not a barbecue, but an open air kitchen – around which, at the weekends, the Nivolas welcome their numerous friends (Alastair 2001, P. 53-55).

Nivola's house, as much as many others of Rudofsky projects have no resonance within the context of American culture. It is in the occasion of his involvement in the planning of the *American Cultural Exhibitions* at the *Brussel's World Fair*, in 1958, that Rudofsky is yet again addressed in a negative way. And yet again he demonstrates that he welcomes the political, economical and cultural needs aimed to assert the *American Way of Living*.

The shows, curated and displayed by Rudofsky and housed on the ground floor are: *Face of America*, *Streetscape*, *City Scape* and *Islands of Living*. Single exhibitions aside, the general setting brings to foreground examples of daily life and an anthropological portrait of America but, as recorded by the New York Times, the most frequent recrimination by the American visitors is that the exhibition are superficial and tend to deliver an inadequate or distorted image of the many American faces (Waggoner 1958, p. 23).

Besides the the negative comments on the single exhibitions, the real outrage is the display exemplifying the American home: *Islands of Living*. Reminding that «no house of the kind existed in the United States» (Rudofsky 1958, p. 31), Rudofsky explains that his intention was to keep as far away as possible from popular press and magazine's clichés to communicate to Europeans the domestic aroma of America. Later on though, Rudofsky will complain about the fact that *Islands of Living* was turned into a mere commercial show as if it was a big department store «The house, or what left of it, functioned merely as backdrop for merchandise» (Rudofsky 1958). Rudofsky's American house is developed through living room, kitchen, bathroom and bed room. It will be precisely the kitchen and the bathroom though to arouse the discontent of the Americans.

In the kitchen Rudofsky avoids the most recent electrical appliances and those devices (*gadgets*) that make the all-American kitchen so famous. The display of that particular environment of the house, on the other hand, was to be remembered for the criticism raised precisely because of the absence of those domestic devices so dear to the heart of Americans.

The design plan expected also a large bathroom or rather a space that would keep together a washroom and a toilet as designed in the Procida House.

Since he could not find the right bathroom fixtures to represent that environment, Rudofsky designs the fixtures himself and he has them made in plaster specifically for the exhibition. A large out of scale bath tub, reminding of the ones used by hairdressers to wash their customer's heads, and finally a bidet. For the most part of Americans instead, it is a symbol of depravity and a diabolical tool, as declared by the United States Government Commission. Rudofsky recalls that on the day the exhibition opened, the vice commissioner froze at the sight of the bidet, «He grabbed the thing and carried it to safety. Another person smashed the washbasin - accidentally, and the toilet bowl disappeared in a still unexplained way. Thus, the virtue of the nation had been preserved once more against all odds»

(Rudofsky 1958, p. 24).

Just a few days after the opening, *Islands of Living* was closed to the public and the display rearranged to give more tangible evidence of life around the typical American home (Cullman 1958).

In occasion of the photographic shooting for *This is America* - the official guide book - the kitchen was completely transformed and clogged up with all the desirable national products, indispensable to represent America. They placed mixers, ice cream freezers and a dishwasher (Harlepp 1958, p. 43).

The European public appreciates the exhibitions in Brussel, unlike most Americans who perceives them as little more than a cold war episode in opposition to Russia. The American press and the public opinion do criticize Rudofsky's displays and judge more positively precisely the Russian ones as witnessed by President Eisenhower's words:

«The Soviet Union's exhibit presented all of those things I expected to see in the American exhibit, tremendous murals showing happy people playing and working together and industrial displays, including airplanes, modern automobiles and a model of the Soviet Sputnik» (Rudofsky 1958, p. 37).

The general criticism for the setting of the show, and in particular for the idea of the American home in the section *Islands of Living*, springs from the fact that Rudofsky's proposal has more to do with an interpretation of a different America, the one that could have been or become rather than the one that it really was. It puts on show an ideal Way of Life and an ideal home, perhaps the one of which he talks in some of his articles and books like *Behind The Picture Window* (Rudofsky 1955), and that here, he tries to disguise as an example of the American home. He shows Europeans, but also Americans, the idea of a house made of open air rooms in a garden, without electric appliances to get accustomed and acclimatised to the environment.

Rudofsky's *Architecture without Architects* exhibition (*AWA*) has to wait for twenty-three years before the times are ripe for it to be understood. However, on 11 November 1964 it opened, ironically, precisely at the place that was the propeller and the supporter of the *International Style*, New York's MoMA.

*AWA* is reasonably successful in terms of audience, to the point that the requests of numerous museums, both in the United States and abroad, induce MoMA to get together two circulating versions of the exhibition's display. In eleven years the two versions were presented in eighty-four locations (museums and galleries) in sixty-eight different countries, from Australia to all the way behind the iron curtain (Rudofsky 1977, p. 368).

With *AWA* Rudofsky wants to extend the boundaries of knowledge and interest of the world of architecture, pointing out how it was much vaster than the one traditionally known, studied and evaluated by historians and architects.

*AWA* reflects on the observation that some of the best forms of architectures - past ones as well - are accomplished by so called "ignorant" builders, without any knowledge or training in theoretical architecture. More than once Rudofsky declares that, despite being a graduated and qualified architect, he stopped 'practicing' in the 1940s, becoming a sort of conscientious objector, a position that he assumes not because of architecture itself but because of the operational practices of professional architects.

What does Rudofsky envy in vernacular architecture? The fact that it is not standardised: «One is not likely to confuse an Andalusian town with a Swiss town, or take a Japanese village for a Mexican one. The very big towns [...] are, after all, stereotypes» (Rudofsky 1973, p. 3).

This point of view irritates Reyner Banham, *Progressive Architecture* and Josef Rykwert (Banham 1965, p. 24; Rykwert 2012, p. 7-8), as they dread a dangerous shift of the profession towards an unprofessional, dilettante trend. But Rudofsky does not indicate these structures as useful models to reproduce, he rather maintains that, far from being accidental, architecture ‘without pedigree’ bears evidence of the possibility of more humane and intelligent ways of living.

The so-called vernacular buildings are often examples of authentic functionalism and Modernity. In other words, according to Bernard Rudofsky, the ‘ignorant’ builders do not subordinate the search for well-being to progress and profit, conscious that a development that disregards human necessities is sterile and counterproductive. Rudofsky is of the opinion that modern architecture is illogical, does not comply with nature, with human habits and to human life, but it is rather more influenced by fashion and other short-lived trends.

In the same way as Winston Smith – with the simple assertion, «two plus two make four» (Orwell 1949) – threatens the entire social system in *1984*, Rudofsky, in stating «What We need Is Not a New Technology but a New Way of Living» (Rudofsky 1938), expresses a critique of architecture and western society, denying the fundamental principles.

Since his first writings and plans Rudofsky represent a cumbersome figure in the architectural panorama of his time. Only a few years had past since when, in 1928, the most important modern European architects had come together in Switzerland, at the Madam de Mandrot Castle in La Sarraz, for the first CIAM convention, and since the construction of prototype of modernity’s housing projects – the *Siedlungen* – were completed and also since when Gropius had built his standardized residential building units in Dessau-Törten. It is not surprising that Rudofsky’s “vision”, at that time, was a marginal one, or even unacceptable. At a time in which “*aufklärung*”, “*Neue Sachlichkeit*” and “*Existenzminimum*” were establishing themselves, industrialization, standardisation and prefabbricazione, it was improbable to accept forms of architecture that originated from the cultural traditions of the Middle East and the Mediterranean, soaked in myth, inhabited by and crowded with gods and nymphs.

His work referred and devoted to unusual architecture (and the *non-pedigreed* one) represents an exemplary research into extraordinary place. A way to expose globally the fading of a whole heritage and to denounce the alleged certainties settling in the cultural and architectural panorama in which Rudofsky operated (Furlong 2015).

The intransigent, iconoclastic, transgressive architect Bernard Rudofsky has devoted all of his life «To lost causes, such as ennobling Western man’s life style» (Rudofsky 1980).

Without any concern for the consolidated habits based on prejudices or dictated by fear of confrontation with the exotic and the unknown, Rudofsky constantly asks us to verify the ways of living to which we are passively subjected. Incessantly he asks why we dress inadequately, why we wear footwear that deforms our feet, why we sleep on beds, why we sit on

chairs rather than on the floor, why the ritual of bathing is so close to the act of defecation in a squalid environment, why bathing does not enjoy a more central position in the home like a sort of social entertainment.

Certainly, in his work we do not find the solutions for a modernised, mechanised and nowadays globalised Western society, but his questions are most definitely a useful stimulus to do more research. His work is a sort of incentive for curiosity, an escape from standardisation, from the boredom derived from the passive subjection of humankind to packaged product and messages. Even planning, and not just the art of living, becomes a way to challenge the orthodoxy of the modern CIAMs movement and of the American inspired international style, delving right down into the depths of meaning, manifested through his rethinking, and expressed in his disillusion with all those architectures based on industrial construction techniques without any localised cultural heritage.

Rudofsky implements a radical change of the customary point of view, he replaces the official history and that of the masters of western civilisation with the teachings of unknown architecture. He studies the relationships that evolve among different civilisations, different places and in different times, with the objective of identifying the universal laws shared by different cultures, he recognises in the architecture of anonymity the result of widespread cultural aspirations, not determined by technique and mechanisation.

Through anthropological investigation, he carries out a comparative analysis of the way of living and inhabiting space in diverse societies, to give a definition of planning he identifies a system of parameters different to the traditional western ones; he gives a new definition and broadens the concept of the architectural plan: all matters related to living become part of it. Rudofsky travels to learn about different ways of living and different civilizations. He bears witness to the changes in the art of traveling and consequently to social and cultural ones and those ones pertaining human and natural landscapes (Rossi 2016b, Rossi 2018). Rudofsky believes that what is actually likely to endanger western civilization is not so much the process of modernization or internationalisation – today called globalization – but rather, as it always happens, the homologation, standardization and oversimplification of the consequent ways of living, the perspective of a simplified uniformity of the panorama and the construction of global, depersonalized, identical landscapes as well as the loss of peculiarity and the bond with the actual place. Rudofsky reads, in the international homologation, the inevitable loss of unique cultures and civilizations.

His houses, his plans and designs, from the ones for the house in Procida and Casa Oro to the one for the house built for himself and Berta in Frigiliana (Rossi 2014b), all share the same aspirational research for a sort of Spartan rigour but also for a sort of sybaritic happiness.

Passionately taken by the extraordinary poetry of daily life, he tries to enjoy it and perfect it. In any of his houses one could be exposed to Bernard and Berta's daily routines.

In any of those houses one could recognise his criticism of Western society's way of living and building, from the way the home is furnished to the way one cooks, eats, sleeps and washes.

The product of his own, personal conception of architecture, they are built as the result of the surrounding circumstances, these houses simply adapt to the land, avoiding any natural disruption of the landscape, and the old custom to cut down trees and to even out the ground.

His playful attitude, as one notices in the sketches for the houses on the Mediterranean coastal areas, in Brazil or on the sketch for his own place in Long Island, describes his idea of luxury: the joy of living in a garden where the outdoor spaces can be lived in in the same way as the indoor ones.

To Rudofsky a luxurious house is not determined by its technical appliances and fixtures: air conditioning equipment, jacuzzi, televisions, vacuum cleaners, electric ovens, two door fridges... but it consists of an open air room where, like in the Garden of Eden, one can at the same time work and sleep, cook and eat, play and relax, an environment with a natural climate determined by trees, water and the light of the sun. Those peculiar ideas though did not apply, and still do not nowadays, to what was feasible in the world of architecture.

For sure Rudofsky has long been ignored both by architects and by historians in a sort of reciprocal way which is confirmed by his own statement: «if we ever decide to get out of the mess that so-called modern architecture is in, we have to start all over again, to begin at the beginning» (Rudofsky 1975).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For more details on the author's research on Rudofsky see: Rossi (2016), Rossi (2014a), Rossi (2018).

## References

- ALASTAIR G. (2001) - *Weekend Utopia. Modern Living in the Hamptons*, Princeton University Press, NY.
- BANHAM R. (1965) - "Nobly Savage Non-Architects", *New Society*, 2 September, 24.
- BLAKE P. (1974) - *Form Follow Fiasco, Why Modern Architecture Hasn't Worked*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston & Toronto.
- CULLMAN H. S., EISENHOWER D. D., et al. (1958) - *This is America*, The Office of the U.S. Commissioner General.
- FERLENGA A. (2015) - Architetti senza architettura. Architettura popolare e rifondazione culturale, in ROSSI U. (ed.), *Tradizione e modernità. L'influsso dell'architettura ordinaria nel moderno*, LetteraVentidue, Siracusa, 19-29.
- FRANK J. (1931) - "Entdeckung der Maschine 1914". In *Architektur als Symbol. Elemente deutschen neuen Bauens*, Verlag Anton Schroll & Co., Wien.
- HARLEPP J. (1958) - "U.S. Revises Home Show At Fair Site", in *New York Times*, May 6, 43.
- HUXLEY A. (1958) - *Brave New World Revisited*, Harper & Brothers, New York.
- LICITRA L. (1988) - "Bernard Rudofsky". In *Juliet*, 36 (aprile-maggio), 24-25.
- ORWELL G. (1949) - *1984*, Secker & Warburg, London.
- PODESTÀ A. (1937) - "Una casa a Procida dell'architetto Bernard Rudofsky". In *Casabella* (settembre), 12-17.
- ROSSI U. (2014a) - The Discovery of the Site. Bernard Rudofsky. Mediterranean Architectures. In MANTESE E. (ed.) *House and Site*, Firenze University Press, Firenze, 53-113.
- ROSSI U. (2014b) - "Haus Rudofsky in Frigiliana. Bauen ohne zu zerstören". In *Denkma[i]*, n. 16, Wien 2014, 30-31.
- ROSSI U. (2015a) - *Tradizione e modernità. L'influsso dell'architettura ordinaria nel moderno*, LetteraVentidue, Siracusa.
- ROSSI U. (2015b) - "Bernard Rudofsky, Tino Nivola: Building with a few bricks, some

- blocks of concrete and a few poles. Nivola Garden- House, Long Island, NY (1950) - In *Firenze Architettura*, 1, 189-90.
- ROSSI U. (2016a) - *Bernard Rudofsky Architect*, CLEAN, Napoli.
- ROSSI U. (2016b) - "Bernard Rudofsky. Learning from the 'other'". *FAMagazine [e-journal]* 37, 49-55.
- ROSSI U. (2017) - The Mediterranean is not a Myth. Bernard Rudofsky's Mediterranean Eutopias, in MAGLIO A., MANGONE F., PIZZA A. (eds.), *Immaginare il Mediterraneo*. Artstudiopaparo, Napoli, 197-204.
- ROSSI U. (2018) - "Bernard Rudofsky: paesaggi dal mondo". In *ANANKE*, 2018, 83,133-136.
- RUDOFKY B. (1938a) - "Fine della città". In *Domus*, 124 (aprile), 20-21.
- RUDOFKY B. (1938b) - "La moda: abito disumano". In *Domus*, 124 (aprile), 10-13.
- RUDOFKY B. (1938c) - "Non ci vuole un nuovo modo di costruire ci vuole un nuovo modo di vivere". In *Domus*, 123 (marzo), 6-15.
- RUDOFKY B. (1938d) - "Origine dell'abitazione". In *Domus*, 123 (marzo), 16-19.
- RUDOFKY B. (1938e) - "Panorama negativo". In *Domus*, 124 (aprile), 2-3.
- RUDOFKY B. (1938f) - "Problema". In *Domus*, 123 (marzo), XXXIV.
- RUDOFKY B. (1938g) - "Quattro esempi di giardini". In *Domus*, 122 (febbraio), 12-13.
- RUDOFKY B. (1938h) - "Rapporti". In *Domus*, 122 (febbraio), 1-5.
- RUDOFKY B. (1938i) - "Scoperta di un'isola". In *Domus*, 123 (marzo), 2-5.
- RUDOFKY B. (1938l) - "Variazioni". In *Domus*, 124 (aprile), 14-15.
- RUDOFKY B. (1955) - *Behind the Picture Window*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- RUDOFKY B. (1958) - *On Exhibition Design*, unpublished conference, Tokyo (Rudofsky Papers, Getty).
- RUDOFKY B. (1964) - *Architecture Without Architects*, Doubleday, MoMA, New York.
- RUDOFKY B. (1973) - *Lecture in Provincetown* (Rudofsky Papers, Getty).
- RUDOFKY B. (1975) - *Back to kindergarten*, Lectures Copenhagen (Rudofsky Papers, Getty).
- RUDOFKY B. (1977) - *The Prodigious Builders*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York-London.
- RUDOFKY B. (1980) - *Golden Eye Exhibition Announcement* (Rudofsky Papers, Getty).
- RUDOFKY B. (1981) - Unpublished conference at Minneapolis Walker Art Center (The Bernard Rudofsky Estate Vienna).
- RYKWERT J. (2012) - "Adam at Forty". In *Journal of Architectural Education*, 65.
- WAGGONER H. (1958) - "Guidebook to Aid U.S. Fair Exhibit", in *New York Times*, Sunday, 11 May, 23.

Ugo Rossi, trained as an architect in Venice and Milan. After his master degree at the Polytechnic in Milan, he continued his studies in Venice, where he received his Ph.D. at Luav University with a thesis on Bernard Rudofsky.

His theoretical and practice interests focus on the investigation of the different meanings of the modernity and the intersections between history and culture in the critical practice of modern and contemporary architecture.

He writes essays and articles published in books, national and international journals. On his latest publication: *Tradizione e Modernità, l'influsso dell'architettura ordinaria nel moderno* (LetteraVentidue, Macerata 2015), *Bernard Rudofsky Architect* (CLEAN, Napoli 2016).