

Lucia Miodini

**The architectural drawing. Project and writings**

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**Abstract**

The essay examines the debate on architectural design in the early eighties. The aim of this study is to reconstruct the history of the working meetings *Il disegno dell'architettura*, organized by the Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione of the University of Parma on 23-24 October 1980. A conference, which coincides with the opening to the public of the collections of the Project Department, today the Project Section, in which the greatest designers and historians of architecture of our country participate. The speeches get to the heart of the debate on the reform of national cultural institutions. A contribution to the study of architectural design, a material space for theoretical reflection and research, emancipated from the univocal relationship with constructive and professional practice.

**Parole Chiave**

Architectural drawing — CSAC — Project

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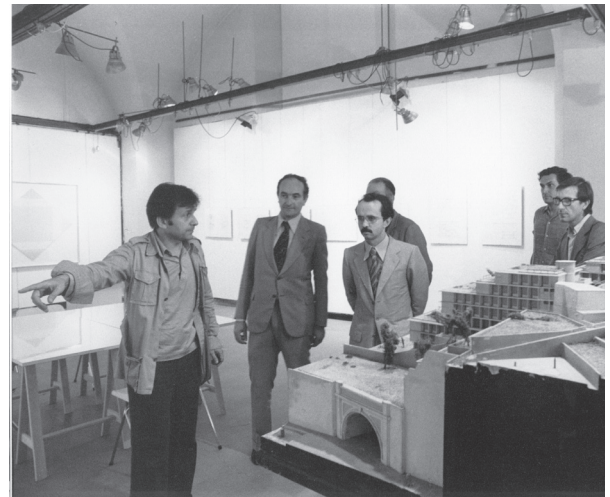
**For a history of the Project Archive.****A new theoretical and epistemological model**

In 1979 on the ground floor of the Ala dei Contrafforti, in the monumental complex of the Palazzo della Pilotta, where the Institute of Art History was located<sup>1</sup>, the heritage of the constituting Project Department finds its first location, the first in Italy, which then counted just under five hundred thousand drawings belonging to funds of designers, architects, graphic designers. A structure that between the mid-seventies and early eighties grows extraordinarily rapidly to touch eighty thousand original drawings, with about forty archives already present in the collections and a perspective at least as wide of acquisitions in the following years, up to the current consistency of about one and a half million pieces.

The Project Department, called Section since 1987, not only arouses great interest at national level, but within this period appears to be the driving structure of the activities of the CSAC (Quintavalle 1979), integrating the collections of art, photography and media.

The common denominator is the phenomenological category of communication, which also explains the integrity of the collected material, compared to the selective codification carried out by the Museum, and which, beyond the different hermeneutic key, anticipates the inclusive receptivity of postmodernism. For the attention to the processes of image production, to the tools and techniques on which this process is based, for the anthropological perspective attentive to cultural processes and to the dissemination and transformation of communication products, it fully anticipates the interdisciplinarity of Cultural and Visual Studies.

The opening to the public of the Project Department coincides with the



**Figg. 1 a-b-c**

Bruno Munari at Scuderie.

Photo by A. Amoretti.

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exhibition of Bruno Munari, inaugurated in the Salone delle Scuderie in Pilotta on June 28, 1979.<sup>2</sup>

It is Quintavalle himself (1979) who explains why the Executive Committee of the Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione<sup>3</sup> has considered it appropriate to identify this monographic review as the first and most suitable to analyze the entire design process, from the first ideas to the sketches, from the initial versions to the final work. A choice in perfect harmony with the shift of plan determined by the standardized and mechanized reproduction of the work of art, a conceptual passage from which emerge with irrepressible force the theoretical assumptions of the debate developed between the late sixties and early seventies, which leads to the formulation of the idea of an archive of visual communication (Calzolari, Campari, Quintavalle 1969).

According to this interpretative key, all the preparatory elements that contribute to the realization of the artistic product are fundamental and equal. The executive drawing will then have the same documentary value as the work and the preparatory sketch will be a testimony of the choices and motivations that underlie the definitive version. Before any other consideration, however, design studies reveal the political, cultural and material vicissitudes that have marked the creation of a design object, a building, a dress.

**Fig. 2**

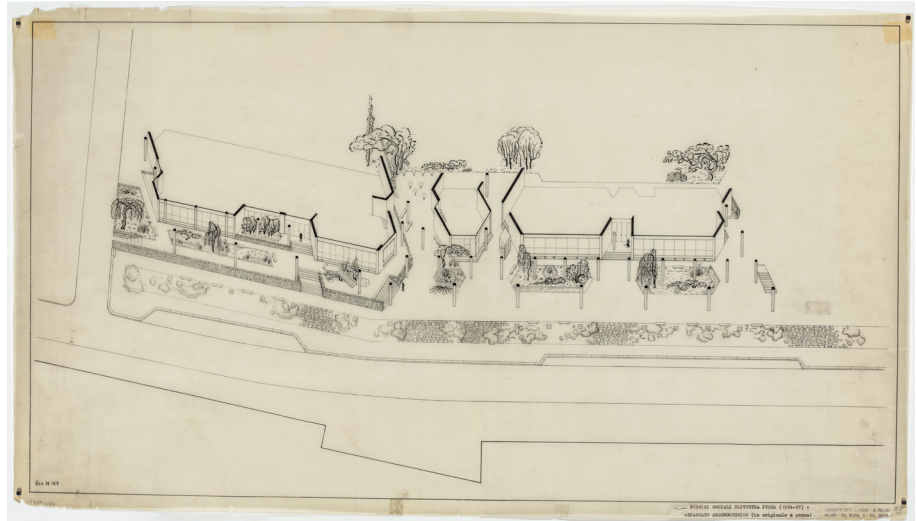
G. Ponti, Hotel Du Cap, Bungalows project for Eden Roc, Antibes 1939.

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**Fig. 3**

Figini e Pollini, Fascia servizi sociali Olivetti, Ivrea 1957.

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The figure of Bruno Munari, ideologically straddling the culture of idealism and the models elaborated by the Bauhaus, seemed exemplary, Quintavalle specifies, «both of a working process and of a debated analysis of the problems of the design of objects of the generation prior to the middle generation» (Quintavalle 1979).

An exhibition that allows the opening to the public of that *Archive of the Project*,

issued by the Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione of the University of Parma, which stands out as one of the most significant enterprises of Italian figurative culture in recent times (...). A pilot monographic exhibition for a series of initiatives already planned, and at the same time exemplary of the research directly or tangentially linked to design, a sector in which Italy (lately it is often repeated) boasts its glory in the world (Caroli 1979, p.3).

The choice fell on Bruno Munari first of all for reasons of age. Munari, with his seventy-two years,

is the most aged enfant terrible in the sector, and has behind him an uninterrupted youth of more than forty years of work (...). Secondly, because few stories can boast the richness of his, touching on planning in its broadest sense, from the ashtray to graphics, to lighting, without neglecting the "travel sculptures" (if they had been made more in the past years, instead of occupying many squares with monuments to the roughness of authors and clients) and the extraordinary experimentation with the children of Brera (Caroli 1979).

And as Munari himself used to say: «Give me four stones and a tissue paper and I will make you the world of wonders».

We can add that the interpretation of Munari's work, in perfect correspondence with the critical methodology of research that characterizes a Cwithin studies on visual communication, does not privilege in any way the analysis of design products, with respect to graphics or illustration, examining in an organic way the different activities of the designer.

Finally, let us consider the operational choices that qualify the acquisition policy. Quintavalle considers it necessary to preserve the design material, not partially, per exempla, but in its entirety, without implementing any a priori selection, and the Munari Fund had to appear exemplary in this sense.



**Fig. 4**

P. Portaluppi, Centrale idroelettrica di Crevola 1923.

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### Communication versus Artification

The renewed interest in architectural design, which intensified between the end of the seventies and the beginning of the following decade, is due in part to the importance that drawing assumes in the search for a new disciplinary dimension to the practice of architecture (Sixtus 1980). Many critics applaud the arrival of design on the serious shores of art, criticism and art history, on the walls of museums and galleries. We are increasingly talking about paper architectures. Aldo Rossi, Costantino Dardi, Franco Purini or foreigners Robert Venturi, Michael Graves, Hans Hollein Thomas Gordon Smith, give their projects dignity of works in themselves, real paintings and precious paintings to be framed and hung in their homes (Minervino 1980).

Private galleries and cultural institutions are dedicating more and more space to architectural design. In New York, Leo Castelli, a well-known art dealer, inaugurated in 1977, *Architecture I*, where he exhibited the drawings of Raimund Hohann Abraham, Emilio Ambasz, Richard Meier, Walter Pichler, Aldo Rossi, James Stirling and Venturi and Rauch. Two years later, on October 18, 1980, *Architettura II: case in vendita* opened to the public, an exhibition of design drawings created by Emilio Ambasz, Peter Eisenman, Vittorio Gregotti, Arata Isozaki, Charles Moore, Cesar Pelli, Cedric Price and Oswald Mathias Ungers. A collection of case studies for state-of-the-art family homes, coming from the pen of internationally renowned architects. Potential clients do not buy drawings to hang in the living room but to turn the designers' original vision into reality (Archer 1980).

Antonia Jannone, a Milanese gallerist active since 1977, focuses on an artistic expression that until then had not found space: architecture, and realizes the first solo exhibitions of Léon Krier, Ernesto Bruno Lapadula, Giovanni Muzio, Aldo Rossi, Alberto Sartoris, Ettore Sottsass, Stefan Wewerka, combining the watercolors of Massimo Scolari and Arduino Cantafora with the sets of the painter and architect Giovanni Paolo Panini or the views of Hubert Robert. In 1979 the XVI Triennale, with the aim of expanding the exhibition activity and thematic areas, from audiovisual space to fashion, dedicated space to architectural design.

In those years, therefore, architectural design seems to leave the strictly design function to become an autonomous art form. This is why the acquisition of architectural archives, in their organic completeness, becomes,



**Fig. 5**  
C. Aymonino, Gallarate.  
@ CSAC, Sezione Progetto.



**Fig. 6**  
M. Nizzoli Palazzo per uffici.  
@ CSAC, Sezione Progetto.

first of all, an ethical act, aimed at counteracting the dispersion of design sets. Faced with an increasingly aggressive market that coincides with the so-called season of paper architecture, in conjunction with a crisis in the construction sector that dramatically expands the production of architectural drawings, promoting, often for exhibition purposes, the design of manifesto-works.

Private collecting, privileging, in fact, only the drawings considered “artistic”, and the “beautiful” perspectives, would have operated a very serious destruction on the fabric of the design heritage. This is one of the reasons that probably led some of the greatest Italian architects of the twentieth century to donate to the CSAC a set of collections of so much interest and of the highest quality<sup>4</sup>.

To the question that we hear more and more often: fashion is art, design, is it art? Quintavalle replies that it would make the same sense as asking today if cinema is art, or architecture.

Instead, it makes sense to ask why the question of the artistic status of architectural design is raised insistently in the eighties, when the critical debate is marked by a renewed interest in Made in Italy. As if to highlight that the notion of art and the field of social relations that underlies it are absolutely arbitrary and conventional and, therefore, changeable from culture to culture and from society to society.

When the CSAC archive was set up, in the second half of the sixties, as Quintavalle recalls<sup>5</sup>, for at least four generations new areas of art had been discovered: design project, architecture, fashion; while caricature was considered art for at least a century and the manifesto from the late nineteenth century.

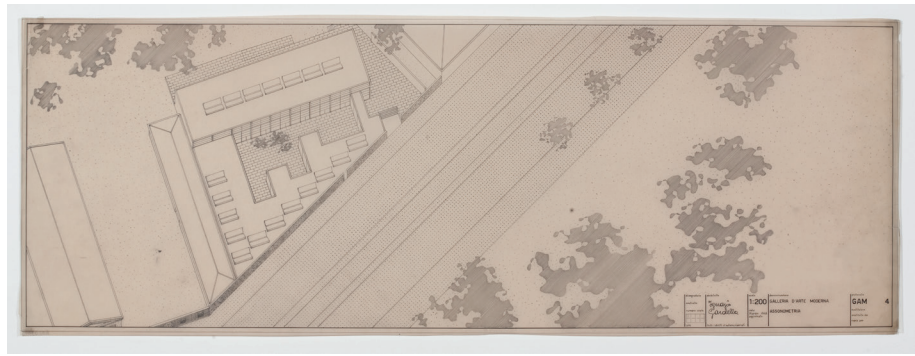
For anyone who wants to make history, where then are the limits of art? And it is perhaps not anachronistic to continue to ask the problem.

The contrast that existed in the post-war period and again in the following decade between official culture and the system of objects, analyzed by Jean Baudrillard (1968), no longer has reason to exist in the sixties, when the boundaries of art are less definable, and many critics show interest in the problem of mass production.

These are the questions to which the establishment of the Parma archive, and the opening to the public of the Project Department, intend to answer. CSAC is the place where the memory of all the different writings of the Contemporary is preserved, in which frontiers and systemic conceptual boundaries of the definitions of memory and heritage do not find space, where the objects and works preserved escape the process of “artification”. It has imposed itself on the global cultural and scientific scene in recent times, which nevertheless has a complex genealogy and illustrious antecedents, placed both in artistic practice and in the theoretical reflection pertaining to contemporary art criticism and history, semiotics or aesthetics, from Nelson Goodman (1977) to Meyer Shapiro and Nathalie Heinich (2012), to name a few. Artification, I take up a recent contribution by Francesco Faeta (2018), refers, in its own way, to the anthropological rule, which reminds us how objects and practices defined as artistic are in accordance with a social sharing, more or less extensive, which then determines their different acting capacity.

### **The project archive. A new theoretical and epistemological model**

Faced with the growing interest in art design and the risk of dispersion of architectural archives, the issues of conservation and access to documents

**Fig. 7**

I. Gardella, Pac.  
@ CSAC, Sezione Progetto.

are increasingly relevant in the field of studies and research on contemporary architecture.

In the construction of the Study Centre, in its interpretation and in related studies, an openness and a general rethinking of traditional historiographical, iconographic, aesthetic and epistemological categories emerge. An opening that finds more than a coincidence with an interdisciplinary approach, aimed at returning a completely renewed object of study that relates research focused on visual communication.

It is evident, in the principles of method, the experimental approach and generalized theoretical revision with respect to the most consolidated statutes of critical knowledge in the field of art. An epistemological orientation that moves in the direction of a broader and more inclusive recognition of the meaning of art.

The Archive is, in fact, the place of the equal collection of different cultural products (from sculpture to film poster, from architecture to fashion, from design to photography, from illustration to graphics), not preferring labels that indicate them as aesthetically different.

Similarly, the criterion adopted in the archival system tends not to divide collections, series or sets of documents that have been deliberately assembled by an individual or an institution (Quintavalle 1983, p.11).

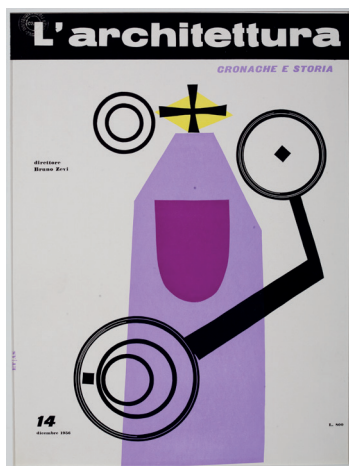
Collecting architectural drawing, in addition to being a decisive operation to reconstruct the history of design in the twentieth century, becomes a key fact to understand the present and an indispensable tool for any real awareness of the reality of our culture. Attentive to the transformations and changes of the contemporary world, the Centre soon took on the characteristics of a public, open and accessible collection.

Given these epistemological premises, we understand the choice of Giulio Carlo Argan, president of the CSAC since 1978<sup>6</sup>, and of the scientific committee, to organize a conference, which would focus on a precise theme, that of the relationship between design, design and architecture.

The working meetings *Il disegno dell'architettura*, in which the greatest designers and architectural historians of our country participate, opened on October 23, 1980 in the Aula Magna of the University with the report *Design povero* by Giulio Carlo Argan. The crisis of the welfare society, this is his assumption, should also make us rethink the way of designing objects. Poor design is an alternative, yet always design, discourse to design read as elite, and is determined by the dialectic of the social in our culture. «We need to think of a design – concludes Argan – that projects information instead of planning a utopian future of existence». The scholar, who hopes for a world based on ethics, is a key figure not only in the context of the conference, but in the history of the Project Section itself.

It is no coincidence that the Institute of Art History, founded on the defi-





**Fig. 8**

M. Nizzoli, Copertina de L'architettura, Cronache e Storia. Volume 14, dicembre 1956.  
 @ CSAC, Sezione Progetto.

nition of a new methodological model, has oriented itself in the direction of the historical art theory promoted at national level by Giulio Carlo Argan. The exchange of ideas between the two scholars that dates back to the mid-sixties becomes more intense in the second half of the seventies. Common is the idea of adopting a methodological system opposed to Crocian idealism and the assumption of a critical historical model that, in those years, coincided with adherence to a political and civil commitment.

It is only appropriate here to mention the intense exchange between Quintavalle and Giulio Carlo Argan (documentation remains in the historical archive of the Center) and the role of the latter in the design and definition of the structure. In a letter dated December 1978, Quintavalle informs Argan of the situation of the constituting Project Archive, which at the time had about twenty thousand drawings. A reality that, highlights Quintavalle, is «in essence the demonstration that the ideas of *Project and Destiny* (but also of *studies and notes*, albeit in different terms), the line of your investigation are functions of practice seems to me a great result».<sup>7</sup>

It seems, therefore, that *Progetto e destino* (1965), where Argan highlights not only the intentionality of the design act, but also how this concept is essential from that of responsibility, is a reference to the birth of the Project Archive, then Project Department, finally Project Section, already well outlined just over the middle of the Seventies. The methodological foundations that have historically characterized CSAC's collection activities: the transversal interest in new forms of communication and the attention to the project, to the historical and social process that underlies creative activity, are inextricably linked to the conviction that the reform of university teaching should be cultural even before academic.

The very idea of developing an archive rather than a museum fits into a much broader debate on the reform of national cultural institutions. (Quintavalle 1977). Several times, on the other hand, Argan himself had suggested the opportunity of a correlation between university institutes and the administration responsible for the protection of cultural heritage. And, the need for the connection between the two areas, is a perspective coherently coinciding with the history of the CSAC.

Added to this is a reflection on the changes that, in recent decades, have affected the concept of memory and the institutions that deal with it. I believe that retracing the history of the Project Archive, and, in perspective, interpreting its construction and communication, coincides with the narration of a heritage of a different nature from those offered by tradition. It is not only a question of what has been achieved, but of the transformations of the “meanings” that, in the age of the knowledge economy, are attributed to cultural heritage and to material and immaterial memory, a primary resource for people's quality of life.

One of the places dedicated to the institutionalization of memory is the museum and one of its functions is to establish “hierarchies” of memory, that is, to legitimize – as institutions responsible for guaranteeing – systemic conceptual boundaries and delimitations of the definitions of memory and heritage. Places dedicated to the selection and visibility of what, in the definition of Jacques Le Goff (1978), are defined as monuments. Objects and concepts that become “collective memory” when a society, or part of it, elects them as representative.

Since its origin, the CSAC has developed an innovative model for collecting the visual memory of the twentieth century. The aesthetics of the masterpiece is contrasted with a different model, that of the system of cul-

ture, in a critical perspective that recognizes among the epistemological foundations the attention to the historians of the Middle Ages, and to the historians tout court of the French school of the Annales, the *nuovelle histoire* in those years in full affirmation with the studies of Lucien Febvre, developed by Fernand Braudel and Jacques Le Goff.

From these premises develops a new reflection on history or rather on historiography, considered as a multiplicity of stories, provided with their own specific temporality and articulation. And it will become clearer later how this synchronic approach has important outcomes in the investigation and enhancement of cultural heritage.

Designed starting from the destabilization of an idea of a traditional museum, that is, a selective collection based on aesthetic evaluations or typological groupings, the Parma Archive was born, therefore, from an analysis of the museum problem and from the question, nodal in the mid-sixties, of an alternative choice between archive and museum. An open cultural approach in full harmony with the new epistemics of Marxian roots, anthropological and linguistic.

The structuralism of Fernand De Saussure and the anthropological model of Claude Lévi-Strauss, the studies based on the systematic analysis of space, signs and every form of communication, are a model for the construction of new tools for reading and interpreting contemporaneity.

The archive is interpreted as a heterogeneous system consisting not only of individual pieces, but also of the set of protocols and practices, measures and institutions, knowledge and knowledge that have the specific task of governing, ordering and determining opinions and the order of discourses as an effective and strategic sedimentation on the political and cultural level (Serena 2013).

### The design of architecture. Work meetings

On 23 and 24 October 1980 the conference *Il disegno dell'architettura* was held in Parma at the University, and the proceedings were published in 1983, marking the presentation to the public of the CSAC collections as part of the project. A great exhibition, that of the Bruno Munari donation, opens in the Salone delle Scuderie in Pilotta, while in the wing of the Buttresses there are about fifty classifiers already full of drawings by many designers, Enzo Mari, Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni, Roberto Sambonet, Mario Bellini, Alessandro Mendini and others.

As can be seen from this list, it is clear that at the beginning, the Center «focused above all on design, and on Milanese design, not too far from the American triumphs of that design and the weight that our project had assumed in the collections of the MOMA in New York» (Quintavalle 2010, p.41).

The conference is attended by scholars and designers, from Giulio Carlo Argan, who introduces the works to Manfredo Tafuri, from Gillo Dorfles to Vittorio Gregotti, from Corrado Maltese to Giovanni Klaus Koenig, from Bruno Zevi to Costantino Dardi, to Pier Paolo Saporiti; there are a group of planners and designers, many of whom are already present in the CSAC funds, from Giuseppe Samonà to Giancarlo Iliprandi, to Gino Pollini. The list of participants in the conference is much wider, in addition to the major historians of architecture, also the designers who in the following years would donate their archives to the Center: Andrea Branzi, Ignazio Gardella, Mario Nervi, Mario Olivieri, Leonardo Ricci, Ettore Sottsass, Giancarlo Ulrich, and many others.



**Fig. 9**

Copertina de "Il disegno dell'architettura : incontri di lavoro, Parma 23-24 ottobre 1980" a cura di Gloria Bianchino. Università di Parma, Centro studi archivio della comunicazione.



In the five years preceding the opening of the project archive, «I had moved – writes Quintavalle (2010, p.40) – with some of my collaborators, to try to collect the design starting from an idea, which was essential to put together the various design phases». An extremely coherent response to the debate on the conservation of the architecture and design project ignited in those years. How to preserve, why to preserve, what to preserve; choose some drawings considered of higher quality, opt for a selection among the projects without extrapolating drawings, or even not accepting, due to difficulties of conservation, entire archives: these were some of the theses that were discussed (Quintavalle 2010, p.40). In the end, the model suggested by Quintavalle prevails: to preserve complete documentation, without selection interventions or in any case of transformation of the characters of the original project.

A methodological choice that stems from a reflection on the comparison of interpretative models of architectural design, from Bruno Zevi «with his myth of Wright and the organic relationship with the natural», to Giulio Carlo Argan «with his adherence to post-Bauhaus design»; to Gillo Dorfles «with his attention to the most revolutionary avant-garde» (Quintavalle 2010, p.40).

Without forgetting the critical reflections of scholars of the project, such as Fulvio Irace and Maurizio Fagiolo, and of art such as Filiberto Menna and Maurizio Calvesi.

A particularly lively debate in the mid-seventies, in which Quintavalle distinguishes two lines, the one that comes out of a reflection on the themes already placed within the Bauhaus and a research that tends to overturn those problems by focusing on a different model, linked to the research of other areas, from street theater to the themes elaborated by the theory of perception.<sup>8</sup>

A debate that sees Bruno Zevi and Paolo Portoghesi, protagonists of the history of our architectural culture, on different lines and on divergent positions. The latter in 1980 is called to direct the Architecture Biennale, The presence of the past, passed into history as the Biennale of Post-Modern, accompanied by many controversies (Mucci 1980; Savorra 2017)

How does the conference fit into this debate? First, it focuses on a problem: the dispersion of the architectural and design project, and the consequent need to collect it, to preserve it and guarantee its study at university level. Ordito e trama della tela is the conceptual assumption that art is always a project and therefore a path of organization and choice of reality, that the whole of each archive is indispensable to understand the design, that historians are indispensable to identify the archives and to orient the owners towards a non-profit public collection (Quintavalle 2010; p.40).

Architectural design, a material space for theoretical reflection and research, emancipated from the univocal relationship with constructive and professional practice, cannot be understood outside this theoretical and cultural framework. And only the archives that preserve it allow us to reconstruct the design process, and not exclusively in view of the work carried out, but rather to understand the relationship of the designer with everyday life.

But what sense does it make to organize a conference on architectural design, asks Quintavalle, «in the perspective of a historical collection of design design that should, in theory, be outside the debate even very lively to which we have come in recent years witnessing?».<sup>9</sup>

**Fig. 10**

G. Zanarella, Arredamento Appartamento Spadacini Milano 1932-34.

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The answer clearly suggests the political and cultural significance of the conference. An open and lively structure, such as the CSAC, cannot escape, notes Quintavalle, discussions and must know how to model its work on the basis, «indeed on the basis of even the most diverse trends».<sup>10</sup> The interventions may suggest solutions and indicate areas of aggregation; Especially since the debate takes place in the presence of the highest regional administrative authorities, to encourage a dialectical confrontation with those who actually work on the management of the territory.

The scientific committee<sup>11</sup> thinks that the convention should have operational conclusions, address the problems related to the conservation and cataloguing of architectural design, set up international collaborations; outline operational conclusions, both on specific issues and on the general operational design of the CSAC. The Scientific and Executive Committee must, at the end of the work, indicate the lines of the next interventions «in the living reality of civil coexistence»<sup>12</sup>

The conference addresses, in essence, the communicative aspects of architectural design in view of the arrangement in the archive of the funds being acquired; It proposes a new way of studying architecture, design, graphics, especially considering that, in the contemporary world, the executive procedures are not perfectly consistent with those used in the past, corresponding, on the other hand, to the emergence of new design methodologies.

After the introductory report by Giulio Carlo Argan and, in the early afternoon, the visit to the Project Archive in the Buttresses Wing, the work resumes in the Mulas Hall in Pilotta, with the reports by Paolo Portoghesi, Project and drawing; Manfredo Tafuri, The archaeology of the present; Corrado Maltese, The end of the culture of objects and the limits of memorization.

Tafuri focuses his attention on the relationship between design, design and architecture, indicating the problem of the collection of CSAC as a kind of problem of knowledge understood as a discourse on memory and the

future. There is no architecture without drawings, which are the only historical testimonies of the relationship that binds intellectuals to the modes of production. The problem of the collection of materials cannot disregard, in his opinion, the problem of “knowledge”, of archeology of knowledge, borrowing its title from a well-known work by Michel Foucault. The relationship between discursive and non-discursive formations, between knowledge and social behavior, emerges from the series of architectural drawings, considered archaeological traces that serve to “disseminate” the work.

Numerous explanations formulated during the twentieth century on issues related to the retrieval, selection and conservation of traces produced by countless human activities share a characteristic: their object of reflection is the archive. For Foucault (1966) the archive is an instrument of systematization of knowledge that has a normative character and cultural value, decisive for the elaboration and transformation of discourses (Foucault 1969). It is, for Jacques Derrida (1995) an instrument of production and preservation of signs that would reveal the gap between the empirical and the transcendent, the role of inscription and deferral of presence.

The critical analysis of Corrado Maltese is based on the semiological reading of the problems of the culture of objects and the crisis connected to the theme of memorization. Maltese focuses on the spaces and tools that house series, collections, populations of objects that have characterized the last decades, wondering what meaning we can or should attribute to the process of museification.

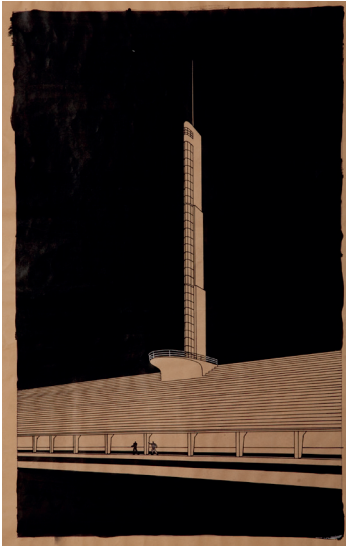
The following day the work continues with the interventions of Gillo Dorfles, *Autonomy of architectural drawings*, Giovanni Klaus Koenig, *Drawing and design*; Vittorio Gregotti, *Process and function of architectural design*, Cesare De Seta, *Hypothesis of choice of the paper museum*.

Giovanni Klaus Koenig raises the theme of the relationship between design and object, while De Seta addresses the issues of the choice of materials, a necessary discourse in the face of the enormous amount of texts that could theoretically be collected.

Dorfles supports the autonomy of architectural design, and investigates the “aesthetic” problem. «The mistake that is usually made in the analysis of architectural design is that of not knowing how to circumscribe the linguistic specificity of a given art» (Dorfles 1980, p.16). It is around this problem, “the need to attribute to each art its own specific language”, that the heated discussions and numerous interventions of the congressmen rotated.

The problem of architectural design in the contemporary world, highlights Dorfles, is very different from the pre-technological past. Before the industrial revolution, before the rise of current drawing and design methods, often mechanized, there was a synchrony and an aesthetic equivalence between architecture, drawing, painting, sculpture. Michelangelo, Bibbiena and Palladio were painters, sculptors and architects at the same time. Today, continues Dorfles, a drawing, a sketch of architecture should only serve as a reminder, as a premise to the actual project. The architect and designer can use drawing as a creative starting point to establish a constructive idea. However, it also happens that there is an interest in drawing free from any actual design will and therefore comparable to any other impromptu sketch of a painter or a sculptor. When an architect aims to elevate a drawing, design or not, to artistic value, Dorfles points out, he can create an equivocal situation in the user. That is, it is necessary to distinguish,





**Fig. 11**  
P. L. Nervi, Stadio di Firenze.  
@ CSAC, Sezione Progetto.

warns Dorfles, between the actual urgency of fixing an architectural idea through a sketch – that is, without thinking of having created an important visual work – and the satisfaction of having executed an architectural project, already with the prior intention of elevating it to a pictorial work in its own right, which today, the scholar complains, happens more and more often.

Dorfles reiterates the importance of the CSAC, which indiscriminately welcomes the drawing and design material, adopting a methodological practice, the only one able to offer the scholar a complete picture of the activity of each individual artist archived.

Preserving the drawings allows, and would have allowed even in the past if sketches, drawings and models had been preserved, to know in depth the mechanisms of the creative process that leads from the initial idea to the realization (Minervino 1980, p.14).

Vittorio Gregotti also<sup>13</sup> highlights the importance of the collections of drawing that allow us to reconstruct that delicate coming and going of repentances, variations and second thoughts, very close to the patient work of weaving: all knots and plots to fix provisional and yet irreplaceable moments of design; To investigate the creative fact in its entirety, especially in architecture and design, where nothing better than the design commitment serves to highlight the relationship that binds “the inventor” to reality, that is, to that everyday life that to some extent is called to modify or with which he must still deal. If, of so many pages of architecture we ignore genesis and developments, and consequently the virtual suggestions for our time, for contemporary culture, the Parma Archive responds to the gaps, which collects the projects of architects and designers.

Gillo Dorfles and Vittorio Gregotti emphasize with greater conviction, among the scholars who took part, the importance of the policy followed by the CSAC in acquisitions.

### Project and writings

When we talk about “architectural drawing” do we also mean drawing as a language, as an expressive form? Or just the architecture? If Bruno Zevi supports architecture without drawing, and Paolo Portoghesi, considers drawing as an artistic fact, Quintavalle makes his position clear: he does not believe in drawing as art in the slightest.

Thesis well expressed in his report, *Scriptures and sense of architecture*<sup>14</sup>, which closes the conference. The scholar addresses more strictly semiotic problems and introduces the theme of drawing writings.

An interpretative key to understanding the cultural weight of the notion of “writing” and the related concept of “transcription” is the reflection on the culture of mass production, without forgetting the Benjaminian lesson exposed in the famous *The work of art in the era of its technical reproducibility*, often cited by Quintavalle himself, which has radically changed our perception of what is original / authentic. Mechanized reproduction emancipates the work of art, transforming it from an object of contemplation to a matter of empirical and scientific study. Modern perception can be better understood by distinguishing two notions, that of “authenticity” and that of “singularity”: the mass proliferation of copies is established by sacrificing the idea of authenticity, which is supposed to be sustained by an original or founding object.

To understand the formation of an archive of visual communication, based on overcoming the old model that separated art from the world of pro-

duction, it is useful to think back to industrial production between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when the typologies of the collections incorporate the modern phenomenon of repetition, reproduction of images and multiplication of forms of exhibition, which make the principle of novelty a central issue, originating from the very process of industrial production.

According to this interpretation of the artistic product, all the preparatory elements that contribute to its execution become fundamental; the various design studies, texts, writings and every transcription tool that tell the political, historical and material vicissitudes that marked the creation of a design object, a building, a dress.

Given these premises, the concept of “writing” will be better understood. Quintavalle, accepting the structural interpretative model, supplemented by iconology studies, considers drawing a system.

The collections are built, in fact, from the beginning, as a system aimed at the historical reconstruction of cultural contexts and the critical reading of the scriptures.

Before proceeding, it is worth recalling, albeit briefly, the genesis of the concept of writing that recurs in the publications of Arturo Carlo Quintavalle and his school. Writing, as Roland Barthes states in *The Zero Degree of Writing* (1953), is a function, it is the relationship between poetic creation and society. In the genealogy of the concept of writing, which Quintavalle brings back from the textual to the communicative sphere, there are the structural linguistics of Fernand De Saussure and the analysis of the structure of discourse or of the internal organization of Roman Jakobson's text.

The director of the Centre takes an important step: he exports the methodology of structuralist analysis from the study of language to audiovisual languages. A meaning of writing that also considers the redefinition of the role of the spectator-reader in the narratology of Algirdas Julienne Greimas, Claude Bremond and Gérard Genette. This is confirmed by the statement that the narrative description of the clothes is functional, like that of the environments, to the structures of the story.

The narrative structures are linked to the interest in the syntactic moment of the figurative work, be it a photograph, a fashion figurine or an architectural drawing. Grasping the cultural meaning of drawing through the analysis of formal elements is not those who do not see the connection with the iconological method from which the innovative hermeneutics of the genre system derives. The “genre” is, in fact, decoded within a system of image traditions capable of providing interpretative criteria.

The question of gender is linked to the debate on structuralism that characterizes the late sixties and early seventies in Italy. Referring to the studies of Viktor Sklovsky, gender, in Quintavalle's critical exegesis, is a system of conventions, of linguistic structures that is maintained beyond and above (but in precise dialectic) with individual creation. And the writings of the drawing fit well into this theoretical framework. Following Northrop Frye (1957) the emphasis is on the spectator, on the consumer, interpreting the function played by the genre as a mediator between author and audience. It is very clear, however, that if the attention of the authors just mentioned is directed to the literary system, to textual and non-iconic communication, the interpretation of genre as a narrative tool, fundamental in the concept of “writing”, refers to the narratological theory of Algirdas Julien Greimas, mentioned above, but even more to the interdisciplinary

setting of the iconological method.

If for the Lithuanian linguist and semiologist narration, or rather narrativity, is at the bottom of every act of meaning, be it a story proper, a philosophical work, an advertising image, a design object, an architectural artifact, a dish, a ballet, a dress, a fashion design, as well as the lived experience of our daily life, for Claude Bremond (1966) who elaborates the “logic of possible narratives”, each story is a logical set of processes. However, specifying that the different representative norms (genders) are examined as evolutions of a closer and implicitly ideological relationship between “rule” and invention (or “creativity”), they are not fixed and imperishable, but depend, from points of view activated within the cultural debate of a given historical moment, the result of a discursive activity, in which different actors take part (artists – designers, graphic designers or architects – producers and clients, public, cultural mediators) and which is renewed whenever a corpus of visual writings is revised and reinterpreted.

### **Towards new epistemological perspectives: archival activism**

A tight epistemological reflection, which has invested the very foundations of knowledge, has been matched by a loss of influence of the great narratives. And from this general theoretical rethinking have descended new criteria for the use of memory deposits, the discovery of new dimensions of archiving, a redefinition of the classifier orders of reality and disciplinary partitions, methods and techniques, which proceeded, however, hand in hand with a reduction in the overall social legitimacy and authoritativeness of the archive and its cognitive practices.

It is immediately clear how necessary are communication innovation initiatives that allow the overcoming of critical issues, in the awareness that accessibility (I am thinking above all of cognitive and cultural accessibility) is an essential requirement to enhance the heritage of the Project Section.

We always hear that today the archive has profoundly changed, as well as being dislocated, virtual, accessible at a distance and immaterial, it seems to have become polysemous and polymorphous.

Let us ask ourselves instead what kind of research it is possible today to carry out on archival material while keeping visible the originality and also the anomaly of the personal and collective “writings” preserved among the papers and how to re-actualize them. A critical perspective, still to be explored, is archival activism, introduced by Andrew Flinn (2011).

Since the seventies, when in Italy there was no awareness on the themes of communication, Arturo Carlo Quintavalle, founder of CSAC, broke the fences and through an “eclectic” attitude, without ever failing to the rigor of philological culture, taught to look, without blinkers, the contemporary aesthetic dimension. The architectural design is not, I would add, material and inert and to be subjected to careful examination, observed from a certain distance with the traditional detachment required of any self-respecting scientific work: but rather the expression of a set of relationships inherent in the very procedures of archival exploration. Emotionality and affectivity, a fundamental condition in the formation of subjectivity, would then constitute the foundations of a new epistemology of historical research. The relational dimension can attribute, in fact, new meanings to the design materials of the archive, making use of new epistemological and heuristic approaches that come from the transnational and postcolonial perspective. A radically different idea of the historiographical perspective that had its



genesis, as is known, in Walter Benjamin's Theses on the Philosophy of History, originated from the revisiting of modern conceptions of temporality and its meaning. A profound work of revision of the "scriptures" of History, as well as of History itself, with respect to the contemporary social and political context, which has firmly placed some of the knots of cultural policy that in this country have never been resolved, stops attention on a series of problems that educational and cultural institutions in Italy have historically removed, also with respect to the languages of the image, to the media transformations that have delivered us to digital globalization.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The ala dei contrafforti, partially sold to the Institute of Art History of the University of Parma in 1973, underwent a long restoration by the architect Guido Canali.

<sup>2</sup> The Bruno Munari Fund was recently acquired; a first donation dating back to 1977, followed by a second in 1978 and a third in 1979. In the same period the Enzo Mari Fund reached the CSAC, the donation of three works of art in 1977 was followed by the donation in 1978 of the archive sketches and drawings; the Roberto Sambonet Fund, whose first donation dates back to 1979. There are also the presences of the archives of the generation of Giuseppe Samonà, Ignazio Gardella, and, earlier, of Giò Ponti, and those of Carlo Ajmonino, Vittorio Gregotti, Leonardo Ricci; by designers Achille Castiglioni, Ettore Sottsass, Tobia Scarpa, Alberto Rosselli, Mario Bellini, Alessandro Mendini.

<sup>3</sup> The wording appears for the first time in the catalog dedicated to Emilio Isgrò, Quaderno 27, 1976.

<sup>4</sup> A. C. Quintavalle, *Il disegno dell'architettura*, typescript, Archivio storico CSAC, (1980).

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>6</sup> The position appears for the first time in number 39 of the Quaderni CSAC series, in the volume dedicated to Alfredo Chiappori of which Giulio Carlo Argan also edits the premise.

<sup>7</sup> Typewritten letter from Arturo Carlo Quintavalle addressed to Giulio Carlo Argan and dated December 1, 1978. CSAC. Archivio Storico.

<sup>8</sup> *Il disegno dell'architettura*, typescript, Archivio storico CSAC, 1980.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>11</sup> In the catalog of the exhibition dedicated to Bruno Munari, published in 1979, the Scientific Committee of the Project Department is made up of Adriano Bragia, Guido Canali, Achille Castiglioni, Pier Luigi Cervellati, Silvia Danesi, Ignazio Gardella, Vittorio Gregotti, Enzo Mari, Thomas Maldonado, Bruno Munari, Paolo Portoghesi, Paolo Rosselli, Roberto Sambonet, Giuseppe Samonà, Ettore Sottsass, Manfredo Tafuri, Marco Zanuso, Bruno Zevi.

<sup>12</sup> *Il disegno dell'architettura*, typescript, Archivio storico CSAC, 1980.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>14</sup> In the deeds the title of the report is: Project writings.

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