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BETWEEN FORM AND HISTORY: THE HOUSES OF MARIO BOTTA AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE IDEA OF CONTINUITY IN ARCHITECTURE

MIĘDZY FORMĄ A HISTORIĄ. DOMY MARIO BOTTY JAKO WYRAZ IDEI CIĄGŁOŚCI W ARCHITEKTURZE

Abstract

The article analyzes selected single-family house designs by the Swiss architect Mario Botta as examples of architecture rooted in the idea of continuity. Continuity is understood here not only as formal references to architectural tradition but also as encompassing cultural, material, and typological dimensions. Botta's houses, based on archetypal forms, rigorous geometry, and constructed with local materials, illustrate how architecture can contemporarily continue traditions. The text situates Mario Botta's work within the context of twentieth-century Swiss architectural thought.

Keywords: architecture, continuity, house, Switzerland

Streszczenie

Artykuł poddaje analizie wybrane realizacje domów jednorodzinnych projektu szwajcarskiego architekta Mario Botty jako przykładów architektury zakorzenionej w idei ciągłości. Poprzez ciągłość rozumie się tu nie tylko formalne nawiązania do tradycji architektonicznej, ale także wymiar kulturowy, materialny i typologiczny. Domy Botty oparte na archetypicznych formach, rygorystycznej geometrii i wzniesione za pomocą lokalnych materiałów obrazują, jak architektura może we współczesny sposób kontynuować tradycje. Tekst lokuje twórczość Mario Botty w kontekście szwajcarskiej myśli architektonicznej XX w.

Słowa kluczowe: architektura, ciągłość, dom, Szwajcaria

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary architecture is developing in an era in which a multiplicity of positions, ideas, and formal languages has reached its historical peak. After the revolutionary experiences of modernism and postmodernism, which clearly and emphatically defined the relationship between the past and the present, there appears to be an increasing need to reconsider what architecture rooted in history might be and whether its continuation is possible. In this context, the idea of continuity is gaining greater significance. However, this idea should not be interpreted as a primitive return to past styles or a passive preservation of historical forms. On the contrary, continuity as an architectural concept can be understood as a conscious

creative strategy based on the bond between place and form, the interpretation of spatial types, or the transformation of archetypes. Its fundamental premise is not a nostalgic desire for imitation, but a need to find meaning for architecture in the contemporary world – an architecture which, while contemporary in character, does not ignore history, nor allow itself to be dominated by it.

Twentieth-century architectural theory has offered various perspectives on this issue. Some, such as Aldo Rossi, saw in typology and architectural archetypes a form of permanence and a structure of collective memory, not tied to any specific architectural style but deeply rooted in the history of the city¹. Others, such as Kenneth Frampton, emphasized the possibility of integrating contemporary design with the landscape, local context, or material, thereby formulating the concept of critical regionalism². Christian Norberg-Schulz, on the other hand, emphasized the phenomenological dimension of place, asserting that architecture should primarily provide existential rootedness for human beings – thus offering an experience of dwelling rather than merely supplying space³. In the twentieth century, other views could also be encountered, such as those shared by Botta, which emphasized the role of memory and archetypal order as potential tools for contemporary design.

Each of the above-mentioned positions and perspectives shares a common denominator – architecture cannot exist detached from history but nor can it be uncritically subordinated to it. In this case, continuity does not mean stagnation or inertia but the ability to creatively transform and develop what has previously been recognized as valuable.

In the understanding of continuity presented here, the concept becomes an important design tool. It can lead to the creation of enduring forms rooted in context, yet open to new perspectives. It can serve as a way to create spaces that hold both cultural and social meaning. Furthermore, it can be seen as an attempt to answer fundamental questions: How to endure without merely repeating? How to be contemporary without forgetting?

1. THE FIGURE OF MARIO BOTTA

Mario Botta, born in 1943 in Mendrisio, Ticino, is recognized as one of the most significant Swiss architects of the second half of the twentieth century. His work is primarily rooted in southern Switzerland, in the Ticino region, yet it simultaneously remains in deep dialogue with international architectural thought, particularly with the heritage of modernism and its later reinterpretations⁴.

Botta studied at the Iuav University of Venice (*Università Iuav di Venezia*), where he gained knowledge, among others, from Carlo Scarpa, and acquired his first professional experience in the studios of Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn⁵. Since the early 1970s, he has

¹ A. Rossi, *The architecture of the city*, MIT Press, Cambridge 1982, p. 5.

² K. Frampton, *Towards a critical regionalism. Six points for an architecture of resistance* [in:] H. Foster (ed.), *The anti-aesthetic. Essays on postmodern culture*, Bay Press, Port Townsend 1983, pp. 16–30.

³ C. Norberg-Schulz, *Genius loci. Towards a phenomenology of architecture*, Rizzoli, New York 1979, pp. 5–22.

⁴ M. Gardinetti, *Mario Botta Casa Bianchi* [in:] Marcelo Gardinetti blog, 7.11.2023, <https://marcelogardinetti.wordpress.com/2023/11/07/mario-botta-casa-bianchi/> (access: 29.06.2025).

⁵ S. Wrede, *Mario Botta*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York 1986, p. 8.

run his own architectural practice and, since 1996, he has also been engaged in teaching at the Academy of Architecture in Mendrisio (*Accademia di Architettura di Mendrisio*) as a professor and founder⁶.

Botta's work encompasses a wide range of projects – from single-family houses to schools, museums, and churches. However, single-family houses play a particularly important role in his *oeuvre*, allowing for the most consistent expression of his ideas. At the small scale of houses, Botta experiments with archetypal forms, the integration of the building within the topography, and the relationship between interior space, light, and the materiality of the structure⁷. Distinctive elements of Botta's architecture include a clear geometry primarily based on the use of cylinders, cubes, or rectangular prisms; a restriction of materials to the most fundamental ones – such as stone, brick, or concrete; and an introverted, centripetal spatial organization of volumes⁸. Botta's buildings are almost always distinctly and firmly rooted in the local context – not only topographical but also cultural. This is connected to his deep conviction that architecture not only constructs space but also defines its identity. Botta emphasizes that: “The architecture is not a structure that can be moved somewhere, it belongs to a particular place. In other words, the architecture is an activity that builds the place. So the location is an essential part of the architectural structure.”⁹ Although his work is clearly distanced from the postmodern aesthetics of quotation or formal deconstruction, his projects are not a straightforward continuation of modernism either. This approach can be described as a creative tension between modernity and tradition, between abstract form and cultural and material context. The architect himself emphasizes that he is interested in a form of dialogue between the past and the future: “...my style is the answer to the problem of modern times, as a combination of the ancient and the future.”¹⁰ Botta can be seen as an heir to modernist ideas, but it should be noted that his work also fits within the current of critical regionalism, which holds that architecture should arise from local conditions¹¹. Botta's buildings, although formally closed and introverted, respond directly to specific locations and histories.

As an architect from the Italian-speaking region of Ticino, Botta is also part of the broader phenomenon of Swiss architectural culture in the second half of the twentieth century, whose most outstanding representatives include Luigi Snozzi, Livio Vacchini, and Aurelio Galfetti. Buildings designed by these architects share a respect for material, structural logic, and contextual integration – qualities that can also be interpreted as forms of contemporary architectural continuity¹². Botta's work grows out of his experiences collaborating with great twentieth-century architects: Le Corbusier, Louis Kahn, and Carlo Scarpa. It is precisely these figures who form the foundation of his architectural language.

⁶ M. Gardinetti, *op. cit.*

⁷ W. Sherman, *The architecture of Mario Botta. Narrowed gates in an expanded field*, “Cite Magazine” 1987, no 17, p. 10.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

⁹ M. Wato, K. Bilychkevskaya, *Mario Botta! Exclusive Interview for CyberEmpathy*, “CyberEmpathy-Visual and Media Studies Academic Journal” 2014, no 7, p. 2.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

¹¹ K. Frampton, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

¹² I. Davidovici, *The autonomy of theory. Ticino architecture and its critical reception*, gta Verlag, Zurich 2024, p. 10.

1.1. LE CORBUSIER – THE DYNAMICS OF FORM AND THE SOCIAL VISION OF ARCHITECTURE

From Le Corbusier, Botta adopted the understanding of architecture as a social form – one that is not merely a matter of pure function but also expresses the values and needs of its era. He particularly emphasized Le Corbusier’s ability to transform social and political content into architecture: “There was no political, social, or economic consideration that Le Corbusier could not in some way transform into architecture. This, perhaps, is the great lesson he has taught us.”¹³ Initially, Botta also adopted a fondness for asymmetrical forms, composition, and dynamic plans, but over time, he replaced this with his own more compact geometry based on symmetry and centrality. However, even in the house in Stabio (1965–1967), one can see inspiration from the formal language known from Villa Savoye¹⁴.

1.2. LOUIS KAHN – LIGHT, ARCHETYPE, AND STRUCTURE

The strongest influence on Botta, however, was Louis Kahn, whose approach to structure and light shaped the Swiss architect. Kahn’s principles of structural clarity, the use of primal forms, and the spiritual dimension of designed space are clearly reflected in Botta’s approach: “What impressed me most about Kahn was his ability to get to the roots of problems. He had an almost messianic predisposition to focus on man’s primary needs.”¹⁵ Botta also inherited from Kahn the pursuit of designing monumental spaces, not through the sheer size of forms but through their elemental nature, the fundamental character of volumes, rhythm, and light. This approach is most evident in his sacred buildings and single-family homes.

1.3. CARLO SCARPA – DETAIL, MATERIAL, SENSUALITY

Carlo Scarpa, in turn, taught Botta sensitivity to the texture of materials, the sensuality of construction, and detail: “As for Scarpa, what is most important was his capability and sensitivity in giving expression to materials; his ability to read into the very structure of material in order to draw the greatest possible expression from it.”¹⁶ Scarpa’s influence is clearly evident in the intricate details of Botta’s later buildings as well as in the careful joining of raw materials.

1.4. CONCISE LANGUAGE OF CONTINUITY

It is precisely these aforementioned inspirations that Botta transformed into his own language: raw and geometric, yet open to the landscape and cultural context. As he himself stated: “In architecture, as in art, one cannot speak of progress. There is only continuity in the attempt to provide new answers for new situations.”¹⁷ This language became an expression of the search for enduring values in an era that often celebrates ephemerality and diversity.

¹³ S. Wrede, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 66.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

2. CONTINUITY AS AN APPROACH IN ARCHITECTURAL THEORY

In a period marked by the coexistence of diverse architectural languages and the decline of unified stylistic paradigms, reflection on the concept of continuity gains particular significance. Contemporary architecture, liberated from adherence to normative formulas, increasingly raises the question of how it can maintain relationships with place, memory, and history without simultaneously falling into superficial historicism. The response to these needs is precisely continuity, understood not as stylistic continuation but as a design and cultural attitude that involves creatively embedding new works into the long-lasting existence of forms, types, materials, and meanings.

One of the key voices in this debate is Kenneth Frampton, who in the 1980s formulated the concept of critical regionalism. This stance was a reaction against both the aesthetic globalization of modernism and the superficial quotation of historical forms characteristic of postmodernism. Frampton proposed an approach wherein architecture preserves its modern expression while consciously and creatively responding to local conditions such as climate, materials, and topography¹⁸. Continuity in this understanding does not involve the mere copying of historical forms but rather the skillful transformation of local elements so that newly designed buildings maintain a meaningful relationship with their context.

Another approach, emphasizing the typological dimension of continuity, was represented by Aldo Rossi. In his perspective, as presented in *L'architettura della città*, the architectural type – such as the house, tower, courtyard, or theater – is not merely a functional spatial solution but a structure of collective memory capable of enduring independently of changing aesthetic conventions¹⁹. According to Rossi, a type is not a form to be replicated but a principle of spatial organization that carries cultural meaning and can be transformed by successive generations of architects without losing its identity.

Yet another perspective on the notion of continuity is offered by Christian Norberg-Schulz, who introduced the concept of *genius loci* – the spirit of place – into the vocabulary of architectural theory. In this framework, architecture should enable human beings to achieve existential rootedness by creating spaces that respond to the rhythms of life and acknowledge the presence of history and memory²⁰. Continuity, according to Christian Norberg-Schulz, can be understood not as the replication of historical forms but as the creation of spaces that allow human beings to inhabit the world with a full awareness of the context in which they find themselves.

The aforementioned theoretical approaches to continuity find, to some extent, their paradigm in vernacular architecture. Traditional architecture and construction, devoid of ideological intentions yet deeply rooted in cultural and functional logic, exemplify a practiced continuity. This continuity is grounded in local materials, craftsmanship, and climatic conditions. According to contemporary research and analysis, vernacular architecture maintains its typological and material identity not through resistance to change but through constant adaptation to evolving living conditions²¹. This form of continuity is dynamic yet firmly rooted in the local context, enduring through practice rather than style.

¹⁸ K. Frampton, *op. cit.*, pp. 16–30.

¹⁹ A. Rossi, *op. cit.*, pp. 7–8.

²⁰ C. Norberg-Schulz, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

²¹ M. Philokyprou, *Continuities and discontinuities in the vernacular architecture*, “Athens Journal of Architecture” 2015, no. 2, p. 111.

After the experiences of postmodernism – which turned architectural citation and pastiche into tools of aesthetic play – continuity can be understood not as a language of forms, but as a responsible and context-aware mode of design. Increasingly, voices are being raised asserting that architecture should engage in a dialogue with the past not to imitate it but to maintain a meaningful relationship with the history of place and form. Continuity in this contemporary sense thus becomes a design strategy that does not negate novelty but integrates it into an ongoing cultural process. It enables the creation of spaces that are simultaneously new and familiar, contemporary and enduring, innovative and responsible. Continuity, therefore, does not signify a return to past forms, but rather the creative embedding of form within structures of meaning. Theorists such as Frampton, Rossi, and Norberg-Schulz demonstrate that architectural continuity is possible even within a world of aesthetic pluralism. In this view, it becomes a relevant design strategy – rather than a limitation.

3. FORM AND ITS GEOMETRY AS A CARRIER OF MEMORY

Mario Botta's architecture is based on elementary geometric forms, which in his designs are not merely formal devices but become carriers of memory, meaning, and spatial discipline. In Botta's works, geometric figures such as the cube, cuboid, or cylinder serve not only as spatial organizers but also as symbols of order and relationships with place and history. These geometric archetypes enable him to reference culturally recognizable universal structures while also providing a field for spatial experimentation. They are also a key element in realizing the idea of continuity understood as creative reinterpretations of enduring forms. As the architect himself admits: "Strong geometry provides the quality to space, which is originally created by the light. If we turn off the light, the space will disappear. I'm trying to work with the light from the zenith, so I use geometry to find the balance. This balance provides the quality to space"²².

Geometry, therefore, is a key aspect of Botta's work, introducing order. For him, order constitutes a fundamental act of transforming nature into culture. As he emphasizes in one of his interviews: "...order, for me, is the matrix of all artifice; it is the concretization of thought, of reason, in relation to the natural world. Architecture is the activity which transforms nature into culture"²³.

This ordering geometry, evident in his designs, derives from inspirations in Romanesque and archaic architecture. Botta admits that, among historical styles, Romanesque appeals to him the most due to its materiality, mass, and rhythmic structure: "I like the Romanesque style the most among different ways of expression: the feeling of heaviness, weight, strength, power. In this respect, I suppose that architecture bears the idea of gravity, weight. Any architecture organizes the power to pass onto the ground"²⁴.

For Botta, architecture thus ceases to be merely an abstract structure and becomes a concrete entity rooted in its place and history. Therefore, his designs feature heavy materials, monumental forms, massive volumes, and rhythmic arrangements of openings that reference

²² M. Wato, K. Bilychkevskaya, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

²³ S. Wrede, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

²⁴ M. Wato, K. Bilychkevskaya, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

defensive architecture – not through literal citation, but through metaphorical evocation of meanings. A prime example of this approach is the house in Riva San Vitale (1971–1973), whose massive, cubic form is intersected by a vertical circulation core. The exterior shell, constructed from large concrete blocks, evokes the image of a tower or fortress – not as a direct quote but as a form bearing symbolic significance. The interior, intimate and complex, contrasts with the monumentality of the exterior mass, which only emphasizes the duality of the architecture²⁵.

Botta applied a similar logic and method of manipulating form and geometry in his house projects in Massagno (1979–1981), Pregassona (1979), Stabio (1980–1981), and Breganzona (1984), where the geometric simplicity of the plan – expressed as a square or cylinder is disrupted by shifts, rotations, or cutouts, imparting new complexity to the form²⁶.

In the aforementioned examples, geometry functions as an intrinsic memory of the form, serving as a durable framework that can undergo transformations without losing its original identifiability. In Mario Botta's architecture, geometric form thus becomes a tool of continuity, not through mere replication of archetypal shapes but through their deliberate transformation and reinterpretation, filtered by contemporary spatial and cultural needs. As he himself emphasizes: "In architecture, as in art, one cannot speak of progress. There is only continuity in the attempt to provide new answers for new situations"²⁷.

4. TYPOLOGY AND MATERIAL

4.1. TYPICAL SPATIAL ARRANGEMENTS

In Mario Botta's work, typology occupies a special place, understood as a lasting spatial structure that enables architecture to participate in cultural continuity. The recurring forms in his projects, such as vertical dominants, massive walls, and central atriums are not mere historical quotations but reinterpretations in a contemporary sense. They also serve as carriers of meanings rooted in collective memory and a specific cultural and geographical context. Their grounding in locality is achieved through spatial and formal structure rather than through style.

Mario Botta's single-family houses, such as those in Origgio, Massagno, Riva San Vitale, and Breganzona, employ a language of elemental geometric figures, subordinated to a rigorous compositional order. They are often designed around internal cores or voids that organize the spatial layout of the interiors and serve as symbolic centers of gravity. In the project in Breganzona, it is emphasized that all rooms open inward, thus being isolated from the surroundings, which represents a conscious design strategy: "All spaces open up to the inner court and have no major exterior openings"²⁸. The internal spaces and patios constitute

²⁵ M. Gardinetti, *op. cit.*

²⁶ H. Anay, *Analysis and evaluation of the design process of Mario Botta's single-family house in Breganzona*, "Journal of Engineering and Architecture Faculty of Eskişehir Osmangazi University" 2009, no. 1, p. 191.

²⁷ S. Wrede, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

²⁸ H. Anay, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

a structure that organizes the spatial experience, the origins of which can be traced back to history.

Another significant recurring element in Botta's designs is the massive and monumental wall, often an almost solid partition with minimal openings that defines the building's external form while also shaping its relationship with the surrounding environment. Here the wall does not seek to disappear; on the contrary, it becomes an affirmation of materiality, weight, and the permanence of form²⁹. The massiveness and repetition of materials, manifested in rhythmic bands of brick, concrete, or stone, cause the wall to define boundaries, regulate light, and give form to the space.

Vertical elements such as towers, corner dominants, or elevated cylindrical forms also fulfill a typological role. In many single-family house projects, such as the one in Breganzone, the tower form is employed not merely as a formal vertical accent but as a tool for organizing the circulation and functional layout. As noted in one analysis:

The tower is scaled up to fit the cross dimension of the corner grid. The main entrance is also aligned with the diagonal axis, and relocated at the center of the square. Between the main entrance and the stairs resides the circulation distribution core where the circulation between the legs of the 'L', vertical circulation, access between the closed spaces and the semi-open space, and between entrance and the inner spaces take place.³⁰

Equally crucial in shaping the space is a void, understood as an internal atrium or patio, which does not necessarily assume a classical form but generally serves to bring light into and organize the spatial composition. In many projects, this void represents the most important aspect of the design, primarily in geometric terms but also typologically.

All the aforementioned elements such as patios, walls, and towers form in Mario Botta's work a typological system that can be described as a structure of continuity. Their strength does not lie in literal repetition of form but in their capacity to be transformed without losing their meaning. Typology here becomes a tool of endurance, a structure that enables adaptation to changing conditions without breaking from what constitutes its essence. As the architect himself states: "Architects must: take a careful and critical look at the past, not to emulate its procedures, but to understand what it has to teach us about the potential of our own age"³¹.

In this perspective, the typological form is not a frozen model but a dynamic framework that inherently contains the possibility of updating to contemporary realities. Botta's architecture demonstrates that it is precisely through the transformation of types, rather than their abandonment, that continuity between the past and the present can be constructed, not at the level of style, but through typological structure.

4.2. MATERIAL AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE IDEA OF CONTINUITY

Materials in Botta's architecture hold fundamental significance as elements shaping space, structure, and the cultural meaning of architecture. In his design approach, the choice

²⁹ A. Paine, *Botta's striped historicism: Historicism, myth and fabulation in Mario Botta's stripes*, [in:] 29th Annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand, Lauceston 2012, p. 5.

³⁰ H. Anay, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

³¹ A. Paine, *Botta's striped historicism...*, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

of material stems from the building's relationship with its site and the tradition of construction. The continuity that Botta seeks in architecture finds its expression precisely in the consistent use of local, heavy materials and traditional techniques³². Botta does not treat material as something neutral; on the contrary, material almost always carries a specific historical weight. His walls are massive, often almost entirely closed, with a distinct texture and repetitive rhythm. This mode of construction not only organizes the composition but also references Romanesque architecture and the typology of houses in Ticino.³³

In projects such as the houses in Massagno, Origgio, and Breganzona, material and form are inseparable. The massive brick walls result from a distinct compositional rigor. The regularity of the bands becomes a tool of discipline and an affirmation of weight. Bands made of local brick or stone organize the facades into rhythmic zones that express compositional order.

Material continuity is also expressed in the pursuit of a clear relationship between form and structure. Botta does not conceal the structure of his buildings; this approach is evident, among others, in the Church of San Giovanni Battista in Mogno, where local marble and granite arranged in bands serve not merely as facade materials but constitute the entire structure of the temple³⁴.

For Botta, material is always connected to place. This connection does not necessarily refer to physical origin but rather to how the material is processed within the culture of building. The concrete used in his projects exposes its weight and roughness. This approach stems from the conviction that architecture, through its materiality, should relate to the collective experience of place. Materials speak about the place, give architecture weight, and allow it to express itself. Continuity in the material sense thus involves maintaining the relationship between place, form, and structure. Material is the tool of this relationship, both at the level of detail and on the scale of the entire building. Through its resistance and weight, it becomes part of the architecture of continuity.

Typology and material in Botta's architecture serve as fundamental tools for expressing the idea of continuity. Recurring forms such as walls, towers, or patios are transformed traces that impart cultural depth and formal order. Material, on the other hand, acts as a carrier of the local memory of place and structural honesty. In both cases, Botta demonstrates that architecture can establish a relationship with the past while simultaneously being fully contemporary.

5. HOUSE AS AN EXPRESSION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY

5.1. ROOTEDNESS IN THE TICINO LANDSCAPE

In Mario Botta's residential projects realized in Ticino, the house becomes a medium of cultural transmission. It is not merely a living space but a form of articulating the relationship

³² W. Sherman, *op. cit.*, pp. 10–11.

³³ A. Paine, *Botta's striped historicism...*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

³⁴ A. Paine, *The history and artifice of horizontally striped architecture: A study of articulation, composition and the work of Mario Botta*, PhD thesis, University of Queensland 2015, pp. 40. DOI: 10.14264/uql.2016.21.

between humans and place, memory, and history. Ticino, as a region situated at the crossroads of cultures, becomes a unique field of experimentation where Botta attempts to transform local archetypes into structures rooted in the present³⁵.

The houses designed by Botta in this part of Switzerland, such as those in Riva San Vitale, Origgio, or Breganzona, are characterized by a compact form, a closed composition, and a limited number of openings. They exhibit a deliberate separation between the interior and exterior spaces, creating architecture with a strong centripetal orientation³⁶. The choice of this compositional strategy does not stem from isolationism but from the need to create contemplative architecture, focused and ordered in its spatial structure. The relationship with the Ticino landscape is expressed through the affirmation of weight, geometry, and materiality³⁷. Botta thus advocates for the creation of architecture firmly rooted in its context, which should not shy away from cultural connections but remain in relationship with the landscape and surroundings, thereby granting it authenticity³⁸.

5.2. POST-ANTIQUÉ BOTTA

Although rooting his work in the local context is one of the pillars of Botta's practice, his architectural thinking also emerges from a much broader context of European cultural heritage, especially the classical tradition. Geometric forms – such as the cube, cylinder, or rectangular prism – that appear in his projects are not mere quotations from history, but bearers of archetypal meanings present in architecture since antiquity. Botta operates with a logical and rhythmic structure, transforming the past into contemporary spatial responses³⁹.

Inspirations from classical and Romanesque architecture are evident in details, the organization of rhythms, and proportions. Botta's characteristic articulation of facades does not serve historicism but rather constructs a semantic order that evokes the rhythms of ancient walls without replicating them⁴⁰.

The use of materials and their rhythmic arrangement thus carries a cultural dimension. Botta's post-antique⁴¹ approach also involves the updating of fundamental forms that retain compositional value regardless of style, which attests to the universality of the form.

5.3. CONTINUITY AS A STRATEGY AGAINST GLOBALIZATION AND TIMELESSNESS

Contemporary architecture is largely subordinated to the logic of the global market, often disconnecting from locality and cultural identity. In this context, Mario Botta's work can be interpreted as a form of resistance against timelessness, which manifests itself in the homogenization of aesthetics, materials, and spatial systems. His houses, through clear grounding in landscape and context, offer an alternative narrative based on endurance rather than change. Botta's architecture, especially his single-family homes, is rooted in a specific place,

³⁵ W. Sherman, *op. cit.*, pp. 10–11.

³⁶ H. Anay, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

³⁷ W. Sherman, *op. cit.*, pp. 10–11.

³⁸ G. Astengo, *Resistant architecture*, "Lobby Magazine" 2015, no. 3, pp. 25–31.

³⁹ A. Paine, *The history and artifice of horizontally striped architecture...*, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹ M. Wato, K. Bilychkevskaya, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

tradition, and culture. Thus, continuity, understood as the conscious transformation of spatial structures, becomes a distinct design strategy. Architecture does not reject modernity but offers an alternative understanding founded on dialogue with the past. In this sense, Botta's houses become a form of persistence and a response to the challenges of the contemporary world⁴².

In Mario Botta's architecture, the house becomes not only a living space but also a structure of cultural identity through which the architect engages in a dialogue with place, history, and form. Rooted in the landscape of Ticino, employing geometric references and the deliberate use of materials as carriers of meaning, Botta creates architecture that connects the contemporary with the past. He employs a language of continuity, both typological and material, as a strategy of resistance against the homogenization of space.

6. SUMMARY – HOUSES AS AN EXPRESSION OF MEMORY AND MODERNITY

The houses and ideas analyzed in this article demonstrate that architecture can be modern while remaining faithful to its own foundations. This continuity, understood as a transformable relationship with history, constitutes the condition for its durability and cultural value.

The continuity emerging from Botta's architecture is neither a repetition nor a stylization. It is a deliberate design strategy encompassing typology, materiality, spatial structure, and the relationship with context. Recurring typological forms are not quotations but reinterpretations. Similarly, materials such as brick, stone, or concrete become not only mediums but also carriers of cultural weight. All of this contributes to a design approach that does not flee from the past but redefines its meaning considering contemporary needs.

Botta's houses are deeply rooted in the topography and culture of Ticino, yet their message transcends the region's boundaries. They respond to challenges faced by contemporary architecture as a whole, such as the blurring of identity and global homogenization. Botta demonstrates that continuity can serve as a form of resistance against placeless architecture.

In this sense, Mario Botta's houses do not merely belong to the history of architecture; they actively continue it. Their significance lies in the deliberate relationship between what was, what is, and what can still endure. This architecture not only speaks of memory but itself becomes its structure, offering a contemporary language that is both simple and rational.

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⁴² I. Davidovici, *op. cit.*, pp. 80–86.

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