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THE SEARCH FOR THE TRUTH OF ITALIAN ARCHITECTS DURING THE COLD WAR

POSZUKIWANIA PRAWDY WŁOSKICH ARCHITEKTÓW W OKRESIE ZIMNEJ WOJNY

Abstract

This research aims to analyse the influence of the Cold War atmosphere on the works of the Italian architects who designed and built between the 1940s and 1980s. It consists of a collection of observations from their thoughts and writings. From their search of the Truth of Architecture, we can learn very much, even by observing their efforts to explore the boundaries of the architectural and urban process, and their tenacity in turning a painful story into a creative opportunity.

Keywords: Italian architects, Cold War, architectural truth, cultural war

Streszczenie

Celem niniejszego opracowania jest analiza wpływu zimnowojennej atmosfery na twórczość włoskich architektów, którzy projektowali i budowali od lat 40. do 80. ubiegłego wieku. Jest to zbiór obserwacji zaczerpniętych z ich przemyśleń i tekstów. Dzięki ich poszukiwaniom Prawdy Architektury możemy się bardzo wiele nauczyć, obserwując choćby ich wysiłki na rzecz zgłębiania granic procesu architektonicznego i urbanistycznego oraz wytrwałość w przekształcaniu bolesnej historii w twórczą okazję.

Słowa kluczowe: włoscy architekci, zimna wojna, prawda architektoniczna, wojna kulturowa

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1998, Leonardo Benevolo wrote his *L'architettura nell'Italia contemporanea* where he uses a series of Italian movies to describe Italy in the post-World War II. He quotes *Roma città aperta* (1945) and *Paisà* (1946) by Rossellini, *Sciuscià* (1946) and *Ladri di biciclette* (1948) by Vittorio De Sica, using their scenes to describe the Italian landscape of that period. Moving from the cinema world to the theatrical one, Benevolo underlines the passage from a realistic representation of Eduardo De Filippo's *Filumena Marturano* (1946), to the absurd, paradoxical and not credible stories of his *Le bugie con le gambe lunghe* (1947). Benevolo affirms that, in those post-war years, he and his coetaneous architects chose to take an important distance from previous older architects' generation, because they need to create an architecture from an external and objective reality, using the unique word: Realism. Benevolo affirms that to write the story of the post-war Italian architecture he cannot ignore

the climate of that period: the detachment from myths, the scruples of objectively verifying and accepting with reservation the experiences of others.¹

As Gardner, Nicholls and White wrote in 2012 on Italian art, can Italian architecture also be considered contaminated by Cold War effects?

Post-war Italian art was affected by the geopolitical context of the Cold War in two significant ways. First, after a period of cultural autarky in which Fascist Italy was increasingly isolated politically, economically and culturally from a great part of the Western world, there was an explosion of interest by Italians in the United States [...]. Second, due to Marshall Plan aid and other efforts by Americans to harness Italy for a new democratic and capitalist Europe, resources, organisations and people flooded into the country from the USA with enormous impact, creating vibrant, international art colonies in cities such as Rome, Venice and Milan.²

This research will explore this attitude of the Italian architects based on a feeling of mistrust and detachment, caused by the suffering that the World War II had brought to society at the time. There are many theories that can let us believe that this feeling was alimanted by the particular cultural atmosphere of the invisible Cold War that began a few years after the end of the second conflict.

We use the term ‘atmosphere’ thinking about Griffero’s definition in his book *Atmosferaologia*, where the author affirms that all the feelings on which the associative life rests are atmospheric. The atmosphere is in the heart of every social relationship. Guaranteeing a shared system of ideas and projects, it is that set of words, tones, gestures, suggestions, looks that implicitly reaffirms social hierarchies also through the activation of previous atmospheres.³

Griffero described how the rise of a new atmosphere can give a different ‘colour’ and ‘tone’, creating a new humoral predisposition.⁴

An example of that period comes from the Hilton hotels. As Cristina Carbone wrote in her review on Wharton’s book:

While Hilton read his hotels as ‘a physical expression of an American assurance in truth and stability of America’s economic and moral values’, Wharton approaches them as palimpsests on which several architectural histories have been written. Between 1949 and 1966, Hilton International built seventeen luxury hotels outside of the United States, all of which were resolutely modern [...] the Hilton International hotels were, like embassies, built with Marshall Plan credits and [...] United States government actively encouraged Hilton’s foreign endeavours. Hilton hotels were, according to Wharton, the first largescale building projects undertaken in many major cities after World War II, and with them American modernism and modernity were introduced into the social and architectural fabrics of their host countries.⁵

¹ See L. Benevolo, *L’architettura nell’Italia contemporanea*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 1998, pp. 130–143.

² A. Gardner, M. Nicholls, A. White, *Cold War Cultures and Globalisation Art and Film in Italy: 1946–1963*, Third Text, 2012, vol. 26, no. 2, p. 208.

³ T. Griffero, *Atmosferaologia. Estetica degli spazi emozionali*, Mimesis, Milano 2017, pp. 75–77.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 40.

⁵ C. Carbone, *Book review: Building the Cold War: Hilton International Hotels and Modern Architecture*, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 2002, vol. 61, no. 3, p. 416.

2. COLD WAR ATMOSPHERE: A CULTURAL WAR

At the end of World War II, the introduction of the atomic weapon led to the paradox of the MAD (Mutually assured destruction) which made the conflict unlikely because of the extremization of its own effects. The Cold War was born of a political-military, economic, diplomatic, cultural and ideological opposition, centred on the so-called 'balance of terror' in a new bipolar world. It was divided between the two US and USSR superpowers, no longer solvable through a frontal war.

The Cold War was not only a political-military confrontation but a way of life, an atmosphere that enveloped and conditioned society in all its dimensions. Citizens lived and suffered in a climate of absolute mistrust and fear that led to the birth of the so-called 'culture of suspicion'. A way of conceiving and looking at 'the other' as an enemy, the one who lived beyond the Iron Curtain, behind the wall (Ill. 1).



Ill. 1. Frame of *A Bridge Too Far*, movie by R. Attenborough, 1977. From *Raiplay*, 2020 (an interpretation of the image made by O. Longo)

Involving various cultural sector and using intelligence activities and technological espionage, the race between the two superpowers manifested itself through complex propaganda systems.

The delicate question of secret relations between the CIA and the anti-communist part of Western Europe was reconstructed and published in England in 1999 by Frances Stonor Saunders. She wrote on little known, submerged and even occult aspects of our recent history and cites many of the most outstanding names of the twentieth century. Brains promoted by the American secret service to counter communist influence: writers and philosophers, scientists and historians, directors and conductors, actors and art critics, publishers and journalists.⁶

⁶ See G. Fasanella, *Prefazione* [in:] F. Stonor Saunders, *La guerra fredda culturale. La CIA e il mondo delle lettere e delle arti*, Fazi, Roma 2013, p. 7.

The analysis of these artistic interrelationships can help us to delineate the influence of the Cold War policies on architectural production in Italy, which was also unconsciously conditioned by a renewed artistic fervor in the cinematographic field.

FBI and CIA financed and produced films. American films both reflected and projected official Cold War ideology, consciously and unconsciously. The result was thousands of images that helped millions of people worldwide to grasp the ‘real’ meaning of a conflict that was peculiarly abstract and on an imaginary level.⁷

In the most famous scene of the film *The Third Man*, Orson Welles gives his speech on the Swiss cuckoo clock.

Although Welles himself improvised these lines, they fit both the scene and the heterotopic thrust of the film which seems to suggest that perhaps the search for and understanding of both social stability and social instability, in post-war Europe, can be of some use in creating active and reflective spaces that move away from a world of unequal social sterility and lobotomized deference. *The Third Man* creates spaces through which people can explore controversial roles and their divisive functions within society, without being completely annihilated by a clearly moralistic framework.⁸

3. THE ITALIAN CULTURAL WAR⁹

Italian cultural producers did not reject American cultural, political and economic influence *tout court*; instead, they sought to develop successful networks with foreign (including American) partners at the same time as they critically reassessed the cultural impacts that underwrote Cold War international investment. Indeed, it was through these networks that Cold War cultural models moved beyond normative notions of transatlantic cultural imperialism and unilateral exchange.¹⁰

Since the late 1940s, Esso has built hundreds of service stations based on models made in the United States, following the principles of American marketing. So, the stations had to be built using a single type of construction, marked by simplicity, clarity, elegance. In 1954, ENI entrusted the architect Bacciocchi with the design of its service stations according to modern and functional lines. The idea came from its founder, engineer Mattei, who had travelled extensively abroad and, in particular, was very impressed by the huge American gas stations, of which he wanted to bring the model to Italy. Even Mario Pavesi, after a visit to the United States, had decided to build a network of restaurants along Italian highways. The architect who designed it, Angelo Bianchetti, said that Italian drivers would discover “a little piece of America.” In this context, AGIP promoted the creation of a chain of motels, looking with interest at the experience of the United States but wanting to give an Italian modernity suit with particularly comfortable design and services, wanting to differentiate

⁷ See T. Shaw, *Hollywood's Cold War*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2007, pp. 301–302.

⁸ See C. Wilson, *Rooting for Harry Lime: 'The Third Man' As Morally Ambiguous Heterotopia*, <https://www.popmatters.com/196355-rooting-for-harry-lime-the-third-man-as-morally-ambiguous-heterotopi-2495496750.html> (access: 01.2020).

⁹ Being this article an extract of a larger and more complex overview, only Giancarlo De Carlo's, Vittorio Viganò's and Leonardo Ricci's works and thoughts will be observed.

¹⁰ A. Gardner, M. Nicholls, A. White, *op. cit.*, pp. 214–215.

itself from the overseas monotony and standardization, where more than elegance was efficiency to prevail.¹¹

In Italy, during the Cold War, new networks were created, beyond the national borders, based on international dialogues and artistic collaborations at the time when there were countries that were concerned instead with consolidating their national traditions.

From the 1950s to the 1980s, Italian Architects' productions oscillated between rigorous 'sincere' symbols and ambiguously 'interrupted' signs. The unfinished character could come from the Zeigarnik effect discovered by the homonymous psychologist who said that interrupted behaviours are more easily remembered than completed ones.¹²

In 1978, Giulio Carlo Argan and Christian Norberg-Schultz organized an international exhibition in Rome entitled *Roma interrotta* (Rome interrupted). The title paraphrases the name of an editorial column edited by Luciano Patetta, *L'architettura interrotta*, published in the magazine *Controspazio*, directed by Paolo Portoghesi. A column dedicated to "architecture made of paper," or in any case "in a condition of suspension, of unnatural, intentional or provoked arrest." The exhibition was attended by Robert Venturi, Aldo Rossi, Paolo Portoghesi and James Stirling, among others. As Patetta said, the architecture shown was characterized by an unrealism that, at the same time, denounced the impotence to which architecture was forced, but there was also the allusion to an alternative reality.¹³

3.1 DE CARLO'S PROTEST

In 2015, Francesco Zuddas wrote that after an observation of the student unrest between 1963 and 1968, when the university spilled out onto the streets, in the essay *The Overturned Pyramid*, De Carlo said: "only when institutions are 'interrupted' can 'total experience' be reached."¹⁴

In an interview with Franco Bunčuga, after the 1950s and the disappointment of communism, De Carlo declares that he has returned to anarchist thinkers, rereading their writings and reflecting on the meaning that efficiency can have, in order to achieve significant results. He emphasizes the ability of anarchists to be patient and not outraged or furious. He affirms that these principles have been his starting point for architecture and urbanism. Even if anarchism is specifically Western, Bunčuga replies that this attitude seems closer to an Eastern thought, almost a Buddhist logic, because what matters is not so much the goal as the path.

In this way, De Carlo confirms that it is possible to have a project without keeping the goals fixed, because they will continuously adapt to the circumstances, to the contour. In this way, for De Carlo, the project becomes much more effective and interesting. By giving importance to the means, the anarchists end up suggesting complex and tortuous processes, described by curves, hesitant and itinerant. The inefficiency of anarchists thus becomes an ethical and political quality because it can lead to being 'effective' allowing them to be more candid and therefore more confident, more inclusive, aware and consistent.

¹¹ See E. Bini, *La potente benzina italiana. Guerra fredda e consumi di massa tra Italia, Stati Uniti e Terzo Mondo (1945–1973)*, Carocci editore, Roma 2013, pp. 141–145.

¹² See E. Spaltro, *Vittoriano Viganò: How an Architect Can Express a City* [in:] V. Viganò (ed.), *A come Architettura*, Electa, Milano 1992, p. 155.

¹³ See M. Biraghi, *Storia dell'architettura contemporanea II. 1945–2008*, Einaudi, Torino 2008, p. 192.

¹⁴ See F. Zuddas, *Pretentious equivalence. De Carlo, Woods and mat-building*, Festival dell'Architettura Magazine, 2015, vol. 6, no. 34, p. 51.

It gives the possibility of coming into contact with other processes that are not linear, such as those of nature.¹⁵

In one of his writings, De Carlo stated that architecture and town planning are fundamentally authoritarian, because architects and town planners have provided their services to power and have therefore elaborated theories, solutions and projects in line with the clients. There were, however, different ways of being and of conceiving the relationship of human beings with the territory. Coming from America, there is an important current, that has always been set aside by official criticism. A deeply anarchic thought that consists in not specializing the human environment, in not dividing the great territory from the city, the neighbourhood, the building, but to see everything together, as a place where human life takes place, recognizing at different scales their common belonging to a phenomenon from which they do not want to separate themselves. De Carlo goes on to say that there are also people in Italy who belong to this current of thought. He mentions only two of them: Elio Vittorini and Italo Calvino. Of the first one describes the book *Le città del mondo* (The cities of the world), where you can perceive this libertarian thought, this rich vision of the city. He mentions Calvino's invisible cities as the product of the people who inhabit them and of infinite stratifications, not the product of the authorities. For Calvin it is the use of the city that determines it, not who ordered or designed it.¹⁶

De Carlo addresses the need of a common language in architecture through his buildings. In particular, an important example is the Magistero, Urbino University's School of Education, completed in 1976 (Ill. 2).



Ill. 2. *Magistero*, De Carlo, 1968–1976. From *Google Earth*, 2020 (an interpretation of the image made by O. Longo)

¹⁵ See G. De Carlo, F. Bunčuga, *Conversazioni su architettura e libertà*, Elèuthera, Milano 2000, pp. 210–212.

¹⁶ See G. De Carlo, *Gli spiriti dell'architettura*, ed. L. Sichirolo, Editori Riuniti, Roma 1992, pp. 195–198.

Inside, De Carlo has created a modern spatial narrative that continues the spatial experience of the historic town [...] then space opens ambiguously, formed less by its edges than by the shapes embedded in it. [...]. Amidst the “urban” palette of materials [...] both the cylinder and the larger, focused semi-cylinder occupy space like buildings in an internal town.¹⁷

In 1969, at a conference in Liège, Giancarlo De Carlo (Genoa 1919 – Milan 2005) spoke about the crisis of architecture in that period:

[...] the presence and the work of the Modern Movement and its heroes must emerge in a different perspective from that allowed by its own publicity machine. [...] The field which the Modern Movement intended to conquer (and did in fact conquer) was that already occupied by academic or business architecture; [...]. This was a field that excluded everything in economic, social, cultural and aesthetic terms that was not shared by the class in power. – De Carlo goes on his speech remembering the CIAM Frankfurt Congress of 1929 devoted to ‘Minimum Housing’: The period of the heroes, of the born-again, of the universal solutions is over. [...] A real metamorphosis is necessary to develop new characteristics in the practice of architecture and new behaviour patterns in its authors [...]. Therefore, the intrinsic aggressiveness of architecture and the forced passivity of the user must dissolve in a condition of creative and decisional equivalence.¹⁸

3.2 THE RAW TRUTH OF VITTORIANO VIGANÒ

In 2006, Greg Castillo wrote that during the Cold War, the Bauhaus was a cold war artifact.

The immigration of Bauhauslers to the United States during the 1930s was the launching point for narratives about the Americanization of European avantgarde design. [...] Triumphalists interpreted the new world successes of Mies, Gropius, and other Bauhaus figures as evidence of the global preeminence of American post-war culture. Three disparate efforts to revive Bauhaus pedagogy in early postwar Germany—two in the Soviet-affiliated eastern sector, and one in the U.S.-allied west—provide case studies of how Bauhaus revivals promoted opposing cold war ideologies: an aspect of the school’s legacy studiously ignored or strategically dissimulated in postwar histories.¹⁹

In 2009, Lucy Maulsby wrote about the book *Bauhaus Culture: From Weimar to the Cold War* that

the editor Kathleen James-Chakraborty and seven other scholars analyse the accomplishments and dispel the myths of the Bauhaus. [...] In doing so, *Bauhaus Culture* calls into question the degree to which this influential school should continue to symbolize an uncomplicated relationship between art, modern technology, and progressive politics.²⁰

¹⁷ J. McKean, *Il Magistero: De Carlo’s Dialogue with Historical Forms*, Places, 2004, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 54–56.

¹⁸ G. De Carlo, *Architecture’s Public* [in:] P. Blundell Jones, D. Petrescu, J. Till (eds.), *Architecture and Participation*, Spon Press, London-New York 2005, pp. 6–11.

¹⁹ G. Castillo, *The Bauhaus in Cold War Germany* [in:] K. James-Chakraborty (ed.), *Bauhaus Culture: From Weimar to the Cold War*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis-London 2006, p. 171.

²⁰ L. Maulsby, *Bauhaus Modern and Bauhaus Culture: From Weimar to the Cold War*, *Journal of Architectural Education*, 2009, vol. 63, no. 1, pp. 145–147.

To the massification of architecture as an object of art, followed the phenomenon of the *brutalist* current where the concept of megastructure and ‘power’ could be associated with an indirect influence of American culture.

In 1945 in Milan, the *A.R.* plan was drawn up. The first to address the overall problem of the reconstruction of Milan. In the same year, the *Movimento di studi per l'architettura* (Msa, Movement of studies for architecture) was founded, an association of architects to which Vittoriano Viganò also belongs. The movement criticizes the dogmatism of the Modern Movement and seeks a rationality understood not as a ‘style’ but as ‘reasonableness’ of the design approach, a desire for clarity, intelligibility of forms and the attempt to establish a relationship with the place. A personal interpretation of the rebellion against a ‘modern style’ can be recognized in the *béton brut* of the *Istituto Marchiondi Spagliardi*, designed by Viganò in Milan (1953–57), expression of an experimental didactic and educational program.²¹

In 1992, Marco Dezzi Bardeschi wrote on Viganò’s work that in Milan, the post-war reconstruction period were the years of the tribute to a structural rigor and ‘sincerity,’ of the absolute identification between Form and Truth, of research into the natural use of ‘poor’ materials (such as reinforced concrete), and into new and original forms of beauty, ‘rough but sincere.’²²

Years later, remaining an apparently unclassifiable ‘object’, being both a building and a sculpture, the Marchiondi Institute has been promoted to a masterpiece of ‘architectural brutalism’: as suggestive from a tectonic point of view, as it is spatially a crossroads of inexhaustible *promenades*. Bruno Reichlin recognizes in this building some references to the filiform distribution elements of Gropius of the late 1930s. The articulation of these buildings ensured the functional and formal autonomy of the different buildings, improving circulation and, above all, giving the building the diagrammatic appearance of an urban fragment. Of the building, it is interesting to note the effect of the slats on the curved front, based on the movement of the observer and the light that changes during the day. Demonstrating his familiarity with contemporary art and the research that at the time led to the so-called ‘Kinetic art’, Viganò here shows an interest in the kinematic effects that architecture can arouse. In particular, in the variants in which this art explores virtual movement and the abstract visual stimuli given by spectator’s movement. These variants of kinetic art are inscribed in the continuity of the historical avant-garde: in the legacy of Cubism, of Vorticism, of the visual experiments investigated at the Bauhaus by Kandinsky, Klee, etc., and in the evolution of the art of kinetics.²³

In 1985, Viganò thought of the addition to the School of Architecture as a sublimated factory of knowledge but within the systematic doubt and continuous re-evaluation of any assumed certainty. This concept has been identified with the sign, mounted on the façade, of that stylized and colossal red ‘A,’ in which the symbol of architecture coincides with the freedom of Anarchy²⁴ (Ill. 3).

²¹ See M. Biraghi, *op. cit.*, pp. 75, 87–88.

²² See M. Dezzi Bardeschi, ‘Brutalism’ and Brutalist: *A Style Lesson or the Architect to His Critic* [in:] V. Viganò (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 150.

²³ See B. Reichlin, *Vittoriano Viganò, brutalista senza saperlo?* [in:] F. Graf, L. Tedeschi (eds.), *L'Istituto Marchiondi Spagliardi di Vittoriano Viganò*, Mendrisio Academy Press, Mendrisio 2009, pp. 9–11.

²⁴ See M. Dezzi Bardeschi, *op. cit.*

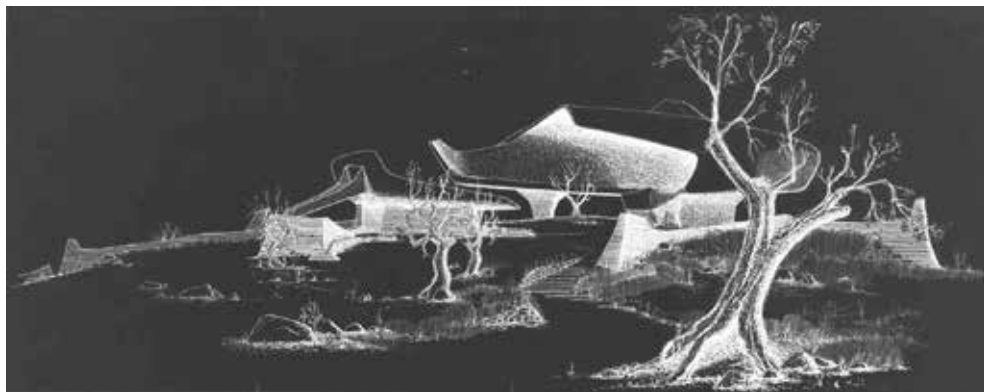


Ill. 3. School of Architecture, Polytechnic of Milan, Viganò, 1970–1985. From *Corriere della Sera*, 2020 (an interpretation of the image made by O. Longo)

4. THE EXISTENTIALISM OF RICCI

In the United States, the unusual success of Leonardo Ricci's book *Anonymous (20th Century)* is symptomatic of a widespread and inhibited need for architectural culture in the 1960s. The union between modern forms and old or reactionary content, carried out by the neo-capitalism of the time, put in crisis the certainties and values of 1920–1940. From this came the push to demythologize and re-propose from scratch the question of living. For this reason, Ricci's existential position is much appreciated. In his book, Ricci explains that he is prevented in his expressive authenticity. He states that a man (of the time) was trying to transmit a capital that he could not spend. It was no longer possible to build without having rediscovered the collective sense of existence. He declared that the architect, as a single hero, was finished, while, as a social hero, he was yet to be born. For Ricci, the new man is the one who denies the Enlightenment postulates by plunging into doubt and contradictions. He questions every aspect of man's life, affirming that we must re-examine not the house but the living, not the factory but the work, not the hospital but the sick, not the agriculture but the cultivation, not the stadium but the sport. Only in this way, a new existential humanity will be born. The success of the book is linked to an unpublished portrait of the architect, torn by the contrasts of an inner life. An architect who denounces his impotence and dissatisfaction, not illustrating the project of a city that guarantees happiness putting everything in its place.²⁵

²⁵ See B. Zevi, *Cronache di architettura, dal piano di Kenzo Tange per Tokio alla battaglia per la diga sullo Jato*, Laterza, Roma 1979, pp. 405–407.



Ill. 4. Sketch of the *Ecclesia*, Monte degli Ulivi, Rieti (CL), Leonardo Ricci, 1963–1967. From *Giornale dell'Architettura*, 2020 (an interpretation of the image made by O. Longo)

In his incessant aspiration to a new, harmonious and just world, destined for a new man, reconciled with his fellow men and nature, Ricci reveals both the utopian and realistic foundation of his ideas. He recognizes in himself the figure of a scientific and radical utopian architect, with the aim of experimenting alternative values that favour new integrated systems of social, existential, spatial and functional relations. Ricci's strong social vocation, not always visible in his architecture, is for him a fundamental premise of his conception of architecture and his role as an architect. Immediately after the World War II, Ricci denied the Enlightenment postulates, plunging into contradictions and asking himself a thousand questions in order to start all over again. He thus contrasts doubt and criticism, the commitment to unmask the false truths that condition the underlying contents and therefore the results of architectural design. He taught students that architecture and urban planning are first and foremost the concretization of a way of life and therefore he recommends them to critically re-examine every act and condition of existence in order to understand the basic needs of man, setting aside those superfluous. With an explicit reference to Kierkegaard, existentialist philosopher *ante litteram*, Ricci postulates the concept of "open work." A single building or a city, it is inserted in the uninterrupted cycle of life, capable of fostering new human relationships, liable to be transformed and revitalized by changing destination with changing needs. An authentic, albeit illusory, proposal to free itself from any conceptual, idealistic and literary superstructure, to face design free from any conditioning, in the rejection of any abstract and theoretical presupposition of style.²⁶

In 1962, Ricci wrote:

In their attempts to survive, self-styled modern men have found a thousand justifications or non-justifications. None of them is acceptable to me. Thus, I have set out to find my own justification, my own *raison d'être*. It is somewhere along the existentialist line [...]. More than a century of history is on hand [...] to demonstrate the absurd [...]. The cows on a Van Gogh corn field, Dostoevsky's possessed, Picasso's monsters, Kafka's metamorphoses, Camus' strangers have by now passed into the blood of men, and you can find them even in the design of a dress, even in the last neon light down the avenue [...]. Collective suffering lies heavy on our personal happiness [...] man has become abstract [...] to the point of no longer seeing [...] the clouds in the sky, whose beauty he perceives only he see them reproduced on a movie screen.²⁷

²⁶ See C. Vasic Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci. Architetto "esistenzialista"*, Edifir, Firenze 2005, pp. 11–13.

²⁷ L. Ricci, *Anonymous (20th Century)*, G. Braziller, New York 1962, pp. 9, 15, 24, 37, 68.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In the most famous scene of the film *The Third Man*, Orson Welles says his 'Swiss cuckoo clock' speech.²⁸

Although Welles himself improvised these lines, they are fitting for both the scene and the heterotopic²⁹ drive of the film [...] – that – appears to be suggesting that perhaps the pursuit and understanding of both social stability *and* social instability, [...] in post-war Europe, can be of some use in creating active and reflective spaces that move away from a world of unequal social sterility and lobotomised deference [...]. – The *Third Man* creates – [...] spaces through which controversial roles and their divisive functions within society can be explored without being thoroughly scaffolded by an overtly moralistic framework.³⁰

In this complex cultural atmosphere of the Cold War, the very different thoughts of these three Italian architects are united by a *fil rouge*, characterized by three unsuspected 'sinister' components:

- the protest (explicit or not, anarchist or bourgeois) against a past and a present considered unacceptable;
- the use of interrupted forms (at various scales and with different functions) as manifestos of a total creative renewal of architecture making;
- the contradictory attitude (not conscious, perhaps for Viganò and De Carlo), expression of an incessant search for a new architectural language.

Today we are at a sufficient distance from their works to be able to consider their ideas outside the Modern Movement and other 'isms.'

We can learn from their efforts and their tenacity to explore the boundaries of the architectural and urban process, to leave them beyond their unknown thresholds, bringing with them a story still painful but lived as a creative opportunity: the possibility to overcome their own limits.

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²⁸ O. Welles, in the film *Third Men*, directed by Carol Reed and written by Graham Greene, 1949.

²⁹ See M. Foucault, *Des espaces autres. Conférence au Cercle d'études architecturales, 14 mars 1967*, *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*, 1984, no. 5, pp. 46–49.

³⁰ C. Wilson, *op. cit.*

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