

Editorial and Abstracts

Editorial. Contemporary Ancestral
Maria Argenti, Roberto Pasini

It may seem odd that, in a time where contemporaneity runs so fast that it ages rapidly, *Rassegna* dedicates an entire issue to reflect on what connects it not to the present but to the primordial dimension of the material or the architectural imagination evoked by the term 'ancestral'. Yet who, if not a magazine like ours, has the task of grasping the signs of the times and collecting reflections on this characteristic of contemporaneity: an unintentionally coordinated but undoubtedly emerging trend of reform of places, according to which design and context, nature and artifice always merge into a single structure and seek a single meaning.

Wild and dramatic topographic remodelings propose operational topologies for the encounter between the anthropic and the uncharted, between the project's creative imagination and the context's reality, through fundamental gestures, essential arrangements, primary elements, and materials. Habitable districts set out in inhospitable or remote regions, on rocky cliffs, in quarries, forests, savannahs, and deserts, architectural assemblages of essential elements and simple geometries, with tactile character and austere appearance, trigger processes of resignification. Re-inventions of possible pasts redeem the ruins of modernity, eroded by renaturalization processes and re-functionalized by reduction, emptying, or disassembly. It is also about migrations of the apparatus of global material production towards the rarefied scenarios of informational production. In these operations, the idea of *locus* acquires a characterizing value, which coincides with the aspiration to install a single intervention along the broader trajectory of the collective process of knowledge and reform of space across time. This aspiration emerges driven by powerful currents that move towards the fundamental encounters between nature and artifice and between structure and meaning. The 'ancestral contemporary' perimeter is located around the places of these meetings, which align the individual's conduct with the collective destiny.

In his monumental essay on the culture of settlement, Lewis Mumford notoriously called the city 'a fact in nature', likening it to a school of mackerel, and also 'man's greatest work of art'. He then described it as a 'physical utility' and at once a 'symbol of collective purposes'. In the search for the fundamentals of the human settlement across the '*tristes tropiques*', Lévi-Strauss defined the city as the '*chose humaine par excellence*' built upon the meeting point between nature and artifice, both an organic congregation of biological history and the aesthetic creation of cultural agents, a monument of stones that the community endows with meaning. We owe Aldo Rossi the highlighting of this unexpected coincidence of analysis between historiography and anthropology of the architectural accumulation that revolves around 'nature', 'art' and 'sense'.

On this coincidence, he celebrates the *locus* as the poetic center of the edification of the architecture-city. At the antipodes of Rossian idealism, an empirical exploration of the same morphogenetic process of the architecture-city, that is, the *locus*, is conducted by Spiro Kostof in the diptych on the city 'shaped' and 'assembled'. According to Kostof, the incessant evolutionary/subversive process operated by multiple forces of nature, culture, politics, and the economy constitutes the link between the form of the architectural-urban complex and the meaning it contains.

A symposium at Princeton University a decade ago elaborated on the category of 'landform' to identify a coherent spatial production pursuing the construction of the site itself by exceeding the architectural scale, internalizing the atmospheric qualities, and merging vertical stratifications into horizontal topographies. In our time, the loss of distinction between object and context, architecture and territory, interior and exterior, figure and field, through the merging of a technical action into a geological platform, represents the manifestation of an even broader aspiration to draw on a primal character of form. We could identify this impulse toward the primal form with a reversal of approach opposed to that of Metropolitanism, hegemonic at the turn of the century, often advocating for a *tabula rasa* of the site and its replacement with total artificiality.

The texts of the issue explore interventions in the quarries of Zhejiang, 'untimely' humanisms on the peaks of Tibet, transitory permeations in a garden in Tokyo, sands turned into stone and greenery theaters in Bastia, fusions of stereotomy and tectonics in Oslo, architecture /context symbioses in Ribe, nature-city in the Swiss suburbia, underground architecture in the Cyclades. The reflections unfold over a 'West-Eastern divan' which debates the modern-ancestral between the sublime and the melancholic, the ancestral-contemporary in the Shan Shui Hwa, the mythopoiesis of the Ukiyo-e, the metasemics of the mountain, the topological reinventions of the ancient, and the past-and-future-full volutes oscillating on Kairós' forehead. By reducing Braudel's powerful historical divisions to the limited scale of the micro-history of the *locus*, we could say that the works and contributions collected in this issue recover the value of the quasi-immobile primordial substrate and the slow transformative dynamics of collective meaning, beyond the rapid succession of factual events, to contribute to the formation of a fresco that portrays a possible shared destiny.

In Memoriam.

In the final stage of preparing this issue, we learned of the passing of Jean Luis Coen (1949-2023). It seemed necessary and significant to us to dedicate to him the fruit of our collective reflection on what connects us to the most distant past. Jean-Louis, an undisputed reference in the analysis of modern architecture, has accompanied us for many years – as part of our scientific council – in inves-

tigating reality and helping to increase the magazine's prestige. An academic at countless institutions, author of a vast bibliography, curator of fundamental exhibitions in the most prestigious museums, Officer of the French Order of Arts and Letters, member of the Berlin Academy of Arts, the Russian Academy of Architecture and Building Sciences in Moscow, and the Accademia di San Luca in Rome, recently wrote an article for us on the ethical sense of our discipline, recalling the lessons of another master, Carlo Melograni. Such bonds weave our individual stories together into a shared path.

DEBATE

The Ancestral Modern: Sublime and Melancholiac

Bart Lootsma

Currently, we see the rise of practices, that share a new interest in the landscape combined with a strong conceptionality. At first sight, they come close to Critical Regionalism, but both the scale of the spatial context the projects as well as the historical scope they address are much larger. With the ancestral, we enter a terrain beyond history and beyond the architectural object itself. It has more to do with archaeology and plate tectonics, explaining how major landforms are created.

Most works that we discuss here have a Romantic sensibility, as we can find it in late Romantic landscape painting with its interests in the sublime. Ancestral Modernism often seems to feel more at home with or inspired by contemporary art than with contemporary architecture. Many approaches seem inspired by post-minimal and land art. The setting is not necessarily nature, but the complex landscape of the Anthropocene, in which nature and culture seem both under threat.

How beautiful and sublime Ancestral Modernism may be, there's also something bleak melancholiac in all this, as if we've already lost it all with the climate crisis. But maybe that's true.

Shan Shui Hwa as a Reflection of the Contemporary Ancestral

Peter G. Rowe

Shan Sui Hwa or "Mountain Water Art" in both China and Korea presents an underlying scene and locus for architecture and landscape architecture that also conforms to the *Contemporary Ancestral* theme of this issue. Characteristic of this art form are balance, composition and form depicted among rugged mountainous and riverine landscapes, similar to those to be found in places like the Nanxi River area of Wenzhou in China. Further, these depictions were largely to engage the mind rather than simply the eye. They were less about what was seen than about what was thought about nature. In both China and South Korea, there are several projects within the scenic range of *shan shui hwa*. These include vernacular examples such as the greenhouses located in the outer suburb of Hangzhou in China's Zhejiang Province. Then, too there is the present architecture of Ma Yansong of MAD Architects and Zaha Hadid with their commitment to futuristic, organic parametric design of 2014 and later.

A Moon-Viewing Mythopoeia in Kengo Kuma's Work *Roberto Pasini*

This article interprets the work of the Japanese architect Kengo Kuma in reference to cross-temporal instances rooted in a primordial past while projected toward scenarios of technological advancement. The contemporary/ancestral topic is explored through the lens of three critical nuclei, place, time, and matter, of particular relevance in Kuma's creative poetics and respectively engaging the confluences of specificity and globalization, tradition and innovation, materiality and vocation. The three critical nuclei are then intersected with three characteristic operations of Kuma's practice, "emanating," "unraveling," "particlizing." A foundational mythopoeia is interpolated based on both Kuma's appropriation of the spatial composition of the Katsura Detached Palace and his claim of an anti-objectual architecture as a form of philosophical exploration of the world through design. Finally, the proposed mythopoeia is characterized for the aspiration to a material composition of place and time capable of interfacing subject and world, or consciousness and matter. Throughout the text, multiple relevant projects are associated to specific segments of the critical analysis.

Manipulations, Unveilings, Metasemias between Ancestral and Contemporary Alpine

Antonio De Rossi

To think about the terms of contemporary and ancestral in architecture, an excursus through the projects carried out in the Alps may be useful. The dialectical comparison between ancestral and contemporary is in fact the basis of many aesthetic devices used in landscape design and mountain architecture at starting from the eighteenth century. The essay starts from the illustration of the functioning mechanisms of the complementary contrast device as a "machine" to create the landscape. But there is not only the complementary contrast device. Contemporary Alpine architecture also shows other strategies, based on manipulation, estrangement-unveiling, metasemias of historical heritage. All these architectural strategies show the escape from a traditional conception of the reuse of heritage, in favor of a new idea of habitability of the Alpine territory.

Reinvention of the Topos. The Critical Reconfiguration of Topographies in the Places of the Ancient *Michele Montemurro*

The physical and topological characters of the physical substratum were, in ancient times, the etymological root of settlements and at the same time the incipit of the construction of the locus as a unity between man's work and nature. Time can conceal what might have appeared clear in the past, through the deterioration of material structures and the loss of the ancient image of places, closely connected to ancestral topographical matrices. What persists are the relationships endowed with topological sense, present in the archaeological traces and encapsulated in the ground attachment, in the adherence to the profile of the Earth, telling what remains of interrupted ancient stories. The project can then take the foundation, the "primordial act" of transforming ancestral conspicuous places, as a value for reinventing the meaning of a place, operating with archaic

forms from the *stratum*, recognizing in the ground attachment and modeling of orographic bas-relief, the settlement and formal matrix of ancient architecture. Some contemporary projects show us that the re-signification of the places of the ancient can take place through the declination of the topographic paradigm.

Contemporary, Ancestral (One Way)

Fabrizio F.V. Arrigoni

In design culture, the original and ever-renewed collision of *physis-téchne* has often found solution in the opposite extremes of total splitting or complete confusion, that is, strategies that move and articulate from rigid hypostatizations with a low tenor of historicity. Among the images of Time that classical culture has delivered to us there is one in which it appears in the guise of a winged-footed youth with a prominent curl of hair on his forehead: it is *kairos-ocasio*, the propitious instant laden with past and future, whose wisp must be grasped on pain of uncompensable loss: it is what comes closest to project writing when, no longer directed to the foundation-delimitation of stable and accomplished identities, it becomes a sensitive tool for the activation of found “fecundities”: a thinking-acting in situation, where the *agudezas* of the architect resides in grasping the possible necessary in the shifting web of geographies, memories, customs, programs.

RESEARCHES

Xu Tiantian and the Primordial Space in the Bowls of the Rock. Three Quarries in Zhejiang, China

Alberto Bologna

Architect Xu Tiantian's regeneration of the space inside the quarries near Lishui, in Jinyun county of Zhejiang province, China, stages a skillful fusion of natural elements and anthropic construction, with the aim of generating community places closely connected to local memory.

Xu Tiantian establishes a real material dialogue between an ancestral spatial quality (given by the interaction of natural light on the walls of the old quarries furrowed by the traces left by mining activity) and the punctual insertion of new steel and bamboo structures (designed to make these places usable and visitable).

Quarry n. 10 is characterized by a volume open to the sky, almost rectangular, and is designed to show, live, the work of the quarryman who, during educational performances, illustrate the ways in which a craft, now disappeared, was carried out.

Quarry n. 9 has an inverted funnel section, which thus takes on a shape comparable to the intrados of a very high-pitched roof, open at the top so as to allow rainwater to enter, forming the walking surface into a basin on occasion. The volumetric and geometric conformation of the large stone nave has coincidentally given this space excellent acoustics: for this reason, its function is to host conferences and performances.

Quarry n. 8 houses spaces for reading and study, distributed in height by means of a sophisticated *raumplan* of platforms placed at different heights, on five levels and up to a height of twelve meters.

The Silence of Transformation in Zhang Ke

Caterina Padoa Schioppa

In the constellation of works by Chinese architecture firm ZAO/standardarchitecture exhibited at the 18th. Architecture Biennale in Venice, some unbuilt projects seem to show a bond to Mediterranean architectural forms, a material and perhaps, above all, cultural allusion: a thermal spa and an open-air theatre, archetypes of the Greco-Roman world, which Zhang Ke explicitly mentions to legitimise a further transition in his engagement with, and for, communities. These projects “establish” a locus from which an idea of humanity originates, but not in an abstract manner, as an intellectual exercise. Zhang Ke, before starting a project, plunges himself into the situations, even if this involves, such as the Tibet projects, a long journey. The professional trajectory of ZAO/standardarchitecture outlines a perspective for the discipline of architecture, based on “simplicity” or “almost immobility,” on architecture's ability to trigger moderate disturbances to conquer small or large spaces of freedom. That is, the free social space of which 21st century China, and perhaps more generally the contemporary city, claims the importance.

Kokage-gumo Temporary Pavilion: Tracing Ishigami's Design Approach through the Notions of “Actuality” and “Permeation”

Shunichiro Higashi

The Kokage-gumo project was created by Junya Ishigami as one of eight pavilions hosting the cultural program of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympics. The structure consists in a sunshade installed in the garden of an old residence, built in charred cedar. As recurrent in his practice, Ishigami proposes an architecture that combines tradition and novelty, adjusting the site rather than imposing a radical reformation. In the Kokage-gumo project, Ishigami aims to create a space where built architecture blends into the context to become the backdrop for the garden. His design approach revolves around the opportunities arising from architecture's interaction with its environment and the increased freedom endowed by passage of time. Such approach revolves on the notions of “actuality” and “permeation,” respectively the idea of enhancing the present state of things on site and a plan for a gradual consolidation of the project's strength through percolating into it. Ishigami seeks to achieve a balance between tradition and novelty, harmony between architecture and environment.

Measured Steps. Connections and Open Spaces for the City of Bastia

Maria Argenti

This article analyzes the Mantinum and the Aldilonda, two works in Bastia, Corsica, by Buzzo Spinelli Architecture with, respectively, Antoine Dufour Architectes and Dietmar Feichtinger Architectes.

The text focuses on the design wisdom capable of retracing the schemes to the ancestral history of the place and effectively addressing the issue of the connection between the lower and upper city and that of the requalification of the waterfront.

What characterizes both designs is the intent of devising a non-antagonistic relation to the context. The design avoids overwhelming the context to accompany it and resonate with it instead, through materials, colors, and construction techniques.

The two works represent a holistic vision of the relationship between contemporaneity and history, natural context and human intervention, engineering and architecture; seeking in the past an anticipation of the future that we are called to plan.

The ancestral memory is thus sublimated into a mild and reminiscent contemporaneity, into a complex essentiality, capable of starting a transition, a physical and cultural journey, and making the stratification alive, dynamic, and integrated.

The Challenges of Continuity: the National Museum of Art in Oslo

Michelangelo Russo

The new National Museum of Art in Oslo, due to open in June 2022, was designed by Klaus Schuwerk (Kleihues + Schuwerk), winner of the 2009 international competition. The solution interpreted with a clear design strategy, a project programme aimed at the creation of a new exhibition complex capable of recomposing in a single structure an extensive exhibition heritage dispersed in various locations, to showcase more than a thousand years of national history in a unified form. The realisation of this museum represents an intervention of urban regeneration of an important urban place, in close relationship with the landscape of the Oslo fjord: a central and very significant area of the city, in dialogue with some historical architectures, including the City Hall and the Akershus fortress with which the new building establishes a measured visual and architectural relationship. The design solution shows simple and linear geometries that express the strength of a body of architecture with a clear volumetry, expressed with a linguistic code centred on history and the meaning of stratification as a key to interpreting the challenges and ambitions of contemporary times. The reference to the ancestral and archetypal values of architecture acquires a symbolic force that characterises with great effectiveness a wide-ranging project for the renewal of the city and its spaces.

Architecture and Culture of the Territory. Dorte Mandrup's Wadden Sea Center in Denmark

Patrizia Mello

In an era in which the theme of environmental protection has become a sort of vademecum for everyone, the project for a naturalistic visitor center, the Wadden Sea Center (2017/2021) designed by Dorte Mandrup in Denmark, seems to open an important path towards the possibility of recovering and strengthening our dialogue with nature with immediate effects on the enrichment of the natural heritage and at the same time of the built one. What the architect hopes with this project is that nature and culture achieve the strength of an intense and poetic dialogue, where traditions are renewed and by renewing themselves they transmit confidence in the future through "new forms" of beauty, in harmony with one's time and with everything that makes the transformation of the gaze towards horizons of new habitability of the planet urgent.

A project as a link between distant cultures, expanses of flat and marshy landscapes, rich fauna and man, so as to be able to bring their horizons closer and make a possible becoming "together" more discursive.

The City-Nature in the Swiss Suburbia. Uferpark Attisholz Süd

Maarit Ströbele

In the middle of the Swiss plateau, a large former cellulose plant is transformed into a new type of dense urban neighbourhood. Swiss landscape architects Mavo Landschaften supplemented the citadel-like former plant buildings on the north shore with a linear park on the south shore of the Aare river. The park integrates pre-existing features such as a former sewage treatment plant transformed into a series of *horti conclusi* and a playground as well as the former company canteen which is now a restaurant next to a large square. Another part of the park is dedicated to nature, with a large-scale restoration of the river bank. The Attisholz brownfield transformation tries to establish a high-density mixed-use neighbourhood in a peri-urban context. Formerly, large redevelopments of industrial areas were limited to the larger cities. Park Attisholz Süd also introduces a new type of recreational area to low-density Swiss suburbia. The park is not only an example of a transformation of old structures for new uses, but also changes the recreational habits of the local population. *Suburbia* now has an urban park.

"yposkafo." Charting the Contemporary "Pirate" Mode of Architectural Construction

Demetra Katsota, Konstantinos Petrakos

This article aims to problematize the complex relation between vernacular underground dwelling and "yposkafo" as a contemporary building practice. Casting the spot light in three case studies (one before 2012 and two after 2012) we investigate how the design practice of underground architecture was transformed through the years in the Aegean Sea. Particularly, the primary case study is the "Aloni" project [DECA architects] in Antiparos, while the other two case studies are the NCaved [Mold Architects] house in Serifos and the summer house in Naxos [Z. Kotionis]. The use of case-study based methodology was deemed crucial in our study in order to gain a deeper understanding of the nuances and particularities of such a complex topic.

The following study aspires to establish a critical view on the benefits of underground buildings concerning the environmental footprint. In this regard, we investigate the history of underground buildings and the evolution of Greek Building Code. Finally, although the following analysis was tailored around the peculiarities of Cyclades islands, has the potential to be developed in other "sensitive" Mediterranean landscapes.