

Editorial. Brutalisms Today*Alberto Bologna, Tullia Iori*

What critical horizon is opening today around Brutalism, and to what extent does a term forged within post-war British architectural theory continue to operate beyond its original historical genealogy? How can it serve as an interpretative category capable of informing design thinking while providing a framework through which to read contemporary architecture, infrastructure, materials, images, and political conflicts? These questions form the point of departure for this issue. Its aim is not to advance a definitive definition, but rather to gauge the breadth of a constellation of experiences that resists univocal classification. Here, Brutalism emerges as a mobile, pluralised category – *Brutalisms* – capable of being reactivated across profoundly different contexts, scales, and modes of design practice.

Buildings evoking Brutalist imagery have returned insistently to the centre of public and disciplinary debate through deeply contradictory processes: suspended between campaigns of delegitimation, heritage recognition, preservation activism, and unprecedented digital visibility. This renewed prominence necessitates returning to its conditions of emergence. As Laurent Stalder demonstrates in his reading of early 1950s British architecture, New Brutalism did not arise from a coherent manifesto, but from disciplinary conflicts and critical operations. Brutalism appears less as a language than as a stance: a practice capable of incorporating fragments of reality – as found elements, uses, materials, and contemporary contradictions – while resisting reduction to a formal grammar.

From this original instability, the collected essays trace an itinerary across distinct lines of enquiry. The first concerns semantic displacements and reception. Revisiting Le Corbusier's legacy in France, Daniele Frediani challenges the notion of *béton brut* as merely rough or spontaneous, revealing a striking contemporary paradox: the raw *brut* effect is increasingly the product of sophisticated technical mediation, orchestrated construction, and controlled execution.

A second line explores the relation between constructional ethics and architectural image. Contemporary Brutalisms foreground construction processes, revaluing reclaimed materials and transforming economic and ecological constraints into design principles through reuse, recycling, and upcycling. Within this framework, Smiljan Radić's work – recently highlighted by the 2026 Pritzker Architecture Prize – outlines what Maria Argenti terms a Brutalism of fragility: a language of heterogeneous materials in which expressive force resides not in mass or permanence, but in vulnerability, precarity, and exposure to time and erosion.

The issue further expands its scope to infrastructural landscapes and territorial systems. Beatrice Moretti proposes dams, piers, and offshore platforms as manifestations of a “contemporary infrastructural Brutalism,” where technique

and matter redefine relationships between architecture, ecology, and political power. Alongside these large scales, contributions by Tullia Fidelbo and Vincenzo Moschetti focus on bodily and sensory dimensions, demonstrating how fashion can critically reactivate sites like Giuseppe Perugini's Casa Albero and Louis Kahn's Salk Institute by restoring the relationship between matter, movement, and lived space.

Ultimately, these diverse contributions demonstrate that Brutalism's vitality lies not in the coherence of a canon, but in its capacity to hold tensions together and accommodate contradiction. Releasing Brutalism from a stylistic label allows it to operate as an ethical attitude, historiographical device, material culture, territorial infrastructure, and sensory experience – illuminating those moments when architecture enters into friction with its own time to render visible the conditions of its making.

DEBATE**Brutalism Today: Between Haters and Followers**
Tullia Iori

The essay analyzes Donald Trump's political offensive against Brutalism, culminating in the 2025 executive order Making Federal Architecture Beautiful Again, which calls for a return to classical and Renaissance languages in federal buildings in the name of a presumed beauty shared by “the people” against architectural elites. Through opinion polls and regulatory acts, the campaign seeks to delegitimize modern architecture and to impose an official aesthetic by law, evoking the propagandistic value of architecture and the risk of a “cancel culture.” The text then reconstructs the complexity of the term Brutalism, from its critical origins to its gradual transformation into a broad and contradictory label. While the presidential attack symbolically targets the most disliked buildings, it ultimately strengthens awareness and preservation movements that have emerged in Europe and the United States. Between haters and followers, Brutalism re-emerges as a plural and global category, whose strength lies not only in exposed materials or constructive ethics, but in a memorability capable of stirring emotion beyond traditional canons of beauty.

Regenerated Materiality. Lendager and Upcycling as a Design Practice
Alberto Bologna

Drawing on Anders Lendager's notion of “availability” as a guiding design principle, this paper examines the work of Lendager as a paradigmatic case of con-

temporary architecture grounded in circular construction and material upcycling. Originating in Denmark, Lendager's practice redefines architectural production through buildings assembled from regenerated components derived from selective demolition, not as an aesthetic of reuse but as the outcome of an ethically driven design attitude. Beyond technical innovation and resource optimisation, the paper argues that this approach reshapes the expressive translation of construction processes into architectural form. Through an analysis of Resource Rows (2019), The Swan kindergarten (2022) and the TRÆ offices in Aarhus (2025), the study identifies affinities with the theoretical principles of the New Brutalism, understood not as formal imitation but as an ethical stance rooted in necessity, material truth and acceptance of real production constraints. Reinterpreting concepts such as "as found" and "assemblage" through contemporary upcycling practices, Lendager's work is read as a non-figurative reactivation of Brutalism's ethical core and as a critical framework for assessing the expressive potential of *cradle-to-cradle* architecture in the Anthropocene.

Brutalisms in Search of Meaning. Inventions and Conflicts of an Unfinished Concept

Silvia Groaz

To counter the iconographic shortcuts that have fixed a "canonical" Brutalist image, this article treats Brutalism as an unstable, plural, and intrinsically conflictual concept. Brutalism first condensed post-war disputes about what architecture is, what it owes to a democratic society, and who has the authority to name and legitimize practices. Rather than a coherent style, a critical tag or a movement, Brutalism was launched as an attitude, catalyzed by its ethic of reality, the everyday, and the as-found. Critics' performative definitions enabled international circulation, translation and local appropriation for personal agendas, while its reduction to a recognizable aesthetic spurred architects' refusals and exposed the unresolved tension between ethics and image. Today, Brutalism resurfaces less as a stable repertoire than as a diagnostic framework for contemporary anxieties, prompting renewed debates on preservation, climate cost, and publicness. The challenge remains to articulate a discourse that embraces complexity and resists the oversimplification produced by rigid categorizations, sustaining a conversation about architecture's capacity to redefine itself through rawness, authenticity, and what a society, in a specific time and place, considers essential.

The Ecological Project of Léon Krier

Roberto Gargiani

The main architect of the revolt generated by an ethical rather than aesthetic selection of construction materials was Léon Krier. Between the 1960s and 1970s, Krier sought to free himself from industrial materials and rediscover the technical logic of ancestral ones, before arriving, through his projects, his theoretical proclamations and his graphic schemes, made between the mid-1970s and 1980s, to the definition of a kind of project on the scale of the building, the city and the countryside, which he specified through the use of the concept of

ecology. Throughout his work, which until the 1980s was marked by a refusal to compromise, Krier established himself among the theorists of his time for defining the political criteria and operational strategies of what he called "Ecological Project." Against the backdrop of the dramatic events unfolding in the 2020s, his work takes on the characteristics of a lesson for arriving at a common project for a new political strategy: "A Global Ecological Reconstruction."

Exposed Matter, Hidden Power. Africa Between Colonial Invention and Tectonic Care

Tomà Berlanda

The essay interrogates the paradox of "brutalism" in postcolonial Africa: how the Banhamian ethic of material truth became instrumentalized as an aesthetic of subalternity. Through archival analysis of early Aga Khan Award cycles (1980-1986), the research deconstructs how "material truth" was often instrumentalized by global North experts to project an exoticized image of authenticity. Drawing on Kenneth Frampton's tectonic culture and Lesley Lokko's concept of the *development bind*, the paper identifies a shift toward a practice of "tectonic care." Through the analysis of projects such as Demas Nwoko's Dominican Institute and Peter Rich's Mapungubwe Centre, the essay argues for an architecture where raw material is no longer an icon of poverty or a literary genre written by outsiders, but a political tool for climate justice, social dignity, and sovereign self-determination. It highlights how the junction and stereotomies become acts of spatial resistance and decolonization.

Smiljan Radić Clarke, the Poetry of Fragility

Maria Argenti

The essay examines the works of Smiljan Radić Clarke through the lens of a new form of Brutalism, capable of expressing a unique interpretation of contemporaneity: rooted in the past yet free; simultaneously fragile, monumental, and lightweight; Brutalist and minimalist, in an extraordinary blend of high- and low-tech approaches.

By revisiting a range of projects – from the Serpentine Pavilion to the Pite House in Papudo; from the small chapel for the Venice Biennale to the structures built for himself and his family in Vilches (including the House for the Poem of the Right Angle); from the Casa del Carbonero to the Vik Winery; from the Mestizo restaurant to the expansion of the Chilean Museum of Pre-Columbian Art in Santiago and the Beranda House – the article argues that the meaning of each of Radić's works emerges from experience rather than preceding it. It further posits that vulnerability is deliberately exposed to temper the technological paradigm's strong sense of abstract omnipotence.

The conclusion is that, for Radić, flexibility stems from concreteness rather than abstraction, and that theoretical speculation does not feed upon itself in isolation from reality but draws nourishment from it – reflecting a vision that, developed alongside his wife, the sculptor Marcela Correa, interweaves the concepts of material, construction, installation, landscape, and time.

RESEARCHES

Fun Brutalism: The Playful Concrete of Bjarke Ingels Group

Gianluca Capurso

Over the past two decades, the work of Bjarke Ingels and the Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG) has gained international recognition for its ability to combine formal innovation, sustainability, and communicative effectiveness. This paper examines the relationship between Ingels' approach and certain themes traditionally associated with Brutalism, such as material centrality, the expressive force of image, and the exhibition of construction. These elements re-emerge in his work in reinterpreted forms, departing from the austerity of New Brutalism and moving toward more open and accessible configurations. The analysis focuses on BIG's concrete architecture, showing how the use of material, the expression of construction processes, and formal definition contribute to the development of an architectural language in which materiality plays a narrative and explicitly playful role. Within this framework, the paper proposes the notion of *fun brutalism* to describe this approach, highlighting how BIG reinterprets the legacy of Brutalism through flexible, combinatory, and communicative design strategies.

Frictionless Brutalism

Alberto Calderoni

Over the last decades, Brutalism has undergone a progressive neutralization, shifting from a critical and operative stance to a stabilized historical label and recognizable aesthetic repertoire. Once grounded in the coincidence between architectural gesture and the material conditions of production, it is now often reduced to a catalogue of visual traits detached from its ideological and constructive premises. Reconsidered as an aesthetic ideology rather than a stylistic episode, Brutalism defines a regime of visibility based on the responsibility of the gesture and the explicit exposure of structure, technique, and process. This concentrated conception of form contrasts with the contemporary condition, shaped by normative density, environmental protocols, and technical mediation. The aspiration to unify design and construction gives way to distributed coordination among heterogeneous systems. Brutalism thus operates as a critical term of comparison, making perceptible the distance between constructive coherence and present stratification. Within this framework, architectural photography assumes a strategic role. Beyond documentation, it functions as an analytical device that renders legible the material and structural logics of the built object, reactivating Brutalism's critical charge and interrogating the operative stakes of contemporary production.

Honest Construction: Materials and Processes in Contemporary Switzerland

Giulia Boller

The article uses Reyner Banham's concept of "New Brutalism" as an interpretive lens to examine contemporary Swiss architectural and engineering practices. Rather than considering Brutalism as merely a stylistic

category, the article argues that recent Swiss work is characterized by a design approach rooted in material authenticity, structural integrity, and the clarity of construction processes. Through selected case studies from different regions, the article identifies two complementary operative logics. The first, a "static logic," derives architectural form directly from structural behaviour. In contrast, the second, a "circular logic," employs adaptive reuse strategies – ranging from the transformation of early concrete structures to the integration of reclaimed components – to generate new spatial and constructive possibilities. These approaches demonstrate how engineers and architects collaborate to integrate structural performance, prefabrication, sustainability, and social responsibility. By doing so, the article demonstrates how contemporary Swiss projects reinterpret Brutalist principles in the context of today's ecological and cultural conditions, redefining Brutalism as an ethical rather than an aesthetic paradigm.

In Spain, Exposed: Towards an Integral Image of Architecture

Giulia Setti, Francesca Zanotto

Starting from the themes explored by the Spanish Pavilion at the 2025 Architecture Biennale in Venice – *Internalities*, curated by Roi Salgueiro and Manuel Bouzas – the essay reflects on a design season that began in the Iberian Peninsula in the 1990s, characterized by a specific attention to materials, energy, waste, and emissions. The projects discussed share a common language, a recognizable grammar of "exposed" materials, without cladding, exhibiting an expressive richness that exploits the intrinsic qualities of matter to reduce environmental impact and energy consumption. The buildings by Carles Oliver and Xim Moyá, TED'A arquitectes, Peris+Toral, 08014 arquitectura, Harquitectes, Alventosa Morell and TAKK showcase a clear approach to sustainability, rooted in the use of local materials and the rediscovery of traditional construction techniques. They demonstrate how honest, almost "brutal," material and design choices, together with typological precision, can reduce environmental impact and support local, more economical building processes, restoring a decisive role in the creative work to the human intellect and its ability to make choices in response to specific places and climates.

Invented Traditions and the Performativity of Power in Skopje

Giuseppe Resta

This text situates Skopje's post-earthquake brutalist legacy within a broader inquiry into the political uses of architecture in North Macedonia, focusing on the tensions between post-socialist nation-building, neo-liberal urban policies, and memory politics. Drawing on Hobsbawm and Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition* and Judith Butler's notion of performativity, the *Skopje 2014* programme is analysed in a global context to compare conservative cultural politics. This large-scale urban project retroactively re-clad brutalist buildings in a pseudo-historicist idiom known as Etno-Baroque.

Through the emblematic case of the MEPSO building, architectural "dressing" is interpreted as a performative act that produces symbolic antiquity, reshapes col-

lective memory, and legitimises nationalist narratives. Ultimately, façades, monuments, and decorative apparatuses function as repeated acts that generate ontological effects on the city and its inhabitants, naturalising specific ideas of national identity while marginalising others. This dynamic is not unique to Skopje, but rather exemplifies a broader strategy employed by contemporary nationalist governments to materialise identitarian projects.

Some Fashion Experiments Between the Casa Albero and the Salk Institute

Tullia Fidelbo, Vincenzo Moschetti

This paper examines the relationship between fashion and Brutalist architecture through a marginalised theoretical lens that foregrounds the body-space relationship as a primary interpretative device. In Brutalism, materiality exceeds its role as surface or enclosure, operating instead as a narrative structure that generates meaning and perceptual tension. Fashion thus emerges as a privileged lens through which Brutalist forms can be read and reactivated.

In recent years, several fashion houses have consciously adopted concrete as both a symbolic and spatial reference, as exemplified by Saint Laurent's 2021 runway at Tadao Ando's Bourse de Commerce, Balenciaga's aesthetic codification of exposed concrete, and Hermès' "brutalism chic" collection presented in 2025 at Auguste Perret's Palais d'Iéna. Conversely, fashion's dynamic figures amplify Brutalist concrete as a contemporary symbolic image, conveying narratives of material authenticity.

This reciprocal dialogue, in which the body intensifies matter and matter enhances movement, is explored through two case studies: Giuseppe Perugini's *Casa Albero* in Fregene and Louis Kahn's Salk Institute in La Jolla. Read through the lens of fashion and corporeality, these examples reveal architecture as a performative and reactivated space.

Is Béton Still Brut? Expression and Construction in France

Daniele Frediani

Starting from the impact that the Unité d'Habitation had on the imagination of its contemporaries and on the consolidation of a shared Brutalist aesthetic, it is possible to reconstruct in which way *béton brut* established itself as the principal "face" of an architectural season and its countless emulators: materials' sincerity, structure's exposure, and the display of the construction process. However, considering current methods for casting and finishing exposed concrete, this narrative falters. Through three buildings recently completed in southern France, not far from the *Unité*, this paper seeks to identify the many constructive rhetorics by which is still advanced the commonplace idea that *béton brut*, with its imperfections and roughness, is the outcome of artisanal procedures and processes that elude the designer's control. On the contrary, to produce today an expressive surface, marked by joints and the grain of formwork, entails engaging in a veritable operation of falsification, where imperfections are merely simulated and often the result of theoretical elaboration and highly refined technical research.

Offshore Architectures. The Plurality of a Radical Language

Beatrice Moretti

Offshore and port infrastructures, due to their extreme exposure, technical dependency, and radical construction processes, offer a critical field to investigate the relationship between form, material, and architectural language. Drawing on Reyner Banham's interpretation of *New Brutalism*, this essay frames these infrastructures as expressions of a contemporary infrastructural Brutalism, where material truth, construction processes, and operational conditions directly generate form. Through the analysis of large-scale maritime works such as the New Breakwater in Genoa and Maasvlakte 2 in Rotterdam, the research highlights how digitally driven construction, algorithmic precision, and material density converge in shaping these environments. In this context, offshore infrastructures are interpreted as *hyperobjects*, whose scale and temporal extension exceed human perception while deeply affecting ecological and territorial systems. By integrating theoretical perspectives from Banham, Couling, and Morton, the paper argues for a renewed understanding of infrastructural architecture as both a material and ethical practice, capable of redefining the spatial and cultural relationship between land, sea, and contemporary urbanization.