

ARQUITECTURA Y PAISAJE

transferencias históricas
retos contemporáneos

VOLUMEN I

A B A D A E D I T O R E S

**ARQUITECTURA
Y PAISAJE**
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retos contemporáneos

VOLUMEN I

LECTURAS

Serie **H.^a del Arte y de la Arquitectura**

DIRECTORES Juan Miguel HERNÁNDEZ LEÓN y Juan CALATRAVA

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La influencia de Wright en Nápoles

Wright's Influence in Naples

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Abstract

Al final del fascismo, el redescubrimiento de la figura de F. L. Wright también se involucra a la cultura italiana, especialmente en Nápoles. Algunos proyectos aislados, para ubicarse sobre todo dentro de la institución académica napolitana, están muy cerca del trabajo del maestro.

De Luca se acerca gradualmente a los temas de la arquitectura orgánica, especialmente gracias a la acción de Zevi. Hay ideas en el Hotel Punta Molino en Ischia, como las referencias a la arquitectura wrightiana, que se encuentran en los espacios interiores y en la complejidad de los caminos con los que se relacionan las distintas estancias. En la siguiente generación, sin embargo, es muy importante el trabajo de A. L. Rossi y Donatella Mazzoleni. El edificio muestra una interpenetración de volúmenes y formas geométricas en una elaboración antiestereométrica que recuerda el estilo tardío wrightiano, como el Guggenheim y los proyectos realizados en la década de 1950. Rossi define esta línea de investigación como "dinamismo plástico".

At the end of the Fascism, the rediscovery of the figure of F. L. Wright also involves the Italian culture, especially in Naples. Some isolated projects, to be placed above all within the Neapolitan academic institution, are very close to the work of the masters.

De Luca gradually approaches the themes of organic architecture, especially thanks to Zevi's action. There are ideas in the Punta Molino Hotel in Ischia, references to Wrightian architecture are found in the interior spaces and in the complexity of the paths, with which the various rooms are related. About the next generation, however, is very important the work of A.L. Rossi and Donatella Mazzoleni. The building shows an interpenetration of volumes and geometric shapes in an antistereometric elaboration that recalls the late Wrightian manner, referred to the Guggenheim and the projects carried out in the 1950s. Rossi defines the research line as "plastic dynamism".

Keywords

F. L. Wright, Aldo Loris Rossi, De Luca, arquitectura organicista

F. L. Wright, Aldo Loris Rossi, De Luca, organic architecture

Introduction

At the end of the Fascist period, the rediscovery of the figure of F. L. Wright also involves the Italian cultural scene, although late, especially in the city of Naples. Indeed, Wright's work and the organic current had a lot of luck in Naples. The figures of Wright and Le Corbusier become two complementary poles to be taken as points of reference for the champions of the "modern". In fact, the Neapolitan environment is enriched by figures with extraordinary openness towards novelties and especially about organic architecture, felt as a bearer of values, and as an ideal means to overcome a cultural block. Giulio di Luca, professor at the faculty of architecture, and Aldo Loris Rossi belong to this category of illustrious figures.

The role of Naples in the Italian debate

The foundation of a Neapolitan branch of the APAO, with the fact that many professors of the Neapolitan faculty of Architecture see organic architecture as an emblem of compositional freedom, means that the Wrightian influence spreads theoretically very quickly.

The Neapolitan environment is enriched by figures of an extraordinary openness to novelties and in particular to organic architecture, felt as a bearer of values, and as an ideal means to overcome a cultural block. The opportunity for the theories accepted and absorbed by Neapolitan architecture experts to turn into vivid projects is given by the post-war period. The first timid expressions of adherence to organic canons emerge in the social housing sector. To assert itself more fully in the isolated experiences of the individual supporters of the organic movement. Next to the work of the American master there are isolated projects unrelated to the great social housing programs but included in the research of representative figures of Neapolitan architecture and the academic institution. To this category belongs the work of Giulio di Luca, teacher at the faculty of architecture and of a large part of his school. Following the footsteps of De Luca's activity, the next generation of undoubted Wrightian ancestry is formed, it operates in the climate of the avant-garde of the Sixties which allows a futuristic vision in which the work of Aldo Loris Rossi and Donatella Mazzoleni will be inserted¹. It should be remembered that the architects who designed a new image of the city were active in a convulsive period of post-war population explosion that led to unauthorized buildings responsible for real damage to the Neapolitan urban system. In this climate, the activity of avant-garde designers capable of transforming the city emerges within the cultural debate on a national scale. A recognition that, as will be seen in the following paragraphs, will arrive in a complete manner in the seventies, above all thanks to the intense work done by Camillo Gubitosi and Alberto Izzo. In fact, their exhibitions have the merit of offering an important contribution to the international opening and de-provincialization of the city's architectural culture. All through an original format never experienced until then: exhibitions, conferences, and catalogues. Three tools useful for the dissemination of culture on a large scale.

¹ A. Maglio, *L'influenza di Wright sulla cultura architettonica napoletana del secondo dopoguerra* (Roma/Bari: Laterza), 72-73

De Luca gradually approaches the themes of organic architecture, above all thanks to Zev's action. Son of the well-known Neapolitan sculptor Luigi De Luca, he demonstrates a propensity for the arts and for architecture. Indeed, he enrolled at the Royal Higher School of Architecture in Naples. In the academic years he becomes the pupil of Marcello Canino. He graduated in architecture in 1933 and since that moment he embarked on a prolific career as an architect that exploded in post-war reconstruction. It was in these years that he took care of the pavilions of the Mostra d'Oltremare. During the post-war period he participated in university competitions for the assignment of professorship as Elements of Architectural Composition and Architecture and Architectural Composition. His contribution to being able to reform the faculty of architecture in Naples was considerable and his seminars involved numerous teachers and students. After World War II, De Luca gradually approaches the themes of organic architecture. Among the first manifestations of this new membership, the project of the Punta Molino Hotel in Ischia stands out (fig. 1).



Figure 1: Giulio De Luca, *Photo of the hotel insertion*, 1961 (Barbara Bertoli, *Giulio de Luca 1912-2004 opere e progetti*, Rome: Clean, 2013, 157).

A hotel built in one of the most evocative places on the island of Ischia, Punta Molino, set between the pine forest in front of the Aragonese Castle and the panorama of the island of Procida and the Phlegraean coast. The building was built in the place of an old house traditionally known to those who walked the pedestrian street that runs along the beach, on a land rich in lava rocks and characteristic vegetation. In his requests, the client had considered the opportunity to equip the hotel with about 80 rooms, but the limitations

imposed by landscape reasons and by the explicit request of the superintendent meant that the number was reduced. However, there was a problem of designing a building whose dimensions would be so large as to risk seriously disturbing a landscape that had its equilibrium. De Luca replies to these problems with a solution that is original and at the same time respectful of the surrounding environment. The building designed by De Luca seems to prefer curvilinear and irregular shapes over stereometric ones, approaching what Bruno Zevi defines as "informal" architecture, a complete abandonment of any compositional rigidity, in order to bring the project closer to the real life of man. The building is configured as a white mass perfectly integrated into the green of the vegetation and the blue of the sea. It is made up of two bodies, one with a linear development and the other one characterized by the play of concave and convex shapes. The two bodies appear linked by the restaurant space. The organization of the interior spaces (fig. 2) and the complexity of the system of paths with which the rooms connect are purely organic, and also the choices made to insert the building into the landscape without upsetting it. Among these, that of natural materials to be used for flooring and cladding.

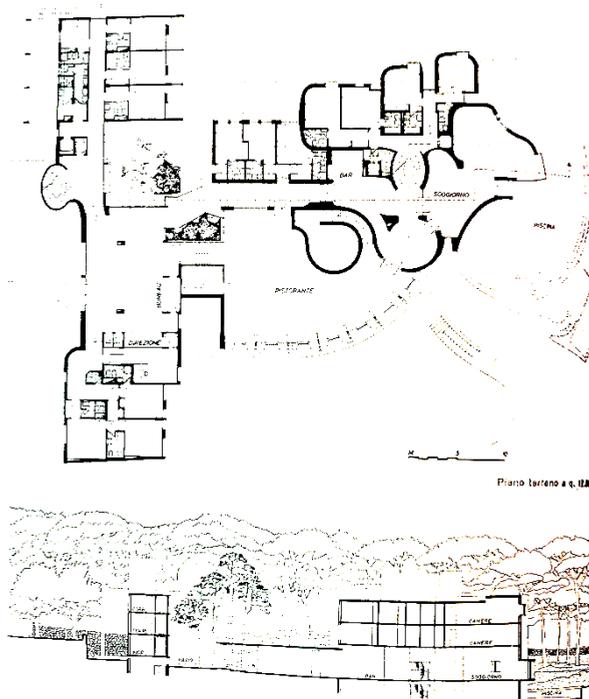


Figure 2: Giulio De Luca, *Punta Molino*, ground floor plan and section, 1961-1964 (Barbara Bertoli, *Giulio de Luca 1912-2004 opere e progetti*, Rome: Clean, 2013, 158).

Just think of the paving of the clearing in grey quartzite, or of the brick terraces. Today, the pre-existing trees and plantations were maintained, even at the cost of considerable technical and economic difficulties. Thus, today, the building is surrounded by old olive trees, holm oaks, palm trees, fig and acacia trees. In addition, the spontaneous flora of prickly pears was reconstructed, which had suffered some damage during the works². Wright's lessons are wisely interpreted by De Luca, as shown by some design details that are exemplary of the desire to experiment with new forms. An example of this is the design of original boat-shaped entrance canopies for the buildings, a new type of canopy full of materiality. It is precisely these unusual and sinuous shapes that harmonize with the rest of the structure, enhancing the Mediterranean characteristics, however strongly present in the whole work. Furthermore, the soft and curvilinear shapes combine to best express the continuity between the interior and the surrounding space. His sculptural approach emerges in the gestational phase of the hotel in Punta Molino. Indeed, De Luca shaped the structure by breaking down and reassembling the various forms that make it up several times. He re-proposed the elements of the architectural tradition decontextualized and presented in a new revolutionary light. Interesting in terms of plasticity, it is references that in some way referring to the figure of Di Le Corbusier, is the volume of the living room, at the junction between the concave and convex walls facing the pool, which presents a vertical cut reminiscent of the solutions adopted at Ronchamp. With the hotel in Punta Molino De Luca reaches a dynamism of forms typical of organic architecture.

About the next generation, on the other hand, to emerge in the climate of the new vanguards of the sixties, it is the work of A. L. Rossi. Loris Rossi, extremely reluctant to the conservative approach of academic teachings, and with the conviction that to better understand architecture and thus be able to disquisition it must "enter" the works, he built his professionalism collecting the most diverse experiences, observing from self-taught, attending artists and writers, but above all traveling frequently all over the world, from Norway to Greece, from the United States to the USSR. This is in order to be able to appreciate live and with a critical look the works of the masters of modern architecture, to find concomitances, ideas, analogies and solutions, immortalizing them and then preserving them in an archive in which there were about 40 thousand slides of "all the beauty that is in the world"³, collected in its rich library.

During the period of his formation, Rossi dedicated himself to the deepening of the avant-garde: futurism, expressionism, neoplasticism, constructivism, from which he elaborated his own and original language⁴. During his academic years, one of his major educational references for architectural design was Marcello Canino, a modern classicist.

Decisive, during the university period, was the meeting with the architect Paolo Soleri. The latter, in the fifties, was engaged in the construction, in Vietri sul Mare, of *ceramica solimene*, judged by a then very young Rossi, as exemplary case for its open and dynamic spatiality,

² A. L. Rossi, "Albergo a Punta Molino", *L'architettura cronache e storie*, no.113 (March 1965).

³ M. C. Aulisio, "Aldo Loris Rossi, vademecum per gli studenti: «Romper le scatole. Sempre»", *Il Mattino* (January 2016).

⁴ M. Locci, *Aldo Loris Rossi. La concretezza dell'utopia* (Turin: Testo&Immagine, 1997), 5.

as well as the main example of organic architecture built in Italy, for which "in Naples there was no place for an open, dynamic, antigeometric, anticlassicist spatiality"⁵.

Soleri, together with Michelucci and Zevi, represent those whom Rossi always referred to as his masters. In particular, Bruno Zevi, who together with Luigi Piccinato, promoted so-called organic architecture in Italy, encouraged his career from the beginning: the architect immediately became passionate about the national debate aimed at overcoming rationalism in favour of an organic vision of architecture proposed by Bruno Zevi in the magazine *Metron*. Therefore, from its inception, Rossi's architecture set himself the goal of materializing the zevian organic invariants, in connection with futurist, constructivist and expressionist inspirations⁶ and of Corbusier's aspiration.

He recognized the Italian organic movement, the elaboration of a strategy that aimed to stem the pressing post-war demographic explosion, which would lead progressively and inexorably to environmental disaster. From Bruno Zevi he learned and promoted the deep relationship that binds architecture and urbanism, marrying the ideas of *Urbatettura*, city-territory and eco-city, following the idea that the crisis of late-rationalist urbanism, indifferent to history as to nature, from the post-war period onwards, had treated agricultural areas as mere areas to occupy and historical centres as remains of cultures to be overcome with the introduction of new and functional buildings. The organic vision to which Rossi approached, was masterfully adapted to the different design stairs, from the housing unit to the Red Bridges, to the building in San Giacomo dei Capri in the case of Loggetta, to the hospital in the case of Cotugno, and to the Casa del Portuale. In the works of Loris Rossi, we recognize, in addition to the obvious influences of the aforementioned Paolo Soleri, also those of Frank Lloyd Wright, father of organic architecture, whose composition for horizontal and vertical planes followed, and that of the historical period. Inspired and influenced by the most varied artistic movements and guided by the themes of the Modern Movement, Loris Rossi was constantly looking for solutions that could solve or at least mitigate the environmental and local problems, through the introduction of new architectural and urban forms, as well as ways of easy use of the environment⁷.

As already mentioned one of the most important projects of A. L. Rossi is the Casa de Portuale (fig. 3), designed in 1962 by Rossi together with the architect Donatella Mazzoleni, the building is located in Calata della Marinella, in the Eastern Zone of the port of Naples and symbolizes the productive chaos of urban areas dedicated to maritime activities. Its characteristic features spring up between the containers, silos and railway line tracks, in a degraded landscape and devoid of "creatively significant parameters", where Rossi's structure represents almost a form of claim to environmental redemption⁸.

⁵ A. L. Rossi, ed., *Napoli. Architettura, città, paesaggio* (Roma: Mancosu, 2006), 142.

⁶ Locci, *Aldo Loris Rossi...*, 5-7.

⁷ A. Castagnaro, “Aldo Loris Rossi. L’architettura come protesi della natura”, *Arkedà* 8 (Novembre 2019): 99.

⁸ Castagnaro, *Aldo Loris Rossi...*, 99.



Figure 3: A. L. Rossi, *Casa del Portuale*, photographic detail of the main elevation (Vincenzo Esposito, 2019).

Of great visual impact and with a singular sculptural uniqueness, the structure has been defined, recalling Le Corbusier, a "poetic reaction object" for its strong futuristic and avant-garde ancestry of Wright's matrix⁹. It accurately resumes the visionary use of languages capable of enhancing semantics and symbolism: it is a building that fully represents the expansion of internal strength in space, functions and vitality, which arises from an internal nucleus and then expands into space vigorously¹⁰. The shapes, which seem suspended between dreamlike and real, defy the force of gravity with disconnections and disturbing elements, decompositions, irregular distributions¹¹. It is, therefore, a clear example of utopian architecture, with its sudden changes, deep measures to accentuate verticality, sheer profiles, passable hollow structures, contrasting geometric shapes, the contrasting of tall towers and spires on horizontal planes¹².

Through the recognition of irrational behaviours, freedom of expression and multidisciplinary, it testifies to the idea of a "city that happens": "nomadic, transient, interchangeable, imaginative, where chaos spontaneously regulates itself, and each randomly inserts its own artefact [...] exorcising all taboos about habitat stability¹³ (fig. 4).

⁹ D. De Rienzo, "Il regno tangibile dell'illusione: La casa del Portuale di Aldo Loris Rossi", in *AWM* (website) 6 November, 2014, accessed 27 may 2021, <https://www.artwort.com/2014/11/06/architettura/regno-tangibile-dellillusione-casa-portuale-aldo-loris-rossi/>

¹⁰ G. Menna, ed., *Historia Rerum. Scritti in onore di Benedetto Gravagnuolo* (Roma: Clean, 2018), 81.

¹¹ C. Paganelli, "Forme fluide nella discontinuità della città", *Casa Oggi*, no.205 (1991): 42-43.

¹² De Rienzo, "Il regno tangibile...".

¹³ B. Zevi, *Storia dell'architettura moderna* (Turin: Einaudi), 1973.

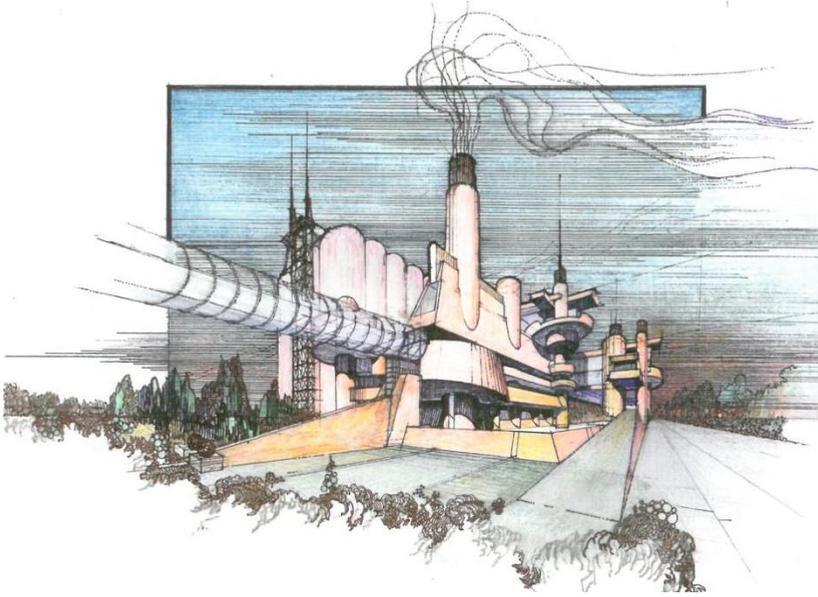


Figure 4: A. L. Rossi, *Casa del Portuale, Offices for social services in the port of Naples 2nd lot*, 1968-80 (collection Centre Pompidou, from Locci, *Aldo Loris Rossi...*, 44).

Looking at the structure, freely inspired by Boccioni's sculpture *Bottle Development in Space*, for its spatial complexity it is necessary to move to several angles to fully grasp all the aspects that are always changing and never taken for granted, the field of view is dynamic and constantly renewing, as if it never really ended. Stylistically, it takes up the late Wrightian works, the glaring example of which is found in the Guggenheim, designed to "break down the wall box" by virtue of the conception of architecture as an expression of spatial freedom and plastic dynamism¹⁴. The building was actually conceived as a fragment of the larger "city-structure" project, reworking the Corbusian idea of the building-city with stylistic references of Wrightian origin; also defined as "primary *urbatettura*" because it is able to break down the barriers between architecture and urban planning. The project, which blended stylistic elements of Wright's Mile-high skyscraper, Rino Levi's Brasilia superblocs and Reginald Malcomson's Linear City, consisted of a megastructure that included a vertically developed settlement capable of holding 250,000 inhabitants, 1 km long, 800 meters high and equipped with services, facilities and internal transport. The Casa del Portuale, therefore, represents in a certain sense the crowning achievement of its futuristic projects and is about 1/3 of what has been achieved compared to the total designed. A building that has been defined by critics as neo-baroque, since, just as the Baroque broke the manneristic schemes of Renaissance architecture, the architecture of Rossi and some of his contemporaries aimed at breaking the manneristic schemes of the

¹⁴ Menna, *Historia Rerum...*, 80.

Modern Movement. In Rossi's project, this is realized through the skilful recovery of many functionalist motivations, but used with wide compositional and expressive freedom¹⁵.

In line with the idea of a city-structure, the building intended to assume the value of urban units with vertical, multifunctional and autonomous development, in symbiosis with the laws of nature. The mega-structure provided, at the time of design, the combination of different volumes superimposed on various levels, each to be allocated to specific use: offices and service areas at the lower levels; housing and other offices at intermediate levels; restaurant and recreational spaces on the upper levels¹⁶.

At the construction level, the bold features are seen in a plano-volumetric articulation based on a skeleton, consisting of twelve hollow cylinders and a triangular-based prism, which coincide with all the vertical infrastructures. The first block was intended to contain administrative functions; the second was divided into four functional units (worker recruitment sections; general services; technical services; plant sub-services). The building has been entirely made of reinforced concrete with open surfaces alternating with large windows; with horizontal structural elements consisting of plates, mostly circular, constrained along the edges or on supports, following a complex centrifugal development; and the vertical systems, mostly consisting of flat and curved slabs, which enclose the pipelines of the various plants: the twelve hollow cylindrical pylons, which are inspired by the surrounding silos and which correspond to the vertical connections, represent the structural nuclei of the entire building from which the platforms are used for functional purposes¹⁷ (i.e. containing lifts, stairs and technical installations). And, to such cylinders are anchored the individual sections of the building, independent of each other, which extend on different levels; while the alternating game between concave and convex runs through the inside and outside of the structure¹⁸.

Concrete blocks take up the current of brutalism, which uses cement as a primary element, as well as processed and innovative plastic forms. In addition, the angular part of the building resembles the bow of a ship, taking on board the building environment that surrounds it. Particular care was taken, given the corrosive atmosphere due to the presence of marine salts and industrial fumes, to check the limit states of cracking to prevent the early degradation of the bearing elements. Special work was also done for the foundation, from the moment the foundation ground was made up of thin strips and sand in the water: they were built on beaten poles¹⁹. The first lot of the building aims to put into practice the principles expressed in the idea of "city-structure" and proposes itself as a fragment of the new assumed metropolis²⁰.

With the second lot, articulated around structural and plant cores that define the fixed points of the matrix, distinct but integrated with the pre-existing by means of an aerial passage, an organic set of space-functional relationships comes to life. Now today, the Casa del Portuale represents an icon of the Neapolitan avant-garde, increasingly present in the

¹⁵ G. Dorfles, "Barocco Napoletano in Waterfront", *Domus* 617 (May 1981): 10.

¹⁶ De Rienzo, "Il regno tangibile...".

¹⁷ Locci, *Aldo Loris Rossi...*, 36.

¹⁸ Dorfles, "Barocco Napoletano...", 10.

¹⁹ Rossi, Locascio, Irace, "La Casa del Portuale a Napoli...", 537-538.

²⁰ Locci: *Aldo Loris Rossi...*, 36.

photography of contemporary TV series and music videos. About it, however, the concept of exercise of compositional and spatial freedom, of city-structure built in height to leave large spaces to nature but, at the same time, harmonically binding with the surrounding metropolitan environment, has been lost. In fact, one perceives the side inherent in gigantism, the brutal use of reinforced concrete, the unusual construction by volumes.

El paisaje es hoy un tema crucial en el debate arquitectónico, urbanístico, artístico, territorial, político, ecológico y antropológico. En la pregunta sobre qué es un paisaje se entrecruzan muchas de las grandes cuestiones que tienen que ver con la construcción y con la percepción de nuestro entorno, en un momento determinado por una crisis global que convierte a la mirada sobre nuestro hábitat en un asunto marcado por la urgencia. La centralidad del paisaje en la cultura contemporánea es un fenómeno tan reconocido que ha dado lugar a elaboraciones teóricas específicas tendentes a dar cuenta del mismo. Está claro que hoy las cuestiones relacionadas con el paisaje, en su sentido más amplio, constituyen uno de los núcleos conceptuales en los que en mayor medida se entrecruzan naturaleza, cultura, historia y contemporaneidad.

La complejidad y variedad de temas que el paisaje convoca solo puede abordarse desde una mirada transversal y desde la complementariedad de diferentes saberes y disciplinas. Tal fue el objetivo que se propuso el Congreso Internacional *Arquitectura y paisaje: transferencias históricas, retos contemporáneos*, celebrado en Granada del 26 al 28 de enero de 2022, cuyas aportaciones se recogen en el presente volumen.



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