

Chapter 20

U.I.R.D.A. – Unbuilt Italian Rationalism Digital Archive: Piero Bottoni and Luigi Vietti

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ABSTRACT

For twenty years, the architecture of Italian rationalism through the digital modelling has been investigated. Very often, the production of a model and the consequent representation of tridimensional views, in many case studies, as outcome of the research on architecture have been considered. Actually, the digital model, intended as a critical tool, has to be conceived as a ‘starting point’ for graphic analysis of architecture and not as the outcome. Indeed, it is associated to other graphics, sometimes not ‘deducted’ from the model, useful for the understanding/translation of architecture. The construction of the model is not the construction of a simple image, operation, which is often carried out for the representation of the project, but it is the hermeneutic and critical result of the drawing tending to the analysis of the form, which is the true object of ‘imitation’. This study wants to contribute to the construction of a digital archive on the topic of the single-family house investigated by Piero Bottoni and Luigi Vietti.

INTRODUCTION

In a masterful introductory essay for an exhibition of architectural drawings of the twentieth century, Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani (1982) stated that in the drawings kept in drawers, author’s creativity appears in its purest form. He also said that since drawings are not debased by compromises of construction, the architectural idea manifests itself with greater fullness of ‘meaning’. In this sense, the value of the architectural drawing assumes one of its most ‘high’ expressions: as symbolic figure, and icon.

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During the exhibition organized by the Roman scholar is underlined a history of architecture of the last century through the drawings of those authors considered real masters of the Modern Movement whose representations can be considered architecture icons of that period.

For many years now, due to legislative definition the archive drawings have been considered cultural heritage that, as others, need to be safeguarded and focalized. Beyond their conservation, cataloging and indexing one must disseminate not only through simple photographic representations, found in books or catalogs, but also with critical interpretations of their contents.

As real place of architectural criticism the drawing is the tool that allows more than any other *modus* of criticism to get closer to the recognizable consistency of the design process due to its constant ‘coming and going’ characteristic of the drawing and construction of the form, without which it cannot take ‘body’. Consequently conceiving the drawing as analysis of the form and critical tool, it becomes the *medium* between words and things. When these latter are ‘drawn’, drawing is the only survey device able to retrace the project’s critical points, the hidden ones, that the word cannot identify. Therefore, the redrawing of the unbuilt architecture becomes a mimesis of the design process in which the action of the drawing coincides with the design one, so manifesting the Italian translation of the English word ‘design’ that is project.

Due to its extreme versatility the digital drawing is a useful tool for graphic analysis of architectural projects remained within the drawer that, just to be ‘pristine’, have a richer expressiveness than to the built projects debased by compromises of external factors such as the client, economic aspects, sudden variations in the process, errors.

The digital model, intended as a critical tool, is thus to be considered as a ‘starting point’ and not as the outcome for graphic analysis of the architecture. Indeed, other graphics, sometimes not deduced from the model, useful for understanding/translation of architecture, are added. The construction of the model is not the construction of a simple image, operation often carried out for the project’s representation, but it is the hermeneutic and critical result of the drawing tending to the formal analysis, true object of ‘imitation’.

The critical path traced by Magnago Lampugnani (1982) was enlightening because it had allowed undertaking research lines related to the unbuilt architecture. Indeed, when it is investigated by critical redrawing, allows to develop a ‘new history’. At the same time it offers new architectural review and unpublished images for the ‘written word’, establishing new digital archives often explored when inserted into computerized databases on the web.

The construction of a database, the digital archive, is a dangerous operation since the produced image, instead to function as ‘stop-glance’ inviting to the silence, risks to add itself to the general noise, made by the web, until to create a sort of vague background noise to which it is not focused enough.

From this brief notes, through the creation of new images, this study wants to be a starting point for the construction of a possible digital archive related to the theme of the one-family house in the work of Piero Bottoni and Luigi Vietti, proposing itself as potential method.

Albeit apparently limited, the survey field has opened up to new scenarios both for the study of Bottoni and Vietti’s work, and for the study of the history of architecture. Indeed, when the analysis of the drawings and the redrawing practice investigate the history of architecture, one can easily find similarities and differences in architectural production of the architect studied.

Leaving to the reader of drawings the critical judgment on the work of architecture, we do not want to cross the threshold of the ‘doors’ of history.

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