

Chapter 6

Digital Representation Techniques to Interpret, Communicate, and Share 20th c. Architectural Archives: The Case Study – Rosani’s Archive

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ABSTRACT

20th c. Architectural Archives are probably the latest and hugest collections of architectural documents on paper. Their conservation depends largely on the discovery, analysis, comprehension and interpretation of their value as Cultural Heritage. Today design documents produced by contemporary masters of Architecture, especially original drawings, are usually digitized and shared in the Web at scholars' disposal. The fate of the Archives that preserve the design drawings of minor architectures is completely different, so that the main motive of their safeguard has to be found in the recognition of their value as the testimony of a diffused architecture, significant to trace a framework of the building activity of their time. This is the case of the Archive of Industrial Architecture produced by Nino and Paolo Rosani, active in Turin up to 2010, for which a series of digital devices designed to enhance and communicate its most relevant content are being hypothesized.

INTRODUCTION¹

The future of the archives is also in imagining new documentation forms of the object of interest of which they are the narration, in other words the architectures, which, remind, have the role of telling, as they are lost architectures, or just imagined ones, or contemporary but distant from us, and therefore they cannot be ever really represented as only the direct and kinesthetic experience makes us perceive. (Aleardi, 2011, p. 17)

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XX century Architectural Design Archives are probably the latest and the hugest collections of architectural documents on paper. Their conservation depends largely on the discovery, analysis, comprehension and interpretation of their value as a Cultural Heritage, to understand the historical-architectural period in which they arose and to preserve their memory.

Knowledge is so the motive to their safeguard, study and communication.

The digitization of contemporary architectural archives becomes one of the best practices of sources communication, making possible the visualization of the original documentation through remote mode, and of the preservation, reducing the direct manipulation.

This process has been started since the beginning of the XXI century by institutions preserving these archives that have benefited from this way: low cost for the digital documents acquisition; the sharing of sources to a wider public; the possibility to underline relationships inside and outside the archive group.

The simple digitization of archival drawings seems not to be sufficient to transmit the potential of knowledge and meaning that it was caught by the direct study of the sources.

Moreover the knowledge data, resulting from documentation analysis, needs to be interpreted, represented, and communicated.

As researchers of Architectural Representation, the authors think that digital models are the most useful database for collecting and synthesizing these analyses (Spallone & Paluan, 2015).

The extreme care in implementing 3D reconstructions starting from archival drawings is the final result of a new attention paid by the stakeholders to the communication capability of information technologies, both as for the large public and the narrow scientific community.

The authors think that digital representation methodologies and techniques could actively contribute to widen the knowledge and the understanding of Archival Drawings intended as Cultural Heritage and support their sharing, in the firm conviction that safeguard and fruition should go together.

It entails a preliminary in-depth analysis about the archive contents, the design poetics of the professional studio which produced it, and the architectural critics' evaluation, in order to select the most significant works the interpretative modeling can be performed about, which can concern different aspects of the design interventions.

Such considerations prove to be even more important in the case of archives of 'minor architectures', whose drawings and materials have contributed to the transformations of the twentieth century city, usually the theatre of a wide urbanization linked to the industrial and tertiary development, offering examples of an inexpensive and diffused construction, in any case often characterized by a good qualitative level (Spallone & Bruno jr., 2013, Bruno jr. & Spallone, 2015).

In this case, pursuing the archive is clear to assume further meanings: it deals with the safeguard of precious materials from the certain obsolescence, guaranteeing the knowledge of the territory transformations and of a diffused culture about the 'building art', shared by architects and engineers of the time.

The case study, which is analyzed in this chapter, falls within this area of interest: the archive of Industrial Architecture Rosani's Studio, in fact, really concerns a lot of contemporary buildings, diffused not only in Italy but also all over the world. In this kind of case studies, even economic reasons related to the preservation and the dissemination become often unchallengeable. In this way, too many drawings risk the oblivion because they are unknown, usually roughly catalogued, lost in storages of public and private institutes. But in order that such memories are operational, they need to be shared: they need to enter into a circuit of communication, of integration, of interaction.

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