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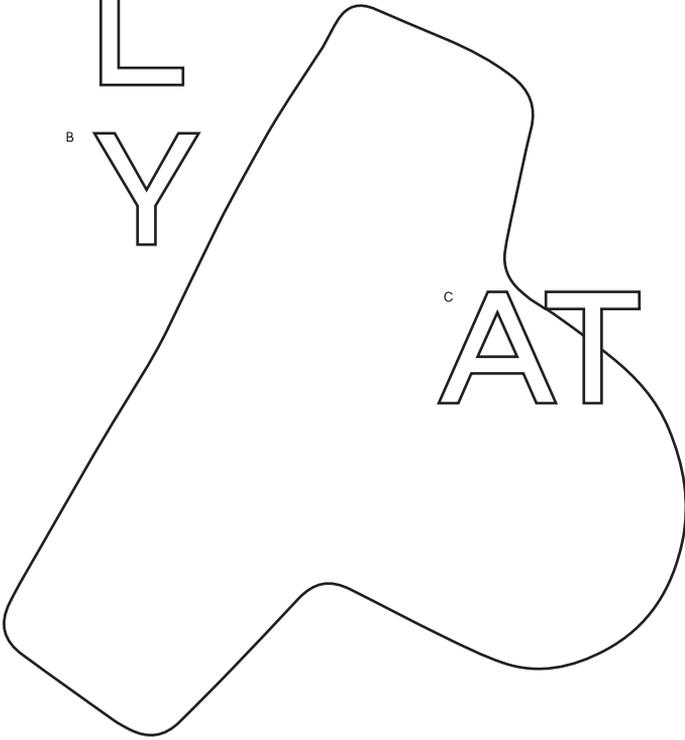
## EDITORIAL

- A  
SHORT STORY 011 ALL THESE QUESTIONS WE COLLECTED  
Leonie Wagner
- B  
ESSAY 027 THE STRUCTURES OF SELF  
Alina Biriukova
- C  
ESSAY 039 UNBOTHERED, UNWATCHED, UNHARRIED  
Jana Schwinkendorf
- D  
~~INTERVIEW~~ 053 CONVERSATION WITH BJARKE INGELS  
Juliette Martin
- E  
ESSAY 061 MARKIERUNGEN UND SPUREN  
Kristian Faschingeder
- F 079 INTERVIEW WITH TIM INGOLD
- G  
ESSAY 087 WANN GESCHIEHT DER RAUM?  
Marco Schröder
- H  
ESSAY 103 EIN WOHNEXPERIMENT *ODER*  
ICH BAUE MEINE WOHNUNG,  
ALLE RÄUME SIND SCHON DA  
Paul Knopf
- I  
PHOTOESSAY 119 UNVEILING INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES  
Pedro Esteban Estudillo Sacoto
- J  
VIDEOESSAY 133 ADAM AND EVE  
Joana de la Fontaine, Valens Fragenz, Lian Liana Stähelin
- K  
PHOTOESSAY 139 COMMON CONDITIONS:  
OBJECTS OF THE IN-BETWEEN  
Jakob Sellaoui
- L  
DRAWING 153 MATERIAL & METAPHOR  
Page Comeaux
- M 159 INTERVIEW WITH AMID.CERO9
- N  
GEDICHT & ESSAY 171 TOPOS DES FREIEN RAUMES: SEASTEADING  
Jasmine Grace Wenzel
- O  
ESSAY 189 FOREST UTOPIA, CONCRETE JUNGLE  
Maya Sorabjee
- P  
ESSAY 201 VILNIUS IS CHANGING (AGAIN)  
Sophia Holst
- Q 217 INTERVIEW WITH ANNE LACATON
- R  
ESSAY 229 LAST YEAR AT BUZZINDA  
Andrea Alberto Dutto

## IMPRESSUM

A L

B Y



A

E

C AT

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[Comment](#) PAGE COMEAUX [PC]

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<sup>D</sup>BUZZINDA



007

Last year I embarked on a journey that had nothing in common with the kind of journeys architects usually undertake. The destination was a place, but this place was not the goal of the overall trip. The goal was larger – I thought I was going to understand it only later. I had come to know this place by accidentally discovering an architecture book that immediately appeared both disturbing and promising, as it highlighted a lack of meaning in the way I had seen architecture. The journey amplified this feeling. The place was a locality of the Umbria region, Italy, known as *La Scarzuola* and nicely renamed *Buzzinda* in relation to its creator, the architect Tomaso Buzzi (1900-1981). The work of this architect evoked a ›world‹ that I perceived as being far from my prosaic categories of judgment; a ›world‹ that was commonly related to the aristocracy and the upper bourgeoisie marked by parties, ceremonies and banquets. A baroque world, full of memories; a world buried by architectural modernity. Indeed, more than a ›world‹, I prefer to think about the journey I undertook as the discovery of a ›common project‹ related to a social class in which Buzzi stood, for me, as an architect as one of the most outstanding interpreters.

## THOUGHTS ABOUT

### THE POOR

### LITTLE RICH MAN

Who was Tomaso Buzzi? First, we can say that he was an architect who had nothing in common with 99% of the architectural milieu of his time.

Thanks to his friendship with Giò Ponti between the 1920s and the 1930s he was one of the authors of *Domus*, where he published several writings about Mannerism and the architecture of the 1500s; themes that no one else were dedicated to. Later in life, he was mainly active as a professional architect, and author of exclusive interiors for the aristocracy and the Italian haute bourgeoisie. So, why did we forget Buzzi? Was he an enemy of modernity? He was not. Simply, he had nothing in common with it. At first glance, Buzzi embodies the architect of Adolf Loos' story *The poor little rich man* (1900); the cynical and uncompromising architect who is commissioned solely by the stupid, vain and rich. Only later was I able to realise this prejudice was wrong. Indeed, this kind of sarcastic representation with which Loos represented the aristocracy and its architects has remained very widespread, like many other clichés in his writings. Loos was so straightforwardly effective in his social critique, to the point that still today, no one would put into crisis its claims for fear of the self-realisation of ones shortcomings and contradictions; as either commoner or petty bourgeoisie. After all, who would question Loos' ideas? What he said and wrote – wasn't it the result of healthy common sense? By



abolishing ornament didn't he steal architecture from the rich and give it to the poor? No! Rather Loos had skilfully transformed the values of the rising middle class into a category of universal judgment. What do I mean by ›values‹? I mean values such as the desire for non-luxurious comfort, modest non-ostentatious wealth, and other similar slogans that converged towards the Loosian banner. Namely, the well-furnished sober apartment for the single family; whilst the interiors reflect character and needs of the owners (not his artistic taste!), common life takes place in the city. In the eye of Loos, architecture had to appear devoid of humorous nuance and sobering, to the degree that, he had to use the metaphor of the tomb:

›If we were to come across a mound in the woods, six foot long by three foot wide, with the soil piled up in a pyramid, a sombre mood would come over us and a voice inside us would say:  
›there is someone buried here.« That is Architecture.«

Still, he had convinced everyone! Loos became the cornerstone of the 20th century, whose ideas were repeatedly resurrected. One instance can be seen in *Architecture of the city* by Aldo Rossi in which the value of architecture is situated in the split between the bourgeois apartment and the city; the private is set apart from the public.

Yet Loos' thoughts aligned with the petty bourgeoisie and could certainly not extend to other social subjects, like the aristocrats for instance. These unaligned subjects were first ridiculed in all ways and, if necessary, indexed as marginal epiphenomena; nostalgic regurgitation of a declining class. So, the ›poor little rich man‹ had to be rendered an idiot and his architects, like Buzzi, had to be described as a cynical opportunist – obtuse and perhaps idiotic because of his inability to recognize the seriousness of Loos.



# IN FRONT OF A REAL ESTATE AGENCY

The criteria that we habitually match with petty bourgeois buildings, do not work with aristocratic buildings and houses. All our petty bourgeois categories of judgment inevitably collapse; Le Corbusier collapses, Mies collapses, etc... This remark came to my mind while, during a stop in Florence, I found myself in front of a real estate agency near the station. Well exhibited in the window shop of this agency were several middle-class houses provided with plans and interior renderings. Although all such houses had different shapes and sizes, all of them, had one thing

in common – the distributional spaces were reduced to the minimum; usually only a long and narrow corridor connecting all rooms. Such kinds of monotonous layouts reminded me of a more general condition I could relate to petty bourgeois houses I had experienced before, namely a dichotomy between A-side spaces and B-side spaces. A-side spaces are the rooms in which family members sleep, eat and bath, while B-side spaces stand for distributional spaces. Conversely, aristocratic houses do not show such dichotomy; as I could remember from Buzzi's plan, they look like an overall A-side space. Distributional spaces are not simply designed in order to connect one room to the next, but rather to provide a space in which collective life can take place. That is why, sumptuous corridors, galleries and ambulatories are usually chosen by painters and photographers in order to represent the very essence of aristocratic houses.<sup>Fig.001</sup> This feature was particularly evident when looking at Buzzi's sketches. From these drawings, I could really feel his effort to grasp such kind of A-side spaces from old plan repertoires in order to understand how they could be newly re-enacted in his projects.

Essentially, Buzzi thought it necessary to show that modern functional requirements could (and, in a way, had to) adapt themselves to traditional repertoires and not vice-versa; at least, not in the way functionalists approached architectural design, as an outcome of in-depth functional analyses of functional programs. In order to support his thesis, Buzzi published on *Domus* in 1928 (issue 12), an article that, already from the title, left no space for interpretation, namely: *Trascrizione Moderna di un antico disegno* (eng. *Modern Transcription of an Ancient Drawing*). Here, Buzzi showed that one of Sebastiano Serlio's plan for a mansion house was still suitable for modern needs. This house could host everything that was needed by an updated way of living (it was comfortable and beautiful) and so there was no reason to avoid defining it modern. In essence, Buzzi told us that by not recognizing the modernity of this plan we proved the problem at hand, it was not the house itself but ourselves with our dubious habit to believe: ›the bungalow is a good example of the modern house‹. After all: who decided that the ›modern house should be overall sober, with small rooms and minimal corridors‹? Were it perhaps the industrialists? Was it Loos? Was it Le Corbusier? Who was it? Who decided that the evolution of architecture should go through an inevitable proletarianization?

## A BANQUET BY

## THE MARQUIS

Being truly modern meant applying a blanket judgment to everything that had preceded the advent of industry; not only to architectural plan repertoires but also to rituals that had connaturalized with architecture over time. At one point, the pioneers of modernity must have perceived a lack of seriousness in such tabula rasa attitude to the point they had to



002

compensate with something else. This is perhaps the reason why modernism embodied a kind of moral ethos. Eating, working, sleeping and other primary values became the basis on which modern pioneers thought architecture could start from scratch. Only through a serious acknowledgement of these values, the design for a house could be considered good, healthy, and authentically modern. In view of this target, the traditional house (the house built during the previous centuries), had to be ridiculed either for its inefficiency, or for its prodigality. From this perspective, the aristocratic house was easily ridiculed as it embodied a mixture of such modern preconceptions about traditional buildings. However, this kind of ideological evaluation does not offer much illumination.

Looked at from the outside, an aristocratic mansion might appear austere, but upon closer inspection, its essence is strictly related to celebrations, mundane events, and other kinds of collective *divertissement*.<sup>Fig.002</sup>

Such thoughts came to my mind many times before the journey when searching for Buzzi's archive. I realized it consisted of an enormous amount of quick sketches drawn on the occasion of parties and sumptuous events. As a hidden machinist, I could easily imagine Buzzi walking in the euphoria of the party with pencils and papers, ready to record details, small incidents and other curious shades of the event he thought he could improve and propose again at further events. For Buzzi, the task of designing spaces that could host such kind of *divertissement* was not a secondary task among the many. It was the main task of an architect.

This became particularly evident when Buzzi dealt with banquets that he designed as an architectural project. The kind of maniacal care he dedicated to the setting of these events made its early appearance on a poster that Buzzi curated for an insert of *Domus* in 1928 (issue 12). This poster entitled *Panorama della gastronomia monumentale* (eng. *Panorama of the monumental cooking*)<sup>Fig.003</sup> was an example of exalted culinary art – here I like to use ›exalted‹ as it reminds me of ›exalted rationalism‹, an attitude Aldo Rossi attributed to E.L. Boullée. It presented a series of pompous, hyper-decorated, ultra-baroque crockery and silverware collections. In the mind of Buzzi, such pieces allowed the banquet to look like a ceremony. Before being consumed, the food had to abandon its naturalness and turn



into a simultaneously edible and monumental architecture. In front of this culinary architecture, guests had to feel involved in a collective sacrifice – a bit like in the writings of the Marquis De Sade in which the moment of food constitutes the ritual antechamber of the embrace. To Buzzi, the scene of the banquet had to appear so important that in some of his projects (as in the *Villa Gerli*), it was printed on the floor

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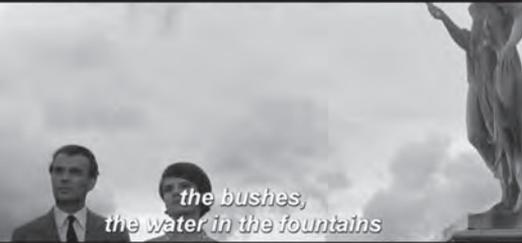
mosaic; a kind of decoration that is also known as *asaraton* (unswept floor), a Roman mosaic portraying plates and leftovers of a banquet. Thus, days before the journey it inevitably arose in me a certain sense of scepticism towards several clichés that ridiculed aristocracy in the eye of the moderns. The reality depicted by Buzzi displayed an exciting and ironic way of dealing with architecture; a way that, honestly, I had not experienced before.



*Sometimes we remained silent.*



*We talked about the statues' names,*



*the bushes, the water in the fountains*



*and the colour of the sky.*



*And again these walls, corridors, doors.*



*And still more beyond.*

# AT THE

# CINEMA

It was not only Buzzi, but a more general chain of events, that fed my scepticism towards modernity before the beginning of the journey. A few months earlier, during a film festival I involuntarily found myself in, I had the opportunity to watch *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*, a 1961 black and white movie written by Alain Robbe-Grillet and directed by Alain Resnais. Honestly, at first, I did not understand anything about it. There was no clear plot and the characters were like monads: the dark and handsome man, the rich and frustrated beautiful woman, another dark, rich but ugly man and other variants of rich, more or less ugly, and dark men. The place was essentially as monotonous as the characters; it was a large hotel with endless decorated corridors, all equally claustrophobic. Yet, despite all this monotony, coupled with an evident difficulty to understand anything about the plot. I understood later, the problem was not the movie itself, but it was me! My categories of thought, as petty bourgeois, did not allow me to penetrate the kind of representation that was proposed by Resnais and Robbe-Grillet. Unlike 99% of current movies and documentaries in which the director strives to adapt the plot to the average audience (to the point that sometimes animal behaviours are anthropomorphized in order to convey empathy to the audience), Resnais did not. He did not address clearly how the movie had to be understood by the audience; he left it up to interpretation, which in this case was to my own philosophical categories of petty bourgeois. Throughout all of this, of greater pervasiveness, was the role of memory. Memory was the link between subjects. The handsome, rich, and dark man persevered in persuading the beautiful, rich, and frustrated woman

004

(they had already met the year before in that place) and he made plans for the next year – at times the woman seemed to accept this proposal, other times she refused.<sup>Fig.004</sup> Amongst them, the memory played as a binder: their very condition of existence. What they had in common were not the sort of feelings that lovers usually express, but primarily: memories. By taking away such memories, these subjects had nothing more to say to each other. In this sense, I thought Resnais and Robbe-Grillet showed the true fulcrum of aristocracy and haute bourgeoisie, namely: memory as a device of self-recognition and social cohesion. For aristocrats, memory was the real common foundation from which, as one of the protagonists of the movie affirmed: ›*there is no escape*‹.

At that point, the sense of monotony I perceived as a petty bourgeois was certainly not casual. Instead of questioning myself about the inability to penetrate the values of another social class, I simply perceived tedium and sense of pity towards the characters that were represented. After all, are not technological values and a sense for advancements standing at the very core of petty bourgeoisie? Of course, they are. Thus, it was logical that the film would appear monotonous and even a little pathetic to this kind of audience. At the same time, I would have had no chance to appreciate Buzzi's work while keeping me constrained to that ideology.

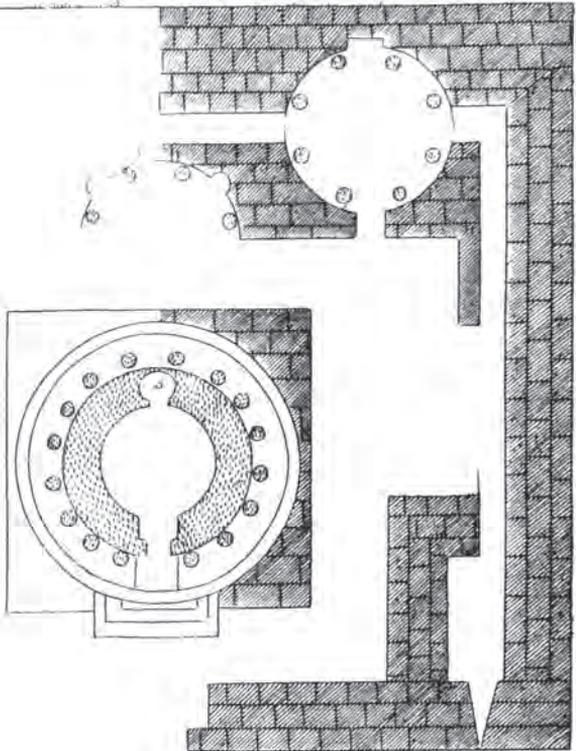
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## UNIVERSAL

## VOCABULARY

For Buzzi, this indifference for newness could be motivated by his choice to elect Mannerism as the main reference for his own attitude towards architectural design. What made this architectural style different from the others? Generally speaking, contemporary histories of architecture depict Mannerism as a (neither particularly heroic nor courageous) time comprised between the Renaissance and the Baroque. In essence, Mannerism, unlike its ancestor and its successor, didn't really affirm anything new. It did not aspire to portray a new style for a new society. In this way, Mannerist architects mainly re-worked, with endless variations, materials inherited from the Renaissance; they were not willing to highlight new architectural themes (like, for example, the central plan building of the Renaissance) and did not advocate for social revolution; they were neither pioneers nor visionaries. And for all these reasons, Buzzi had to fall in love with Mannerism; in particular with the architect Giovanni Battista Montano (1534-1621).

Why was Montano particularly interesting to Buzzi? Basically, for Montano, the Renaissance did not represent a new way of making architecture, but rather a way of understanding construction as a vocabulary of

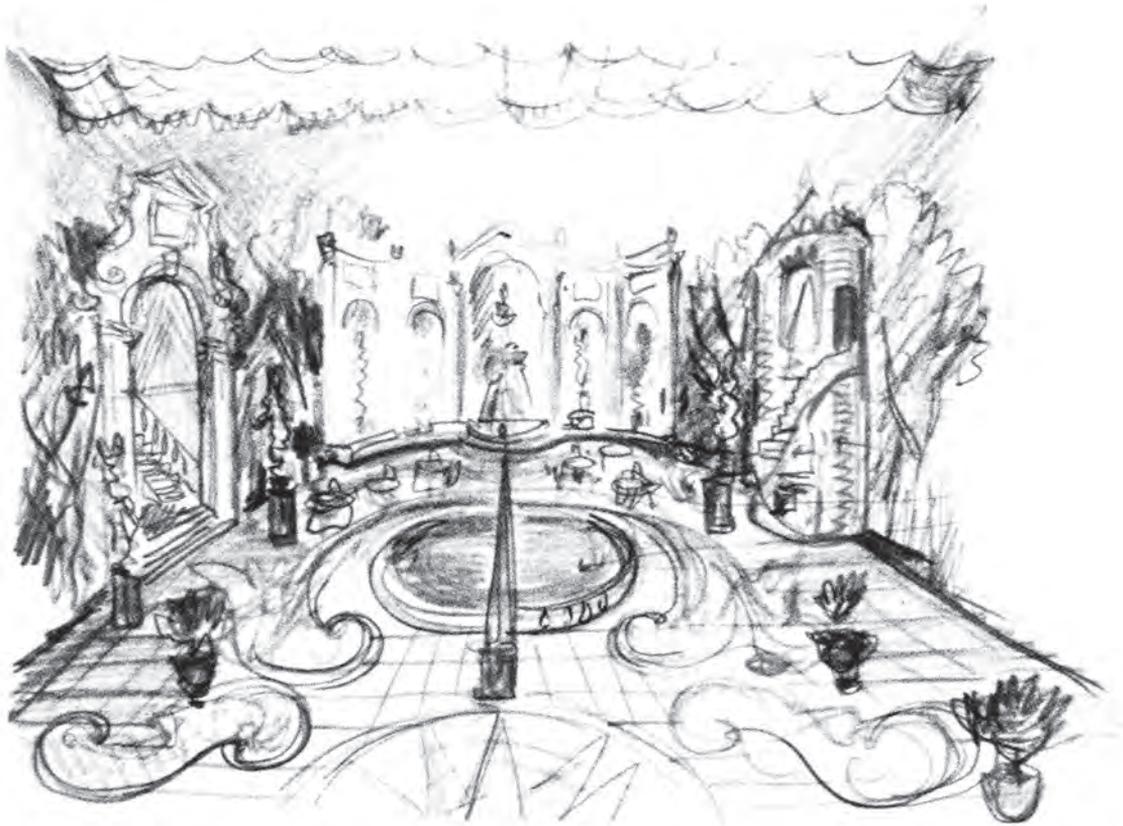


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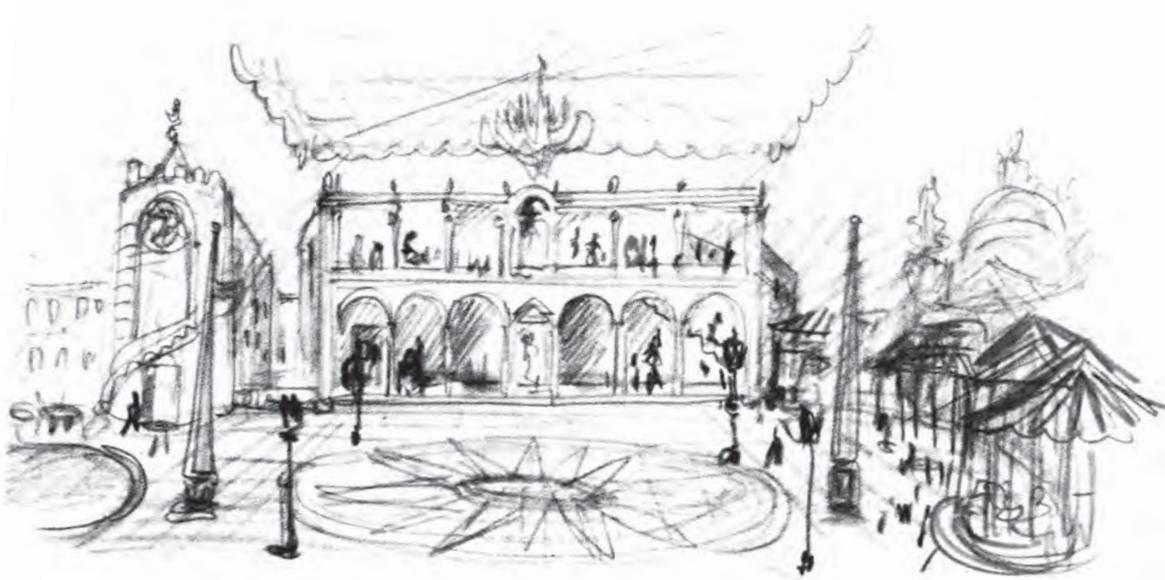
fragments that could be assembled for the most diverse purposes: from the making of dwellings towards the hypothetical reconstruction of ancient ruins as he demonstrates in his most famous book: *Scielta di varii tempietti antichi* (eng. *Selection of Various Antique Temples*, published posthumous, 1624). For Montano, architecture consisted of a vocabulary that was rigid within its grammar but, at the same time, versatile in its use.<sup>Fig.005</sup> In his view, this grammar was common to all architects; it was shared but not negotiable: the vocabulary was that. Period! Only starting from this vocabulary, and by acknowledging its rules, could architects prove their originality in making new compositions. Likewise for Buzzi, architecture worked in this way; it implied no new ideas or inventions, neither formal suggestions, but rather the acknowledgement of a dictionary of forms inherited from the past and stratified in the memory of the architect and of the society moulded by traditional architecture. Given this vocabulary of elements (or architectural characters), architectural design was not an activity of inventing from scratch, but rather a composition: a variable scenography for non-variable characters.

# THE UNDERGROUND THEATRE

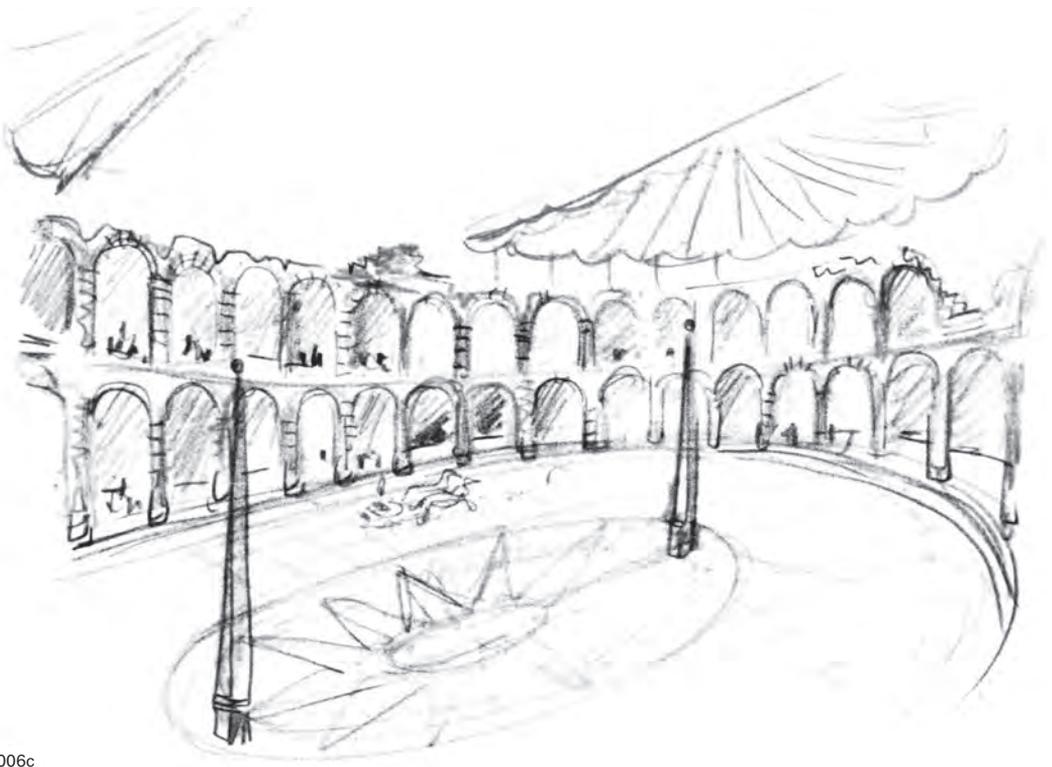
By thinking back to Buzzi's copious professional activity, I could realize how his reference to Mannerism was very present. During the journey, I had with me a copy of the summary of his complete works that I found published at the end of the book *Tomaso Buzzi. Il principe degli architetti 1900-1981* (Milano: Electa, 2008). The curator of this summary, Silvia Chiesa, listed about 600 entries among projects, new buildings, renovations, furnishings, and so on. At first, all those arches, capitals, and baroque allusions raised in me the kind of nauseating effect I felt when looking at post-modern buildings gathered in Charles Jencks' *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (London: Academy, 1977). However, after a more thorough reading, I realized Buzzi's projects shared very little similarity with that stuff. Post-modern architects attempted to adapt classical architecture to the needs of petty bourgeoisie; classical quotes were addressed in order to provide the client with a self-representation in public; in order to appear as a cultured owner of a cultured building. Conversely, Buzzi did not adapt classical elements of architecture to the needs of his client but rather tried to set architecture as a stage for an event (e.g. a party or a celebration). In his view, this kind of event reconciled the client with their social circle, so it was intended as a project of the common. Hence, it is pretty evident why, rather than the classical temple, Buzzi's main reference was the theatre.



006a



006b



006c



006d

A good example of such a feature, that suddenly came to my mind, was Buzzi's design proposal for the theatre for Felicino Chiesa in Milan, dated 1959. Buzzi drafted four sketches of this space that (it is important to emphasise) was underground and therefore detached from the public sphere as it did not show itself to the ›public‹. The sketches suggest four variations of a large rectangular space, probably covered by a large lowered vault. The first sketch shows a ›garden arrangement‹ with pools of water surrounded by exedras and a coloured projection of the sky on the vault and vegetation on the walls.<sup>Fig.006a</sup> The second sketch shows a ›loggia‹ arranged with rides and backgrounds projections.<sup>Fig.006b</sup> The third sketch is entitled as ›Colosseum arrangement‹ and portrays a racing circuit surrounded by loggias and completed with two obelisks at the centre of the rink.<sup>Fig.006c</sup> Finally, the fourth sketch defined ›Banquet arrangement‹, is similar to the first one, but with the addition of a platform placed in front of the exedra with tables and seating.<sup>Fig.006d</sup> Though I did not know anything about Felicino Chiesa, I could easily imagine this client as a kind of haute bourgeois exhibitionist. Indeed, Buzzi conceived a design for a private space that was intrinsically common to Chiesa's social circle. This is exactly what I mean for the project of the common; namely, it is the project of a private space that is common to other people that are not owners of that same space, but it is not public, and thus not owned by the state. The problem is that it cannot be simply addressed by the architect, but it is supposed to be acknowledged as a social value. As in many other projects, Buzzi thought this project was possible whenever it was related to collective rituals such as eating, dancing, celebrating, etc. In this way, the composition is strictly connected to the event at stake; an event that is always ephemeral and collective at once, it is, therefore, neither permanent nor public.

## ARRIVAL

### AT

## DESTINATION

Whilst all these thoughts had emerged, I had almost reached the destination of my journey towards *Buzzinda*. The landscape outside the window of the train had lost any urban reference whatsoever. The itinerary appeared to me as a slow process of distancing oneself from civilization, culminating in a sort of pre-modern land. I understood, for example, why not only Buzzi but also another renowned architect, Mario Ridolfi (to whom I had dedicated a study the year before), had chosen the Umbria region, to spend the last season of his life during which he was deeply engaged with introspective research.

Once I had arrived at the station of the small town called Fabro, twenty kilometres north of Orvieto, the route continued into the hills to the east, towards the village of Montegiove. The final destination was a place called *La Scarzuola*, known for being the home of St. Francis of Assisi, and was later converted into a convent. On the advice of a friend, Buzzi had bought this place in the 1950s with the capital accumulated in years of feverish work, and with the aim of building his own ideal city, that he later defined as *Buzzinda*. I had read on a tourist guide that discovering *Buzzinda* would have been an astonishing experience for the visitor. However, this kind of commercial expedient made me doubtful and, in fact, it was not as astonishing as it was supposed to be – at least for my sophisticated aesthetical evaluation.

I have to admit that at first glance, *Buzzinda* seemed rather awkward to me.

[PC]

What might be  
instead of  
what can be

In terms of what a common architecture means for the present, Dutto's commentary here on Buzzi is surprisingly relevant. Where today architectural theory can be described to live in a state of pluralism, Buzzi existed in an era that was profoundly influenced by the Industrial Revolution and dominated by the subsequent push toward modernity. While his forays into architecture were perhaps limited, he found other ways to express his desire to reinstate the Mannerist through decorative arts. While I believe that what Dutto calls the proletarianization of architecture was not without good reason or perhaps not without necessity, if we are to learn anything from this essay or Buzzi himself, it may be through an appreciation for those who seek to imagine an architecture that might be instead of what can be.

I did not perceive anything really surprising. What was it about? A large open-air theatre, like a huge stage set up in view of an event that would have never taken place. The uniformity of the complex derived from the use of a single stone, the tuff, petrified volcanic ash. At the same time, however, there was no general outline that could provide a general plan overview of that place. Indeed, Buzzi led the building process through quick sketches drawn on flying sheets of paper without whatever precaution that could sound to him like a normative constraint.

As I said, I was not particularly attracted to the form of *Buzzinda*, but rather to the idea behind it. The place was arranged messily, with all the architectural figures Buzzi used throughout the course of his architectural works. However, his intent was not to construct a rhetorical building such as, Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Vittoriale*, where architecture was a symbol of values such as history, civilization, and homeland. On the contrary, *Buzzinda* can be seen as an emblem of waste, lavish entertainment and unnecessary extravagance. This way, perhaps, *Buzzinda* was a metaphor for Buzzi's culinary compositions. It reflected, on a larger scale, the imaginative ideas Buzzi had conceived for his monumental banquets. After crossing the entrance of *Buzzinda* together with the other visitors, I had the feeling of finding myself, not so much in front of a building, but rather in front of a giant monumental wedding cake.  Evocative of some culinary works conceived by Marie-Antoine Carême (1784-1833) in his *Le Pâtissier pittoresque* (1815), who was inspired by the architecture of J.N.L. Durand. Thus, the feeling I had at first glance was not the one I usually have when visiting a building. I was estranged – like someone who gets involved in a celebration with other guests but does not clearly understand the kind of celebration that is about to happen nor the reason why he got there, however, upon seeing a cake is on the table, he thinks that might be the right place.

# POLIPHILLO'S DREAM

During the visit, I wondered why *Buzzinda* had ever been interpreted by critics as an ideal city. Actually, it had no features of an ›ideal city‹, at least in the sense I could understand from books like Hanno-Walter Krufft's *Städte in Utopia* (1989) and Lewis Mumford's *Story of Utopias* (1922). Did these authors not teach us that the ideal city consists of a mirroring between a (more or less geometric) urban form and a (more or less organized) social structure? *Buzzinda* had nothing to do with such things. It could be defined ›ideal‹ only in the prosaic meaning of this term, thus of a city conceived by a single author for a purpose that was far from being practical.

More generally I asked myself: Is *Buzzinda* a ›city‹? It is hard to say yes or no. However, the reference that Buzzi cited as the source of this work was not a city (nor an ideal city), but rather *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, a novel published in 1499, and attributed to Francesco Colonna. This novel, renown mainly for its illustrations, describes the adventures of Poliphilo (that is the protagonist making an initiatory journey seeking to reach his beloved Polia) passing from one dream to another. Poliphilo undertakes an itinerary that goes from the forest towards the garden and is involved in celebrations, parties, and erotic rituals of all kinds before he finally reaches Kythera, the island of Venus. The great absentee of *Hypnerotomachia* is the city, and architecture plays the role of a device at the service of the celebration and party. Perhaps Buzzi was so fascinated by this novel that he had to seize it to give shape to *Buzzinda*. In his view, the *Hypnerotomachia* represented the possibility for architecture to express a narration that could be acknowledged as non-rhetorical, therefore detached from the rhetoric of the city (i.e. public space, monuments, etc...), but at the same time filled with architectural memories. I wondered for a long time why *Buzzinda* did not look like a city. For all of us (architects of the second millennium), is not the city an adventurous place? Of course, it is! However, for Buzzi, it was not like that. He still had a classical ideal of the city; as a civic, edified place that contrasts with the forest, or the garden which, on the contrary, he saw as adventurous places. For this reason, the *Hypnerotomachia* was a good example for him to follow. Similarly, *Buzzinda* had to look like an adventurous and ephemeral itinerary through a wilder place.

## GOING

## RANDOMLY

As I said Buzzi did not provide *Buzzinda* with an overall plan. The architecture had to appear as a mixture of allegorical and symbolic buildings that can be generally related to three main architectural elements, namely: towers, theatres, temples. Honestly, although I thought about it for a

long time, I did not find a way to properly tackle the description of these elements. As a non-expert, I would have surely reduced or misinterpreted their ultra-charged symbolic meaning. Therefore, for further information, I recommend the reader see the essay *La Cultura di un architetto* by Enrico Fenzi in the Buzzi's monography (mentioned in the first sentence of this article paragraph entitled: ›The underground theatre‹). However, I would like to clarify that the reason why I am avoiding going too in depth in the description of the building, is not due to laziness but has at least two good reasons. The first reason is that this would exceed the extent of this magazine. The second reason is related to a certain difficulty, or inability of mine, to face architecture as a narrative domain. This is inevitably due to the influence of modernity in my formation, namely the fact that I was taught to face an architectural description by the choice of two possible ways: geometry and construction.

Again, I would like to convey to the reader that, for Buzzi, it was not like that. Before being geometric objects or constructive elements, his architectural conceptions were thought to be real narratives (or novels) related to a wider domain of other narratives; populated with symbols, myths, and legends. This was a way of describing architecture that at the time of Buzzi had already mostly disappeared, as it gradually started fading away from the 19th century with the end of architectural treaties. Therefore, this desire to place one's architecture within a narrative is perhaps the most useful and important thing. I believe I can communicate to the reader of this essay, who are, more likely than not, allergic to the pure display of erudition (as it could have been if my choice was instead to address a dissertation about Buzzi's architectural symbolism...). Nevertheless, for the most demanding readers, I refer to the essay written by Fenzi, mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph.

Besides these remarks, I would like to add that what struck me so much about *Buzzinda* was the absence of a predefined path. The itinerary was substantially indefinite between objects and fragments juxtaposed and assembled without a chronological succession criterion. In this sense, *Buzzinda* seemed to me to display the concept of ›units that contain multiplicity‹ as described by Gilles Deleuze in his *Le Pli* (1988), a book he dedicates to Leibniz and the Baroque. *Buzzinda* appears as a great theatre, populated by heterogeneous voices and presences, which represent an extra-historical condensation: a journey into the folds of memory and (most importantly) not into history as it might apparently seem. As in a large baroque gallery, *Buzzinda* sets the eye in motion; it encourages our gaze to stop on some details and to travel through it thus relocating his figures in a non-chronological sequence that recalls scattered memories. In this sense, it probably represents the most radical and convincing expression of Buzzi's work as it transposes into an architectural form, the absence of plot already evoked within the film *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*. Indeed, the kind of estrangement I could feel throughout my journey towards and inside *Buzzinda*, metaphorically reminded me of Resnais' film, though, this time, a sort of latent excitement saturated the pathetic sense aroused by the film. This excitement was accompanied

by a feeling of vacuum, an absence of meaning that I had to elaborate for the duration of the return of that journey.

# VACUUM

I always had to invent something to fill that void. As all the journey basically had this character... Everywhere I found myself I perceived this emptiness, as something to which I would have to give meaning, even if this could not have any fidelity with Buzzi's intentions... It was as if instead of being there to know Buzzi better, I had been trapped in his world; a world populated by mysterious objects like the rooms of the hotel in Marienbad... I cannot deny that saturating that void generated in me a special pleasure... It evoked memories of ceremonies, imaginative scenes of common life that I could relate to those sumptuous galleries, decorated spaces, baroque interiors... Scenes and spaces that were so powerful, so majestic, so pompous, to contrast with the neutrality of modern architecture and it's being so smooth, neutral, and aseptic to be impermeable to my desire... Yet those baroque architectures, so far from my system of values, so distant from being functional with a purpose, captured my memories within an area of which I did not find any other effective description than a zone filled with tension... Phrases and thoughts were arranged within this area, with intermittent pauses that I wanted to give back to the reader in the form of the points of tension placed among the sentences of this last paragraph... Phrases that are confused with other phrases... Like thoughts that populate rooms *where the steps of those who come forward are absorbed by carpets that are so heavy, so thick, that no sound of footstep comes even to his ear, as if the ear itself of those who come forward, once again, along these corridors [...] through these halls, these galleries, in this building of another century, this immense, luxurious, baroque hotel [...] as if the ear itself was far away, far from the ground, from the carpets, far from this heavy and vacuum space*...001 ☺

## Bibliography

001

Quote from Alain Robbe-Grillet, *L'anno scorso a Marienbad* (Torino: Einaudi, 1961), p.26-27.  
Translated by the author of this essay.

## List of Figures

Fig.001

Painting by Jakob Rousseau entitled *»Masked Ball in the Hoftheater«* (1754).

Fig.002

Painting by Pietro and Alessandro Longhi entitled *»Convito in casa Nani«* (1755).

Fig.003

Page scan of *»Panorama della gastronomia monumentale«* in *Domus* magazine, issue 12 (1928).

Fig.004

Frame stills of Alain Resnais' *»L'Année dernière à Marienbad«* (1961).

Fig.005

Drawing by Giovanni Battista Montano entitled *»Interpretazione di un sepolcro cilindrico racchiuso entro un recinto quadrato«* found in the article by Giovanni Zander about *»Le invenzioni architettoniche di Giovanni Battista Montano Milanese«* (1534-1621) published in *Quaderni dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Architettura*, issue 30 (1958).

Fig.006a

Sketch by Tomaso Buzzi for the Underground Theatre for Felicino Chiesa in Milano. First proposal (1959).

Fig.006b

Second proposal.

Fig.006c

Third proposal.

Fig.006d

Fourth proposal.

Fig.007

Sketch of Buzzinda made by the author of this essay during the journey (2017).

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013 Common

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