



UNPLUGGED the materia of architecture

SUMMER DESIGN WORKSHOP, TURIN. FROM 17TH TO 23RD OF JUNE, 2012

a project by Zeroundicipiù. For information: www.zeroundicipiu.it, redazione@zeroundicipiu.it

UNPLUGGED

September 28th, 2003. The black-out that strikes Italy for several hours blocks entire security, control and management systems, forcing a great number of people to stop carrying out their tasks, making it impossible for them to execute even the most basic actions. What happens if we or someone pulls off the plug? Battery-backed systems and uninterrupted power supplies give us some hours of autonomy, and then what? How do we perceive reality without electric energy? How do we orientate ourselves? How do we defend ourselves? How do we design? How do our cities, every day “smarter” but also more energy-dependent, respond to such an occurrence?

New strategies in energy conservation and clean energy production find a precious ally in Information and Communication Technologies that, through data generated from sensors associated to spaces and objects, control, anticipate and regulate part of the processes of our environment: a “smart dust” that nests where needed and report to us the status of things, or at least their superficial functioning, administrating the complexity of the real world and helping us in taking our daily choices. But even though these innovations allow us optimize our interaction with the spaces that surround us, the paradoxical consequence of the extended use of such devices is that the more complex and layered our perception of reality becomes, the less we really know about it. Uncritical trust in technology, both in everyday living and in urban and architectural design, eventually anesthetizes our most basilar capacities of environmental interaction: a society which is more and more “augmented” by new technologies is less and less capable of perceiving autonomously the nuances of reality, and of transforming it according to its laws.

However, placing ourselves in axiomatic opposition to the ongoing “dematerialization” of reality would be something naive. In the era we live in we can choose between orienting ourselves perfectly through GPS navigator or getting lost like dreamy metropolitan *flâneurs*; we can associate instantly multiple data layers to a place, or contemplate its landscape silently; we can anticipate reality through sophisticate virtual representations, or exercising in playful and participated auto-constructions. We can have both: we don't need to renounce to reality, as once predicted from literature at the dawn of the digital era; and we certainly don't need to call upon the return to a non-better specified idyllic past. We have to learn to use both the dimensions at our disposal, in the way that is proper to them.

For this reason, in a historical phase in which research (scientific, architectonic etc.) is mainly directed to the exploration of the possibilities – and the tales – of new technologies, “UNPLUGGED” proposes to dive into the real, momentarily pulling the plug off digital instruments – every day more present, and influent, since the first steps of the design process – in order to dredge the poetical value that spins off the direct confrontation with reality and materials: elements that lie at the real essence – since always and despite everything – of architecture.

June 17th, 2012. For a week, thirty students and young architects will confront themselves to the basic principles of designing and constructing, with the reality of a peripheral zone of the city of Turin and with different types of construction materials, in search of minimal structures of urban interaction¹.

¹ Electric energy won't be guaranteed, the organizing staff informs that there may be frequent “black-outs”.

OBJECTIVES

Those who will take part in the workshop will be pushed to deepen, both practically and theoretically, a “modern” design philosophy, where such term indicates, as written by Jean Baudrillard, a research attitude that aims to find value out of crisis. If value is here defined by the leak of electric energy, then the tools through which value can be created will be defined as ideas capable of leading to a coherent design starting from a catalogue of construction materials, whose characteristics (physical, constructive, economic, structural etc.) will constitute the funding criterion of any architectural configuration. At the apex of a historical phase in which the logics of construction have been subordinated to those of the tools of architecture – as well exemplified by the abuse of diagrammatical narration and digital design (parametrical and non-parametrical): representation systems whose internal coherence is too often raised as justification of otherwise inconsistent design choices – we find it necessary to return to the exploration of the poetical potential of the materials of architecture, aiming to the synthesis of a specific design attitude, capable of complementing the actual tendencies linked to the development of new technologies. Quoting Mies van der Rohe: «When I begin, I don't think at the form: I think at the correct way of using the materials. Then I accept the result».

FORMAT

Participants will work in groups of maximum six people: each group will be followed by a tutor and one or two assistants. The title of the workshop is indicative of the particular design method proposed: participants will be asked to design starting from the analysis and manipulation of construction material proofs that will be at their disposal during the whole duration of the workshop, whose physical properties will be explored and adopted as the generative criterion for final design configurations. At the end of the workshop, every group will have to have reached a design proposal capable of responding coherently to the urban and architectonic problems raised by the program, and of expressing in a creative way the formal potential of the adopted materials. Feasibility of the design proposals will be judged positively, in the possibility of a second phase of the workshop, during which the best project could be actually realized in partnership with local enterprises. The theme of the workshop is that of the “small urban shelter”, declined in different ways: from urban gardening tools repository, to district info point, to minimal living pods. The working area, situated in the north of Turin, is bordered by the c.so Giulio Cesare, via Botticelli, strada di Settimo and lungo Stura Lazio. Parallel to the workshop, a cycle of six public conferences will be held from the tutors, during which important topics related to the main theme of the workshop will be presented and discussed. Two moments of critical revision are expected: one at the half of the week, where an external commission of architects will be invited, and one at the end of the works, with the participation of an external commission of architecture critics and editors.

CERTIFICATE AND CREDITS

At the end of the workshop, participants will receive a frequency certificate: participation and completion of the workshop corresponds to 3 credits CFU.

REGISTRATION AND COSTS

“UNPLUGGED” is open to students, recently graduated and young architects of all nationalities. The registration form has to be filled in and sent, together with a copy of the bank transfer and a short portfolio (maximum 5 pages in pdf format), to the address redazione@zeroundicipiu.it before May 13th, 2012. A mail will be sent back to confirm the correct reception of all the documents. There are two possible modalities of registration to the workshop:

- a) Just workshop: 250 €
- b) Workshop and residency (2 meals per day and overnight stay in the Residence Miramonti: <http://www.hotelmiramontitorino.it/it/index.php>): 390 €

Bank transfer coordinates for payment are:

Associazione Zeroundicipiù

Bank name: Banco di Desio e della Brianza

Branch: Torino 314 - Matteotti

Iban: IT 38 B 03440 01000000000446200

Cause: *Name of participant*, Workshop "UNPLUGGED"

In case of excess of registrations, the organizing team will select the participants after analysing their portfolios. Official communication of the selection results will be made before the 17th of May. Participation fee will be totally refunded to those who won't be selected.

In case of renunciation, 75% of the total amount of the registration fee will be refunded, only if the renunciation takes place before May 17th, 2012; after this date there will be no reimbursement. The workshop will be activated if the minimum number of thirty participants will be reached. In case the workshop didn't take place, registration fees will be totally reimbursed.

CALENDAR AND PLACES

The workshop will take place in Turin, from Sunday 17th of June to Saturday 23rd of June, 2012. Design activities and internal conferences will take place in the Sala Monviso of the Residence Miramonti, piazza Derna 238, Torino. Public conferences will take place in a place yet to be defined.

Sunday 17th

15:00 opening conference, workshop presentation, linked activities

17:00 work groups formation and first theme discussion

19:00 opening *aperitivo*

Monday 18th

09:00 guided visit to the work area

14:30 start of design activity

Tuesday 19th

09:00 design activity

19:00 public conference

Wednesday 20th

09:00 design activity

17:30 half-term jury

Thursday 21st

09:00 design activity

19:00 public conference

Friday 22nd

09:00 design activity

Saturday 23rd

09:00 design activity

15:00 final jury

19:00 public conference

21:00 closing party

TUTORS

Grainne Hassett, born Dublin 1967, practicing as Hassett Ducatez Architects architectural practice since 1995. Senior Lecturer at School of Architecture, University of Limerick, Ireland. Visiting Critic to Yokohama, Turin, Stockholm and Strathclyde Schools of Architecture, former design tutor at UCD and DIT Schools of Architecture.

Book Publication; 'A Necessary Contract' ISBN 978-0-9562379-0-3 published by Grainne Hassett in 2010 arising from research undertaken with the Kevin Kieran Arts Council OPW Bursary for Research in Architecture, awarded in 2003. Lecture Trinity College Dublin January 2011.

Lectures: Dublin, Cork, Glasgow, Paris, Yokohama, Melbourne and Stockholm. Written work: Tracings 2003 UCD School of Architecture Academic Review. Published Built Work: Wired (U.K.) 1996. Archi 2000 (Swiss Architectural Publication). Night 1996 (New York Arts Review). Irish Arts Review 2002. Sculptors Society of Ireland Newsletter. A10 Architectural Periodical No 22. 2008. New Irish Architecture 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2008, 2010.

Awards/Competitions/Exhibitions: Downes Medal Architectural Association of Ireland 2008, New Trends Europe Asia Oceania Exhibition 2004-5 (Lille, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Cork, Melbourne, Korea) Shortlist of ten Young Architect of the Year (U.K.) 2002. Architectural Association of Ireland Awards 2010, 2008, 2007, 2003, 2000, 1999, 1995. Royal Institute of Ireland Awards 2001, 2000, highly commended 2008 Exhibited Pompidou Centre 1994, European Geneva 1994. New York Storefront for Art and Architecture 1996, Berlin Spreebogen Competition 1991. Royal Hibernian Gallery Dublin 2006, 2007.

Fellow of the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland 2000.

Antonio Ravalli born Ferrara, 1961. Architecture diploma with Università degli Studi di Firenze in 1988. During the next three years works with studio Aleardi, Ferrara. In 1992 founds the architecture practice Antonio Ravalli Architetti.

His interests are mainly directed towards the processes of transformation of urban and territorial landscapes, both at micro and macro scale, where architecture has the possibility to research alternative solutions to the diverse environmental conditions. He designs and realizes complex urban projects inside and outside Italy, where he tries to accommodate the instances of the market by exploring possibilities of riappropriation and requalification of grey zones, actual interstices among the infrastructures of contemporary city, through criteria of multifunctionality, complementarity between public and private, temporary and dynamic objectives and uses.

Since 1994 he teaches Architectural Design in the Facoltà di Architettura di Ferrara, exploring the possibilities offered by architecture in urban requalification processes. From 1997 to 1999 he teaches in the Master of Architectural Design mar2 of Syracuse University. Design teacher during the summer session at IUAV, Venezia, in 2006, teacher and responsible for the Master in Urban Politics Mapaus, Cordoba (Argentina). He organizes and manages numerous workshops on urban requalification themes. He's invited lecturer in many European and American cities.

Simone Sfriso is architect and partner of the architectural practice studio tamassociati. He works in the fields of bio-ecologic architecture, public spaces design and participative processes management.

Tamassociati has obtained numerous prizes and rewards, winning the following architectural competitions: Piazza Marconi, San Giorgio Piacentino; Parco di san Giacomo del Martignone; Piazza Brin, La Spezia; Piazza Guala, Torino; Segnaletica per la navigazione nella Laguna di Venezia. With the requalification project of the Isola di Pellestrina – Venezia, tamassociati has won the prize INU-ANCI for public spaces Participated Design.

Tamassociati cooperates with Emergency ONG in the design and construction of hospital structures in Sudan, Sierra Leone, Repubblica Centrafricana. With the cardio-chirurgical centre Salam in Sudan, tamassociati has obtained numerous rewards among which: Premio Internazionale Dedalo Minosse; AR Awards for Emerging Architecture; Premio di architettura IntraLuoghi; Premio internazionale di architettura Barbara Capocchin; Middle East Architect Award; Smart Future Mind Award.

Tamassociati has designed and constructed the administrative headquarters in Padova of the Banca Popolare Etica, obtained the following rewards: Premio Architettura sostenibile Fassa Bortolo; Premio internazionale di architettura Barbara Capocchin.

In the residential field, two projects of cohousing are right now under construction in Treviso and Bologna.

Tamassociati has been invited to expose during the XII Mostra Internazionale di Architettura of the Biennale di Venezia.

René van Zuuk studied building production technology at the Technical University Eindhoven, where he graduated in 1988. Directly after receiving his engineers diploma he started working at the office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill in London and Chicago (1988-1989). In 1989 he won the competition "Ongewoon wonen II" (Unusual living II) in Almere with the design for his own house "Psyche". His first project did not go unnoticed and got immediate attention from the architectural world. After realising the project in 1993 René van Zuuk started his own architectural office in Almere.

In the past sixteen years the office has created an interesting portfolio with a large variety of designs. Underlying in all the designs is the continuous search for methods which can guide the projects. The aim is to unite a maximised degree of 'particularity' of the final product with simplicity in manufacturing. René van Zuuk's knowledge of building production technology, is of crucial importance. Almost every project derives its expression from an idea, an invention that initiates and boosts the design process.

These inventions are clearly visible in his most well known buildings. The Architecture Centre Amsterdam (ArCAM) building which is a direct result from transforming blob architecture into well thought-out architecture that is based on production methods. De Verbeelding is derived from construction methods used by the first farmers on the new lands of Flevoland. The Wave (Block 16) is a result of playing with Dutch construction principles.

But also in more recent years these principles keep showing. In the stairs of the Roosendaal pavilion, in the repetitive building structure of the Spikvoorde buildings and in the leave patterns on his own house and on the office building on the Zilverparkkade.

Ignacio Vicens y Hualde graduates architect in Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura of Madrid in 1985. Since 1997 he's architectural design chairman in the same University, where he also directs the Cátedra Blanca CEMEX and the investigation group "CULTURA DEL HÁBITAT".

Invited profesor in the Universities of Harvard, London (AA, Architectural Association), Paris (UP 8), Rome (La Sapienza), Navarra, Montevideo (U. de la República), Budapest (Politechnic), Mexico city (Panamericana and de las Américas), Guatemala (del Istmo) and Palermo. His work, upon which he's held several conferences in different cities, has been extensively published in the world's most prestigious architecture magazines, and has received numerous prizes and mentions, among which those of the Colegios de Arquitectos of Madrid (1992), Vasco-Navarro (1997) and Castilla-La Mancha (1989, 1994, 1998, 2000 y 2003), the FAD Price of the Opinión (1997), the Premio de Arquitectura del Ayuntamiento de Madrid (2003), the CEOE price (1998) and the Wallpaper Award in 2009.

Apart from associating professional practice to teaching, he has an active presence in the cultural world. Since its foundation, he's part of the Editorial Council of NUEVA REVISTA, as well of the magazine ARQUITECTURA from 1993 to 2000. He's part of the scientific committee of the Istituto per la Cooperazione Universitaria in Rome. He's been member of the Comisión de Gerencia of the Real Fundación Toledo, of the Fundación Camilo José Cela, of the Fundación Félix Granda and of the Fundación MARCC.

His work has been rewarded with the Encomienda de la Orden del Mérito Civil. He's Commendator of the Order of San Gregorio Magno, with papal nomination.

CRITICS

Michele Bonino (MARC)
Pierre-Alain Croset (Politecnico di Torino)
Raimondo Guidacci
Andrea Marcante (UdA)
Laura Milan (Il Giornale dell'Architettura)
Stefano Mirti (Id-Lab)
Subhash Mukerjee (MARC)
Marcello Napoleone (ARMA Architecture Materials)
Elisa Poli (Cluster Theory)

ASSISTANTS

Ilaria Ariolfo (PlaC)
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Paolo Borghino (StudioErrante)
Alberto Bottero (bam!)
Valeria Bruni (bam!)
Alessandro Bua (PlaC)
Andrea Cassi (Weekend In A Morning)
Massimiliano Marian (Weekend In A Morning)
Andrea Tomasi

RESPONSIBLE

Davide T. Ferrando (Zeroundicipiù)

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Alessandro Cimenti (*studioata*)
Davide T. Ferrando (Zeroundicipiù)
Walter Nicolino (carlorattiassociati – Walter Nicolino & Carlo Ratti)
Stefano Pujatti (ELASTICOSPA)

COORDINATION

Iride Barbano
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PROJECT PARTNERS

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Urban Center Metropolitano
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Fantoni Group
Mozzone Building System

INFO

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