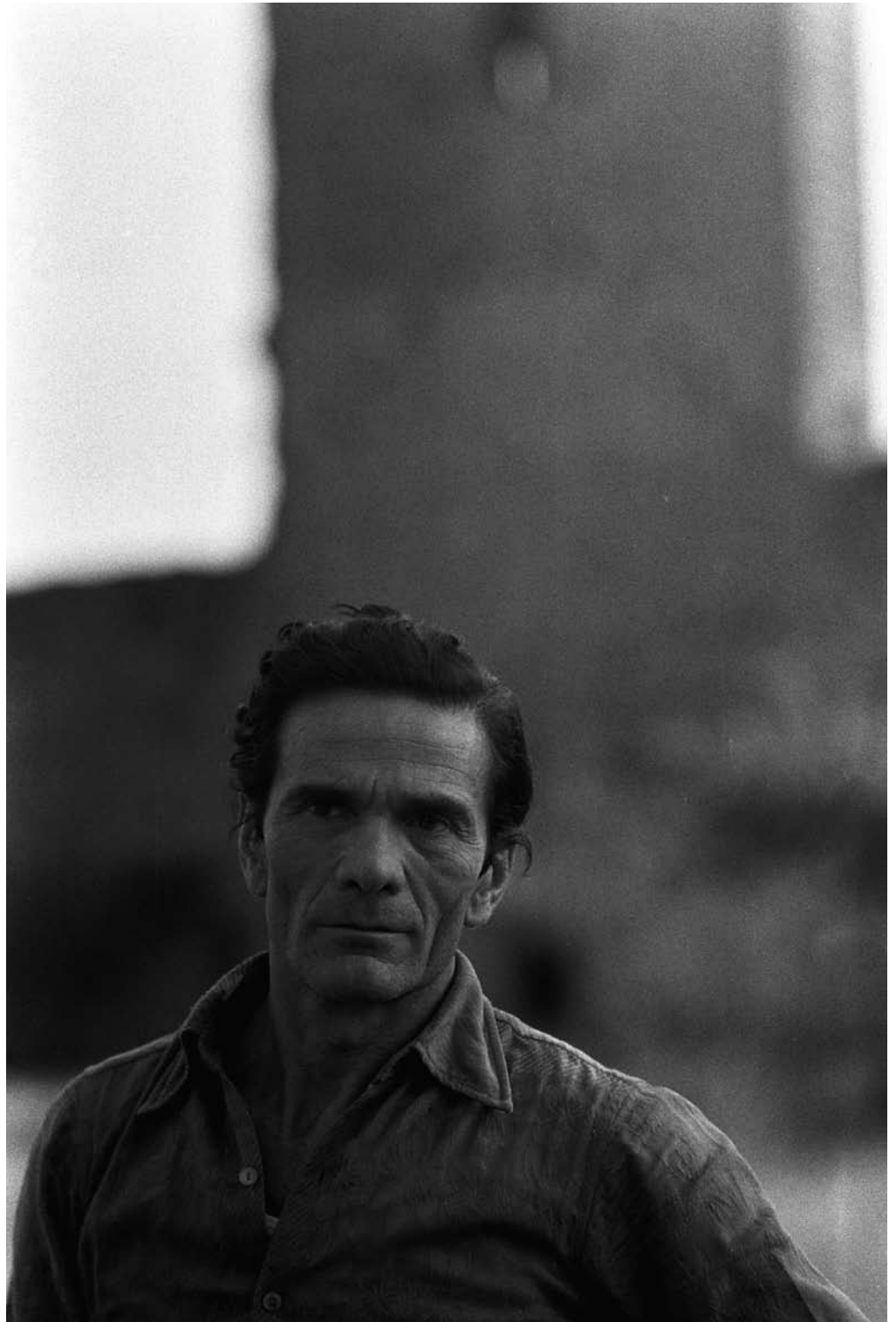


FIRENZE architettura

1.2015



costruire con poco



Periodico semestrale
Anno XIX n. 1

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Pier Paolo Pasolini a Torre di Chia, 1974
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Aris Kostantinidis e la casa ad Anávyssos Un'offerta al paesaggio

Fabio Fabbrizzi

Nel 1962 Aris Kostantinidis riceve l'incarico di progettare una piccola casa per il fine settimana da costruirsi ad Anávyssos, al quarantottesimo chilometro della strada costiera che collega Atene con il promontorio di Capo Sunio.

A quel tempo la condizione paesaggistica di quel tratto costiero, incarnava nel rapporto tra l'essenzialità della natura e la semplicità dei pochi volumi dell'architettura, quella caratteristica di autenticità che Kostantinidis rincorrerà come obiettivo principale della sua ricerca progettuale fin dal suo rientro in Grecia dopo il giovanile periodo tedesco di formazione. Una ricerca percorsa attraverso strade diverse nelle quali la fotografia e il disegno costituiscono gli strumenti privilegiati di una lettura analitica volta a mettere in luce i caratteri della natura e dell'architettura spontanea del paesaggio greco in modo da orientare lo sguardo e la comprensione verso quella forza insita nei luoghi che solo la dimensione mitologica riesce a cogliere e a tramandare.

Il terreno prescelto da Papapanayotou, committente della casa di Anávyssos, si trova a una decina di chilometri dal tempio di Poseidone i cui resti si ergono sulla scogliera di Capo Sunio a dominare il mare che il mito vuole che prenda il nome da Egeo, re di Atene che proprio in quel punto si gettò tra le onde a causa della presunta morte del figlio Teseo.

Il luogo dell'intervento -una lingua di roccia a pelo sull'acqua, sospesa tra terra e cielo, nel mezzo di un paesaggio incontaminato- non è solo un luogo di straordinaria bellezza, ma anche un luogo denso di aspettative, portatore cioè, di una latenza figurale e paradigmatica di immensa forza, stemperata oggi dall'offesa della moltitudine di villette e

di attrezzature ricettive che ne alterano irreversibilmente il senso primordiale, ma che più di cinquanta anni or sono, doveva apparire a Kostantinidis in tutta la sua sfavillante e primitiva latenza.

Ci piace, così, immaginarlo allora -come lui stesso amava raccontare¹- seduto su una pietra a respirare il luogo, a sentirsi parte di quell'insieme di cui la luce, la terra, l'acqua e l'aria ne sono solo una piccola parte, sentendosi appartenente a quel grande disegno "non umano" che l'ha reso possibile, come se quel luogo, come qualunque altro luogo, altro non fosse che il respiro del mondo voluto da un dio benevolo solo per essere colto nell'attimo stesso della sua consapevolezza. E mentre questa consapevolezza si deposita, immaginarlo tracciare contro il cielo luminoso, i segni chiari di una possibile geometria, capace di organizzare il senso di un ritmo arcano, di una misura elementare ma nello stesso tempo assoluta, fatta di nulla ma capace di accogliere il tutto dentro di sé. Una volta progettato mentalmente l'edificio direttamente sul posto, al tavolo da disegno rimane, allora, solo il tempo di fissare la concretezza di una forma che è "nata con il suolo".

È nata con il suolo ma è anche nata da quel patrimonio in costante formazione che Kostantinidis arricchisce, fotografia dopo fotografia, schizzo dopo schizzo, osservazione dopo osservazione e basato sul serbatoio spontaneo dei riferimenti dell'architettura cosiddetta popolare, che fa sì che la sua progettualità possa porsi oltre il tempo in autentica assonanza con le cose, in vibrante comunione con schemi, figure, temi e tipi che si mantengono inalterati nelle diverse epoche.

Solo così è possibile parlare di tradizione, di regionalismo e finanche di critica alla



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1
Il paesaggio visto dal loggiato

Pagine successive:

2

La casa subito dopo la realizzazione

3 - 4

Vedute esterne

5

Interno: lo spazio soggiorno verso il camino

6

Pianta

7

Vista laterale

8

La casa oggi

foto Marianna Giannatou





modernità nell'opera di Konstandinis, ovvero come sensibile interpretazione di una possibile "struttura" che altro non è che una sorta di ideale che ne precede e anticipa la forma, la cui declinazione linguistica è in fondo meno importante della forza che la determina.

Durante il 1964, sulla lingua di roccia protesa nel mare di Anávyssos, Konstantinidis radica un piano rettangolare di scisto grigio di 18,50m x 9,50m posato a lastre di grandi dimensioni disuguali tra loro, quasi uno stilobate affiorante dal terreno, le cui fondazioni sono formate dalla stessa pietra scavata sul posto. Su di esso, erge un volume che svela l'essenza del *mégaron* miceneo, ovvero un'aula rettangolare individuata da quattro colonne angolari con il focolare posto al centro, attorno al quale si sviluppa l'articolazione dei vari ambiti.

La geometria della casa si offre fin dal primo sguardo in tutta la sua nudità, basando le misure del suo perimetro generale in un disegno che contiene un vo-

lume parallelepipedo di 14,50m x 6,00m e un rimanente portico ad "L" che ne abbraccia due lati. Il volume delle stanze è impostato su una griglia di 2,00m x 5,00m a cui si aggiungono gli spessori delle murature, mentre il porticato è impostato su una griglia di 3,00m x 4,00m, segnato da possenti porzioni murarie di 2,00m e 4,00m di lunghezza che si alternano ad aperture di uguali dimensioni.

Tutta la muratura esterna è realizzata con grandi conci di pietra montati a filari irregolari con la particolarità di utilizzare, secondo la tradizione costruttiva rurale, i pezzi migliori sugli angoli in modo da avere delle porzioni di muratura maggiormente definite e nitide nei propri andamenti verticali. Una lastra di calcestruzzo a travi rovesce in spessore, alta 50 cm e realizzata a filo esterno con le murature, conclude in alto l'edificio i cui locali interni risentono dello schiacciamento simbolico di questa superficie, essendo alti solo 2,40m. Quindi, lo spazio compresso dell'interno, ulterior-

mente dilatato nella direzione orizzontale dall'incombente superficie scabra del calcestruzzo in vista dell'intradosso della copertura, lascia sfuggire con facilità lo sguardo verso le grandi aperture protette da pannelli scorrevoli di legno tinto di verde oliva, a vedere la forma discontinua delle colline rocciose da un lato e la linea continua di connessione tra il cielo e il mare, dall'altro.

La distribuzione interna ruota attorno alla presenza di un camino centrale che divide il soggiorno dal pranzo, mentre una cucina si affaccia su una piccola loggia autonoma e una camera con letti a castello comunica con un piccolo bagno. La dimensione essenziale della casa, pensata come *buen retiro* per un militare di professione, suggerisce la sensazione del rifugio, la figura del riparo, la protezione dalla luce abbagliante e dal vento incessante, la comunione con la materia dell'intorno, tanto che la casa appena finita, vista nelle foto d'epoca, appare quasi come una concrezione naturale



Φωτογραφίες "Αρη Κωνσταντινίδη"

2

della roccia, corrosa dal vento e dalla salsedine. Tutto questo, dando tuttavia la possibilità di vivere all'aperto la maggior parte della giornata, utilizzando lo spazio intermedio del portico, inteso quale luogo di mediazione tra l'intimo raccoglimento dell'interno e la vastità dell'esterno.

Sobrietà, dignità, semplicità, eppure al contempo assolutezza, astrazione, simbolo, paiono essere i vari estremi dell'ampio campo di definizione all'interno del quale oscilla la lettura interpretativa di questa piccola opera, nella quale prima di tutto il resto, conta l'impeccabile sovrapposizione tra la dimensione formale e quella della sua costruttività, dove la tecnica è pura forma e la forma è pura tecnica, in un reciproco rimandarsi che è figura e che è sostanza e che ne costituisce il nucleo più prezioso, quello cioè che si impone sopra tutte le altre possibili sovrastrutture interpretative.

Nella sapiente semplicità della casa, pare convergere la forza dell'archetipo, il senso originario dell'avere un tetto

sotto cui ripararsi e allo stesso tempo, l'espressione di una delle declinazioni più asciutte che quel particolare segmento temporale individuato immediatamente dopo l'assertività del Moderno abbia potuto manifestare nell'incontrarsi con il senso arcaico di un luogo carico di tutta la propria carica ancestrale.

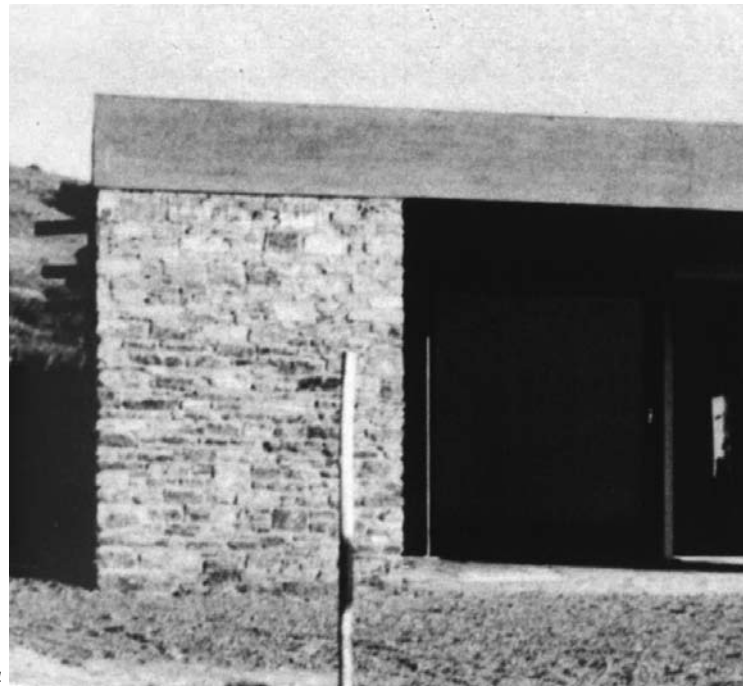
Va da sé che per Konstantinidis fare architettura è un processo corale, nel quale attraverso l'opera, affermare una propria visione del mondo. Un mondo autentico, fatto di quotidianità e di obblighi e divieti, di regole certe e di consuetudini che altro non sono che l'affinarsi di una sensibilità che allea l'uomo alla terra e in questa alleanza, *"la vera architettura deve essere comoda, come lo è una scarpa, avere il sapore del pane bene impastato e deve crescere sulla terra come gli alberi, gli arbusti e i fiori.(...) L'architettura a differenza della dura e crudele scientificità, possiede una dimensione artigianale e manuale, attraverso la quale riesce a esprimere e dare forma agli insegnamenti di vita, per*

*come questi si formano a contatto con le vie tortuose e sconosciute del destino"*².

Quindi una visione fatalista la sua, assolutamente in linea con lo spirito e l'animo greco, dove il senso dell'umano è quindi anche quello dell'architettura considerata come una delle sue più alte espressioni, appare sempre da cogliersi in relazione ad una dimensione altra. Ma guardando l'itinerario progettuale e teorico di Kostantinidis, non si registra nessun provincialismo, nessuna tipicità legata alla dimensione folkloristica di una serie di caratteri appartenenti alla specifica identità greca, quanto piuttosto, un respiro ampio che va ben oltre il ristretto confine di una terra e che fa apparire questo itinerario straordinariamente in sintonia con la migliore lezione progettuale europea del secondo dopoguerra. In particolare quella italiana, nella quale la riscoperta della verità, della realtà, dell'autenticità e della semplicità diventano i nodi concettuali e operativi attraverso i quali si indica la via di una



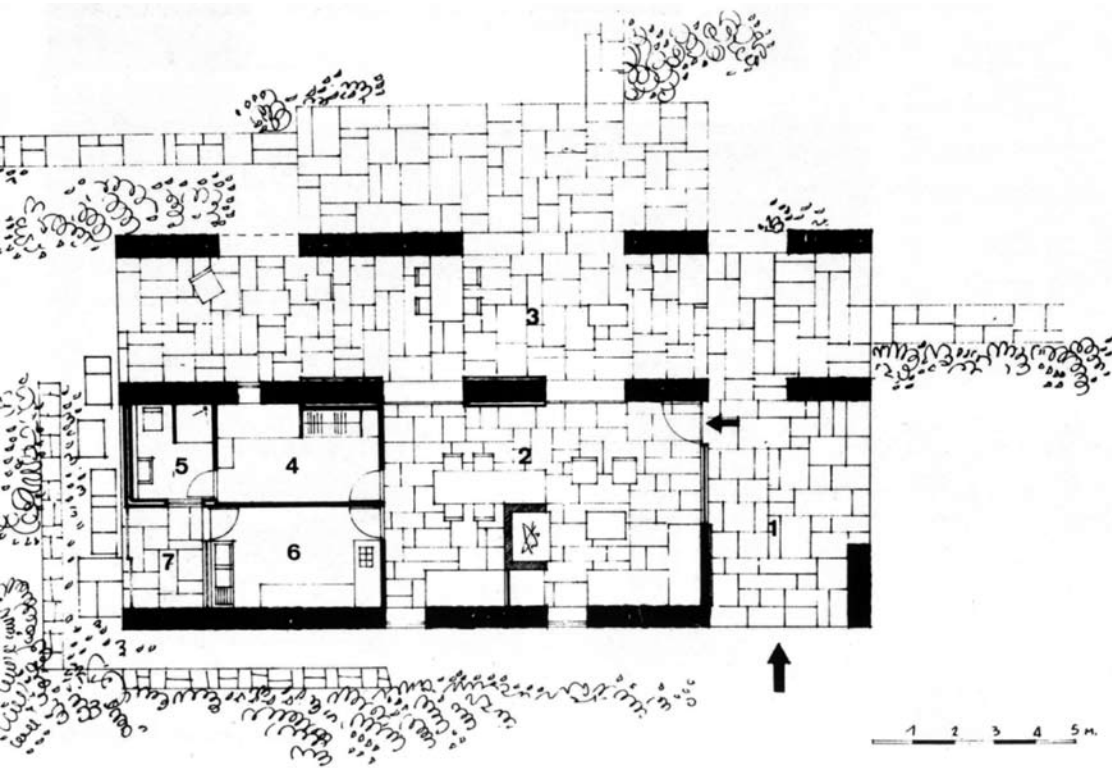
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progettualità maggiormente rispettosa delle molte voci che le diversità dei luoghi hanno da indicare al comporre a chi possiede l'umiltà di saperle ascoltare.

*"In un bel progetto, il disegno complessivo dell'edificio e i suoi dettagli fanno parte di una composizione armonica, come se tutte le sue parti fossero intrecciate con il medesimo punto di vista; il dettaglio si identifica con il disegno generale e quest'ultimo, a sua volta, accetta nel suo grembo il dettaglio senza paura, come se fosse parte di se stesso. Una architettura con una statura e una forma che ha raggiunto una compiutezza compositiva e con tutti gli elementi che formano un organismo ben ordinato, si colloca nel paesaggio come se si trovasse in quel sito da sempre, come se si fondessero in un momento, vecchio e nuovo, contemporaneo e passato, come se si identificasse l'opera di oggi con quello che verrà costruito nel futuro"*³.

Tra lo sciabordio della risacca, il frinire della cicala, l'odore del mirto e la luce a picco sui muri petrosi, la poesia di questo approccio progettuale si è manifestata nelle nitide geometrie di questa casa costruita da un architetto come una vera

e propria "offerta al luogo". Offerta subito disattesa, in quanto solo due anni dopo la sua realizzazione, in seguito anche alle molte critiche negative dell'*entourage* del proprietario che giudicava la sua architettura troppo banale e non visibile nel paesaggio, la casa viene venduta ad una famiglia di armatori che la trasformano nel capanno degli attrezzi della villa volgare ed esuberante che immediatamente le costruiscono accanto.

¹ Cfr. Konstantinidis A., "Alcune parole ancora", in: Cofano P., *Aris Konstantinidis la figura e l'opera*, Libraccio Editore, Milano, 2012, pp. 97-103.

² Cfr. Konstantinidis A., Op. Cit.

³ Cfr. Konstantinidis A., Op. Cit.

L'autore desidera ringraziare Marianna Giannatou, per la preziosa collaborazione nel reperimento del materiale originario, per avere fotografato la villa nella condizione attuale e per avere tradotto alcuni dei principali scritti teorici di Aris Konstantinidis, indispensabili per meglio comprendere il suo pensiero e la sua opera.

Tutte le immagini d'epoca sono tratte dall'articolo: *Κωνσταντινίδης, Αρης, (1971), Κατοικία για διακοπές στην Ανάβυσσο / Summer house near Sounion, ΘΕΜΑΤΑ ΕΣΩΤΕΡΙΚΟΥ ΧΩΡΟΥ ετήσια επιθεώρηση/ DESIGN IN GREECE annual review, 2, pp. 34-38* per il quale si ringrazia il EIA (Hellenic Institute of Architecture - Istituto Ellenico dell'Architettura) che ha rilasciato l'autorizzazione alla pubblicazione delle suddette immagini.



tempt to merge both the technical constraints and the conceptual possibilities. Despite being surrounded by anonymous single-family detached houses which cannot share party walls in order to respect the strict Japanese seismic and fire-protection codes, and being partly overshadowed by high apartment buildings which hide any view of the bay and the volcano, this house introduces to the Take neighborhood an interpretation of a well-known architectural typology. Two built spaces are placed one beside the other, sharing a wall and forming a possible first nucleus for a design for a row house development: the smaller space contains the hallways, the staircase, the toilets and bathroom; the bigger one hosts the main rooms including the *tatami* room (or Japanese-style room) with the usual straw mat floor and the traditional *tokonoma* (a built-in recessed space in which pictorial scrolls *-kake-mono-* or artistic arrangements of flowers *-ikebana-* are usually displayed).

Conceptually blurring the uncertain territory where Japanese and European identities meet, the house and its blackened-timber facade could be read on one hand like an homage to the traditional Japanese art of preserving wood by charring it, called *shou sugi ban* or *yakisugi*; on the other hand as an enigmatic reminder of the arrival of the *Kurofune*, the black vessels used by the first Portuguese merchants. But there is another inevitable reference for such blackness. It is the precious obscurity kept in the traditional Japanese houses, as described by Jun'ichirō Tanizaki's in his *In praise of shadows*. We chose to overturn that deep interior obscurity, using it to form the exteriors of the house, now transformed in a sort of lava rock pierced by the big window of the double-height living room; a squared *oculus* which frames a view of the trees in the nearby park.

The sole green fragment of the landscape surviving in Take, placed between the Ibusuki railway line and the Nakasu Dori bridge, generates another moment in the house. The old trick Le Corbusier conceived for the *cabanon* is directly quoted in the mirrored shutter of the master bedroom interior window which works like a life-size viewfinder of a livable *camera obscura* pointed toward the trees.

We brought the darkness of traditional Japanese houses outside and placed it on the house facades. This move allowed us to work with other powerful analogies in the interiors: the memories of the whitewashed houses of the Mediterranean villages and their little piazzas. Images that form a reversed landscape can be found especially in the living room, an house-like negative space theatrically surrounded by counter-facades with balconies and windows. These open onto secret intimacies, or "the blue of the sky".³

Translation by Justin P. Walsh

¹ From "Ai compagni residenti in Goa (Kagoshima, 5 novembre 1549)" ("To the members resident in Goa (Kagoshima, 5 November 1549)", the first letter written by Saint Francis Xavier to his Jesuit brothers living in the monastery of Santa Fé in Goa, India. Translated from Spanish according to the original version composed in Malacca in 1550. In Francis Xavier, *Dalle terre dove sorge il sole. Lettere e documenti dall'oriente*, foreword and editing by Adriana Carboni, Nuova Città Editore, Rome, 2002, p. 323.

² Bernardo the Japanese was one of the very first Christian converts in Kagoshima who had no genetic relationship with the clan of Paulo de Santa Fé, the official translator of Francis Xavier (considered the first Japanese to set foot in India). Formerly known as Hanjirō, Paulo, like Bernardo, was a samurai. Bernardo would join Francis Xavier in his journey back to India. From Goa he would then reach Lisbon in September 1522. He would not arrive in Rome until January 1555, remaining there until October of the same year, and meeting Ignatius of Loyola. Thirty years later, four young ambassadors from Nagasaki would also leave for Europe. This epic journey to Portugal, Spain and Italy, managed by Alessandro Valignano, the successor of Francis Xavier in Japan, has been reconstructed in the terrific book written by Michael Cooper, *The Japanese mission to Europe 1582-1590 The journey of four samurai boys through Portugal, Spain and Italy*, Global Oriental, United Kingdom, 2005.

³ One of the Aldo Rossi's most iconic competition projects was entered under the title 'the blue of the sky'. This was a direct homage to Georges Bataille's book, *Le Blue du Ciel*. Immodestly, this house lies under the Kyushu sky, pretending to imitate Aldo Rossi's Palazzo in Fukuoka. Both buildings call out a miraculous analogy, the Mediterranean blue hour.

Arrigoni Architeti

Bāmiyān Cultural Centre - Afghanistan by Fabrizio Arrigoni

(page 68)



The starting concept of the project has been to generate form and orientation of the building from the surrounding landscape itself; hence, the fundamental orthogonal footprint aligns to the course of the Foladi river while getting a slight deviation to focus on the perspective of the western Buddha. While the southern part of the building remains committed to this pattern, the side overlooking the valley unfolds like a fan to embrace the whole length

of the cliffs, reaching to the opposite landmark of the eastern Buddha. In this way the horizontal layout integrates the different views, transforming them in architectural elements: whereas the complete panorama of the cliffs can be enjoyed from the outside promenade unrolling in front of the new cultural centre, a sequence of arches on the inside accompanies and guides the visitor in the dynamic perception of partial views, stimulating a deeper, individual experience and suggesting different levels of confrontation between human scale and monumental dimension. On the other way, the building aims at encouraging a reflection on its cultural mission through the architectural medium: the southern front welcomes the visitor with the familiar and recognizable image of a walled compound, like the dwelling form of the *Qala*, typical of rural Afghanistan; at the same time the presence of decorative features like interlaced geometric fretwork and a lapis lazuli coloured wooden screen denies the traditional defensive character of the *Qala*, reminding of the singularity of the building and the public spirit of its function. Surprisingly, once stepped beyond the wall, instead of finding us in a withdrawn space, we discover the unexpected, unique character of the cultural centre, opening itself to the surrounding landscape. It is easy then to catch the message that the cultural centre wishes to share with its guests: although we can feel the contentment granted by accustomed forms and materials as we stroll through the public parts of the building, their disposition does induce us to literally see beyond, showing up different perspectives and symbolically inviting us to greet them not as a threat but as a peaceful chance. Yet, should we look for more privacy, that's possible, too: we can find retreat in more secluded spaces, like in the smaller ones on the south, facing the quiet linear garden beyond the wall, or in the library, with its own secret courtyard, or even enjoy the almost meditative atmosphere of the round domed, light-flooded schoolrooms. The northern front displays an array of oblique transversal walls in an ever-changing sequence of light and shadow, mirroring the alternation of glimmering rock surfaces and darkish caves on the other side of the valley. As the building stretches out onto the slope, its short transversal façade takes the form of a monumentally powerful architectural statement, gathering different volumes both horizontally and vertically and thus formally corresponding to the complex commitment of achieving harmony between different peoples and cultures. Consequently, this is the where the expected expansion will be found: instead of weakening the purity of the building with the addition of further constructions the area is going to be carved underneath the cultural centre itself, reproducing the coexistence of additive and subtractive architecture typical of nearby cave dwellings (in this regard a partial reinforced concrete structure beneath the centre can be arranged beforehand by the first construction phase).

Materials and techniques

The goal is to keep a low profile, taking advantage of local resources in terms of knowledge and materials. Wide use of bricks, provided in their full range of variations depending on their role: from *khesht-i-kham*, sun-dried bricks, to the stronger, baked *khesht-i-pukhta*, suitable for arches and higher load-bearing walls (a concealed, reinforced concrete inner structure might be provided). Furthermore mud cladding, like in the classrooms domes (*gunbad*), and *pakhsa* can increase diversity and general quality: the idea underneath is to establish a fruitful interchange with local enterprises and determine together single formal and technical aspects. Although the structure is mainly based on simple flat-roof construction, some more challenging elements (like domes and wide-spanning arches) are present: one is not supposed to underestimate the capabilities of the afghan constructors, so astoundingly showed in many monumental buildings of the past (among others the *Qalae-Bost* arch...). Precious particulars, on the entrance side and in indoor details, can underline the prestige of the building: we think about the use of lapis lazuli, to be found in the nearby mountains, to stain wood and glaze tiles, the latter ones hidden like a treasure in the linear garden beyond the wall.

Landscaping

In order to achieve a non-artificial, site-oriented appearance and make maintenance easier, the arrangement of external garden-like areas is reduced to clearly marked beds, slightly rising from the soil to serve as perimeter benches. The rest is deliberately left as untilled flat terrain, which represents the natural surroundings of most afghan architectures. The botanical choice implies a selection of species according to aesthetical and practical principles; they all provide the benefits of lower water needs and, what's more, have been traditionally grown for centuries and acquired over the years a symbolic value, too. Five beds of Damask rose (*Rosa damascena*) greet the visitor with their soul-stirring fragrance. On the lower eastern level again a flowerbed, this time filled with ornamental *Nigella damascena* and valuable saffron (*Crocus sativus*); beyond that a small shady plantation of pomegranate (*Punica granatum*) offers shelter for relaxation and walks.

Sustainability

Known construction methods applied to traditional materials, albeit focusing on constructive challenges and sensible experimentations, assure consistency and feasibility of the project. Integration means involvement of local workers in the project development, rejection of formal fashionable gestures artificially superimposed to the context, revitalization of an available technical knowledge that should not get lost. We can take advantage of traditional indoor climate controlling solutions (like thickness and composition of walls) integrating them with contemporary systems like solar panels and borehole thermal energy storage. In addition to that a rainwater reservoir is placed under the building.

Last but not least the above-mentioned landscaping project involving useful plants can represent an additional income (pomegranate fruits, rose essence, dried saffron stigmas) as well as the real, continuative integration of local population, avoiding to create an extraneous enclave.

Aris Konstantinidis and the house in Anávyssos an offer to the landscape by Fabio Fabbrizzi

(page 74)



In 1962, Aris Konstantinidis got the assignment to design a small house for the weekend in Anávyssos, at the 48th kilometre on the coast road that runs from Athens Cape Sunio promontory.

At that time, landscape appearance of that segment of coastline embodied in the quintessence of nature and in the simplicity of a little number of architecture volumes, that characteristic of authenticity that Konstantinidis would have pursued in his design research since he went back to Greece after the German training period. He did his research principally thanks to photography and drawings, the main instruments that Konstantinidis adopted to analyze and highlight the qualities of nature and Greek authentic architecture, in order to understand the inner-power of sites that only mythological dimension can recount and preserve.

The building site, selected by Papapanayotou, the Anávyssos house client, is situated ten kilometres far away from Poseidon's temple, which ruins rise on the top of Cape Sunio cliff in a dominant position above the Aegean sea, which name originates from the king of Athens who threw himself among the waves as long as he presumed his son Teseo's death.

The construction site – a rock strip that floats on the sea, suspended between earth and sky, in the middle of a pure landscape – moreover than extraordinary beautiful, it's really full of hopes, with an innate strong figurative and paradigmatic *latency*, made dull nowadays by the various little villas and hotels which changed hopelessly the primordial sense of place, so brilliant and primitive to Konstantinidis' eyes more than fifty years ago.

We can imagine him – as sometimes he loved to remember – sitting on a stone, *breathing* the site, feeling himself as part of that compound in which the light, the earth, the water and the air are only a small part of a bigger *non-human* creation, as if that place, like anyone else, would be an earth's breath, wanted by a benevolent god just to be understood in the exact moment of its comprehension. And while the comprehension sediments, we can imagine him, tracing against a bright sky, some clear lines of a possible geometry that can organize the sense of an archaic rhythm, an elementary and absolute measure, made of nothing but still able to gather everything inside itself. Once the design project is *mentally* created on the site, the drawing table represents only the required time that is necessary to fix a concrete shape that *born from the earth*.

It's born from the earth, but also from a constant developing heritage that Konstantinidis feeds, snapshot after snapshot, sketch after sketch, observation after observation, thanks to that spontaneous source made up of vernacular architecture, that allows his design capability to be placed out of time, in a true harmony with things, schemes, figures, themes and types that are still the same through the different ages.

In the sensitive interpretation of a possible *structure* that idealizes and discloses the shape – which linguistic result in the end is less important than the power that determines it – we can find tradition, regionalism and also a critic to modernity inside Konstantinidis' works.

During 1964, on the rock strip promontory of Anávyssos, Konstantinidis inserts a rectangular plane of 18,50 m x 9,50 m made up of grey schist plates of several big dimensions, almost an emerging stylobate that comes from the earth, which foundations are obtained from the same dug stone. On the plane, a raised volume reminds the essence of Mycenaean *mégaron*, a rectangular room identified by four corner columns with the fireplace in the middle, around which all other rooms are distributed.

The pure house geometry is completely understandable at first sight, with its perimeter containing a parallelepiped of 14,50 m x 6,00 m and an L-shape porch which surrounds two sides of the volume. The internal rooms are set-down on a 2,00 m x 5,00 m grid, to which the thickness of the walls must be added-on. The porch is set-down on a 3,00 m x 4,00 m grid, characterized by powerful wall-sections of 2,00 m and 4,00 m length which are alternated to breaches of the same dimensions.

All the external stone walls are realized in big pieces assembled in irregular rows; the best pieces are used to define the angles, in order to obtain

sections of a more defined stonework, clear in their vertical raising as the traditional rural construction technique requires. A 50 cm concrete slab, realized flush with the external stonework, closes the upper part of the building and gives to the internal rooms a symbolic sense of pressure, as long as they are 2,40 m high. So, the compressed internal space, further expanded in the horizontal direction thanks to the rough concrete surface of the ceiling intrados, lets the view run out the house in landscape direction, through the big breaches shielded by sliding green painted wood panels, towards the irregular rock hills profile on a side and the continuous dividing line between sky and sea on the other side.

The internal distribution is arranged around a central fireplace which divides the living room from the dining room, while the kitchen looks out in a small independent loggia and a room with a bunk bed communicates with a small bathroom. The essential dimension of the house, designed for a professional soldier as a *buen retiro*, suggests the sense of shelter, of refuge, protection against the dazzling light and the incessant wind, harmony with the *material* of the surrounding context, till the point that the house, just finished, in some vintage snapshots, seems to be a natural stone concretion, eroded by wind and salt. The intermediate space under the porch, intended to be the mediation site between the inside reflection and the outside vastness, gives the possibilities to live the most part of the day in open air condition.

Sobriety, dignity, simplicity, but at the same time absolute, abstraction, symbol, seem to be the extremities of the vast definition field inside which it's possible to give an interpretative reading of this little masterpiece; first of all, in the overlay of formal and building dimensions, where the technique is pure shape and the shape is pure technique, in a constant sending back between figure and substance, we can find the most precious core, the one that imposes itself over the other possible interpretative superstructures.

In the wise simplicity of this house, we can read the power of archetype, the primordial need of a roof protection and at the same time, the expression of one of the most concise example, immediately after the assertiveness of Modernism, of a certain design tendency originated from the encounter with the archaic sense of site, charged of its whole ancestral tension.

Architecture for Konstantinidis is a collective process, in which the architect can express his own world vision through his works. An authentic world, made of everyday life, of duties and prohibitions, of definite rules and habits that are the improvement of the sensitivity that unites man to earth, and in this alliance, *"the real architecture must be comfortable, as a shoe is, it must have the flavour of well-kneaded bread and grow up on the earth like trees, bushes and flowers do. (...) Architecture, far away from the harsh and cruel scientific method, owns an artisan and handmade dimension, thanks to which it can express and give shape to life teaching, as these take place on the contorted and unknown destiny's paths"*¹.

Konstantinidis' vision is a fatalist one, absolutely aligned with the spirit and Greek soul, where the sense of humanity consists also of architecture as one of its most high expression, always in relationship with a higher dimension. But looking to Konstantinidis' design and theoretical approach, no provincialism can be recorded, neither typicality due to the folkloristic dimension of several characteristics of Greek identity; instead, we can find a large-scale effort that goes over the strict boundaries of a single nation and makes this itinerary appear extraordinary aligned to the best European design lesson of the second post-war period. In particular, the Italian one, in which the rediscovery of truth, reality, authenticity and simplicity, becomes the conceptual and operative nodes that reveal the way for a more respectful design approach, taking care about the several voices that sites have to suggest to those ones that are humble enough to understand them.

*"In a good architectural project, building general design and its details are all part of an harmonic composition, as if all its parts would be interlaced with the same point of view; detail is identified with the general design and this one, on its own, includes the detail without any fear, as if it would be a part of its own. An architecture with a stature and a shape that has reached perfection in composition, with all the parts that create a well-organized organism, shows itself in the surrounding landscape as if it would be there continuously, as if they would melt together in a moment, ancient and new, contemporary and past, as if we could identify in the present work the construction of tomorrow"*².

Between the undertow lapping, or the cicada's chirping, between the smell of myrtle and the light that hits directly the stone walls, the poetry of this design approach is showed in the clear geometry of this house, designed by an architect as a real "site offer". An offer immediately neglected, only two years after, when the owner, because of the several criticism of his *entourage* that judged the architecture too banal and invisible in the landscape, sold it to a ship-owners family that reduced it to a tools cabin in service of the vulgar and exuberant villa that immediately was built beside.

Translation by Paolo Oliveri

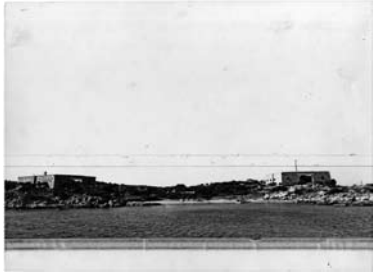
¹ Cfr. Konstantinidis A., *Alcune parole ancora*, in Cofano P., *Aris Konstantinidis la figura e l'opera*, Libraccio editore, Milano, 2012, pp.97-103.

² Cfr., Konstantinidis A., *Op. Cit.*

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A bourgeois retreat. The houses at Arzachena by Marco Zanuso by Francesca Mugnai

(page 82)



"Monti di Mola" is now just the title of a song by singer-songwriter Fabrizio De Andre which tells of a wild land where a troubled love blossomed between a handsome boy and a white jenny (female donkey).

When Marco Zanuso is commissioned in 1962 to build two holiday houses in Arzachena (Olbia-Tempio, Sardinia, Italy), the tourist colonization of Sardinia is just beginning and, in that part of the region, the old name of "Monti di Mola" is still used. In the local dialect (gallurese) it means "stones for the millstone". The few families that still live in the area gladly part with their coastal lands, which, malarial and infertile, are still considered wasteland. Even Zanuso's commissioners, among them the architect's brother, on their voyage from Milan to find a suitable site for their summerhouse, encounter a landowner who offers to sell his land to them¹.

However, the development of the shoreline is soon destined to assume another scale entirely and with different connotations. At this time, the *Consorzio Costa Smeralda* (literally: Emerald Coasts Consortium) is established. It will re-name and forever transform that virgin land, rugged and indomitable, abused by an oriental prince who will remain unpunished. Antonio Cederna, an Italian journalist and environmental activist, was charged with 'defamation' for having denounced the development as a disaster and the crimes as: "A typical robbery of tourist exploitation is underway: a wanton urbanization of the coast, its transformation into a continuum of building that alternates estates of great luxury with seaside concentration camps of the worst quality. Both break every connection between the shoreline and the interior. This privatizes what should be accessible to all; it encloses the sea in a cage and degrades irremediably the natural prestige of these places, which is what really allows the development of tourism"².

If, on the one hand the mess perpetrated in *Costa Smeralda* "style" has as its main objective the elimination of the original wilderness of the coast in order to offer a fake and opulent domesticity, Zanuso's project, on the other hand embraces and re-elaborates all the rusticity of Sardinian land, to offer to the modern Ulysses a temporary refuge (just a holiday) from the comforts and the obligations of the bourgeois life, in communion with the natural elements. This conjures up images Penelope's bed (talamo, in Italian) built by her husband from an olive tree stump.

The twin houses arise near each other but with different orientations so as to follow the coastline. The floor-plan is a 15 metre square enclosure, further divided into 9 equal squares. Only the four corners are rooms, plus an intermediate space occupied by lavatories and an oven³.

The remaining areas form an atypical cruciform court. A grand pergola made of wood and matting recapitulates the central space; a *velarium* hangs wall to wall. This is the centre of the house, the domestic hearth. Here, symbolically, are the oven and the round table, whose top is a granite grindstone. Though the house itself appears to be an introvert structure, it opens outwards through the mediation of the court which overlooks the sea towards the distant coastline through the frame of a large portal.

The court as a pivotal element of the house is almost Zanuso's signature (for example the coeval villas at Arenzano). Here, however, his resort to this typology is ambiguous. The planimetry is an abstract geometrical creation, which has no reference to any precise model and is still inspired by Mediterranean residences (the Greek, Roman and Islamic) in the dual relationship that the living space has with the exterior: direct with the domestic life outside and mediated with the public space. Such ambiguity is reaffirmed by a subsequent enlargement of one of the two houses, consisting of two buildings with a circular plan evoking the nuraghe, yet they integrate into the existing syntax according to rules that are not ascribable to the type.

In the living quarters, the interior design is essential, in harmony with the spirit of the project. Fixed elements integrate with the structure of the house; beds and seating elements, for example, are built in stonework and woodwork, while the door shutters, when open, are recessed into the wall. Everything synchronizes to realize this modern laic refuge that "redefines and reinvents the contemporary idea of the Mediterranean identity"⁴, as architect Francesco Cellini observes.

The image of the squat shapes on the seashore, the thick granite walls and the great gate - more like a fortress than a house - evokes an archaic and fabulous world of shepherds with their flocks, of sorceresses and shipwrecked sailors. With the explosive force of *deja-vu* (meant truly as psychological phenomenon), Zanuso's landscape represents the Mediterranean Homeric myth. In this synthesis, built into the *Arzachena's* houses, we can actually recognise an image that we have never seen, not in Sardinia, nor anywhere else. Nevertheless it appears familiar because it is able to encapsulate - in a modern way - centuries and layers of our History.

Originally these newly-constructed houses are lit with oil lamps and have water tanks for washing and bottled gas for cooking: in Sardinia at that time there is no other technological alternative. It is this real austerity that also emphasizes the ancestral connotations of this house, meeting the clients' wishes. It is not time to challenge the forces of the nature, like in Villa Malaparte, which dominates the sea from above and re-shapes the rock outline. Thirty years later, certain of its domination of the world, the bourgeois challenges itself: by indulging in the paradoxical luxury of remaining naked in order to experience its own ability to resist the deprivation of "wellbeing" and "comfort", nevertheless still returning to nature to measure its own power.

Zanuso's intellectual itinerary presents some affinities with the early *Arte Povera* of the time, which explores the historical-anthropological roots of the Mediterranean culture, searching for an antidote to homogenization, and opposes the plethora of consumerist objects through "humble use of the bare necessities"⁵. Like the "poveriste" works, Arzachena's houses, even if rustic and primitive, are intended for those who live consciously immersed in the civic culture. Although Zanuso had designed objects which are considered the very symbols of consumerism, in 1972 he built a small house for himself in Paxos (Greece) inspired by these same austere values. Perhaps this was his personal "Ithaca" able to embody his aspiration, as man and architect, not to lose sight of the essence of things, including the true nature of objects: "The true vice is incomplete technology", he declares in an interview in 1988, "[which means] that technology which is unable to reach its ultimate conclusion: freedom, and a return to nature and humanity"⁶.

Translation by Livia Dubon Bohlig

¹ Information on the genesis of the house are to be found in M. J. Zanuso, *Casa ad Arzachena*, Marco Zanuso, in "Lotus International" n. 119, 2003.

² A. Cederna, *Hanno messo il mare in gabbia*, in "L'Espresso", 10 settembre 1966.

³ For a deepened analysis of the geometric construction of the plan cfr. A. Calgarotto, *Il cielo nella stanza*. Marco Zanuso, *Casa per vacanza*, in E. Mantese, *House and Site*, FUP, Firenze 2014.

⁴ F. Cellini, *Introduzione*, in E. Mantese, *op. cit.*

⁵ An expression by fra' Ubertino da Casale cited by G. Lista in a beautiful paper on *Arte Povera* in G. Lista, *Arte Povera*, Abscondita, Milano 2011.

⁶ V. Magnago Lampugnani (interview with Marco Zanuso), *Marco Zanuso: portare l'artificio alle sue conseguenze estreme*, in "Domus", n. 690, 1988.

The Poetry of Lost Spaces. Vittorio Garatti's Ballet School in Havana by Caterina Lisini

(page 90)



El campo huele a lluvia reciente. Una cabeza negra y una cabeza rubia juntas van por el mismo camino, coronadas por un mismo fraternal laurel. El aire es verde. Canta el sinsonte en el Turquino... Buenos días, Fidel.

Nicolás Guillén¹

"If Cuban culture - in whichever expression - aspires to reflect the Revolution, I believe it must do so with a full consciousness of a certain excess: deliberately indiscreet and exorbitant"². Thus Hugo Consuegra recounts the 'heresy' of the five Art Schools of Havana, designed by Ricardo Porro, Vittorio Garatti and Roberto Gottardi: architectures that are fable-like, "magniloquent"³, spectacular, naturally excessive and yet extraordinarily capable of summarizing in enchanted and joyous forms the entire consciousness of the Cuban revolution, the vastness of the challenge and the utopia of hope. The year is 1965 and the events concerning the construction of the schools are at their conclusion. Risen with impetus, in the first months of 1961, through an initiative of Fidel Castro himself, and built in the majestic and luxurious site of the exclusive Country Club, the five schools (Dramatic Arts, Plastic Arts, Ballet, Modern Dance, Music) would be, within a few years of

