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## LEONARDO RICCI'S AMERICAN TRANSFER From the Research of the Synthesis of the Arts to the Realization of the “Open Work”

This paper originates from my PhD research on Leonardo Ricci's<sup>2</sup> exchange with the United States from 1952 to 1972, which retraced philologically the architect's stages in the United States unveiling the premises and results of his American transfer in the period between 1952-1972 (Cattabriga 2021)<sup>3</sup>. Ricci's activity in the U.S.A. was driven by four main vectors we are going to deal with: the research of the synthesis of the arts, teaching reform aims, research on Urban and Visual Design, and the conception of “open work” in architecture, which ostensibly includes and melts the first three.



### *The Synthesis of the Arts*

Ricci's research of the synthesis of the arts was the first issue that led Ricci overseas in 1952. That year marked the beginning of Ricci's American transfer as he left Italy to visit his brother Fausto Maria Ricci's house building site in Beverly Hills after the approval

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  - 2 To deepen the figure of Leonardo Ricci see: G. Bartolozzi, *Leonardo Ricci: lo spazio inseguito*, Testo & immagine, Torino 2004; C. Vasić Vatovec, *Leonardo Ricci: architetto 'esistenzialista'*, Edifir, Firenze 2005; M. Costanzo, *Leonardo Ricci e l'idea di spazio comunitario*, Quodlibet, Macerata 2009; M. C. Ghia, C. Ricci, U. Dattilo (eds.), *Leonardo Ricci 100. Scrittura, Pittura e Architettura. 100 Note a Margine Dell'Anonimo Del XX Secolo*, Didapress. Firenze: Dipartimento di Architettura, Università degli Studi di Firenze 2019; M. C. Ghia, *La nostra città è tutta la Terra. Leonardo Ricci architetto (1918-1994)*, Steinhauser Verlag, Wuppertal 2021.
  - 3 The research analysed the following archival funds: Casa Studio Ricci in Florence: (CSR from now onward), Ricci's fund at Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione, the MIT Institute Archives and Special Collections (MIT ASC from now onward) and the PennState University Libraries Archives.



of his project and was invited to a series of four conferences dealing with painting and architecture and take part in painting exhibitions in famous American galleries. The right place for works of art, the re-integration of the artist in society, and the re-integration of the arts by means of town planning were the themes Ricci wanted to investigate during his first stay in the United States and those who helped him to carry on his life-long research.

At the University of Southern California he gave two lectures dedicated both to architecture and painting, respectively titled *An Architect Facing the Problems of a City* and *Architecture in Relation to the other Arts*, while, at the Brooklyn College he spoke to the scholars and students of the Department of Philosophy with two further interventions titled *Uomo moderno e città moderna* [*Modern Man and Modern City*]<sup>4</sup> on November 14 and *The Function of Art in Contemporary Life* to the audience of the Department of Philosophy, on November 21<sup>5</sup>. In the conference typescripts, painting emerges as a guiding principle for design, which must be understood in its main function of describing the truth of existence, thus unveiling the relational value among all human elements and activities. The conferences' transcriptions explain Ricci's belief in the possibility of transforming his ideas into reality starting from the relation and synthesis of the arts. He was an eclectic figure and his conferences, addressed to composed audiences, dealt with Architecture, Philosophy, and Art History.

Ricci was also a painter<sup>6</sup> indeed. His painting was "free and relieved" – as he himself defined it – and it was driven by the feeling

4 The translation of the title is done by the author and here is due because the original typescript is in Italian, while the other ones, were not translated because already in English. The same happens for all the documents originally titled in Italian kept in the archives.

5 This last conference was also sponsored on the university journal, with the title *Art as an Expression*. On the Brooklyn College – Kingsman Ricci's conference was dated November 27, 1952. All the typescript of the conferences are kept in CSR.

6 To deepen the figure of Leonardo Ricci as a painter see L. Grossato, *Il Pittore Leonardo Ricci*, in "Il Bo", n. 5, May 15, 1938; C. Morro, *Leonardo Ricci*, in "Revue Moderne illustrée des artes et de la vie", n. 15, September 13, 1938; R. Papini, *Orientamenti di architetti, di artigiani e d'altro*, in *Stile*, n. 9-10-11-12, 1947, pp.11-13. In late 1940s Leonardo Ricci belonged to the abstract art group which explored articulated volumes, structural solutions, and neo-

of solitude, which was strongly connected to the concept of existence: casting paint on canvas or wooden tables was for him a way to let a piece of himself get out, thus allowing a piece of his existence to get in touch with the external world. To Ricci painting was born because of the human incapacity to break solitude: men painted images that became free, liberated forms in space (Ricci 1962, p. 137). Therefore, in painting Ricci firstly saw the relational value among things: it precisely consisted into the definition of the relationship with all things, it became act, and then, life.

Moreover, Ricci explained this ideal in his book *Anonymous (XX century)*'s eighth chapter, *Raison d'Être of Painting* (Ricci 1962, pp. 127-144), where he firstly described architecture, Urban Design, urban planning, and painting in a strong mutual connection, then form as a result of the "forma-atto" design method<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, painting introduced Ricci to some of the fundamental themes of investigation for his architectural research, some encountered as guiding themes of the exhibitions he took part in<sup>8</sup>. Ricci also published in his book

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plastic compositions, but, at the same time, primitive influences emerged with the representation of ancestral myths, and, finally the Informal appeared as well. Giovanna Uzzani defined them the three optional visions of the world Ricci would have described in the *Anonymous (XX century)* some years after: the logic world, the world of myth, and the world of the absurd respectively. Giovanna Uzzani, *Leonardo Ricci pittore*, in *Leonardo Ricci 100*, cit., 129-139.

- 7 Leonardo Ricci called his design method "forma-atto", which could be translated in English as "form-act" design which foresaw any morphological result as a consequence of the analysis of the anthro-sociological human acts to be accomplished in a place or in a building.
- 8 In 1952 Ricci's paintings appeared again in Florence at Palazzo Strozzi with the exhibition *Mezzo secolo d'arte in Toscana*, and then, in the same year, they travelled overseas to the United States with a personal exhibition at Landau Gallery in Los Angeles. In 1953 his personal exhibitions were arranged at the Gallery Vigna Nuova and, again, for the Premio del Fiorino in Florence (1953 and 1954). The Fifties were a rich period for Leonardo Ricci who took part in several exhibitions in famous American galleries too, such as the North La Cienega Gallery in California (19 January-27 February 1953), at the International Exhibition of Contemporary Painting in Pittsburg (13 October-18 December 1955), In 1958 he exposed at the collective exhibition of sacred art at the Chiostro Nuovo in Florence, a personal exhibition at the Gallery La Bussola in Rome, and was invited at the Rome-NewYork Art Foundation in Rome. In 1959 Ricci's exhibitions in Italy were: *Prima Mostra Regionale d'Arte Toscana*, *Mostra di pittura di gruppo* at the Galleria Michaud, *Pittori astratti fiorentini* at the Galleria Michaud (1959-1960), all in Florence, and

his *Farewell, Masters; Farewell, Geniuses* (Ricci 1962, pp. 79-99), a chapter in which he declared his love for the masters of painting and architecture of the twentieth century, although he recognized their limits for the new direction art had to follow: masterpieces and heroes belonged to the pre-war period, whereas the new era was suffering the crisis of values and, therefore, their teachings were not enough. Ricci used and developed the masters' lessons finding new forms and open solutions: if in painting he experimented ritual masks, female figures playing the moon, simple silhouettes on textured backgrounds as in cave paintings, primitive pregnant Venuses, angels and demons, all immobile and absolute<sup>9</sup>, in his architectures Ricci mastered and declined a grammar made of volumes clinging to the curves of the ground, load-bearing partitions in local stone, beams and inclined slabs in exposed reinforced concrete, simple wooden stairs, poor iron fixtures, in contrast with the refined finishes in stone and marble and with the numerous artistic interventions: ceramic panels on the terrace of the living room and on the wall of the library, compositions in recycled pieces of colored glass such as the 'stone garden' in front of the house.

In the Village of Monterinaldi in Florence, where also Casa Studio Ricci lies, on top of the hill, perfectly translating that grammar, the Exhibition *La Cava. Mostra internazionale all'aperto di arti plastiche* took place in 1955. Besides, since the beginning of the Fifties, in Florence, Fiamma Vigo directed the Gallery Numero, the gallery La Vigna Nuova exposed the Manifesto of the Classical Abstract Art and Giorgini began the made in Italy in fashion. In this active climate Leonardo Ricci designed some of his funding projects as the Ecumenical Village of Agàpe (1946-1951), the Mercato dei Fiori di Pescia (1949) and began the building site of Monterinaldi (1949-1963), while his personal exhibitions reached France at the

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the *Esposizione di pittura* al Festival dei due mondi in Spoleto, while in 1960 Ricci exposed at Trabia Gallery in New York (29 March-30 April 1960).

9 Giovanna Uzzani has recognized in these subjects of Ricci influences of the blue period or the contemporary period of Picasso who painted on ceramics, in the dramatic nudes on two-colored and gloomy backgrounds of Egon Schiele contrasted with material and golden surfaces that recall Cimabue. G. Uzzani, *Leonardo Ricci pittore*, cit., p. 135.



Galerie Pierre<sup>10</sup> and the Salon de Mai in Paris (May 9 – May 31, 1950) (*Le Monde* 1950)<sup>11</sup>, then Germany for the Review of Art in Germany (1950). The collaboration between Ricci and Vigo gave birth to *La Cava* which recalled the Group Espace's open-air experiment of 1954 in Boit<sup>12</sup>. The exhibition was the first expression of

10 Galerie Pierre, *Leonardo Ricci*, May 5, 1950; *Un Florentin expose à Paris des oeuvres d'une étrange indépendance*, V, May 28, 1950; C. Estienne, *Les Expositions*, in "L'Observateur", May 11, 1950.

11 The exhibition of Italian painters at the "Salon de Mai" meant a definite recognition of the importance and international value of the Italian art by France, as well as the importance of the cultural exchange between Italy and France for the European culture. On the Italian painters at the Salon de Mai: G. Grazzini, *Come oggi la Francia "italianizza". L'interesse c'è: bisogna aumentarlo*, in "La Nazione", June 13, 1950. Some materials about the "Salon de Mai" exhibitions Ricci took part in are collected in "Logbook" n. 1 (1938-1952), pp. 33, 34, CSR. In 1950 (from April 28 to May 12, 1950) Leonardo Ricci inaugurated his personal exhibition at the Galerie Pierre in Paris with a strong speech. The text of the conference was then published in Paris and in Italy with the title "Confessione", a sort of artistic manifesto dated April 3, 1950 (L. Ricci, *Confessione*, in "Architetti", n. 3, August, 1950, pp. 29-32). The article tells Ricci's existential intentions to investigate through both painting and architecture the truth of human existence: a "common denominator", as he defined it in several writings, to all beings, something all men could feel to be grounded on.

12 The exhibition set off also the collaboration between Ricci and André Bloc, founder of the Group Espace, which had arranged an open air exhibition in Boit in Provence the year before. That exhibition gave strength to the belief in restoring the role of the artist in modern life, as he could realize works of art and object that, to Ricci, could accompany human life becoming parts of their houses. On the exhibition *La Cava* L. Ricci, *Scritto-manifesto per la mostra "La Cava"*, in "Architettura: cronache e storia", n. 57, July, 1960, p. 188; F. Vigo, *Numero. La Cava. Mostra internazionale all'aperto di arti plastiche organizzata da "Numero" con la partecipazione dell'architetto Leonardo Ricci*, catalogue of the exhibition (Florence Monterinaldi, 24 September-30 November 1955), Florence 1955. As the Group Espace was founded by Bloc during Ricci's stay in Paris between 1948 and 1950, we can infer that Bloc's archi-sculptural work, and its forms as well, influenced Ricci's ones of the following years. On the Group Espace exhibition of 1954: C. Gireud, *La Revue Art d'aujourd'hui (1949-1954): Une vision sociale de l'art*, PhD diss., Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2011; *L'été 1954 à Boit Architecture Formes Couleur*, catalogue d'exposition, 25 juin – 26 septembre 2016, édition de la Réunion des musées nationaux-Grand Palais et Musée national Fernand Léger, Paris 2016. See also: A. Bloc, R. Bordier, *De la Sculpture à l'architecture*, Editions Aujourd'hui, Boulogne 1964; A. Bloc, C. Parent, *André Bloc: sculptures, habitacles*, Galerie Downtown, Paris 2003.



the synthesis of the arts Ricci pursued for all his life: it represented a meaningful moment of reflection for contemporary art about the relationship between art and the habitat, about that close interaction between architecture and figurative art, which were melting and working as complementary fundamental expressive elements of a whole. Andréé Bloc exhibited his art inside Ricci House and decided to install it in the panoramic point on the terrace of the Casa Studio, right where the dome of Brunelleschi was visible.

Lionello Venturi supported Ricci and Vigo's initiative, as he highlighted in a letter addressed to them:

"Dear friends, Fiamma Vigo and Leonardo Ricci, I have full faith in you and in your initiative. The unity of taste in painting, sculpture, architecture is today's most imperative need in the art world"<sup>13</sup>.

The exhibition was successful as the numerous Italian and foreign published articles demonstrated (among others: Colacicchi 1955; Dorfler 1955; *Der Standpunkt* 1958), it hosted sixty-six Italian and foreign artists in the streets of Monterinaldi, in Ricci's study, in the external walkways of the house and in the large steep garden along the slope. The importance of the company laid in setting up a dialogue between the work and the space in a place that was not originally thought as an exhibition hall, but the right environment to compare painting, sculpture, and architecture. The arts had remained separated in their research so far, while the exhibition was melting them: the works merged with stones, wood, perspectives on the house or landscape, glass and, in this way, they demonstrated their foundational role to human life. Ricci wrote on the catalogue of the exhibition that they wanted to prompt the collaboration among artists, architects, and craftsmen, to give them the possibility to exhibit their works and let the visitors buy the most suitable objects for their life. Ricci avoided the function of art as ornament to highlight its importance as an expression of life. Therefore, he moved from primitivism and abstract art to explore the informal, by representing matter in all its colors and textures and indulging in the act and strength of the gestural experience.

In 1958 Ricci approached the Gallery La Bussola, where Lionello Venturi again wrote about his work highlighting another fundamental aspect of Ricci's work: tension.

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13 *Giornali di bordo* – "Logbook" n. 2 (1952-1956), p. 76. CSR.

“Form and composition enhance the color to reach the expression, which encompasses all the visual elements, and goes beyond revealing a particular tension. Tension is the reason for the work, the vitality itself, the aspiration to investigate the world through painting<sup>14</sup>”.

The same tension Venturi described, that represented the soul of Ricci's informal painting, was what most characterized Ricci's paintings of this period and it indicated his “cultured” quality and the possibility of communicating with the other painters (Busignani 1959).

Moving from the exhibition success, which strengthened Ricci and Bloc's shared belief in restoring, in modern life, the role of the artist, Ricci decoded the need for the synthesis of the arts into the need for society to be completely refunded, from a political, social, economical, and educational perspective, he would have then translated into a revision of the educational program in the schools of Architecture as well. The change had to be prompted by the university, and he looked for it in the United States.

At the beginning of the Fifties Leonardo Ricci was already known on the international scene as a painter and for the *Flowers Covered Market* in Pescia, awarded at the Sao Paolo Architecture Biennale in Brazil in 1953, in Naples with the Naples Prize for Architecture in 1956 and published in Kidder Smith's *Italy Builds* in 1955 (Kidder Smith 1955, pp. 218-221). The United States also knew Leonardo Ricci thanks to Lionello Venturi, who was arranging, with Mrs. Elizabeth Mann Borgese<sup>15</sup>, the exhibition of Ricci's paintings at the Kleeman Gallery in New York (October 1960)<sup>16</sup>. To analyze Ricci's works Venturi translated it into the trial of solving a tension between Rationalism and Organicism and drew a comparison between the artistic and architectural movements which followed different

14 *Giornali di bordo* – “Logbook” n. 3 (1956-1959), p. 102, CSR.

15 Elizabeth Mann Borgese (1918-2002) was a German writer, naturalized in the United States, daughter of the German writer Thomas Mann. She left Germany with her family in 1933, after Hitler's ascent, moving first to Switzerland and then, in 1938, to the United States. She became an American citizen in 1941, and in 1983 she was also granted the Canadian citizenship. In 1939 she married the Italian anti-fascist and writer Giuseppe Antonio Borgese (1882-1952), 36 years older than she, with whom she had two daughters, Angelica and Dominica.

16 Letter from Elizabeth Mann Borgese to Dean Pietro Belluschi, February 24, 1959, typescript kept in MIT ASC. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. News Office (AC400 0001).

ideas about form conception: rational ways of shaping elements and organic ways of understanding it, because Ricci had been always fighting against the conception of an *a priori* form, widely spread in functionalist and rationalist works of architecture<sup>17</sup>. From the very beginning to the end of his professional and teaching activity Ricci had always been trying to define the shape of a building as result of the architectural spatial research, analyzing the natural landscape, the residents' needs starting from their human daily acts and activities, needs and from the general environmental laws.

Leonardo Ricci started from his master Giovanni Michelucci's teaching<sup>18</sup> and from that tension to design new asymmetrical, dynamic, and fluid spaces, since his early projects, aiming at building spaces able to connect people's lives, movements, and human acts, which were inevitably dynamic and fast-moving.

Tension was also a feature of Ricci's character, of his attitude towards architecture, but it effectively represented the expression of his continuous intention to design new spaces to encourage the interaction and new moments of communication among people. It was obviously characterized by the difficulty to merge opposite views of the architect and his constant hard relationship with his research itself. To Ricci, that tension was the instrument to reveal all the visual elements and the symbol of the necessary vitality and dynamism the architectural project needed to grow and be useful, successful.

### *Urban and Visual Design*

Ricci's American transfer, started with lectures and conferences, allowed Ricci to enrich his research on the synthesis of the arts with

17 Venturi again presented Ricci as a painter seeking the synthesis among the arts, more in detail between Constructivism (Cubism and Mondrian) and Organicism (Van Gogh and Pollock) and as an architect feeling the tension between Rationalism and Organicism to find the correct synthesis through shape and composition to reach the correct expression (Venturi 1958).

18 Ricci addressed his research towards the refusal of a predetermined form, both in his paintings and in his buildings, following his master's teaching, Giovanni Michelucci, whose feeling was that the functional needs of rationalist architecture could affect the potentialities of new spaces and new cities to be designed after the end of the second world war.

the new founded disciplines of Visual and Urban Design that influenced his work for the projects for communities and for new integrated towns, outlining a turning phase in which all the references he followed and the influences he received for his work in Italy during and after his transfer are traceable. Ricci's motivation to begin his American transfer were not only educational, but also political, cultural, sociological, and technological.

In the Fifties and Sixties Italian urban planning regarded the United States with distrust, due to the substantial difference in scale between the Italian and US development phenomena. The United States had to face the problems of territorial organization on a large scale much earlier than Europe, and the American culture, with its capitalist economic system, had to face development problems deriving from the application of policies aimed at favoring such a system (Rodwin 1961).

Being a federal country, the great power of local autonomies in the United States encouraged planning on different levels, from the most detailed of the urban territorial dimension to the general national and state level. Bottom-up planning was thus facilitated to devise general planning outlines to achieve integration of local frameworks within the general system. The capitalist system was also governed by the need to control development on the base of binding programs. At Harvard and at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.), a plenty of studies on the metropolitan city were conducted in the Fifties and Sixties<sup>19</sup>. All the disciplines involved in planning were conducting interdisciplinary research projects based on the transformations of the human environment as in many major

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19 Some of the most important publications of the JCUS in the Sixties were: K. Lynch, *The Image of the City*, Technon Press and Harvard University Press, Cambridge-MA 1960; L. Rodwin, *Housing and Economic Progress*, MIT Press, Cambridge-MA 1961; S. B. Werner, *Streetcar Suburbs*, Harvard and MIT Press, Cambridge-MA 1962; N. Glazer and D. P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, MIT Press, Cambridge-MA 1963; O. Handlin, J. E. Burchard, *The Historian and the City*, MIT Press, Cambridge-MA 1963; R. Conant, *The Library and the City*, MIT Press, Cambridge-MA 1963; C. Abrams, *Man's Struggle for Shelter in an Urbanizing World*, MIT Press, Cambridge-MA 1964; J. Friedland, W. Alonso, *Regional Development and Planning*, MIT Press, Cambridge-MA 1964; B. J. Frieden, *The Future of Old Neighborhoods*, MIT Press, Cambridge-MA 1964; K. Lynch, D. Appleyard, J. R. Meyer, *The View from the Road*, MIT Press, Cambridge-MA 1965.

American universities. The research project had to refer to a global context and had to provide new principles, theories, methods, and tools in various disciplinary fields.

At the end of the Fifties Leonardo Ricci was attracted by that kind of new research aimed at determining the criteria for the objective evaluation of the factors generating urban form and at the elaboration of new models of spatial organization in terms of structure and form, in function of morphological aspects of territorial structures, based on the existing relationships between the organizational types and the general objectives of the communities living in them.

Ricci's teaching reform aims precisely arose when he became visiting professor at M.I.T. (1959-1960), Pennsylvania State University (P.S.U.) (1965-1969), University of Florida (U.F.) (1968-1972), and Kentucky University (1972-1980s). Each teaching experience marked a precise exchange moment with the U.S.A., which influenced his idea of architecture as social science and drove the evolution of his architectural research towards an interdisciplinary research in Urban Design.

At M.I.T.<sup>20</sup>, from 1957, Dean Pietro Belluschi had tried to improve the educational standards to face the expansion of the profession of the architect due to the economic growth and the technological change and to create a new group of scholars composed of architects, engineers, critics, and artists to find new architectural solutions for the crisis of modern architecture based on social, economic, physical, and

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20 The M.I.T. had a pioneering role in the history of education in architecture and urban planning since 1933, but, before M.I.T., Harvard University established the first degree program in 1929. A five-years course leading to the degree of Architecture in City Planning was established in the School of Architecture at M.I.T. in 1933, and two years later a graduate program leading to the degree of Master in City Planning was added. The course in City Planning at M.I.T. was the second oldest in the country and had the longest record of continuous operation of any school. M.I.T. was the first school in the United States to set up the first academic course in Architecture and the high level of the school was the result of a complex process of rethinking the graduate and undergraduate programs which started in 1954 with Belluschi, who appointed a Committee on Undergraduate Planning Education to review the justification for the undergraduate course in planning, primarily because of the small enrollment of students in those years. At M.I.T. a dynamic educational program was maintained as well as an intense research activity: the premise of all the research projects lied in the new basic visual forms, concepts, scientific tools, and techniques (Adams, Hodge 1965; Vale 2008).

structural studies. At the end of 1957, M.I.T. had established its Center for Urban and Regional Studies, focusing its research activity on the physical environment of city and region. The Center's concern was on the metropolis as a worldwide phenomenon and on its inadequacies and confusions that affected human life in the city. The same chaos Ricci felt in Italy was the same that affected American cities and Pietro Belluschi well expressed the relevant problems and possible solutions in *The Physical Environment of City and Region. The Proposed Focus of the Center for Urban and Regional Studies* dated September 20, 1957<sup>21</sup>.

Thanks to his teaching experience at M.I.T., Ricci finished his successful book *Anonymous (XX century)* (1962) he had begun in 1957, but had not finished in 1959, the year of his summons at M.I.T. It originated from his lectures' titles enriched by his students' observations, becoming a written example of "open work": Ricci investigated with his students the interrelation or integration among architecture, painting, and sculpture. In the Spring term Ricci gave four lectures a month, each divided into two parts: Ricci's speeches last one hour and a half and were followed by a discussion session of the same duration, as he was used to do with his students in Florence.

Concerning the research on Urban and Visual design, in Cambridge Ricci acquired the Harvard-M.I.T. Joint Center for Urban Studies' (JCUS) research aims and was irreversibly influenced by that "radical visual academia" headed by Kevin Lynch and György Kepes that later involved other Italian scholars as Pier Luigi Nervi, Gillo Dorfles, Ernesto Nathan Rogers and that conceived the city as a collective work of art to be designed according to the new founded Urban Design's principles of legibility and imageability (Aviles 2018).

More in detail, for what concerns Urban Design, Leonardo Ricci worked at M.I.T. in the foundation year of the JCUS, a revolutionary research center in which Belluschi's intentions expressed in his *Proposed Focus of the Center for Urban and Regional Studies* were realized. In his writing Belluschi anticipated the idea of a joint training and research program to be conducted by the Harvard Law School and the Department of City and Regional Planning of M.I.T. with

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21 P. Belluschi, *The Physical Environment of City and Region. The Proposed Focus of the Center for Urban and Regional Studies*, September 20, 1957. MIT ASC, AC400, box 6, folder 1.

the collaboration of the Center for International Studies (M.I.T.). The collaboration between M.I.T. and Harvard, also strengthened by a two-term sequence in Housing offered jointly by both universities, as it happened for further teachings as Administration, brought to the institution of the Harvard-M.I.T. JCUS.

The JCUS suggested a new bold approach to urban planning including the use of the network and information theory pioneered at M.I.T. in Mathematics, Physics, and Electrical Engineering. M.I.T. wanted to give a special emphasis in its research to the technological factors affecting the form of the city and bring possible innovations in transportation, patterns of growth or land use and future changes resulting from the development of automatic processes. In the joint release of Harvard and M.I.T. the problems of initial interest to the Joint Center were listed: technological innovation and the city and region, comparative analysis of cities – historical as well as contemporary – applications of research strategies to comprehensive transportation problems, urban growth and structure, including the special problems of interdependence of activities in urban areas, urban and regional problems in developing countries, methods of public and private control over urban change, social values and the community, Urban Design, decision-making and the planning process in metropolitan communities<sup>22</sup>. In the field of Urban Design, Kevin Lynch's *Image of the City* (Lynch 1960), published by the Technology Press and the Harvard University Press, was the first book of the Joint Center Series and one of the pioneering texts of the discipline, which considered the town as a collective work of art. In the United States plural Urban Design – or plural urbanism – opposed to unitary Urban Design and did not consist neither in urban planning nor in architecture. The book by Brent D. Ryan titled *The Largest Art. A Measured Manifesto for a Plural Urbanism*<sup>23</sup> deals with Urban

22 *Joint Release Harvard-M.I.T. Joint Center for Urban Studies*, March 4, 1959. MIT ASC, AC0069\_195903\_009\_0001, box 1.

23 Brent D. Ryan was strongly influenced by Kevin Lynch's thought and especially by his books *The Image of the City* and *Good City Form*. Therefore, it seemed to him that all manifestoes had been written except for the disruptive one referring to Lynch's work. On the contrary, the importance of writing a "measured manifesto", as his book's subtitle anticipated, lied in the need to write one without formulating a formal declaration of Urban Design, but rather in writing a call for recognition of independence that has always existed,

Design as the largest among the building arts since it involves the largest plural entity: the city. In plural urbanism<sup>24</sup> the concept of plurality is contained, which affected all dimensions of the discipline and that enabled it to become the largest and independent of the other building arts as Architecture, Landscape, Sculpture, and Land Art. This vision is extremely consistent with Leonardo Ricci's one on the need to refund the society starting from the synthesis of the arts, and from a new theoretical and practical understanding of Urban Design by investigating its relationship to urban space and urban agents, conceiving it as a practice that accepts all those elements and forces of cities that are beyond the designers' direct control, and which become part of the Urban Design project as well.

Furthermore, Lynch's studies attempted to analyze the citizens' images of the metropolitan region and tried to determine how environments at the metropolitan scale could be given visual shape and form. The metropolitan image was studied in terms of its nature, its function, and how it could be clarified and strengthened. This work on the visual form of the metropolis and on the aesthetic of the highway was an outgrowth of the research Lynch completed for the book and it was published in the Joint Center Series some years later, in 1965, with the title *The View from the Road* (Appleyard, Lynch, Meyer 1965).

In the same years, In Italy, the confusion and the complexity of the events that were shaping the cities after the Second World War allow us to read the birth of a movement that will lead to the formation of the discipline of Urban Design as well. It was a long and difficult process that saw the heated debate on the construction of new neighborhoods, which were going to form parts of the city<sup>25</sup>.

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with its own five dimensions and three qualities of change, incompleteness, and flexible fidelity (Ryan 2017).

- 24 Because of its "plurality", in the book the term "Urban Design" is interchangeable with "urbanism".
- 25 The Italian debate began in the moment of transition from the concept of city intended as a set of buildings or neighborhoods and that of city as a system. This last topic particularly interested a group of "architects-urban planners", as those who began, in parallel with their research in the architectural or urban field, to study in the field of Urban Design were defined. In Italy, this term was coined, on the one hand, to find a term for the field of research common to architects of the 1950s and 1960s, and, on the other, to differentiate the field of Urban Design from that of Architecture and Urban

In Italy 1963 is the date of the birth of Urban Design when a group of scholars was formed around the figure of Ludovico Quaroni who did not teach urban planning, but “Urban Design”<sup>26</sup> until the early Seventies. After what is considered, even by Quaroni himself, the first text of urban planning by Giuseppe Samonà: *L’Urbanistica e l’avvenire delle città* (Samonà 1959), the first Italian texts that dealt with the “urban design project” were published: *Origini e sviluppo della città moderna* by Carlo Aymonino (Aymonino 1965), *L’Architettura della città* by Aldo Rossi (Rossi 1966), *La Torre di Babele* by Ludovico Quaroni (Quaroni 1967). Unlike the cited American texts, in Italy the urban project was still understood as a design of the city through architecture<sup>27</sup>.

There will be no Urban Design courses in Italian universities until 1985<sup>28</sup>, although the discipline had already recognition by the academy: *Casabella*, *Lotus* and *Controspazio* had begun to play a fundamental role in the treatment of Urban Design as well by publishing the US theories<sup>29</sup>.

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Planning, two different disciplines, separate from the first one. Therefore, also in Italy a “third way” of Urban Design was sought and the group of “architects-urban planners”, Urban Designers, is the reference one to understand the development of Urban Design in Italy (Ferrari 2005).

- 26 The courses in architectural composition II held by Saul Greco and subsequently by Quaroni and Aymonino form that generation of architects active in the Seventies who reacted to the new teachers by challenging the academy in the figure of Saverio Muratori. (Casabella 1961).
- 27 In Italy, for a long time, the business centers opened the discussion about the definition of an urban form that could hold the development of the city-region. The related analysis were centered on the growth of the city and its control through design: it could imply a growth by parts, where each part could have worked as a development and growth node. (Ferrari 2005, p. 64).
- 28 The editorial change of *Casabella* and the new American (and French) theories blocked the development of an Italian urban theory and the activities of the Centro Studi Casabella, causing the individual development of the urban theories by Rossi, Quaroni, Tentori, Aymonino and others. Rossi, Quaroni, and Aymonino were the authors of the already cited fundamental texts of urban theory, all published from 1965 to 1968 giving birth to all the subsequent studies on the city.
- 29 *Lotus* and *Controspazio* would have filled the void left by *Casabella* after the publication of Kevin Lynch’s work, when in Italy there was a period of absence of significant comments on the new American theories. *Architettura*, Bruno Zevi’s magazine, also published an article by Filiberto Menna on *The Urban Poetics of Lynch and the Psychology of Vision* (Menna 1965). In 1965 and, a year later, *Edilizia Moderna*, directed by Vittorio Gregotti, published

For what concerns Visual Design, Ricci knew Kepes' work before leaving to M.I.T. and succeeded in proposing the same approach to architectural composition and urban planning to his students in Florence. In October 1959 Ricci and Giovanni Klaus Koenig wrote "Sull'insegnamento della plastica ornamentale nelle facoltà di architettura", a report concerning the teaching of plastic formativity aimed at the renewal of the program of the course *Plastica Ornamentale* into Visual Design<sup>30</sup>. Indeed, Kepes' Visual Design course developed a vigorous program in the field of representational drawing: materials and space were manipulated in pursuit of aesthetic meanings free of the functional and technological pressures that could pre-empt the designer's thinking<sup>31</sup>. The students worked in a studio equipped with special tools and devices for light control and photography to develop their artistic skills, experimenting materials and their properties, *Gestalt* principles, and different artistic techniques. On this "studio work" Ricci grounded his belief on morphological generations in architecture avoiding *a priori* forms, already expressed in the Informal in painting. The influences among all the arts in the design process, combined with the study of the History of Art and Architecture gave birth to a new methodological approach to Urban Design, while Lynch's course on the Form of the City intro-

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Lynch and Appleyard's theses on the psychology of applied urban perception in Boston, for a research program at M.I.T. and on the text entitled *The View from the Road*, in which Lynch described new tools of Urban Design starting from the driver's point of view. (Appleyard, Lynch, Meyer 1965).

- 30 "Sull'insegnamento della plastica ornamentale nelle facoltà di architettura" ["On the teaching of plastic formativity in the courses of architecture"] dated October 16, 1959, typescript, CSR.
- 31 Pietro Belluschi's deanship ended in 1965 and, a couple of years later, in 1967, György Kepes founded at M.I.T. the Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS) by collecting a lot of work done by the Harvard-M.I.T. Joint Center for Urban Studies. Kepes arrived in the Visual Department of the Graduate Program at M.I.T. in 1946 and between 1947 and 1956 he concentrated on the production of his publication *The New Landscape in Art and Science*, largely written in 1952 under the form of an encyclopedic constellation of images describing the aesthetic qualities of scientific findings, as well as displaying the scientific origins of other aesthetic manifestations. To deepen Kepes' work: G. Kepes, *The New Landscape in Art and Science*, in "Art in America", n. 43, 1955, pp. 34-39; G. Kepes, *The New Landscape in Art and Science*, Theobald, Chicago 1967. See also: G. Kepes, *The Language of Vision*, Paul Theobald, Chicago 1951 and G. Kepes (ed.), *Education of Vision*, Braziller, New York 1965.

duced aesthetic problems: spatial relations and perceptual elements were analyzed through group discussions and special project work.

Ricci exported his studies in Urban Design at the P.S.U., the U.F., and in Florence. At P.S.U. he carried out applied research in Visual and Urban Design in the Sixties to elaborate the synopia of the *City of the Earth*: a urban model able to restore the dialectic between the collectivity and the individual aiming at rebuilding a continuous city for a unique social body: *The City of the Earth*, as Ricci titled his second unpublished book which derived from the *Anonymous*<sup>32</sup>. The seven polymateric models of the Integrated City developed in Pennsylvania (1965-1968) and the Miami Model Cities Plan (1968) gave evidence of his theoretical and applied research on the “open work” and allowed Ricci to write *The City of the Earth*, which described in detail the synopia of the integrated city (Masini 2019; Cattabriga 2021, pp. 107-139).

### *Teaching Reform Aims*

Ricci’s contribution in Post-war America foresaw the processing of unknown Urban Design projects and to the foundation of the Urban Design course and Studio at the U.F. as new models of collective and anonymous working experiences that would have led to a refunding of the teaching and design methods.

Those ideas were affected by the 1968 revolt Ricci actively lived both in Italy and in the U.S.A. In line with his previous studies on the theme of the community, the research in the U.S.A. and the 1968 revolt spreading in both countries supported his political, cultural, educational, and social belief in the necessity to actuate a decentralization of powers, against capitalist views which did not let the architects develop appropriate projects to improve the metropolitan human life. During the revolt Ricci and Umberto Eco wrote the *Ricci-Eco Motion*, an important document that welcomed the students’ requests that established the importance of the General Assembly as an institutional place where students and teachers, through fair

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32 The City of the Earth is how Ricci translated into English *Città della Terra*, his model for the future city, recalling the title of his unpublished typescript *Città della Terra. Disegno per una urbanistica non alienata*, kept in CSR.

vote, could discuss the problems and possible solutions establishing a democratic and balanced system. The motion recognized the faculty as an “open place” where all the educational categories – researchers, scholars, professors, assistants, and students – could develop the exchange of ideas. Fair vote and the decentralization of powers were the essential tools to change the future not only of the faculty but of the whole society, to establish a democratic and balanced system<sup>33</sup>.

Indeed, to Ricci, despite being the appointed figures, architects and architecture students could not work together and apply their research to find new flexible living conditions for everyone, but they were rather forced to work separately with obsolete rules he wanted to change with the new educational program he wrote during his deanship at the faculty of architecture of Florence (1971-1973). In that program (“Appunti per un programma”<sup>34</sup>) Leonardo Ricci systematized society and education, possible interventions and requests from students, professors, workers, and government forces. He thought of a total reorganization of the Italian society starting from education, of a systematization of the existing forces for the mass society instead of the bourgeois one. The system actors were professors, students, and assistants whose ideas had to concur to the final asset of the faculty. Ricci’s purpose identified new institutional roles as three reference figures to assist the dean (one professor for the external political issue, one for the internal, and one for the programs), mixed commissions of students, assistants, and professors to face each single problem by using all the existing forces. The system, if common goals were identified, was to be applied to all universities that should cooperate for the correct functioning of the society, into a further general system able to solve the political, cultural, and educational situation. In this way also the interdisciplinary research was fostered with new figures and applied research methods, for which Ricci asked for new laboratories and tools as he saw at M.I.T. and asked at U.F..

33 The *Ricci-Eco Motion* was signed on March 20, 1968, some weeks before the end of the protest, in Florence. The text of the *Ricci-Eco Motion* was published in: G. Bartolozzi, *Nuovi Modelli Urbani*, Quodlibet, Macerata 2013, p. 16.

34 The typescript of the program is kept in CSR.

Thanks to the openness to American studies, that kind of structured program enhanced Ricci's wider ideal of a new decentralized society which could allow architecture students and teachers to work together and realize the *City of the Earth*. Ricci's support for the 1968 revolt, his strong conviction on the importance of decentralization and of the university as an institution – possible herald of the social change that architecture should have brought about in the following years – and his intention to merge architecture and urban planning then influenced the vision of the Radicals in Italy, who were students of the faculty of architecture of Florence attending Ricci's Urban Design courses and whose names appear among the designers of some analyzed polymeric models for the urban macrostructures. Ricci's lesson especially influenced the radical criticisms of the design of modern architecture by Archizoom and Superstudio, founded by students of Ricci and Savioli's courses in contact with Claudio Greppi, a student of the faculty of Architecture of Florence and militant of the Florentine group of the "working class", who would have elaborated their own visions of architecture within the debate on the relationship between capitalism and architecture and on the phenomenon of massification<sup>35</sup>.

The refunded academic system could have helped the design of the synopia of the *City of the Earth*, a plural urbanism project which showed that the placing of an event in time and in space, deriving from Einstein's revolutionary theory, was possible and able to change the world of the arts. Ricci's synopia effectively was embodying an open and unfinished, temporalized and constantly changing design, and could be maybe considered an Italian project of plural Urban Design, the largest of the arts as Brent Ryan would define it<sup>36</sup>.

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- 35 At the beginning of the Seventies, the "Radicals" and the studies on the "integrated city" were promoted thanks to the presence of Giovanni Klaus Koenig in the editorial staff of *Casabella*, who published the projects of the Florentine groups Archizoom, Superstudio, and Zzigurat. At the same time some degree theses coordinated by Ricci and Savioli were published by *Controspazio*, while Kenneth Frampton's research on the urban dimension of architecture appeared on *Casabella* with the title *Appunti sulle teorie della città* (Frampton 1972) as well as Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown's theories on the *Percezione trasversale*, Rob Krier's *Permanenza della forma*, and Peter Eisenman's *Notes on Conceptual Architecture: towards a Definition* (Venturi, Scott Brown 1973; Krier 1973).
- 36 In this concept the sixth invariant of architecture theorized by Bruno Zevi consisted. He called it "temporality of space" and it is explained in the sixth

*"Open Work" in Architecture: the City as a Collective Work of Art*

The idea of "Open Work" is central to explain Leonardo Ricci's work and unifies the previous vectors premises and effects, because it defines the not concluded character of the work of art which avoided the respect of any canon or causal relation. In Ricci's work the "openness" was strongly connected with the "space-time" dimension and with the relational phenomenology philosophical assumptions<sup>37</sup>: the work is "open" and can be read and lived out of any prescription on the "right way" to see, as translation of a synthesis among the building arts, it can be done by the cooperation of students, professors, interdisciplinary experts, administrators and future inhabitants reaching the correct anonymous design dimension without hierarchical roles, and is therefore the design of a collective work of art, embracing flexibility, an essential instance for a proper design able to host the life-flow.

Ricci's ideal of "anonymous architecture" was consistent with the concept of "open work in architecture" Bruno Zevi also analyzed in 1962 in an article titled *La poetica dell' "opera aperta" in architettura* (Zevi 1962). Indeed, Ricci and Zevi shared the idea of a spatial architectural research derived from the conception of architecture

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chapter of B. Zevi, *Il Linguaggio Moderno dell'Architettura. Guida al codice anticlassico*, Einaudi, Torino 1973, pp. 51-56.

- 37 Ricci explained the importance of the relational value of architecture moving from the existential instance, referring to Enzo Paci's studies on the matter that the architect quoted in the *Introduction to the Urban Planning II and Elements of Composition courses* (typescript kept in CSR). Paci's interest in contemporary architecture had given rise, since the mid-1950s, to original reflections contained in numerous essays which date back to the years in which Paci defined his relational thinking that, at the end of the 1950s, took on the connotation of what was defined his "relational phenomenology". On Paci's relational phenomenology: E. Paci, *Il cuore della città*, in "Casabella-continuità", n. 202, August-September 1954, pp. vii-x; *Problematica dell'architettura contemporanea*, in "Casabella-continuità", n. 209, January-February 1956, p. 4146 (republished with the title *Sull'architettura contemporanea, L'architettura e il mondo della vita*, in "Casabella-continuità", n. 217, 1957); *Continuità e coerenza della BBPR*, in "Zodiac", n. 4, April 1959, pp. 82-115; *Wright e lo "spazio vissuto"*, in "Casabella-continuità", n. 227, May 1959, pp. 9-10; *La crisi della cultura e la fenomenologia dell'architettura contemporanea*, in "La Casa", n. 6, 1960 (then republished with the title *Fenomenologia e architettura contemporanea*); E. Paci, *Relazioni e significati*, Vol. III, Lampugnani Nigri, Milano 1966.

as democratic device and the reasons for the theoretical affinity between them lied in the notion of “open work”.

Before the 1968 revolt Ricci had asked Umberto Eco, author of the book *Opera Aperta* [“Open Work”] (Eco 1962) to give some lectures to his students of the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Florence in 1965-1966. In those years Ricci was Professor of Elements of Architectural Composition and Urban Design (1964-1965), Director of the Town Planning Institute (since 1965) and Professor of Town Planning (1966-1970). In Ricci’s courses important social themes were discussed with the students and, after the flood that destroyed Florence in 1966, his course was dedicated to the territorial planning of a continuous city in the Arno Valley by means of an interdisciplinary study. In those years Ricci’s transfer to the U.S.A. was in its central phase and the disciplines of Urban and Visual Design with the relevant teaching methods were permeating Ricci’s teaching as well. Ricci thought that Eco’s course on Visual Communication he was holding in Florence (1966-1969) could offer further reflections on the generation of form in architecture. The collaboration between Ricci and Eco suggests the importance of the investigation into the relationship between Architecture and Semiology, the latter understood as a science that studies all phenomena of culture as systems of signs or culture as communication. Architecture – in its various expressions such as design, architectural planning, Urban Design, scenographic and exhibition construction – can therefore be considered, unlike other cultural phenomena, as the concrete realization of culture and as a constructed three-dimensional reality of associated life, endowed with particular functions. The lectures’ theme of analysis was the connection between object, sign, and function, which revolved the questions about how architectural objects communicate or do not communicate, what they communicate and whether or not they were conceived to communicate<sup>38</sup>.

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38 The connection between object, sign and function was dealt in the previous years in C. Brandi, *Eliante o Dell’Architettura*, Einaudi, Torino 1956; C. Brandi, *Segno e Immagine*, Il Saggiatore, Milano: 1960; G. Dorfles, *Simbolo, comunicazione, consumo*, Einaudi, Torino 1962; G. K. Koenig, *Analisi del linguaggio architettonico*, Libreria Ed. Fiorentina, Firenze 1964; C. Brandi, *Struttura e Architettura*, Einaudi, Torino: 1968; U. Eco, *La struttura assente. La ricerca semiotica e il metodo strutturale*, Bompiani, Milano 1968.

Eco's notes for the lectures given to Ricci's students in Florence gave birth to his crucial text *La struttura assente. La ricerca semiologica e il metodo strutturale* (1968), firstly titled *Appunti per una semiologia delle comunicazioni visive* and dedicated to Leonardo Ricci. The book was released in 1968 and immediately entered the heart of the debate on Structuralism – the theory that most dominated the cultural climate of those years and that seemed (to some) to deliver the sense, knowledge, culture to new metaphysical, abstract, and indifferent destinies to the specificities of history.

As Eco himself declared in the introduction to his book, most of the research contained in the volume had been elaborated during three courses carried out in the Faculties of Architecture, in Milan, São Paulo, and Florence. The book was inspired and much owed to the students of architecture, because in them the author found the constant concern of “anchoring the universe of things to be communicated to the universe of things to be modified” (Eco 1968, p. 43).

One of the sectors in which Semiology is most challenged by the reality on which it tries to take hold is that of architecture (Eco 1968, p. 283).

With these words Eco expressed the difficulty of specifying what “code” meant in architecture since a code was usually made up of a set of signs, among which an infinite set of relationships could be established, which in turn could generate infinite messages as those principles ruling megastructures did according to the notion of continuous and infinite growth. Leonardo Ricci pursued the idea to avoid codifications that put already elaborate solutions into shape and did not consider the principles of formativity and integrativity of the city<sup>39</sup> he had studied in those years at PSU. That was a grounding reflection for Leonardo Ricci and for the “the form-act” theory opposing to an *a priori* shaping of architecture.

According to Eco, typologies qualified architecture intended as service, but this idea of architecture was not useful to change history and society, but only a system of rules to give society what it needed.

39 Ricci stated that idea in several writings as *Ricerche per una urbanistica non alienata* [“Research for a non-alienated urban planning”], *The Future of Cities and Prolusione al corso di Urbanistica II e and Elementi di Composizione* [“Forward to the Course of Urban Planning II and Elements of Composition”], all kept in CSR.

This architecture was not art, activated by men of culture anticipating new structures and social instances, but an architecture serving society, even not able to change it (Eco 1968, p. 329).

Eco's thought, applied to the contestation period of 1968, forbids to read architecture as a mirroring device for the society, but rather as a contestation tool bearer of change. Any scheme or form previously arranged could not be considered by Eco and Ricci, who were taking part in the revolt on the students' side: they wanted to study open forms to satisfy past, present, and future needs<sup>40</sup>. To Eco architecture as an art would have not only suggested a way of living, but also its possible innovations and radical changes, assuming the risks of all the possible implications<sup>41</sup>. The architect could have accepted the social rules and worked at their service, elaborated, and imposed new models of habitat for the same society, or re-designed the existing systems on a new technologically advanced and performing structure. The first attitude was passive against society, the third one was fearful and prudent, while the second one implied the conception of architecture as an art, for which the architect was a producer of history and change. The code to be used to fulfill this second attitude had to be renewed: designers had the words, but they had to formulate a new grammar, a new syntax. They could not do this alone, but with the help of Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, Political Sciences, Economics and all the sciences dealing with human life. Only those disciplines could give architecture the right rules, because other (human) codes had to be considered, architecture could have not changed society with the help of its only rules, they were not enough<sup>42</sup>. Architecture's difficulty to be translated into

40 On the human instinct to revolt against superimposed models and schemes from an anthropological perspective: D. Morris, *La scimmia nuda*, Bompiani, Milano: 1968.

41 Architecture for the mass could have referred to ancient models (persuasive power of architecture), imposed models (psychagogic power of architecture), it could be experienced without any attention, it could have contained horrible meanings not even thought by the designer, it could have forced the inhabitants into unloved spaces or allowed them to a total flexibility. Finally, it could have been forgotten in its obsolescence or inserted in the circuit of goods (Eco 1968, pp. 331-335).

42 Language, painting, music could count on their rules, but architecture should have regulated a system of forms based on needs it did not have any power on. Therefore, the architect could have been considered the last humanistic

a code was related to the continuous changing reality of the cities and of the society that lived them, in a constant recall of history and with a narrow connection between signifier and meaning.

This idea of openness of the city, an open-ended entity was described in *Opera Aperta*, published in 1962 as the first edition of *Anonymous (XX century)*, developing the theme of the XII International Conference of Philosophy titled The Problem of the Open Work (1958). Eco introduced the problem in poetry, psychology, theory of information, music, art, and architecture and their common issue concerning the reaction to the new contemporary sensitivity born from new mathematical, physical, psychological, and scientific discoveries.

The focus on the artistic reaction and the investigation on the moments when contemporary art tried to face disorder demonstrated the existence of a new positive attitude towards the breaking of the rules to conceive form. The notion of openness was based on the interactive relationship between the inputs, the art producer, and the work of art-receiver's world, both at the level of intelligence and perception, in a transaction moment between the act of perceiving knowing intellectually that brought to education (Eco 1962, p. 132). That moment inevitably affected the fruition of the work of art as well.

Leonardo Ricci lived that new attitude both in painting and in architecture, but most of all the difficult condition of the architect in the contemporary world of the Sixties Umberto Eco dealt with in *Opera Aperta*. Ricci lived and suffered this condition and tried to explain it widely in his book *Anonymous (XX century)* from an existential point of view. If in his first book he declared a general pessimistic view about the architect's possibility to solve the urban crisis of the time but did not avoid applying the solution he had in his mind, leaving the theory of the *City of the Earth* as a testament in the last chapter<sup>43</sup>, he defined its design and possible social implications and effects in his second unpublished book, born from his American transfer.

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figure of the contemporary time: he had to think of the collectivity in a total dimension as a sociologist, anthropologist, politician, or economist.

43 L. Ricci, *A Testament*, in *Anonymous (XX century)*, cit., pp. 247-254; B. Zevi, *Il testamento di un architetto*, in "L'Espresso", April 22, 1962.

Therefore, the “open work” succeeds in describing Ricci’s production from its existential roots to its megastructural aims, since it avoids classifications and the boundaries typical of definitions: it is open to different interpretations both in architecture and in painting. The best way to look at Ricci’s projects is through the parameter of “openness”, as he would have wanted. The work is “open” and can be read and lived out of any prescription, as Ricci’s projects are open, they welcome flexibility since, on one hand, they host the life-flow changes, and, on the other hand, architecture is constantly changed by human experience.

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