

Events

Disegno, Memoria, Progetto

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As part of the events for the 210th anniversary of the foundation of the University of Palermo, on December 2, 2016, the exhibition *Disegno, Memoria, Progetto* was inaugurated, in which the graphic and multimedia elaborations of the courses and researches of the Drawing area of the Department of Architecture of Palermo were shown. The event, curated by Vincenza Garofalo and Francesco Maggio with the scientific responsibility of Nunzio Marsiglia, has been elegantly set up at the exhibition hall of the former Faculty of Architecture in Viale delle Scienze. The inauguration of the exhibition was an occasion for a common reflection, which, after institutional greetings, provided for an introductory speech by Nunzio Marsiglia, followed by the views of the president of UID Vito Cardone, Francesca Fatta and me.

The exhibition—as Nunzio Marsiglia recalled in his introductory speech—documented the ways and forms in which, as part of their didactic activity, a group of faculty members in the Representation area declined discipline in its diverse and complex facets within the Department of Architecture of Palermo. Exposed works are produced in the course of a thesis, a doctoral degree, or even just as

a course practice, and are characterized not only by the high quality of the research carried out, but also by the variety of themes faced and the expressive property of the media used. They range from traditional plates, monitor animations to video clips.

In the graduation thesis proposed by Fabrizio Agnello, complex historical architectures such as the Ajutamicristo palace, the Palatine Chapel or the Cathedral are investigated, founding each reflection on documentary data and on rigorous surveys as substantive basis for carrying out research and exercising critical acumen, ending up to the original configurations of the monuments investigated through a 'graphic reflection' on their constructive events, always using an appropriate and effective graphic language. Of great interest is the extract from the PhD thesis by the young scholar Mirco Cannella on the analysis of the Palatine Chapel. In the other two theses, the applications in the BIM environment and the parametric modeling with the Grasshopper plugin are investigated with methodological clarity.

The theses curated by Francesco Maggio, many of which, with the collaboration of Starlight Vattano, relate

to unbuilt, demolished or strongly modified architectures, largely related to ongoing research on the little-known activity of female architects during the twentieth century. Starting from a scrupulous attention to archive documents, sometimes rare and obscure, using three-dimensional modeling, architectures are reconstructed with philological exactness and presented with elegant monochrome renders where the expressive matrix combines with conscious choices of graphic abstraction as it can be especially appreciated in the work dedicated to the house in Cefalù by Luciana Natoli. A similar section consisting of elegant graphical surveys, made with 'ruler and square', drawn by students of the first year of the Laboratorio di disegno e rilievo dell'architettura held by Francesco Maggio in the Master Degree course in Architecture accompanied these works.

The degree theses proposed by Nunzio Marsiglia show a series of analytical drawing applications that, starting in some cases from surveys, in other ones from project drawings or the iconographic heritage produced by *Grand Tour* travelers, propose unpublished readings of existing or unbuilt works. Particularly remarkable are

Fig. 1. The Great Coffee of Giuseppe Damiani Almeyda, rendering of the interior space.
Degree thesis by G. Di Bartolo, supervisor prof. F. Avella.

Fig. 2. Reconstruction of the natural lighting of the Palatine Chapel before the 16th century.
PhD thesis by M. Cannella, tutor prof. F. Agnello.



the elaborations of Giuseppe Caronia's unbuilt project for the Faculty of Architecture in Palermo or the conjectural reconstruction of the Garden of Ventimiglia in Castelbuono, which is no longer recognizable.

In the works proposed by Fabrizio Avella, in addition to a series of careful three-dimensional reconstructions of architectures, objects of common use and complex geometric systems, some unbuilt architectures by Giuseppe Damiani Almeyda are explored and reconstructed with philological attention starting from the analytical study of original drawings and presented through complex images that often perform the fusion of elegant photorealistic views and sketch drawings, wisely mixing graphic abstraction and rendering. A refined elaboration of the *Ginnasio dell'Orto Botanico di Palermo* is the result of a collaboration with Erasmus students. The student's elaborates proposed by Francesco Di Paola clearly explore the geometric structures of contemporary architectures, using the different methods of representation or, in the case of a degree thesis, parametric modeling. Other studies include the digital survey and the graphic analysis of small scenographic panel of the late 17th century oratory of San Lorenzo, made by Giacomo Serpotta. The works presented by Gianmarco Girenti concern in particular a series of virtual reconfigurations at urban scale of the city of Palermo, among which are the reconstructions of the Conceria district and the representation of Piazza San Domenico before the overthrow of via Roma, based on historical and iconographic research. Balanced use of digital tools allows to always configure a wide variety of graphic languages, from traditional

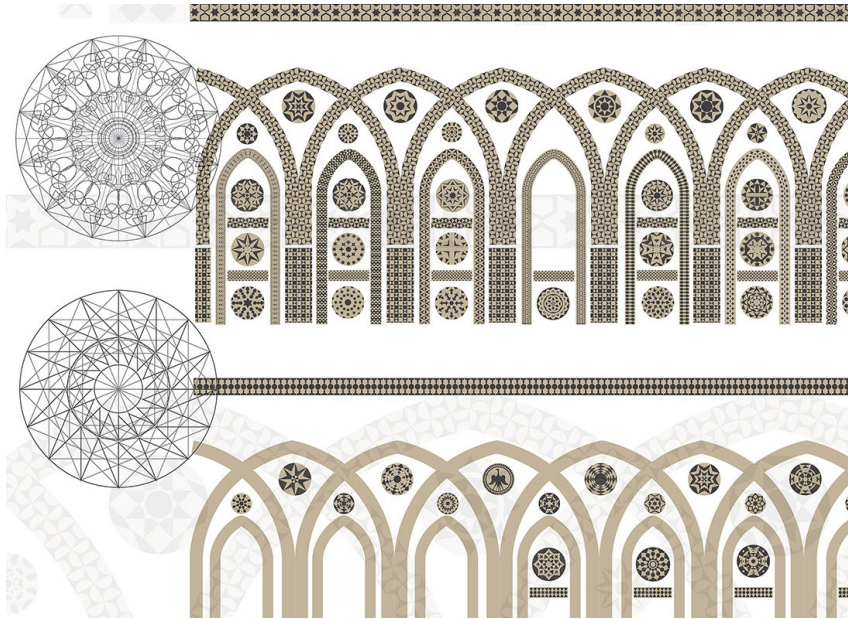


Fig. 3. Geometric decoration of the inlays of the apses of the Cathedral of Monreale. Degree thesis by F. Villanti, supervisor prof. V. Garofalo.

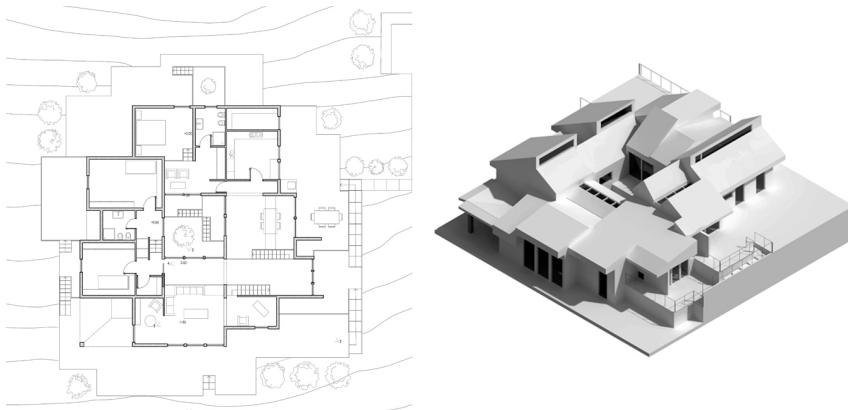


Fig. 4. Graphic reconstruction of the project by Luciana Natoli for the House in Cefalù. Degree thesis by E. Gelardi, supervisor prof. F. Maggio.

hypo-axonomic cross sections to photorealistic renders.

Vincenza Garofalo presented some degree theses concerning the graphical analysis of the polychrome tarsies of the apses and columns of some Norman monuments (the Cathedral of Monreale, the Cathedral of Palermo) outlining, after an accurate survey, the geometric matrices and showing the way of tracing with the help of sober and effective video clips. She also presented a proposal for the innovative use of the Church of San Cataldo through a videomapping project. Of great interest is the analytical study on the drawings of Theo van Doesburg's *Maison Particulière*, in which, from the cryptic drawings of the master, she is able to completely construct the three-dimensional model.

The exhibited materials make it clear that, at the Department of Architecture in Palermo, didactics and research, sometimes considered irreconcilable, can go the same way and how, in quality works where enthusiasm and rigor proceed step by step, they can support each other. Another common feature of the work is the naturalness with which the most advanced application methods are linked to the theoretical and methodological foundations of discipline. As Nunzio Marsiglia recalls in the introduction to the exhibition, the question of replacing traditional graphic techniques with the operating practice supported by the most up-to-date computer equipment has in the past stimulated "a lively debate among scholars in the area, a sort of *querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*, which often, until a few years ago, animated numerous symposia and conventions. [...]" One of the pos-

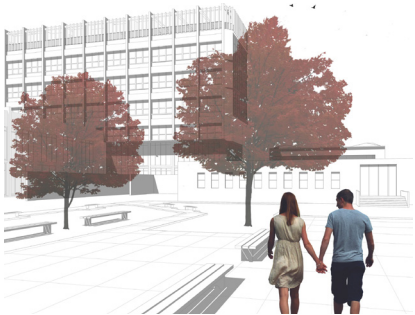


Fig. 5. Graphic reconstruction of the project for the Faculty of Architecture of Palermo by G. Caronia. Degree thesis of S. Calla, supervisor prof. N. Marsiglia.



Fig. 6. Graphic-geometric analysis of the tile "San Francesco wears a poor man" by G. Serpotta. Research directed by Proff. F. Di Paola, S. Barba, G. Rizzo.



Fig. 7. Reconstruction of the original space of Piazza San Domenico in Palermo. Research coordinated by Prof. G. Girgenti; PhD thesis by G. Campanella, degree thesis by G. Passafiume.

sible responses at this time of transition and identity crisis is to look for critical use of new tools and is to be found in the work of many professors of the Department of Architecture in Palermo Architecture Department, in particular, in the critical use of new tools that allows for a more in-depth study of architectural geometric and morphological studies, superior to that derived from the use of traditional instruments."

This exhibition makes us consider the solidity and vivacity of the School of Palermo, which has been crossed over the past decades, as is well known, by the presence of a large group of scholars and masters of unquestioned carature, among others Luigi Vagnetti, Gaspare De Fiore, Vittorio Ugo, Margherita De Simone, Rosalia La Franca and Giuseppe Pagnano. Some of them have been attending the seat only for a limited period, some passing, others spend-

ing in Palermo their whole life. In any case, through their commitment and knowledge transmitted to motivated scholars, they left their own fingerprints, whose synthesis formed the complex identity of this group, even if their research tended to engage many students and colleagues as Margherita De Simone or Rosalia La Franca did, and when their work was based on a more autonomous path, such as in the case of Vittorio Ugo. Palermo's headquarters promoted extraordinary occasions of confrontation in particularly intense periods of the construction of disciplinary identity, as in the mid-1980s, when the methodological arsenal of the area was largely re-established, in the period when the annual meeting with Seminari di Primavera was rooted. In the early 1990s, extraordinary opportunities for verification and sharing were built, such as the Gibellina Seminar of 1994, which allowed a

whole range of young researchers to interweave their research paths and to address specific issues through drawing practice. The headquarters of Palermo has also been the protagonist of disciplinary PhD research fellowships since the first cycle and, together with other prestigious venues, has characterized thematic and methodological researches that have fueled the training of teachers who are still profitable academic professors throughout Italy.

Such a wealth of knowledge has continued to produce its fruits to this day. The professors of the Department of Architecture in Palermo, with this exhibition, reveal how solid the bond between their past and present is. Their autonomy and lucidity with which they interpret the latest intellectual challenges posed by the disciplines of Representation by exploring new paths is the best tribute they can make to their masters.

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