

Events

ANNA SGROSSO through Memory and Future

Barbara Messina

On April 22nd, 2022, in the magnificent location of palazzo Gravina, the historic headquarters of the University of Naples 'Federico II', it was held a memorial day of Anna Sgrosso, a leading figure for the Neapolitan school of Architecture and a national reference point for the scientific-disciplinary sector of Representation of Architecture.

The meeting was attended by several students and pupils, many of whom are currently professors, who had the pleasure of getting to know Anna Sgrosso by meeting her as a guide in their academic careers.

The event was introduced by Alessandra Pagliano (Department of Architecture of Naples), who pointed out the dual spirit, artistic and mathematical, of Anna Sgrosso and the key role she played in the dialogue between tradition and innovation. She was indeed able to combine scientific rigor with extraordinary creativity. Her unique way of drawing architecture, depriving it of materiality and leaving only the geometric structure visible, allowed her to invent new codes that prefigured 3d digital graphics and provided a valuable and still relevant scientific contribution to the Science of Representation.

She then retraced some personal episodes, which linked her to Anna Sgrosso, and underlined her great human

and professional qualities, her kindness and humility in guiding generations of students, thus creating emotional connections over time, were highlighted.

The opening speech was followed by greetings from Michelangelo Russo, Director of the Department of Architecture. He highlighted Anna Sgrosso's critical thinking, technical qualities, and ability to conceive a solid methodology, which was the basis of architectural design. A methodology based on the graphic interpretation of space and characterized by the ability to observe, interpret, disassemble and reassemble architecture. Finally, he highlighted her originality in creating a cultured and sophisticated form of knowledge also through *ante litteram* collaborative workshop experiences, with which to make students develop transversal skills.

Institutional representatives and faculty members from 'Federico II' spoke afterward. Massimiliano Campi dwelt on Anna Sgrosso's teaching technique on understanding the "transparent quality" of architecture and thinking about the way it is composed, rather than the way it appears; Antonella Di Luggo remembered her enthusiasm in guiding students, with whom she always gently and rigorously dialogued to get the best out of them; Riccardo Florio, proposed a comparison with the "*mem-*

brature solide e tuttavia gentili" that Leon Battista Alberti speaks of in one of his writings [Alberti 1960], describing her as "a tiny and gracile person but capable of releasing powerful energy"; Lia Papa referred to her ability to sense in advance the importance of weaving a cultural and scientific dialogue with other disciplines, first and foremost the History of Architecture and Restoration, and to her sense of belonging to the scientific community of Drawing; Mariella Dell'Aquila, her first student, highlighted the determination with which she was able to coordinate the PhD course in '*Rilievo e Rappresentazione dell'Architettura e dell'Ambiente*' at the University of Naples 'Federico II' and the decision to reinstate the subject 'Fundamentals and Application of Descriptive Geometry' –for an optional period– among the basic and mandatory disciplines, as it is fundamental for the training of future architects; finally, Leonardo Di Mauro, President of the Order of Architects of Naples and co-relator with her in several master degrees theses, remembered her as one of the first professionals registered in the Order (since January 1951, the number 228), and referred to her as a refined and cultured colleague, capable of bringing out the historical aspects of the images thanks to a rigorous re-

ANNA SGROSSO tra memoria e futuro

Venerdì 22 aprile 2022, ore 15.00
Aula magna del Dipartimento di Architettura
Palazzo Gravina, Via Monteoliveto 3, Napoli

Microsoft Teams:
<http://urly.it/3mzg4>

saluti:

Michelangelo Russo, DIARC, Direttore
Massimiliano Campli, DIARC
Antonella di Luggo, DIARC
Riccardo Florio, DIARC
Lia Maria Papa, DICEA
Mariello Dell'Aquila, DIARC
Leonardo Di Mauro, Ordine APDC Napoli, presidente
Introduce Alessandra Pagliano, DIARC

Un saluto degli ex allievi
conclusioni Dora Francesca, DIARC

ore 16.00
CERIMONIA DI INTITOLAZIONE
DELL'AULA 18
AD ANNA SGROSSO
Palazzo Gravina, 2° piano

ore 18.00
BRINDISI

Intervengono:

Francesca Fatta, UID, Presidente
Agostino De Rosa, IUAV, Venezia
Giuseppe D'Acunto, IUAV, Venezia
Andrea Giordano, DICEA, Padova
modera Gianluigi De Martino, DIARC

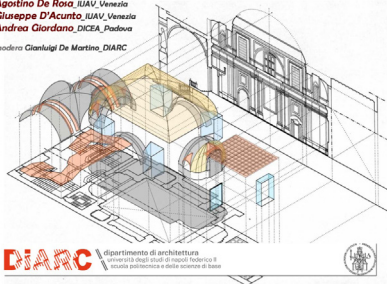


Fig. 1. Flyer of the event.

search methodology based on drawing and graphic interpretation.

The subsequent session of interventions, coordinated by Gianluigi De Martino (Department of Architecture, Naples), had an initial contribution from Francesca Fatta, president of the *Unione Italiana per il Disegno*, who recalled Anna Sgrosso's key role within the UID, starting with her participation in the first national meeting of university professors in Drawing. The meeting had been organized in 1979 in Santa Margherita Ligure by Gaspare De Fiore to discuss what would be the contents of the declaratory of the scientific-disciplinary field, and on that occasion, Anna Sgrosso firmly brought her position: "Representation is not limited to the measurement of reality but shows the aptitude to interpret complex qual-

ities and aspects", obviously through a mainly geometric type of understanding. Words that denote an awareness derived, as Francesca Fatta observed, from her teaching experience in the field of mathematical disciplines for Architecture, from which also flowed the firm conviction that architecture is a synthesis of humanities and "hard" sciences. Her deep dedication and the importance of her cultural and scientific contribution to the field of Representation of Architecture led her to the highest awards given by the UID: the Certificate of Magister in 2005 and the Golden Plaque in 2017 [Cundari 2008]. Finally, there was no lack of personal memories of Anna Sgrosso as professor of the 1st cycle of the PhD program in 'Rilievo e Rappresentazione del Costruito', which was nationally organized in four locations. Anna Sgrosso was noted for her dry but crystalline character, direct and without metaphors, linear –like her figure– and the clarity to tell complex things with simplicity.

In the following intervention, Agostino De Rosa (Dipartimento di Culture del Progetto, Università IUAV di Venezia) related, with sincere emotional participation, the great sensitivity of a "woman with an ancient soul" who always stood out for her democratic approach to culture and knowledge. A woman with broad interests –mathematics, art, music, literature– that then flowed into her writings, all of which, as well pointed out, are marked by a limpid form of expression: the same that emerges in her drawings and her poetic world in general. During his speech, he paid particular attention to a specific aspect of Anna Sgrosso's research, namely the study of the history of the Science of Representation, which she approaches well in advance of the national and international background.

In 1969 she published a small volume [Sgrosso 1969] dedicated to that topic, relating –through the eyes of someone who looks from the inside and deeply knows this discipline– the evolutionary process of representation. Agostino De Rosa highlighted her particular interest in Piero della Francesca, in whose drawings she sought much more than the critics identified. These contained the "configurational character" so dear to her, that is, the law by which lines and surfaces are added. This work then led to the publication of the three volumes published by UTET on the history of representation, written by three hands with Agostino De Rosa and Andrea Giordano [De Rosa, Sgrosso, Giordano 2001], whose long 'gestation' strengthened and made even deeper the bond of pure and mutual affection, as well as that of scientific interests.

The intervention was followed by Giuseppe D'Acunto (Dipartimento di Culture del Progetto, Università IUAV di Venezia) who, combining personal recollections with a more properly historical record, reconnected in the time framework the milestones of her career, starting from the year in which she enrolled in the Faculty of Architecture (1944) –among the first female students– brilliantly completing her studies in 1950 and disrupting, with an innate elegance, the then-common idea that this career was not suitable for a woman. Her academic life was then retraced, from her beginnings alongside Mario Giovanardi, Rodolfo Permutti, and Maria Miglio (the latter of whom she considered "extraordinary people both, though in different ways"), to her teaching assignments as an assistant (since 1961) and professor (since 1969) in disciplines such as Projective Geometry, Mathematical Analysis, Surveying and, of course, Descriptive Geometry,

which she taught until her retirement. Also recalled were the many institutional roles she held, including that of Coordinator of the Doctoral Program at the University 'Federico II', as well as –for two mandates– Director of the 'Dipartimento di Configurazione e Attuazione dell'Architettura' at the same university. Roles that, as highlighted in the speech, were never interpreted as an exercise of power but carried out with a real spirit of service.

The session was closed by Andrea Giordano (Department of Civil, Environmental and Architectural Engineering, University of Padua) who spoke about Anna Sgrosso and geometry. An inseparable union lived in the certainty that this science was "among all the most suitable to act as a link between art and mathematics". The speech brought out the broad meaning associated with the concept of geometry, which, as she liked to repeat, did not refer only to measurement, but contains within itself much more than that. It is in the drawing of the reality that surrounds us, since geometry, the one that configures space and surfaces, allows a true knowledge of it –a knowledge that must necessarily imply 'structure' and constructive aspects– and, consequently, allows its correct representation. She also loved, as mentioned, to introduce her students and pupils to concepts such as the point, the line, and the projective plane, which form the basis for real solutions to complex problems in the representation of architecture. The report also focused on her relationship with digital representation to which, with the foresight of one who knows how to look beyond, Anna Sgrosso had always shown herself to be in favor, cautioning, however, against an exaggerated use of such a tool since, as she said, computer sci-



Fig. 2. The designation of the classroom 'Anna Sgrosso'.

ence without knowledge of Projective and Descriptive Geometry becomes only a mechanical matter.

After a brief greeting by some of her alumni– who commemorated Anna Sgrosso as a professor, thesis advisor, PhD tutor, with inevitable and tender personal memories– Dora Francese (Department of Architecture, Naples), her daughter and student, closed the session of speeches, speaking about her as a mother, life teacher, and university teacher. The short but intense talk focused on lesser-known private moments and cultural and professional interests of her life, but fundamental to defining the richness of a person many have known only as a passionate teacher and researcher of Geometry. For example, Dora Francese recounted that her first academic choice had fallen on studies in Chemistry; then, at

the wishes of her father, who recognized her strong aptitude for drawing, she had opted for the Faculty of Architecture, after a long talk with the then Dean Marcello Canino. Moreover were illustrated, also with original drawings, her talents as a project designer –attentive to executive details, to materials but also to clients, with whom she always related politely– and her deep passions for fashion (her dress sketches are splendid) and design. The talk concluded with a remembrance of Anna Sgrosso seen no longer through the eyes of a daughter but of a university student, who discovered in her a new person, willing to transmit all her knowledge with great passion.

The event concluded with the dedication to Anna Sgrosso of one of the most prestigious classrooms in the Gravina palace, currently the site of

lessons for the master's degree in 'Design for the Built Environment'. A proper tribute to a multifaceted researcher, with a kind, sensitive, helpful, polite character; a rigorous woman with an innate

elegance and an old-fashioned grace but stubbornly obstinate in the pursuit of her intentions; a professor aware of her own and others' merits, capable as few were of teaching, engaging and

enthusing her students and pupils with whom she shared her knowledge. In the certainty that transmitting some of her knowledge would have meant continuing to live on in them.

Author

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