

The Present of Architectural Drawing. *Le dessin est mort, vive le dessin!*

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Exactly ten years ago, the Pinksummer gallery in Genoa hosted an exhibition in the Cortile Maggiore of the Palazzo Ducale in which two architects' collectives, Gruppo A12 and Baukuh, questioned the possible future (or perhaps, more appropriately, the possible futures) of the Ligurian capital. And they did so by proposing projects and solutions that synergistically contaminated representational modes as varied as they were unusual: starting with the image chosen for the communication, namely that same angel, present in the Ribaudò family chapel of the Monumental Cemetery of Staglieno, used by the rock band Joy Division for the cover of its single *Love will tear us apart*.

In particular, the space set up by the Baukuh studio, echoing the idea of the *Genova meno uno per cento* (Genoa minus one percent) project, based on the hypothesis

of surgically intervening with minimal demolitions and small replacements, was divided into three parts, corresponding to the same number of components: a limited edition book of drawings, titled *Panorama* and graphically composed by the Pupilla Grafik studio, a short film made with interviews, titled *Demolire Genova* (Demolishing Genoa) and directed by Alberto Tamburelli, and a polyptych composed of four large double panels (figs. 1-4), also titled *Demolire Genova* and characterized by a magniloquent territorial vision, represented in scale 1:1289 to emphasize its subjectivity (but perhaps also licentiousness), which elected monometric axonometry as the place par excellence of descriptive clarity. Three components that, in fact, claimed the need for theoretical research. And, likewise, the need for theoretical design. For while it is now generally accepted that

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Fig. 1. Baukuh, Demolire Genova, Quadrant I, 2013, Pinksummer Gallery.



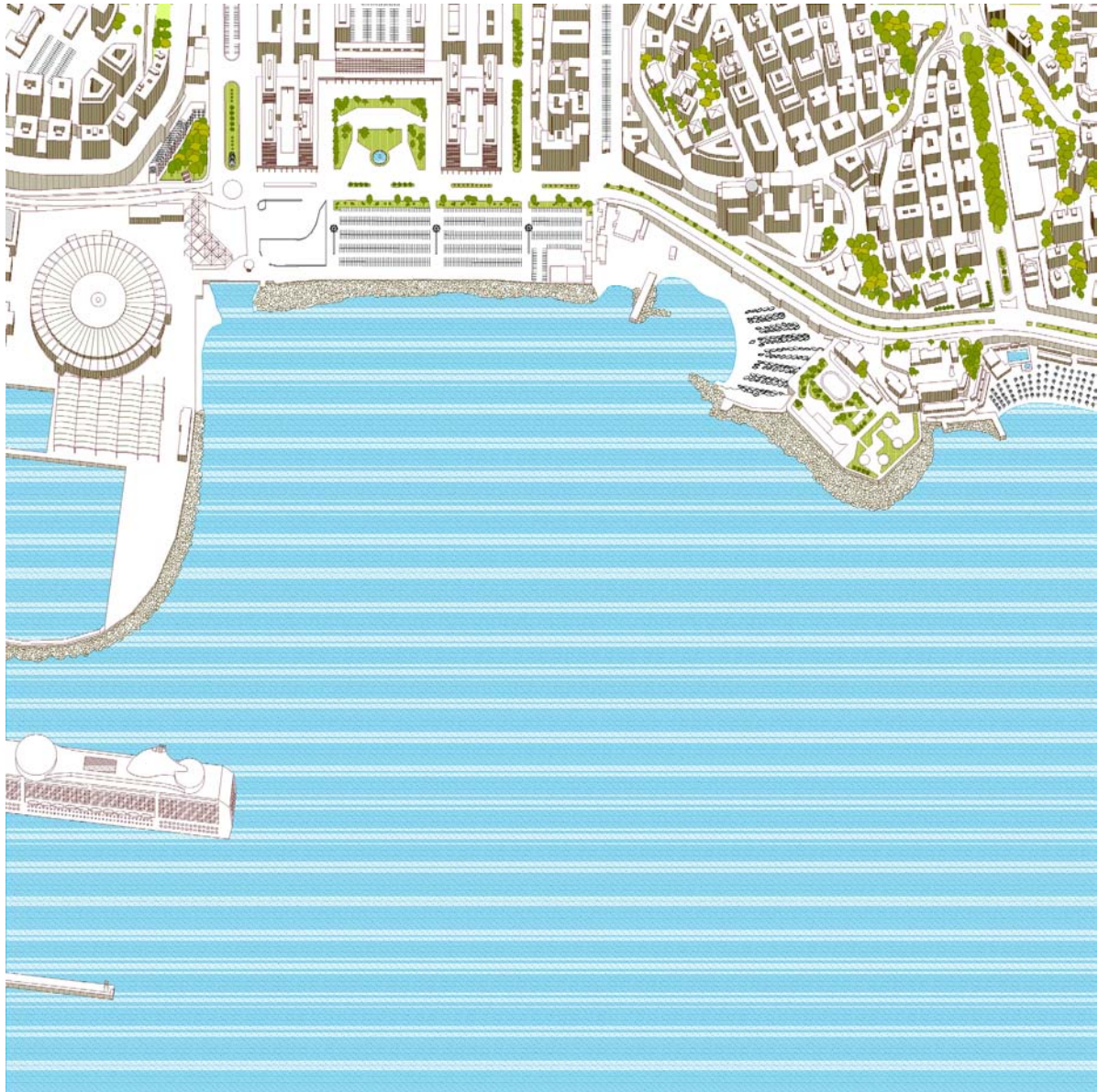
Fig. 2. Baukuh, Demolire Genova, Quadrant 2, 2013, Pinksummer Gallery.



Fig. 3. Baukuh, Demolire Genova, Quadrant 3, 2013, Pinksummer Gallery.



Fig. 4. Baukuh, Demolire Genova, Quadrant 4, 2013, Pinksummer Gallery.



the current professional practice, increasingly committed to disciplinary integration and social sharing, cannot avoid the use of well-established digital tools for digital tools for representation such as BIM (Building Information Modeling) and Rendering, this does not mean that the present of architectural drawing is not animated by other forms of representation. On the contrary, perhaps at the very moment when representation has consumed –reaching an acknowledged consolidation in its own practice– the new modes of expression based on a certain type of drawing, it is time to look elsewhere and, above all, to reflect on what may be the new scenarios capable of revitalizing it. On the other hand, it is precisely because of the concentration on the present, typical of our time, that we experience a very special condition of unstable equilibrium between the past and the future. While we fail to abdicate the legacy of the past and try to keep traditional methods and techniques of representation alive with new meanings, we are also captivated by the extraordinary ideational and visual potential inherent in the digital tools that constellate our lives. The crisp black axonometries with white lines that marked the front covers of the *San Rocco* journal for almost ten years, from 2010 to 2019, come to mind, in which “drawing is deprived of the noble intention of investigating architecture through its fundamental tools and becomes a simple stylistic canon” [Ornaghi 2019], just as the graphic compositions of the Dogma Studio come to mind, which “considers the image as a project in itself, and not as its simulacrum, since the image does not reproduce, but is the very essence of architecture” [The Booklist 2013]. Above all, however, thinking about the topicality of the architecture/environment relationship brings to mind the decorative panel *Pennacchi di città geologica* (2023) realized by Alessandro Melis for the Italian Consular Office in the Canary Islands, as well as Diana Agrest’s monographic essay *The Architecture of Nature: The Nature of Architecture* [Agrest 2018], where drawing allows the exploration of possible morphological interrelationships between the world of geology and the world of the natural sciences.

It is in this vein that the exploration proposed by the themes around which this issue of the journal *disegno* aims to solicit reflection moves, tracing the present of architectural drawing and raising critical and theoretical reflections on the new role that drawing itself assumes in the context of the design activity carried out by the

protagonists of the international disciplinary landscape of this first part of the millennium, in a period between 2000 and 2023, a time segment that seems ripe for an appropriate critical review.

In proposing these themes for reflection, it was deemed appropriate to go beyond the narrow perimeters of a territory confined by the intrusiveness of digital technological skills, in order to expand the limits of an otherwise opaque vision that itself highlights an awareness of the need for a cultural direction aimed at not confusing, when it comes to drawing for architecture, the means with the end. The contributions selected for publication give a glimpse of a renewed scenario that shows that the time has come to reject the hypothesis of limiting architectural drawing only and exclusively to its constructive translation, something that digital drawing, often only synthetically reproducing an assumed reality, has made to seem possible at the beginning of the new digital era. The path to be taken through the three in-depth sections into which this issue of the journal is organized intends to arrive at a contemporary and critical examination of the matter, for reflecting on the extent to which drawing is still the bearer of traditional signifiers in forms capable of giving new meanings. The aim is to be able to finally affirm that, just as it always has been, and just as it always will be: *le dessin est mort, vive le dessin!*

Consequently, it happens that the essays that fall under the topic of *Media and Languages* propose reflections intended to explore, in a contemporary key, the possibilities of knowing, through the representation of architecture, critical dimensions not yet fully attended to, deepening the investigative role that history has evidently already delivered to the discipline, also through the current languages of project narrative prefigured by ‘signs’. At a time when there is more and more talk about what the effects might be in the field of architecture of the possibility of delegating thought to the hidden automatisms typical of Artificial Intelligences, the proposed path continues in the second topic, *Practices and Poetics*, with insights that intend to reflect on the ideational act of the project, which finds its initial concretization precisely through the language of drawing, even before the form finds material consistency in real space. Finally, the topic of *Theories and Research* brings together considerations on experiences addressed in design research that form an interesting picture of the directions that drawing can take to proceed in its cultural evolution.

The horizon outlined in the intellectual figuration of the collection of thoughts presented coincides with the need to identify a synthesis that proposes critical attitudes useful in

identifying concrete tools for the contemporary city, in a fertile ground that again demonstrates the numerous expressive and innovative potentials of Architectural Drawing.

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