

Abitare la Terra *Dwelling on Earth*

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PER UNA ARCHITETTURA DELLA RESPONSABILITÀ FOR AN ARCHITECTURE OF RESPONSIBILITY

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Con il numero 37 la rivista "Abitare la Terra", a quattordici anni dalla sua nascita, cambia il suo formato, ma non il suo obiettivo: la tutela dell'ambiente e la promozione di una architettura, che abbandonata la tendenza all'esaltazione individualistica delle grandi personalità creative, che ha condizionato la produzione architettonica degli ultimi decenni, torni ad essere una disciplina rigorosa, che ha per obiettivo il miglioramento della vita di tutti gli esseri viventi e per questo non rinuncia a utilizzare i frutti di una esperienza secolare che coinvolge le diverse civiltà umane.

Il termine Geo-architettura, che si legge nella testata, è stato coniato da Le Corbusier, nel 1942 per la sua riflessione su *Les trois établissements humains* e allude a una architettura che abbracci tutto ciò che l'uomo ha costruito sulla superficie terrestre. Per noi oggi Geo-architettura vuol dire una architettura umile, che, sia arte senza per questo ammantarsi della superbia del nuovo fine a sé stesso, che si faccia carico della necessità di proteggere l'ambiente, di ridurre i processi di inquinamento, di combattere la disuguaglianza tra i popoli, di ridurre i processi che attraverso i cambiamenti climatici rischiano di distruggere gli equilibri del pianeta e il suo paesaggio. Per fondare la Geo-architettura è necessario a nostro parere: imparare dalla natura e dalla storia, rispettare l'identità dei luoghi, recuperare la "coralità" degli spazi urbani, abbattere gli sprechi di risorse non rinnovabili e di tempo umano, contrapporre a uno sviluppo senza limiti, che presuppone una impossibile "crescita infinita", una crescita spirituale di cui si avvertono i primi sintomi anche nella architettura.

Fourteen years after *Abitare la Terra* was published for the first time we have decided to change its format, but not its goal: to protect the environment and promote architecture. No longer an architecture that has abandoned its tendency to praise and exalt larger-than-life creative individuals and the architectural works that have influenced recent decades, but an architecture that is once again a meticulous discipline focusing on improving the lives of all living creatures; an architecture that exploits the 'fruits' of its centuries-old history and many different civilisations.

The term Geo-architecture at the top of the front cover of this issue number was coined by Le Corbusier in 1942 when he wrote *Les trois établissements humains*; the term refers to an architecture that embraces everything man has built on the earth's surface. For us, Geo-architecture means humble architecture, an architecture that is art without necessarily the arrogance of being an end unto itself; an architecture that assumes the responsibility of protecting the environment, reducing pollution, fighting inequality between peoples, reducing the processes of climate change that may destroy the balance that exists here on earth and its landscapes. We believe that to create Geo-architecture we need to: learn from nature and history; respect the identity of places; reinstate the "choral nature" of urban spaces; drastically reduce the way we waste non-renewable resources and human time; and replace unlimited growth (involving impossible "endless growth") with spiritual growth, the seeds of which are now beginning to grow in architecture.

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 Campi Flegrei, Pozzuoli: georeferenced image taken from the monitoring carried out with the Beconco technological platform, twin-engine aircraft equipped with PhaseOne 150Mpix and TABI 1800 TSR Thermal Search & Rescue sensors.

The drawing and the project of a Liberty Style space in Genoa

SERENO INNOCENTI

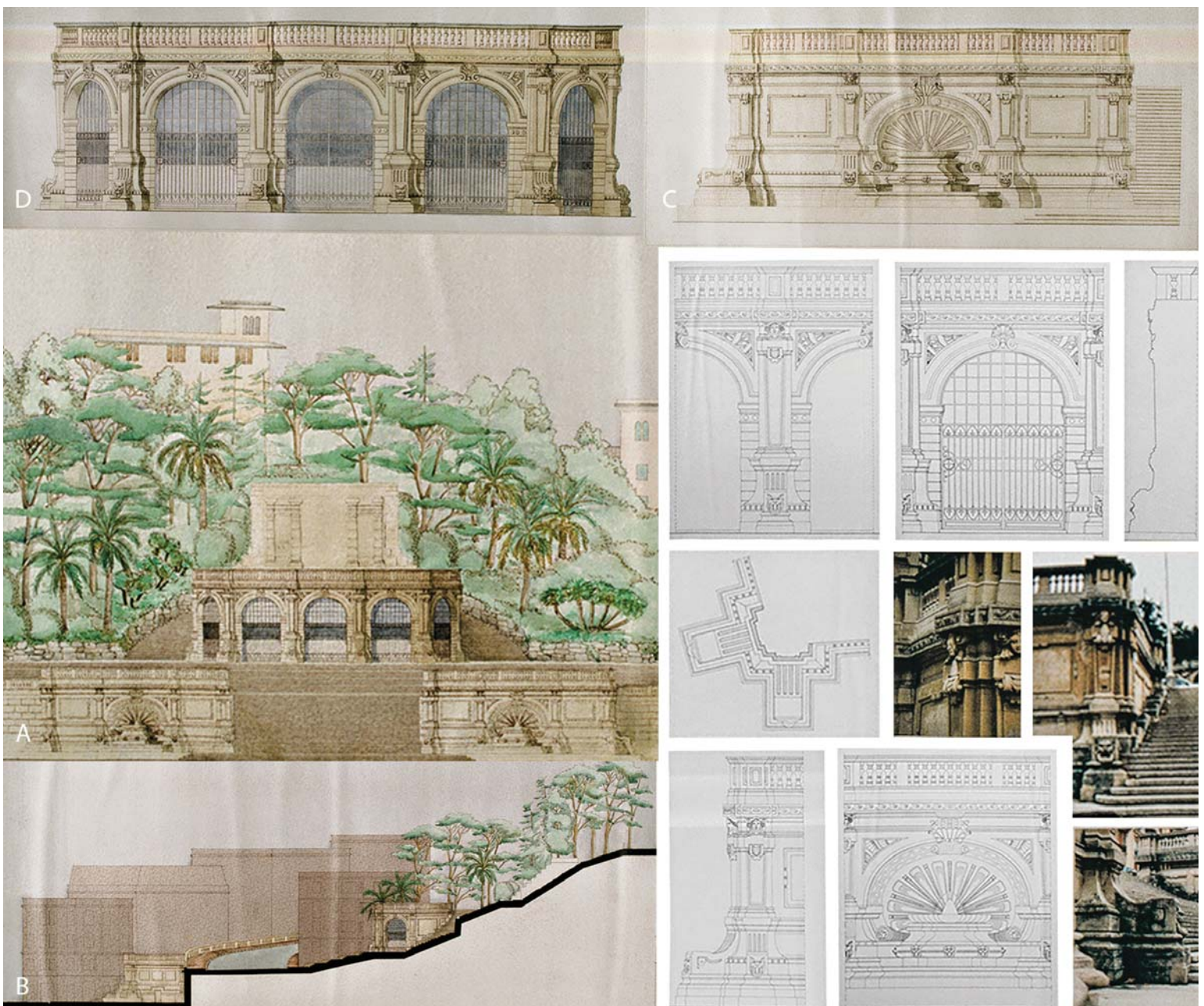
Architecture has always begun with drawing. Music, as we know, begins with a score. In this manner, both architecture and music have completed a work. Architectural drawings and musical scores live a life of perfect solitude even if in a drawer or an attic. Their future is yet to come. Strangely enough, people cannot conceive of architecture or music without a physical performance.

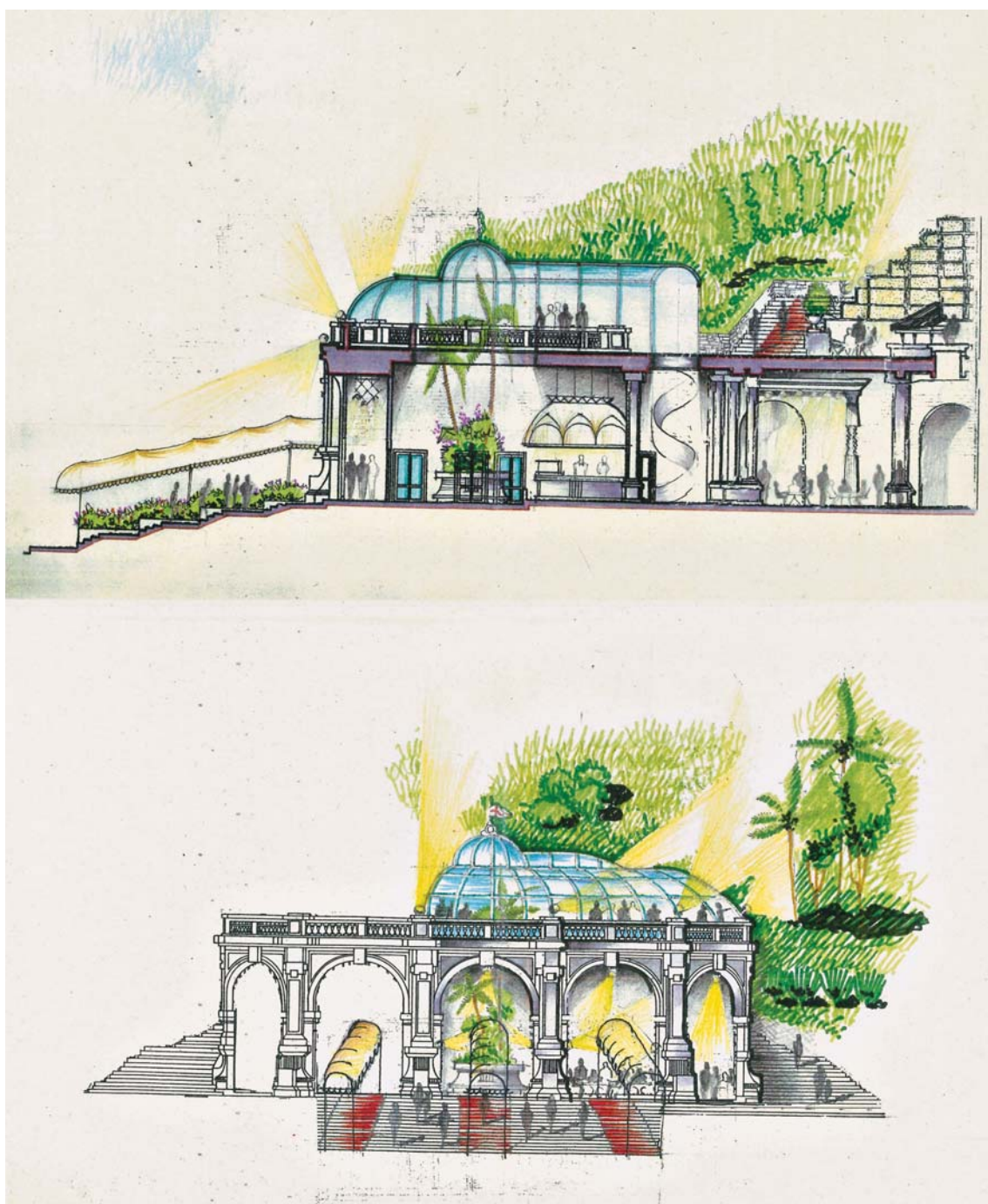
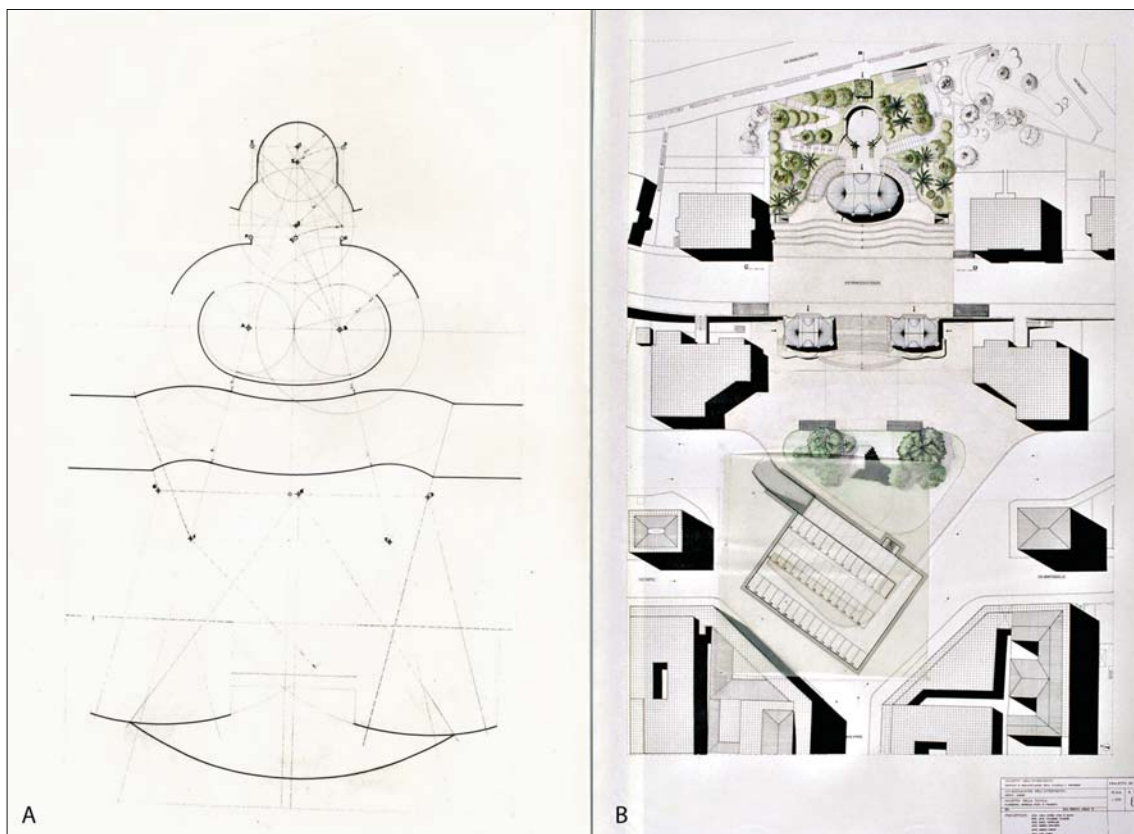
(Daniel Libenskid)

In 2020, facing since its debut the difficult months of the pandemic lockdown of this millennium, the Borghese staircase in Genoa, with its scenographic Liberty style urban architectural presence, has seen its complete restyling and its new intended use. After years of controversial polemic and above all a tangible abandonment, this spaces of the '900 Genoese, have brought to light their vestiges with a project aimed at an use of redevelopment

of the urban image, through a reinvestment of the area to be used for food and entertainment. In two years of restoration, the city has thus been able to regain possession of a place that has always belonged to it, but which with a hiatus of decades, had ceased to guarantee its functionality. With the current trasformazione of the spaces of the important urban "connection" of the stairway of Piazza Tommaseo in Genoa, in its compositional metaphor

comparable to the more famous staircase of Trinità dei Monti in Rome, very little remains of what instead were the drawings of an avant-project, (stigmatized in their degree thesis), by today's architects Simona Parodi and Livio Sterla, who at the time were part of a technical and cultural team that took care of the project for the Staircase. With an initial study supported by a capillary trictly longimetric survey design, aided by a basic but appli-





cative topography with contemporary instruments of the time (late 90s) (picture 1, A and B), the history of the site was stratified by concentrating attention to the great transformation that began at the end of the last century with the urbanization of the Albaro hills in Genoa and to the troubled history of the Regulatory Plan implementation.¹ The first documented traces of today's Piazza Tommaseo, home of the exhilarating scenery, offered by the Stairway, dated back to 1840. The wide-ranging widening served purely as a crossroads to four roads that converge to it. In 1890, with a centrifugal composition around the ring of the square, the first houses appeared. In 1895, even before the call for tenders for the implementation of the Regulatory Plan for the eastern region of the city, the layout of Piazza Tommaseo was the key element in the design of the new Genoa. In the need to better connect the Albaro region with the center, the square becomes a sort of fundamental urban cardan joint, a sort of "door" to the new city to be built beyond it. The widening thus contrasts with the instantaneous linear conception of nineteenth century urban planning, thus losing its urbanistic individuality and differing from those of the previous century for its architectural inexpression, the cause of which is to be attributed to the origin of a functional destination and the absence of a natural or artificial dominant element. The square is therefore part of the expansion of the city of the mid-1800s as an element of exception, not only for the unusual planimetric morphology, but working with the latter (in its "y" joint) for a distributive drift of principal road traffic. In this way it was possible to prevent the network of streets from intersecting the square at right angle, destroying any overall effect. As a result, there are no indefinite perspectives on all similar streets, but everywhere a building or a monument is the background scene of

the road axis of which it is a guest. On the road axis identified in the current toponymy in Corso Buenos Aires, the Borghese Stairway,² not only constitutes the suggestive scenographic background, but constitutes the dominant architectural note.

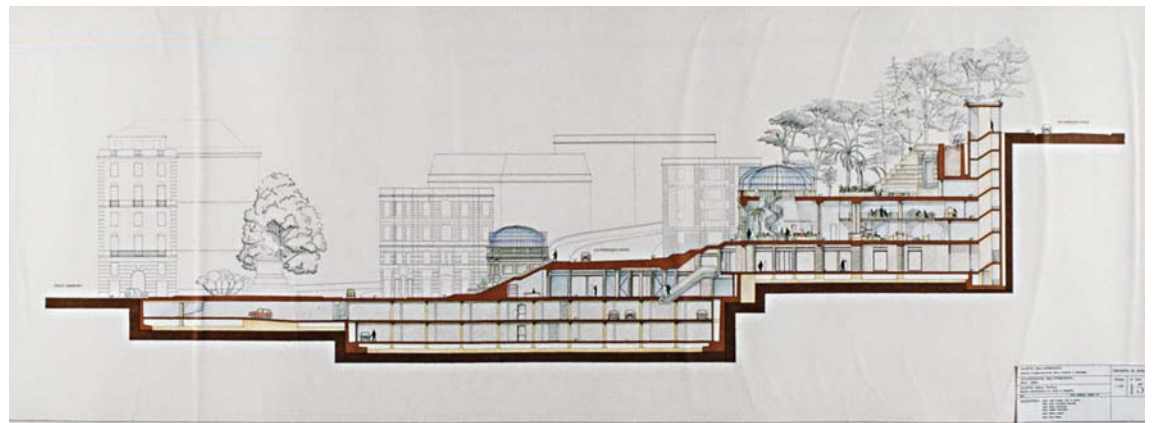
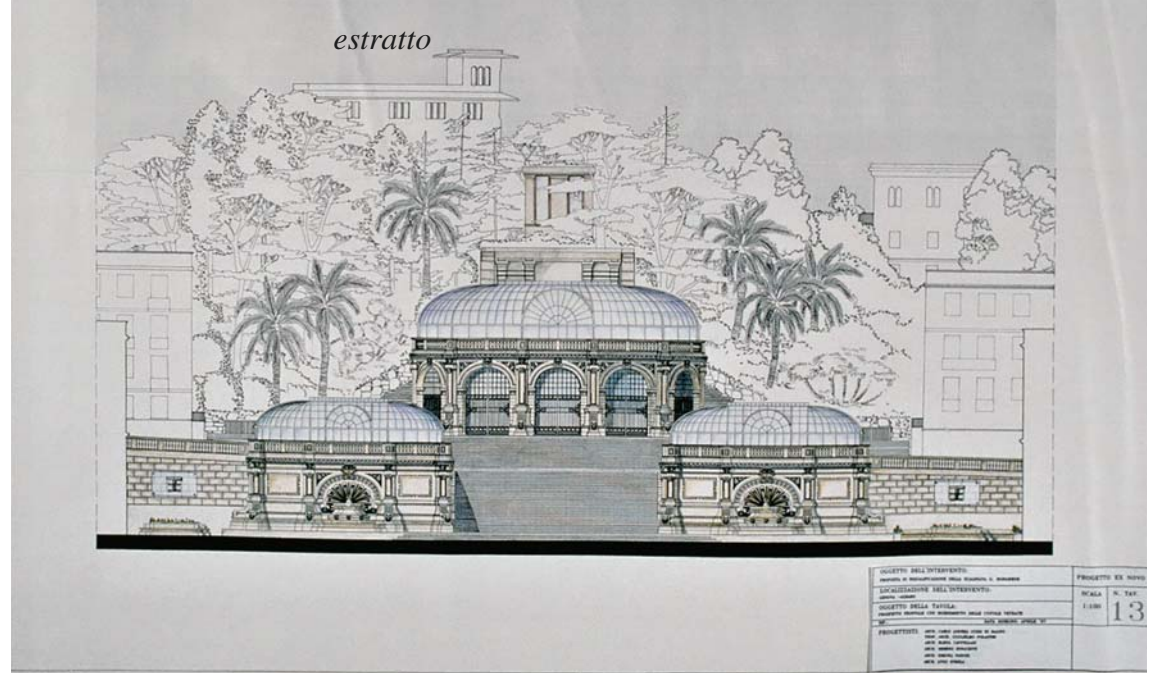
The difficulties of certain dating of the artifact,³ however, were reflected in the archival search of the variant to the Regulatory Plan of 1901, where a connection stairway is provided, but a different trend than the current one. Although there is no trace of the urban corollary buildings that would have completed it, the only scenic element is a large fountain under the first ramp.

I will be in the project that Eng. Gamba presented in 1906, but rejected, that the Stairway has a very similar trend to the current one, especially in the bodies of the lower part, without any reference of the elliptical "body" of the second upper lot. I will be in the variant of the General Regulatory Plan of 1932 that the design and the planimetric morphology for the Stairway find its conclusion and realization in the three buildings of which it is composed.

The three buildings in Liberty Style (picture 1C and D), reveal that Ligurian eclecticism that is always recognized and widespread in Genoa; the pilasters, decorated with female faces and the plastic zoomorphic masks divide the facade in three bays, highlighting the central one with a basin that becomes a fundamental decorative element for the two palindrome buildings of the first level.

The fountain is enclosed by an arch with an elegant repetition of geometrical motifs, embellished with roaring lion heads and ennobled by the valve of a shell. The keystone of the arch is also represented by a mycological sample. An airy balustrade decorates and closes the walkable roof of the two bodies of the first level.

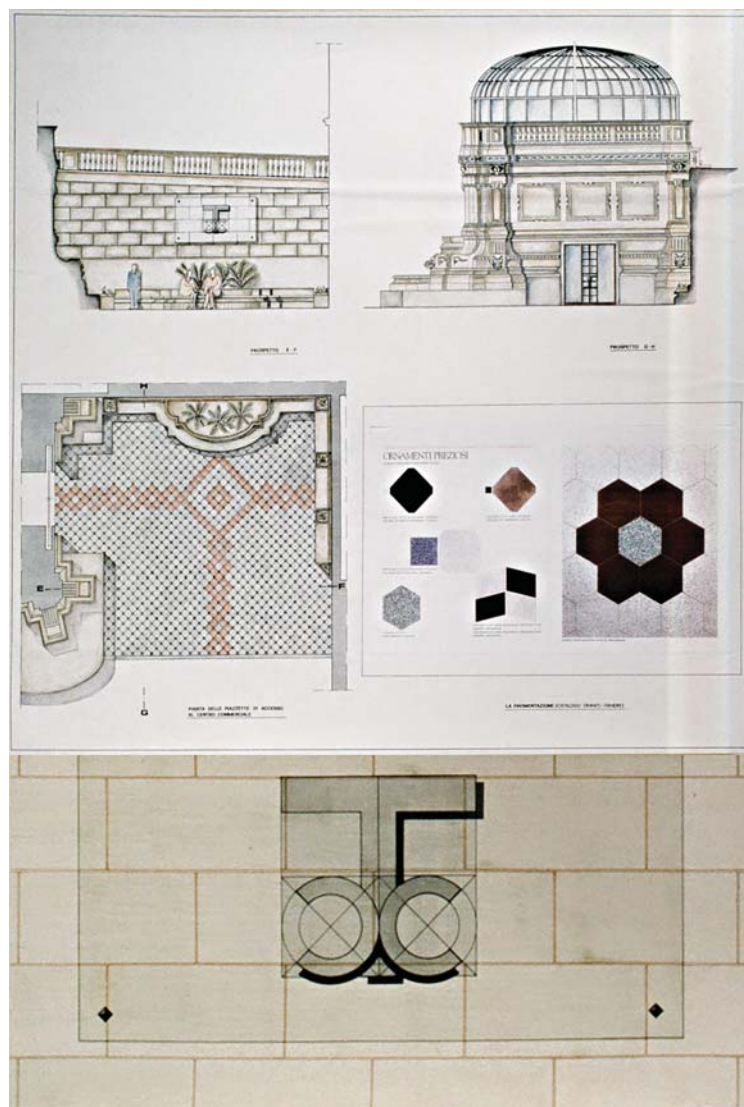
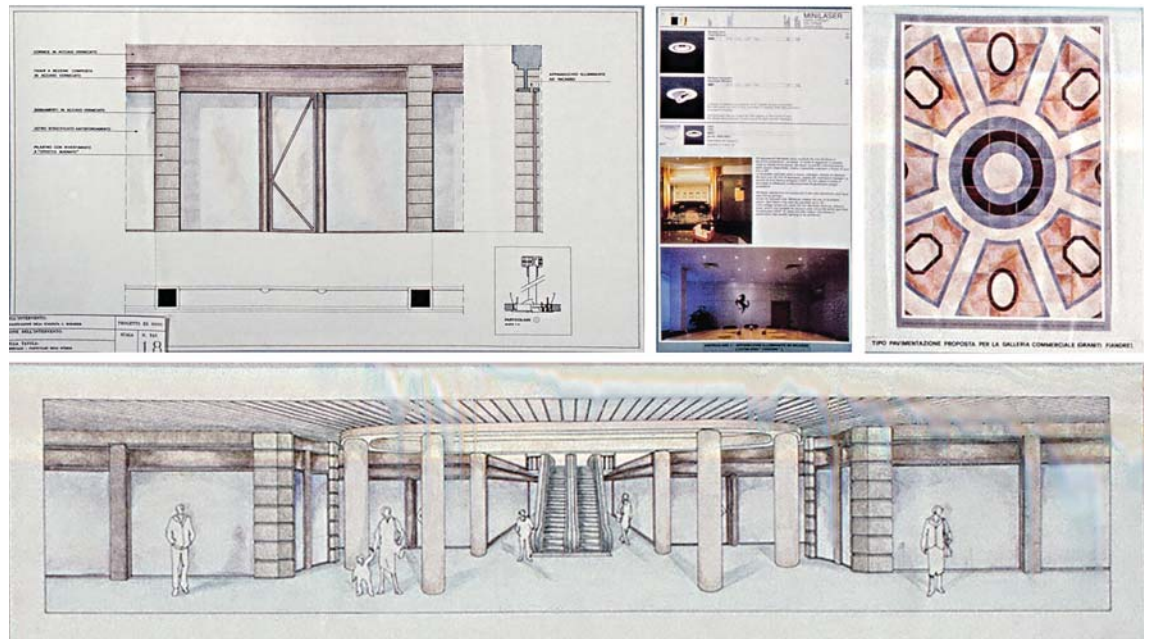
The elliptical pavilion on the second level rests on the design of the actual stairway,



which develops gently like the waves impressed by a stone thrown onto a body of water (picture 2A), connoting structure and decoration in the most canonical stylistic features of the Liberty Style. The pillars divide the facade into seven bays, rhythmizing the void respect to the full one with arched openings closed by large decorated windows in wrought iron. From the terrace with the extraordinary perceptive telescope on the city, immersed in the urban greenery, two ramp paths connect the end part of the whole scenic/architectural complex.

The spaces of the Stairway from their initial intended use as covered market (1922), have had over the years varied and at times socially improbable users and the choice of intended use coeval with the didactic project (degree thesis picture 2B), since from the first studies (picture 3) is due to the desire to restore to the city that architectural quality that the Stairway saw continually degrade. The project of the entire area which contemplates the creation of commercial spaces that constituted a pole of attraction, but above all an aggregative moment of socialization. Although the Albaro district has been annexed to the municipality of Genoa since 1876, it has however maintained a particular character of an expansion area intended for prestigious residences and tourist and sports facilities, however if the residential qualification and the landscape character represent a condition of privilege, vice versa, they prevent a modern dynamism linked to rapid urban changes that characterize today's metropolitan scenario.

Through the redevelopment of the Borghese Stairway, the Albaro district has come to endow itself with that attraction pole that perhaps has always been missing, but of the initial project (picture 4 and picture 5), in which the construction of a shopping arcade was envisaged with direct access through the connection with a perigee autosilos (picture 6 and picture



7), of the escalators and lifts that would have connected and homologate the different levels, finding their main catalyst in the spaces designed by the dehors, only the weak headless trace of the initial project has remained.

Conclusion

But is it possible to create architecture with only the drawing, without ever constructing it, or “filtering”

the end from that drawing in order to partially construct it? The musical composer is not dismissed if his work remains written and not performed. What is represented (drawn) continues to have its indifferent to the time existence of its realization, stigmatizing its creative force to its observers. The drawing can enter the public imagination and become “realization” of

the fantasy, registering itself as a future execution.

Chermikov built only one building and Piranesi not even that one, just as Bach's scores remained unknown for two hundred years and were only performed by Mendelssohn who made them public.

The drawings of the “first” project of the Borghese Stairway will continue to act as a stimulus for the built world... like a Bach score never played! ■

Notes

¹ Note as one of the most controversial urban planning events in the Ligurian capital of our century, between 1900 and 1912 seven commissions were set up to examine the various hypotheses of the Plan, while the municipal council will be called as many times to approve the adoption of urban plans, variants and alternative solutions.

² The denomination of the Stairway was assigned only in 1963, in commemoration of Giorgio Borghese, a Genoese citizen of the XVII-XVIII century who moved to South America in 1730 became finance minister of the first Uruguayan government.

³ In a 1901 sales document of the successors of such Filippo Cuneo to the Municipality of Genoa, the reliquary of the private property and currently the site of the Stairway is not yet built.

1A-B. P. 43. Borghese Stairway in Genoa (Italy), watercolor hand drawing of the current state relief.

1C. P. 43. Watercolor hand drawing of the first level.

1D. P. 43. Watercolor hand drawing of the second level.

2A. P. 44. Hand drawing of latent geometry, centers of curvature of the architectural complex.

2B. P. 44. Borghese Stairway in Genoa (Italy), project drawing, masterplan.

3. P. 44. Hand drawing sketches by the author.

4. P. 45. Project drawing, main elevation.

5. P. 45. Project drawing, longitudinal section.

6. P. 45. Project drawing, cross section.

7-8. P. 46. Project drawing, details and architectural finishes.