

IaN+

CRITICAL WRITINGS

MUSEUMS

HEADQUARTERS

URBAN SPACES

PUBLIC BUILDINGS

PARKINGS

ESSAYS

THEMES OF A TENACIOUS RESEARCH

Introduction
By Antonino Saggio

一个不懈研究的主题

The Italian studio laN+, started by architects Carmelo Baglivo, Luca Galofaro, and engineer Stefania Manna, has recently accomplished 10 years of practice; to celebrate this occasion, they are presenting to the international public this wide and prestigious volume published by AADCU, which will provide people interested in the most advanced architecture research with a new resource of study.

Let's synthetically run through the main projects presented in this volume

The project for the **Estonian National Museum** clearly expresses the main features of their work. The project emerges from a delicate understanding of the territory and its interesting topography. The presence of volcanic craters and an analysis on wave propagation suggest an aggregation of wide circular masses generating a new landscape, an environment that lays between the artificial and the natural, almost lunar. The project, while departing from a heritage of the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and Eero Saarinen, it moves away from any legacy in a secure and original way by creating a real and a properly articulated landscape. The different shapes

come to constitute a “system”, with a harmonic relationship between the single craters building and the fascinating connective tissue bonding them together.

The project for the **Daugava Embankment** in Riga, proposes an infrastructure that wants to question and change the meaning and the architecture of one of the bridges connecting the centre of the city to the new developments beyond the river and, at the same time, it want to rethink the system of wharfs and piers. The structure wrapping the bridge plank has a great interest not only from the esthetical point of view (a pulsating beehive emanating outside set of data and light) but also from the way the new functions within the bridge are organized in section, functions which imagine, among the others, a street bordered with trees and a railway connection too.

The **Bremen Kunsthalle** is an extension and a re-insertion project next to the existing classical museum. laN+ choose to attach to the museum a prismatic building which embraces in a “C” shape the existing one. The various functions and the section are cleverly resolved and its image plays on two themes: from one side an effect suggesting the bar-code reading, through the repetition of different pace elements constituting the façade, from the other side the vertical and the continual rhythm of the elements and the alternation of light and shadows are a way to evoke the forest and the trees, peculiar elements of the region and of the project area. The proximity of a small lake and the refraction of the project in the water reveal,

as the whole architecture of Venice teaches us, how repetitions and gothic vibrations of architecture elements get such an incredible rich and suggestive value once in contact with water. The contrast between new and ancient is also resolved with great wisdom, without the need of useless plastic overloads, but instead conceptualizing the new building in a convinced way from all points of view.

The **Tittot Glass Museum** in Taipei plays on the relationship between the landscape and the building development, which is articulated in two floors, a section presenting a underground level in one side and in another a tower, which becomes the fulcrum of the entire composition. The relationship with the natural and urban surrounding and the different exposition areas is emphasized through the various physical, esthetical, and technological properties of the glass. Glass, which constitutes the object and the program of the museum itself, is not used by laN+ in the Bauhaus tradition functional way, as a transparent element revealing the world “as it is”, but on the contrary, laN+ uses it as a real material of the design. A material to be shaped, to be controlled, and to be diversified in order to assume, within the structure of the exposition spaces and the different articulations of the building, a “subjective” and planned role instead of an “objective” and purely functional one.

In the project for the new **Angelini Headquarter** in Rome, laN+ concentrate its attention in the relationship among the in-between spaces shaping the project, suggesting a sensible

hierarchy of spaces, from the ones in direct contact with the city, to the communal ones of the complex and to the more private zone, all interconnected with each other. The buildings present a compact volume, but with mutable system elevation through the use of various modules and materials. The trapezoidal form of the higher volume is emphasized by the progressive shrinking of the façade modules creating a suggestive perspective accentuation of a building, which becomes a real landmark for that area in the city of Rome.

The new office building of the **Dada Group** in Florence shows in a good way an approach to design, which often recurs in the work of laN+. Confronted with an innovative typology (Dada Group deals with various aspects of technological, cultural, and promotional events related to electronic and internet development) laN+ deeply studies innovative way of work and interpersonal relationship organization. The whole organization is investigated not only in plan but also in section, conceiving always-changing workflows, which can be continually rearranged. The building then intends to propose a new architecture both in the architectural choices and in the projected work and creative flows. Working in the two first floors of a pre-existing poor architectural quality structure, laN+ succeeds in resolving and transforming the amorphous existing box into a valuable architecture. An architecture that resides in the contrast between the upper part, which present a rhythmic elevation of repetitive modules,

and the articulation of the new offices which become an pulsating centre of activities in the city of today.

The project for the parking **Nuovo Salario**, at the moment under construction in Rome, clearly suggest the laN+ “environmental compensation” strategy. In a urban threshold area, in the proximity of a small train station in Rome, the building does not “only” function as a parking but it plays at least three other roles. First of all it is a small station service, with commercial facilities and a ticket office, then it is a multi-modal traffic exchange infrastructure (parking, bus stop, access to the station) and at the end it is an important aesthetical sign, almost an abstract sculpture in the city: all resolved with an emblematic landscape mark which comes to valorize the surrounding natural space. Among the other themes developed in the Nuovo Salario parking is distinctive the insertion of green elements in different points of the building that, beside the practical and environmental advantages, has as a result an interesting rarefaction effect, almost oriental, of the spaces.

Some of these concepts return in the big parking structure for the **New Milan Fair** where the building works also as a connective element with the entrance of the freshly completed Milan Fair complex. The theme of the parking as a “naturalistic compensation” is further developed in another parking project in **Reggio Emilia**, where the façade is treated with a suggestive branched motif, which gives the impression that the vegetation used on the roof is directly emanated by the façade itself.

Dealing with the tough theme of a shopping center in via **della Verna**, a residential area in Rome, the architects decided to create an artificial topography not on the ground but instead on the roof. This sort of “hanging terrain” works as a covering allowing a free arrangement of the commercial spaces below. Big polygonal openings pierce the suspended terrain making visible a complex layer stratigraphy characterized by an interesting and mutable geometry.

The **Tor Vergata laboratory building** for the second University of Rome reveals a great security in its arrangement and in its image. The planimetric arrangement organizes the offices along a longitudinal path which take the stairs to the second floor, where is placed the meeting area, totally opened like a big eye towards the surrounding landscape. The image is very strong: to characterize the small building, laN+ plays recalling an animal icon. The laboratory could be seen as a small dog leaning out its head and its mouth beyond the body. The determination of the volumes and the enjoyable diversity in shape of the piercing, which are now punctiform along the stairs, now a wide opened mouth in the meeting room, and then vertical and asymmetrical openings in the offices, reveal how a small building could be an opportunity for quality and bright design.

The project for community facilities in the **Falcognana** neighborhood, in the outskirts of Rome, is the result of a long negotiation with the inhabitant and the municipality after having won the competition. This long process instead

of affecting the quality of the project, gave IaN+ the possibility to develop it in a more mature and proper way. The theme of compensation is once again the key to understand their *modus operandi*; with its articulation the project, in the edge between countryside and urban periphery, proposes from one side a new contour line, used in the green spaces on the roof, and from the other an inhabited section which offers a series of community facilities. The beehive structure, with sloping beams and pillars folding on the roof, simultaneously defines the internal spaces and characterizes the external areas, to put emphasis once again on the possibility of characterizing through architecture a presence of aesthetical value within the landscape.

MOTIF OF CULTURAL BELONGING TO A GENERATION

Obviously, IaN+ is part of an international research network that has characterized the work of some architecture firms formed in the second part of the nineties of the twentieth-century. I have already dealt with some of these issues in the preface of their volume *Odissea Digitale*, (Birkhäuser 2004) which presents their work together with a selection of other architects operating in the Mediterranean countries.

The main awareness shared by these researches gravitates around the concept of territory and landscape, which are now absorbed not only in the morphology of architecture, but also in its generative and

conceptual process. In a particular way IaN+ intends landscape in relationship to the intense natural forces structuring the making of the project. This theme leads reasonably to the theme of ecology and to a conscious use of the resources and to the necessary design and technologic development. This specific issue became for IaN+ a key-theme of its personal design research so to elaborate a series of guidelines.

The neo-ecological philosophy is not separated from the digital thinking, which represents the other big research field of many studios of the nineties. In fact IaN+ writes: "most the concepts structuring this ecology are similar to those structuring the digital thinking: the concept of dynamical transformation then of the temporal evolution; the concept of relationship, then system as a whole of interrelated processes. In the New Ecology idea architecture plays a fundamental role, because beside being an integrant part of the design process, it also contributes to a radical renovation of the urban planning through the introduction of concepts and planning parameter related to more focused relationships among human settlement, nature and parts of the city"

A significant aspect that differentiates the work of IaN+ from the cerebral theorization that often characterizes the work of American firms, or from the critical Dutch pragmatism, is their awareness about the strong relationship between architecture and the city. It is an issue that is particularly embedded in Italian architecture, especially in the school of the

sixties and in the work of Aldo Rossi, who always saw architecture as prefiguration of an idea of city. Obviously today in the work of IaN+ the metaphysics of pure types representative of those years has been replaced by the awareness of the hybrid, complex and stratified role of today's city, characterized by productive and play cycles co-presence, social and ethnic diversities, openings and connections to the surrounding territory. It is about the idea of a bright and open city, active and multi-ethnic, which can create new spaces and new functions, which can transform the abandoned areas and promote the revitalization of the old parts of towns, concepts and ideas that are often found in their projects.

LEITMOTIVS OF THE RESEARCH OF A PERSONAL ARCHITECTURE

If the above mentioned are the cultural motivations, for sure originally decoded by IaN+, determining the guidelines for a new generation of architecture practices, let us consider for a moment some of the specific recurrent motives of their work which, combined together, determine the marked originality of their research.

First of all, in IaN+ work emerges a symbolic value of the architectural. IaN+ does not like at all volumetric articulations, blobbing planimetric shapes or plastic enveloping nebulas; they prefer instead pure and clear forms with a strong evocative value. It is an architecture which talks through form and through form communicate complex stories.

The Museum in Estonia and the trapezoidal prism of the Angelini Headquarter are two examples of such approach.

Another recurrent motive of their research is the centrality of the section articulation above other aspects of the project. Obviously when we talk about section it means a lot of things at the same time. First of all the relationship between building and ground, as expressed with original and significant designs as the suspended ground in the shopping center in via della Verna or the embedded pathway in the Tittot Glass Museum in Taipei. But section means other two things: first of all to think about the functional flows in a three-dimensional way, that is shaping the space in its totality and not only through an approach in plan (as, for example, we can see in the inhabited bridge in Riga or in the new Dada offices in Florence). Then section as a complete prefiguration of the building-machine (constructive, technological and environmental), which is often conceived as a true living system.

The third leitmotiv is about the structure, which in IaN+'s work is never separated from two fundamental themes. The first is the aesthetical significance of the construction, a significance which carefully looks at an artistic research which literally "interweaves" natural and artificial motives (as in the Nuovo Salario Parking and in the parking in Reggio Emilia which recalls the research carried out by militants of Radical Architecture in sixties), and the second is the awareness of

the centrality of the moment of construction of the new architecture which is about new technical forms and new hypothesis which could take the place of the old punctiform system of the modernist tradition with continuous grid or membrane structure. Of course all their work is intersected by the important theme of the new relationship between architecture and nature, between landscape and architecture, which culturally or historically is made possible by themes proper of the new virtual society and from the role played by the electronics.

The reader handling this fascinating volume will discover these themes and other more and for sure will want to go through and study with attention these ten years of tenacious research of IaN+. At the same time the reader will also look forward to the future project of one of the most interesting studio in the international panorama of architecture.

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意大利事务所IaN+由建筑师Carmelo Baglivo、Luca Galofaro和工程师Stefania Manna创立,最近刚刚完成其10年的实践经历。为了庆祝,他们将向国际公众们展示这本由美国亚洲艺术与设计协作联盟(AADCU)出版的内容广泛而有影响力的专辑,对最先进的建筑研究感兴趣的人们将从中获得新的学习资源。让我们综合地浏览一下该专辑中的主要项目吧。

爱沙尼亚国家博物馆的方案清晰地表达了他们作品的特点。该方案体现了对地段及其有趣地形的精妙理解。火山口般的外观以及对声音传播的分析导致了一个宽大圆形体量的集合,它们形成一种新景观,一种介于人工与自然之间的环境,几乎像是在月球上一样。该方案不仅偏离了赖特和沙里宁的作品的传统,还以一种安全而原创的方式偏离了任何一种传统,创造出真实并得到合适表达的景观。不同的形状建立起一个“系统”,关系和谐的各火山口建筑由令人着迷的缔结组织联结在一起。

位于里加的Daugava堤岸方案设想了一种基础设施,试图质疑并改变某条连接着市中心与河对岸新开发区的桥梁的意义及其建筑原理。同时,它还试图对码头系统进行反思。无论是从美学角度看(一个向外发射成套数据和光线的动力蜂窝)还是从桥梁的新功能(其中包括一条边界种有树木的街道及一个铁路连接)按部分组织的方式看,覆盖桥板的结构都是很有趣的。

Bremen Kunsthalle是原有古典式博物馆旁边的一个加建和重新插入的项目。IaN+选择在博物馆上附加一个棱镜形建筑,它形成一个“C”形,包围住原有建筑。不同的功能和剖面得到巧妙的解决,其视觉效果形成两个主题:从一侧看,通过不同步态的元素重复构成的立面,形成类似于条形码的阅读效果;从另一侧看,元素的垂直和连续节奏以及光影的变化使人们想起森林和树木——该地区和该项目段中的特殊元素。邻近的一个小湖和建筑在水中的倒影,如同威尼斯的建筑一样告诉我们,当与水面结合的时候,建筑元素的重复与哥特式振动是如何能获得如此惊人而丰富的暗示性价值。新老之间的对比也得到