

Preface

di

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The First Issue of the Review “L’architettura delle città. The Journal of the Scientific Society Ludovico Quaroni”

This first volume of the review “L’architettura delle città – The Journal of the Scientific Society Ludovico Quaroni” – a double monographic issue produced in 2013 – develops the theme of “Ludovico Quaroni the Architect”. This is undoubtedly a direct result of the pleasure of beginning the publication by paying homage to the master in whose name we have undertaken this project. However, it is above all our intention to once again focus attention on the fundamental aspects of Ludovico Quaroni’s ideas on architecture, and its relationships with the city, through a unique critical analysis of archival material, original drawings and new testimonials. This is why we have chosen to examine a range of very different projects, various scales and different themes requiring diverse commitments. We will examine both built and unbuilt works, not always familiar or in any case not fully known, despite the fact that many were at the centre of modern architectural debate in post-war Italy. As always, for the same reasons underlying our own project, we believe it important to offer non-Italian scholars the opportunity to participate in this collective reflection and to evaluate its meaning; for this reason the articles published in the review have been rendered accessible to a vaster public through their integral translation in English. The review investigates projects from a period in history that covers almost the entire period of Ludovico Quaroni’s professional career; we have selected at least one project per decade, spanning from the 1940s to the 1980s. As demonstrated by the table of contents, the essays are published in the same chronological order as the original projects.

The first project presented and discussed is that for the competition for *The New Passenger Terminal at Termini Rail Station* in Rome (1947-48). The essay documents a lengthy research by Lucio Valerio Barbera. This articulated and complex project – presented here in its

definitive version – examines a project that belongs to the intriguing events of modern architecture in Rome in the wake of the Second World War. The project is very familiar to the Italian architectural world. It was developed in 1947 by Ludovico Quaroni, together with other extraordinary designers, first and foremost the architect Mario Ridolfi, and the engineers Ceradini and Caré. Their project did not win the competition; it was never realised. Yet it remains in the historic memory of modern Italian architecture as the hinge to a door that was never opened and which could have led the architecture of Italian “neo-realism”, in its Roman version in particular, toward a direct dialogue with the urban and historic dimension of Italy’s largest city. Beginning with the few published documents available, Lucio Valerio Barbera utilises three-dimensional digital reconstruction as a tool of investigation. He also proposes a verification of the structural design, based on the methods of calculation and regulations applicable at the time of its design. This valuable part of the research was conducted by a former graduate architectural student, Cecilia Vodret (the year was 2005), under the supervision and guidance of Professor Renato Masiani.

The second contribution, by Ettore Vadini, presents and analyses the design of the *Parish Church of Santa Maria Maggiore* in Francavilla al Mare (1948). This project is an example of the great attention paid by Quaroni to the role of the church as a special theme of architectural design that for centuries expressed the identity of Western urban settlements by defining the symbolic space of the community. Vadini frames the church in Francavilla within the cycle of “three churches from the neorealist period” of Quaroni’s work; this cycle consists of the study for the Prenestino church in Rome, from 1947, the project for the church in Francavilla, as mentioned from 1948, and that for the “La Martella” settlement in Matera, in the region of Basilicata, from 1951. Separated from this triad is the project for the church of the Sacra Famiglia (the Holy Family) in Genoa, from 1956 that, according to Vadini, already appeared to transmit a sense of an Italian society that, only a few years after the War, had already abandoned the hierarchical and symbolic certainties of tradition. The project for the church in Francavilla, documented in beautiful new and original photographs by Sergio Camplone,

is presented as one of Ludovico Quaroni's earliest and most complete design reflections on the problem of the "search for a measure" of the scale of architecture, drawing inspiration from the role "of the church-monument, as much at the urban scale as at that of the landscape".

The third essay is the work of Antonino Terranova; it is linked to the previous text by its examination of the fourth church designed by Quaroni: the still unfinished *Church of the Holy Family* in Genoa (1955-59). Terranova's text is a transcription of his presentation during a study conference held in Genoa on the correctness of completing Quaroni's project, even if the job were to be entrusted to a valorous Genoese architect. The problem of the completion of the church in Genoa moves Terranova to question the vast range of "culturally correct" conventions regarding the relationship of architecture – and the architect – with the city, with history, with the client and normative restrictions, with the tyrannies of conservation and with innovation; with a past that forever conditions us and a modernity that forever throws us off balance. This is the last text to have been written by Terranova. It was presented to the editors only a few days prior to his sudden death. It is his intense *adieu* to those of us from the younger generation, who learned, and continue to learn the contradictory significances of architecture from him; an *adieu* to his contemporaries who shared his hopes and his projects; including, in the end, this scientific and editorial project.

The fourth essay, *A School in Rosignano Solvay* (1961-'63), is a precious contribution from the architect and urban planner Mario Guido Cusmano – a direct pupil of Ludovico Quaroni at the University of Florence – and Rossella Rossi, an urban planner and docent in Florence. The text examines a little-known project, of which Cusmano himself was a very young co-author. An image of the project was published by Pippo Ciorra in his book on Ludovico Quaroni. Cusmano and Rossi transport us into an Italy that is now a distant memory, at a time when a great academic such as Quaroni, at the height of his maturity as an architect, was at work on his largest projects, the *Centro Direzionale* business park in Turin and the master plans for the principal cities of Syria and Tunisia. Yet he also found time to dedicate a most accurate talent for design to

a sincere participating in the development of small projects, so long as they were the expression of unquestionable civic values; he worked alongside the administrators of local realties, in some cases tiny, with a skill for serving as the custodians of a noble idea of the social and educational role of public action. This essay, other than reconstructing with great sensitivity the political and cultural framework under which the project took form, documents for the first time the original drawings produced and conserved in Cusmano's Archives; with the poetry of precision they describe the maritime Tuscan environment as the physical and social setting into which the project was inserted as an element of collective progress.

The fifth essay *A Place Called 'Il Gualdo'* (1965) is by Roberto Maestro, one of the most important co-authors of Ludovico Quaroni's office during its particularly fecund years. The project – known precisely as the Gualdo – was among those of greatest interest, at the beginning of the 1960s, to the nascent public awareness of environmental issues. This tourist village, situated in what was the most pristine part of the Maremma at the time, consisted in a vast fabric of private homes served by collective functions and enriched by common spaces. The project was initially contested by those with the future of the natural environment of the Tuscan Maremma at heart; this contrast was resolved precisely by Quaroni, commissioned with its design. His underlying idea and that of his collaborators was to experiment with a nucleus marked by an urban quality and conceived by comparing reflections on the Mediterranean habitat with the rapid social dynamics of coeval Italy. The author, involved from the outset in the design and construction of this settlement in the pinewoods of the Maremma, takes us directly into Ludovico Quaroni's workshop. Here each project was immersed in an idea of the city rooted in the history of the Italian city, though raised in a present of fleeting characteristics, in continuous metamorphosis due to the influence of economic events and tastes impossible for the architect to dominate with his customary knowledge and skills. Maestro makes no attempts to conceal the alternating humours of the work group, the friction of the relationships with the clients and builders, not to mention the methodological difficulties arising from Quaroni's surprising means

of transferring into the modern organisation of a project the variability and casualness of the collective fervour that appears to have presided over the realisation of the medieval city. As with other articles, the author of this essay on the Gualdo has kindly provided copies of unpublished drawings from his personal archives.

The sixth essay, *Ludovico Quaroni and the project for the “borgo” Giardino* village in Apulia (1973) is the work of Antonio Riondino. This text sheds light on an urban project developed by Ludovico Quaroni’s team – which included, at the time, Salvatore Dierna – that has rarely been published until now. The settlement is situated along the margins of an ancient system of salt flats in the region of Apulia, which were to have been included in the initial nucleus of a true small coastal city. The project appears to return to the theme of the “città di fondazione” in reclaimed coastal areas developed during the 1930s by the best young architects of the era, including Quaroni himself. Riondino highlights the relationships between the project and the horizontality of the lagoon landscape and the pre-existing agricultural patterns, as well as the perceptive and functional relationships with the ancient village of Margherita di Savoia, on the opposite edge of the salt flats, atop the coastal dunes. The project offered an occasion to describe the difficulties, in a plural and fragmented modern Italy, tied to the realisation of a general urban plan, even such a perfectly efficient and highly suggestive one as this. In synthesis, the project represents the characteristics of Quaroni’s research during the 1970s, characterised by a sort of return to the language of “expressive rationalism”. There was almost a return to the well documented order of Quaroni’s much more familiar projects: the Mogadishu University Campus, in Somalia, the University of Lecce in Apulia, both developed during the same decade together with Salvatore Dierna.

The seventh project presented is *Ludovico Quaroni and the Anagnina residential district* (1985); its presentation is a lively play involving two actors: Vieri Quilici and Ludovico Micara. Both were students of Quaroni, and both are well-known professors and refined scholars of themes related to the city and architecture. What is more, they are

both co-authors of this urban project developed under Quaroni's guidance. The essay is divided into two parts and also includes an appendix written only by Vieri Quilici, entitled *The 'Quartiere Game'*. This text stands as a worthy, almost symbolic conclusion to the entire series of presentations. Vieri Quilici begins by tracing the institutional framework that formed the backdrop to the project entrusted to Quaroni; he thus reminds us of the ambitious commitment, assumed by the City of Rome during the 1980s, to realise a vast new programme of public and private housing in the periphery of the capital. Using the critiques penned by Quaroni himself, he sheds light on the uncertainty of intentions, the fragmentation and lack of any overriding vision. These unsatisfying conditions exalt Quaroni's ability to develop project guidelines that surpass the initial state of disorientation and prove useful to society in general. Quaroni was very familiar with the problems of the roman periphery and the shortcomings of the public administration. It was for this reason he wished to convert a project isolated in an extreme part of the city – that entrusted to his group – into a proposal of method, enriched by suggestions that could be transferred to the city government and to the vaster programme of its planned projects. Quilici ends his essay with a question: how could the project for the Anagnina district respond to such an important intention? The answer is provided by Ludovico Micara through a detailed reconstruction of the phases of the project, of the choices examined by the design team, of the leap in quality introduced by the discussion of the final proposals by Quaroni himself; he identified the architectural drawing of the principal urban infrastructure of connection, to be realised between the different districts, as the expressive and functional element that would qualify the neighbourhood and the entire programme. Micara thus leads us into Quaroni's world of Architecture and Cities, in which the architecture and cities of all eras, of all cultures continue to exist as contemporary, living examples of method and form, irreplaceable concise representations of the need for architectural responses to the concrete necessities of mankind; fascinating and timeless models. The debate between the two authors is completed by a series of original drawings, which make it easy and stimulating to reconstruct the design concepts, the intentions of the project and the sense of its designers' contentment that com-

municated by so many sophisticated drawings. *The Quartiere Game*, the brief essay by Vieri Quilici, narrates a didactic experience he conducted within the Faculty of Architecture in Rome focused precisely on the Anagnina project by Quaroni's group, immediately following its preparation. The role playing game acted out by other students, other professors and young teaching assistants was highly successful. Quilici proposed simulating the implementation of the project through the elaboration by students, in groups or as individuals, of the planned architectural projects. A lively atmosphere of participation is transmitted by the tasteful "scenographic" drawings developed by the students. But what counts most, I believe, is Quilici's conclusion: "A singular fate befell the true design of the Anagnina (...); it would never be realised (...), while it would come to life thanks to the fresh imagination of three hundred young students".

The final essay *Emergence-urban fabric* in the urban design of Ludovico Quaroni: morphology vs typology (1936-65), by the author of this introduction, does not present any further projects by Quaroni. Its objective is that of presenting a – temporary – examination of one of the themes typically found in Quaroni's texts and projects, including those published here: the bipolar unity between the "emergence-urban fabric" as the radical foundation of the idea of the city. The exploration begins with the first monograph written by Quaroni in 1939, from which this review takes its name. It is developed based on the consideration of other documents; finally, the question is raised of whether or not the time has come to introduce the study of the eventual influence of the ideas and works of Ludovico Quaroni to the most important faculties of architecture in the United States.

Undoubtedly, other than the diverse characteristics of Ludovico Quaroni's projects, the essays published in this issue emphasise the diverse identities, the diverse cultures, the diverse characters and the widely diverse writing styles of his direct pupils and their even younger pupils, all invited to heed this common calling. This is partially natural, I would go as far as to say obvious. Though in part it is due to Ludovico Quaroni's vast cultural openness and urban curiosity, to his often criti-

cised “inclusivity” and his consistent search for dialogue. In any case, something links all of the essays published here: Quaroni taught us, and continues to encourage us through his writings and his projects, that alongside the specific and rigorous analysis of urban facts and phenomena, it is necessary to trust our intuition as the most powerful scientific tool. Quaroni’s urban culture was not ideological; it was instead a complex anthropological, historical, sociological and artistic construction. As the anthropologist Leo Frobenius stated: “understanding reality signifies the faculty to be moved by the essence of phenomena – not by the facts themselves, but by their essence”.