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**DESIGN VALUES
IN THE
MEDITERRANEAN**

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FOCUS

The Recovery of Vernacular Interior Design as a Value for the Modern Movement

Bridges between Le Corbusier, Gruppo 7 and GACTPAC

Sara Coscarelli

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Keywords

GATCPAC, Vernacular, Interior Design, Mediterraneanism, Le Corbusier.

Abstract

There are several similarities that point to the aesthetics of design between various countries that address the Mediterranean. Although it is well known that design practices have always been common in this area, it is also the transfer produced between them due to trade and cultural exchanges produced throughout history. This transfer generates synergies and transformations between design resources of the local cultural traditions. It is the case of interior design done during the decade of the thirties in Catalonia, through the publications of the GATCPAC magazine *D'Ací i d'Allà* [From Here and There], whose articles demonstrate how important traditional Mediterranean design is at that precise moment, in which the Catalan territory is in the middle of the interwar period and supposedly under the emancipatory umbrella of the International Style.

However, it is already observed in the 1930s that there is a common thread that links the apparently rationalist design methodologies of Lombardy and Catalonia, led by Gruppo 7 and GACTPAC groups of architects, with a certainly Mediterraneanizing trend. And the common reference of both realities is detected in the figure of Le Corbusier, who at the end of the 1920s, he begins to enter towards the Mediterranean regional universe.

Without style, without decorative school worries and practiced by people who have had no other teacher than the “constructive” tradition (...), Mediterranean popular architecture has, for these reasons, constants that are repeated throughout the Mediterranean countries. (...) Main characteristics common to this architecture are its elements: doors, windows, porches, etc., all on a human scale and with an absolute absence of superfluous decorative motifs and absurd artifacts. If any of its details could be interpreted as decorative, it is almost always derived from the construction, with some rational basis that reinforces it. (The popular Mediterranean architecture, 1935, p. 15)

This quote demonstrates the importance of traditional Mediterranean architecture during the 1930s in Catalonia, which is in the middle of the interwar period and, supposedly, dominated by the International Style.

It has been observed from the very beginning that there is a common thread that allows the seemingly rationalist architectures of Milan and Barcelona of this period to be linked to a certainly Mediterranean trend; and that the common referent of the two realities is not detected in any element from popular tradition, but in the figure of one of the architects who most fiercely defended the International Style, at least at the time of his birth: Le Corbusier (1887-1965).

1. Le Corbusier’s Mediterraneanism: a Bridge between Milan and Barcelona

In the late 1920s, Le Corbusier began to delve into the Mediterranean regional universe. According to his point of view, what is at stake is to address the problems of the real hu-

man being and not abstract, common, and concrete, through knowledge that can facilitate this direct approach and generate fully verifiable realisms. That is the reason why it is understood that his thinking is a great influence on the rationalist groups in Milan and Barcelona.

Catalan architects become faithful allies of Le Corbusier in terms of vindicating the new architecture related to Central European thought. In fact, as Josep Maria Rovira explains:

Le Corbusier had a predisposition against the cultures of the North that he always considered far removed from the ideal of order that Mediterranean civilization offered him and that, since 1911 and his [first] trip to the East, he had idealized in the image of the Parthenon, the true main character of *Vers une architecture*. (Ares, 2004, p. 124)

This work will be a great influence, not only in the formation of the GATCPAC (Pizza & Rovira, 2006) and Gruppo 7 (Costanzo, 2004), but also in their postulates and writings. This alliance began to take shape three years after the publication of *Vers une Architecture* (1923), following Josep Lluís Sert's (1902-1983) first trip to Paris when he was still a student. It is his first contact with modern architecture. There, he acquired Le Corbusier's book, which he later will show to his colleagues (Pizza & Rovira, 2006) and at the end of the decade they will constitute GATCPAC.

In the case of Giuseppe Terragni (1904-1943), who is the future leader of Gruppo 7, he also makes study trips during the same period in which Catalan does so. This experience is of great importance in his learning, and both the sketches and

notes, as well as the routes he makes, reveal the deep search for a system of cognitive references. The choice of places and works coincides with the common trajectory of the young rationalist architects of his generation.

As stated in Gruppo 7's texts, personal trajectory and collective experience, which are an approach to antiquity and a projection towards modernity, are the premises for a profound architectural renovation. The first journey, made in 1925, is the one of institutional and traditional learning, the journey towards what was studied at university. It is also Terragni's first contact with Rome and Florence. At this point, he is becoming aware of the fact that the new spirit of young people must be based on a very good knowledge of the past:

Not only do we believe that a solid foundation in tradition is opportune, but we also think that it is preferable, it is absolute and exclusive (...) and it proposes examples that are of the type of the Parthenon and not of the monument to Vittorio Emanuele. (Gruppo 7, 1927)

The similarities with GATCPAC thinking are obvious. These stimuli have rapid consequences in both groups. On one hand, the work of the painter and art critic Rafael Benet, who with his chronicles of European avant-garde art in *La Veu de Catalunya* magazine, helps to make known the work of several innovative European architects, especially Le Corbusier. In fact, it is Benet who led Le Corbusier's first visit to Barcelona to hold conferences in Sala Mozart on March the 15th and 16th 1928, which are the first seed for the emergence of a rationalist movement in Catalonia (Domènech & GiL, 2010).

On the other hand, Sert invited Le Corbusier to give some lectures in Barcelona on 15 and 16 May 1928, which gave him and his partners the opportunity to show the project *Hotel on the Beach* (Baldellou & Capitel, 1995). A few months later, from July 22 to August 25, Sert and his colleague Josep Torres Clavé (1906-1939), along with other fellow promoters, embarked on a nearly two-month study tour of Europe (Fig. 1). Among the destinations visited, in addition to several Italian cities, there is, again, Paris. In January of the following year, 1929, Sert went again to Paris. He leaves university for three months and begins to work in Le Corbusier's studio. It constitutes a turning point in the future of the whole Catalan architecture. In the editorial of *Plans* magazine first issue, dated in 1931, Le Corbusier writes: "Expression of the real man in his natural element, capable of facilitating the realization of his fullness. The flowering of human civilization, where men dominate the tyranny of machines designed for comfort, will take place again in the universe" (1931, p. 9).

Between March 29 and April 2, 1932, GATCPAC organize a meeting in Barcelona from CIRPAC¹, to prepare for the IV CIAM which will take place the following year. Le Corbusier, together with other European colleagues, like Victor Bourgeois, Walter Gropius, Sigfried Giedion and Cornelis van Eesteren, hold conferences (Baldellou & Capitel, 1995). During the event, Francesc Macià, the President of the Catalan Government, and Le Corbusier, met. But also a few members of Gruppo 7 attend the meeting.

1 International Committee for the Resolution of the Problems of Contemporary Architecture.



Figure 1. Architecture field trip of class 1928. Jaume Foz, Lluís Riudor, Josep Lluís Sert i Sixt Illescas. Archive Lúcia Feu, Barcelona.



Figure 2. CIRPAC meeting in Barcelona. Reception with the authorities. Sert, Le Corbusier, José Manuel Aizpurúa, Cornelius van Eesteren i Gino, Pollini, among others.

One of them is Gino Pollini (1903-1991), who is seen in a picture published in *AC*, together with Sert and Le Corbusier (Fig. 2). From this date, relations between GATCPAC and Pollini will be strengthened. An example is the letter that he writes again to the Catalan group thanking the reception of *AC* magazine where there is the report on the meeting of Barcelona. The Italian offers their help to promote the magazine in the Italian context and encourages them to continue the link with the *Galleria del Milione*:

I have received your *AC* magazine, with photographs of the Barcelona meeting, which interested me a lot. I will do my best to promote the magazine. I know that you are in a relationship with the Galleria del Milione in Milan; this is very good because this gallery works in our sense, and I think it can help you to spread the publication. (Pollini, 1932)

The alleged consanguinity between the representatives of the two Mediterranean territories, united thanks to previous contacts with their mentor Le Corbusier, will therefore be ratified. But he also actively collaborates with the Milanese architectural context. The *Prélude* magazine, published and founded by himself after the closing of the *Esprit Nouveau*, is connected, through various commercial exchanges, subscriptions, and articles, with other magazines, including *Quadrante* and *Bollettino del Milione*, the one of *Galleria del Milione*. Both publications are based in Milan; the first one is directed by Massimo Bontempelli e Lina Bo Bardi; and the second one is directed by Peppino and Gino Ghiringhelli, together with Edoardo Persico, who will become a member of Gruppo 7.

ARCHITETTO DOTT. GINO POLLINI - VIA BERNARDINO LUINI 12 - TEL. 80-442

MILANO 12 maggio 1932.

Gatepac
Paseo de gracia 99. Barcelona.Contestado

Cari colleghi.

Vi prego di scusarmi se per la fretta rispondo in italiano alle vostre cortesi lettere 19/4. Per quanto riguarda la partecipazione italiana all'esposizione, che voi organizzate, degli edifici scolastici, ho spedito a tutti i colleghi del gruppo italiano una circolare, pregandoli di spedire direttamente al gatepac il materiale a loro disposizione. Purtroppo credo sarà difficile che vi possa essere spedito del materiale numeroso, perché noi non abbiamo realizzato quasi niente in questo senso di veramente moderno in Italia.

Per quanto riguarda il libro scolastico, credo sarà bene voi vi limitiate per l'Italia al libro per le scuole elementari (questo perché per le scuole medie ne esistono troppi e la scelta sarebbe molto difficile e richiederebbe del tempo). Tali testi per le scuole elementari sono standardizzati per tutte le scuole italiane, e sono editi dal governo. Credo che essi potranno essere del massimo interesse. Sono in tutto dieci testi:

1ª classe elementare	1 testo		
1ª " " rurale	1 testo		
2ª classe elementare	1 testo		
2ª " " rurale	1 " "		
3ª classe elementare	2 testi		
4ª " " "	2 " "		
5ª " " "	2 " "		

Per poterli avere voi potete scrivere a me oppure direttamente alla "Libreria Treves", Galleria Vitt. Emanuele, Milano. Il prezzo complessivo si aggira sulle 100, 110 lire. Questo mi sembra il materiale più importante.

Altro materiale interessante possono essere i testi di lettura per le scuole italiane all'estero. Sono editi dalla "Direzione degli italiani all'estero" (comm. Piero Parini) via Buoncompagni 30, Roma.

Può offrire pure un interesse conoscere il "Metodo Montessori" (che ha una diffusione mondiale). Per questo è necessario rivolgersi all'Ente Morale Opera Montessori, via Monte Zebio 35, Roma.

A ogni modo se avete bisogno di qualche altro chiarimento potete rivolgervi liberamente a me, che sarò ben lieto di fare del mio meglio per procurarvelo.

Ho ricevuto la vostra rivista AC, colle fotografie della riunione di Barcellona, che mi hanno molto interessato. Farò del mio meglio per fare della propaganda alla rivista. So che voi siete in rapporto colla Galleria del Milione a Milano; questo è molto bene perché detta Galleria lavora nel nostro senso, e credo potrà aiutarvi a diffondere la pubblicazione. Vi ringrazio ancora della vostra buona accoglienza a Barcellona e delle vostre cortesie. Vogliate gradire i saluti più cordiali

G. Pollini

Figure 3. Letter from Gino Pollini to GACTPAC. Milan: 12th May 1932. (Archive AC-GATCPAC AHCO-AC, Barcelona). Typed letter in Italian with signature by Gino Pollini.

Regarding to *Quadrante*, it publishes many articles about *Prélude*, in which the Mediterranean takes on a geopolitical connotation: a “Plan d’organisation européen” (Le Corbusier, 1933 July), according to climatic axes drawn by Le Corbusier, which provides for a great France-Italy-Spain-Algeria alliance, as an alternative to the Rome-Berlin axis envisaged by fascism. Within this plan, a *Fédération méditerranéenne* or *Fédération latine* will consent to Le Corbusier’s “Harmonie du plan” (1933 December). In fact, this is one of the reasons that leads Le Corbusier to become a subscriber to *Quadrante*, especially because of the celebration in Athens of the IV CIAM:

Italian [architects] are extremely excited now: their magazines take up modern architecture with enthusiasm. (...) The situation is clearly defined in the international arena: Latins take up the banner of modernity and Nordics swallow.” (Le Corbusier, 1934)

It should be noted that these ties were strengthened with the intention of overcoming the idea of provincialism of the Italian cultural condition. So, regionalism was accepted, but folklore was rejected.

2. The Territorial Context of the Gruppo 7 and the Anti-Nordicism of the GATCPAC

The question of Milanese culture during the period of the Modern Movement is directly related to the fact that the currents of renewal of Italian architecture take place during the years of the fascist twenties in the Lombard capital. Roman attempts to often cling to the denial of a modern culture contributed directly to this fact. Thus, in 1919, a new program was started

in Milan to promote popular housing, at the first *Mostra Regionale Lombarda di Arti Decorative* (Decorative Arts Lombardy Regional Exhibition), which would take place at the Biennale di Monza and later at the Triennale di Milano.

During this period, with the disappearance of Antonio Sant'Elia, futurism has lost its *momentum* and for this reason the architecture of the first years of the first post-war period offers few novelties. The predominant style is academicism, which advocates a return to the principles of classicism, while adapting them to the trends of the twentieth century. In this context, Gruppo 7 was formed in 1926 and seeks to renew Italian architecture through the adoption of the principles of



Figure 4. Members of Gruppo 7 (Archive AFGATCPAC-AHCOAC, Barcelona).

rationalism to return to reason, but also tradition after the irrationality of war. These principles, however, are understood by Italian society as a return to order that the fascist authoritarian regime had used to advertise. These ideas lead architects to identify urban problems, focusing on the demands imposed by modern cities (Fig. 4).

In an issue of the Italian *Rassegna* magazine, Gruppo 7 is presented to the public pointing out the new principles that architecture must follow, in line with modern ideas that are emerging in various parts of the rest of Europe. The return to the pure and essential form is postulated, that expresses the functionality of the constructions; and ornamentation and decoration are rejected, through the constant use of rationality. However, Gruppo 7 conceives these principles as a way of mediating between the new spirit and tradition, between classicism and functionalism:

We do not want to break with tradition; it is tradition that gets transformed, and assumes new aspects, under which few it is recognized. The new architecture, the true architecture, must result from a close adherence to logic, to rationality (...). (Gruppo 7, 1926, p. 36)

Gruppo 7 was institutionalized under the name of MIAR (Movimento Italiano d'Architettura Razionale), in 1930, when it was officially constituted. It is joined by about fifty architects from different regions of Italy. The following year, the MIAR organize the *Seconda Esposizione di Architettura Razionale* in Rome – the first one had been few years before without much success due to its excessive rationality –, whose

presentation concludes by saying: “It is above all necessary to recognize how the tendency to exalt that character of Latinity, which has allowed this architecture to define itself as Mediterranean, is becoming more and more accentuated” (Gruppo 7, 1931, p. 196). Unfortunately, the exhibition has a very strong impact and receives serious criticism from the most conservative society, whose consequence will be the dissolution of the group in 1931.

The debate on the concept of the Mediterranean originates from this date. The controversy begins with Carlo Enrico Rava, one of the Gruppo 7 members, who, in the article *Svolta pericolosa*, published in *Domus* in 1931, writes:

So we see in Germany the architects of the Ring, led by Gropius and Mendelsohn, the Frankfurt group, led by May, the Bauhaus, led by Mies Van der Rohe (...), to sympathize more and more with the unifying, levelling,⁷ socializing tendencies of the latest Russian architecture (...). A tremendous threat of sterility, perhaps not yet sufficiently reported, is thus outlined by the uncompromising rationalist architecture. (Rava, 1931, p. 53)

The solutions he proposes are called “spirito latino” and “spirito mediterraneo” and once again, he mentions Le Corbusier as a forerunner:

(...) [the] Latin spirit of which Le Corbusier cannot get rid of, in this eternal Latin spirit that returns to invade Europe (...). Our race, our culture, our ancient and brand-new civilization, are Mediterranean: in this “Mediterranean spirit” we must therefore look for the characteristic of Italianness still missing from our young

rational architecture, as certainly this spirit guarantees us the reconquest of a primacy. (Rava, 1931, p. 53)

While this is happening in Milano, four years after the creation of Gruppo 7 GATEPAC was founded in Zaragoza in 1930, coinciding with the end of the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. In the meantime, GATEPAC becomes the Spanish section of CIRPAC, which is the newly created management part of the II CIAM, which finally will not take place in Moscow, but in Athens. This fact will end up pushing the group internationally. GATCPAC constitutes the Catalan section of GATEPAC and will have as objective the promotion of the rationalism in its territory, as well as the opening to the European currents that are being developed. It was formed in Barcelona also in 1930 and its main members are Sert and Torres Clavé, along with other colleagues. The fact of maintaining contacts with Catalan government favours the commissioning of various public projects, and the dissemination, therefore, of the movement and its ideals. But beyond the officialdom, its projects aspire to a more humane and natural architecture, interested in the true productions of the local context. It is about making a different and simple architecture that is against standardizing uniformity, the same as Gruppo 7.

3. Contacts between Le Corbusier, GATCPAC and Gruppo 7

3.1. Galleria del Milione

The first contacts between members of Gruppo 7 and GATCPAC date back to early 1932, when the *Galleria del Milione* was presented at *AC* magazine.

Shortly afterwards, the editors of *AC* requested information from the gallery about the exhibition that had opened on May 11 1930 in Monza and was to be published in the first quarter of 1932. This fact initiates a postal exchange of material between members of both groups: “The center of current trends and daring visual arts, and is logically the meeting point of rationalist architects” (Pizza, 2008, p. 247). *AC* publishes an article dedicated to *Casa Elettrica* (1930) by Luigi Figini (1903-1984) and Gino Pollini, as an example of Gruppo 7 architecture, and which has been the star of the Monza exhibition. The cult of the golden section, the harmonious proportions, the desirable accuracy of the architecture, but respecting a tradition refined from the paradigms of Italian construction, aspiring to a contemporary Mediterranean regionality, inspire the projects of the protagonists of the Italian modernity, and the editors of *AC* put it this way:

Last year, as a result of the construction of the *Casa Elettrica* (...) the general public began to be interested by the modern movement. Journalists began to deal with architecture, conservative critics suddenly found themselves faced with the problem of discussing things that until then they had been silent and that, naturally, they had to deny (...). Thus, understanding it, all the small existing groups have come together to form the M.I.A.R., whose first manifestation has been a great exhibition of modern architecture in Rome and Milan (April and June 1931). (El movimiento arquitectónico actual en Italia, 1932)

EL MOVIMIENTO ARQUITECTÓNICO ACTUAL EN ITALIA

LA NUEVA ARQUITECTURA EN ITALIA

La arquitectura en Italia, se encuentra hoy día sometida completamente al dominio de la arquitectura de otras épocas, al eclecticismo y al modernismo. La arquitectura oficial del Estado continúa prefiriendo el barroco; Marcello, Piacentini, casi dictador en lo que se refiere a construcción urbana, dispone de una oficina bien organizada de proyectos en barroco romano y, además, tiene el monopolio para los problemas de urbanismo en toda Italia; fué casi un milagro que en el concurso para los planos de saneamiento de Bozen y Génova se adjudicase el primer premio a Libera y Pollini

y el segundo a Bottoni y Griffini. Tal era la situación hace un año. En poco tiempo ha cambiado fundamentalmente. Ya antes había habido pruebas aisladas de construcción moderna en Italia, pero de un año a esta parte se puede hablar de un movimiento de conjunto. El año pasado, a raíz de haberse construido la «Cassa Elettrica» de los arquitectos Figini, Frette, Libera y Pollini del (grupo 7) en la exposición internacional de Artes y Oficios celebrada en Monza, el gran público comenzó a interesarse por el movimiento moderno. Los periódicos empezaron a ocuparse de arquitectura, los críticos conservadores se encontraron de repente frente

al problema de disertar sobre cosas que hasta entonces habían callado y que, naturalmente, tenían que negar; sólo algunos pocos comprendieron que se trataba de cuestiones capitales que no se podían descartar tan fácilmente. Pronto la «Cassa Elettrica» no fué el único objeto de la discusión. En Turín los grandes despachos del trust Quailino de los arquitectos Giuseppe Pagano y Gino Levi, recabaron para sí la atención general. En Milán se inauguraron las primeras tiendas modernas, y en Como la casa de viviendas de alquiler edificada por Giuseppe Terragni suscitó vivas discusiones, llegando el municipio a imponer una fuerte multa en metálico al arqui-

La «Cassa Elettrica» en Monza - Arquitectos: Figini, Pollini, Frette y Libera, del «grupo 7», y Bottoni.

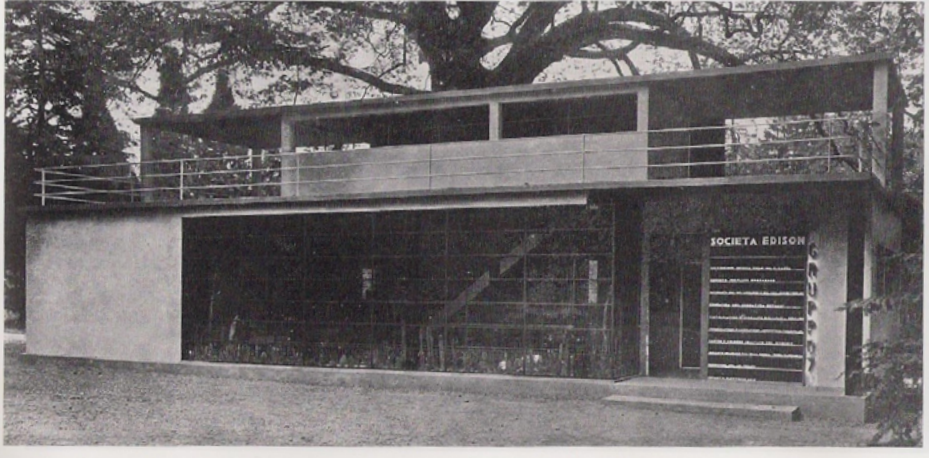


Figure 5. Cover of the article *El Movimiento Arquitectónico actual en Italia* (*The current architectural movement in Italy*), published by the editors of *AC review* in the first quarter 1932.

3.2. Triennale 1933

The Milanese contribution with modernity will have strongly Mediterranean connotations in the V Triennale in May 1933. Perhaps for this reason, the dedication that *AC* editors make to Milanese architecture on the international event is not at all

surprising. The intention of the exhibition is to assert itself as an unequivocal indication of an *Italian way* towards modernity, and that it will find various reasons for kinship with its Catalan neighbours. So important is the exhibition that in the presentation of the Spanish section, the catalogue editor of the Milanese exhibition reviews in this way the materials sent by GATEPAC:

They have claimed the right to an architecture adapted to the climate and the lights of Spain and have shown once again how Mediterranean this architecture is, which some continue to call Nordic but which in the north they recognize as Mediterranean. (Guida della quinta Triennale, 1933 p. 256)

For its part, AC presents a complete report on the exhibition and, in particular, on the *Villa-studio to an artist* (1933), the Figini and Pollini's project for this Triennale:

For the last exhibition of *LA TRIENNALE* a large palace with a dubious tendency to host the General Exhibition was built specifically in some splendid gardens near Milan, and in different places in the same gardens a series of small pavilions designed by the architects of the new trend in Italy. (...) This construction [*villa studio for an artist*] is, perhaps, one of the best Italian works of modern architecture; with an exclusively Mediterranean grace and attractiveness, the architects who have made it have had the wisdom to revive and treat the *patio* element in a modern way by opening the large glass windows in it, orienting them in such a way that they are preserved from the sun during the summer. (...) The slab that covers a part of the patio [aims to] sift the light, which is exces-

sively intense in our climates. (...) Said concept (...) will be able to revive today and count as a characteristic differentiating element of functional Mediterranean architecture from the Nordic one. Logically, instinctively, the Latin peoples are the mainstays of this anti-Nordic differentiation of rationalism. (La exposición de “La Triennale”, 1934)

The achievements of Italian architects in *LA TRIENNALE* have a common denominator:

Latinity, Mediterraneanness which essentially differentiates them from the achievements of Nordic architects. And it is that the new architectural trend has deeply architectural roots. (...) In three years of struggle from the *Casa Elettrica* (...) to the *Villa-studio for an artist* presented at the *TRIENNALE* last year, a considerable path has been made in Italy. (...) The new generation that grows up in the countryside and has a passion for the outdoors, the sun and the light, will easily understand the bare, radically bare wall, the healthy house. (La exposición de “La Triennale”, 1934)

This V Triennale reflects the new behaviour in the layout proposals and in the selection of the used materials. Among the various typologies made, the *Five single-family houses to the weekend*, designed by Piero Bottoni (1903-1973) and his partners, stand out for their similarity to the *Weekend houses in Garraf* (1934-1935) by Sert and Torres Clavé in the optics of a simplification of the procedures of setting up the constructive elements and maximum economy of production, with the generalized use of the standardization (Fig. 7).

LA EXPOSICIÓN DE "LA TRIENNALE" - Milán

Con esta Exposición, Italia nos ha dado un ejemplo altamente interesante. La organización periódica de esta clase de certámenes, que se celebran bajo la dirección de «LA TRIENNALE», permite al público seguir fácilmente la evolución constante de las actividades humanas.

Hace ya algunos años que se celebran

en Italia estas Exposiciones; la correspondiente al año pasado en Milán, ha sido un acontecimiento, un éxito categórico de resonancia internacional. «LA TRIENNALE» tiene por objeto dar a conocer las más recientes actividades en todas las artes: pintura, escultura, arquitectura, así como ingeniería naval, transatlánticos, trabajos manuales, mobiliario, etc., todo perfectamente e inteligentemente representado. Para la última Exposición de «LA TRIENNALE», se construyó expreso en unos espléndidos jardines cercanos a Mi-

lán, un gran palacio con tendencia dudosa para alojar la Exposición general, y en diferentes lugares del mismo jardín fueron edificados una serie de pequeños pabellones proyectados por los arquitectos de la nueva tendencia en Italia.

La arquitectura y la decoración y distribución de los interiores, ha captado la máxima atención de los visitantes. Se ha realizado en este aspecto un verdadero y considerable esfuerzo para poner en conocimiento del gran público las manifes-

Pabellón construido para el Week-end en la exposición de «La Triennale», de Milán, por los arquitectos Falludi, Bottoni y Griffini.



Figure 6. *La Exposición de "La Triennale" - Milán (The exhibition of 'La Triennale' - Milan)* published by AC review in 1934 during the V Triennale held in May of the previous year.



Figure 7. Similarities between the *Five weekend houses* at the V Triennale 1933 and the *Weekend houses in Garraf* by Sert and Torres Clavé.

Indeed, it can be concluded that these similarities exist also in the *Maison de weekend* (1935) by Le Corbusier in La Celle, in France. The postulates of Central European architects are too mechanistic for the lyrical concept that he is acquiring. He begins to make many projects which are tributes to the vernacular, where the parallelisms with the *Weekend Houses in Garraf* are evident. However, this likeness is present not only at a formal resolution level because of the use of local materials, but above all by using the same construction system, the Catalan vault, as a result of the exchanges between the GATCPAC (Pizza & Rovira, 2006) and Le Corbusier during the years before (Fig. 8).

Besides, it is already noticed that *Quadrante* magazine also takes the opportunity to begin a critical line of systematic support for the notion of Mediterraneanness. The first issue, published during the V Triennale, includes an article called *Programma d'Architettura*, signed by some members of Gruppo 7 and other colleagues, in which the question of the Mediterraneanness is announced as one of the points that characterize the line of the group, like concept of order and interpretative key of the expressive code that they try to constitute in response to the so demanded exigency to found an Italian tradition:

Affirmation of a decided Italian tendency, linear and uncompromising, as marked in the fundamental controversies of Gruppo 7. Specification of the characters of the Italian nationalist tendency. Affirmation of “classicism” and “Mediterraneanness” - understood in spirit, and not in forms or folklore. (Gruppo 7, 1933, p. 18)

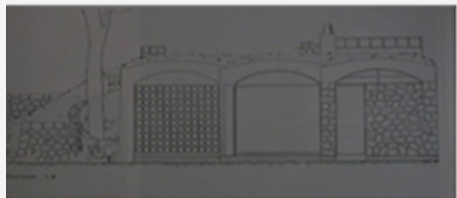


Figure 8. Similarities between the *Weekend houses in Garraf* and the *Maison de weekend* (1935), by Le Corbusier in La Celle, France.

But the conviction of having brought about a change in the Italian rationalist movement is even clearer in the article that Figini and Pollini publish in the next issue of *Quadrante* as a presentation of the *Villa-studio for an artist*:

Three years after the *Casa Elettrica* (VIII Triennale 1930) the *Villa studio per un artista* presents today with greater evidence those characteristics of evolution and differentiation, in the Latin and Mediterranean sense that currently distinguish a part of the new architecture. Logically, instinctively, the Latin peoples, especially the young Italian architecture, focus on this differentiation, classical, solar, anti-nord, of rationalism. Differentiation tends more and more to subject the functionalism of matter to the functionalism of the spirit, to endow it with classical norms and rhythms (a reborn spiritual classicism influences Europe and the world today, from politics to the arts), to determine a trend in the trend. Classic functionalism. Which is infinitely different, antithetical indeed, to the current academic classicism redone by formalistic-rational contaminations. In the *Villa-studio for an artist* the rhythm is determined by the constant intervals (that is, by the number). (Figini & Pollini, 1933, p. 9)

In this way, and moving between the references to the architectural culture of classical antiquity, such as the Pompeian courtyard or *impluvium*, Figini and Pollini introduce in the project an unprecedented attention to the relations contextual aspects of architecture through the specification of a necessary relationship between it, the environmental environment and the distinctive stylistic features of the place. The building, a steel structure with a section of square pillars arranged in a

grid of constant intervals, is part of a rectangular floor plan arranged around two open spaces, a partially covered courtyard and a solarium with a small pool surrounded by walls two meters high. The work is built inside Parco Sempione and is destroyed three months after the end of the event.

And so it happens in the Catalan context between *Detachable House* (1932) by Sert and Torres Clavé, and the already mentioned *Weekend Houses in Garraf*, built only three years after. In this case, the approach to the vernacular themes acquires a clear Mediterranean identity with a special attention to the lyrical and spiritual factors denied by German functionalism. It is observed, both in the *Villa-studio to an artist* and in the *Weekend Houses in Garraf*, the creation of a new language. Sert and Torres Clavé mention the concepts “lyrical” and “spirituality” to justify an option of the project and move away from the technical thought and language that had expressed in the Detachable House:

We can therefore see the influence of the traditional Mediterranean construction, as is the case of the Catalan vault (...), or the furniture, which moves away from industrial veneration and becomes adorned with all kinds of ceramics, wicker or handmade chairs. (Gactcpac, 1935a, p. 36)

3.3. CIAM 1933

This Mediterranean trend is even more emphasized during the IV CIAM held in the summer of 1933 in Athens, where both members of GATCPAC and Gruppo 7 meet, along with Le Corbusier.



Figure 9. Delegates of GATCPAC at the IV CIAM. Archive AFGATCPAC-AHCOAC, Barcelona.

As GATCPAC contribution the group presents three collages with graphics and layouts made about Barcelona: the project of *City of Rest*, the progress of the *Macià Urban Planning* and other projects essays on workers' housing. Gruppo 7 presents various projects, images and essays on the analysis and urban planning of the city of Como.

In fact, the Catalan group writes about defending the supremacy of modern Mediterranean architecture over Central European:

Modern architecture, technically, is largely a discovery of the Nordic countries, but spiritually it is the styleless Mediterranean

architecture that influences this new architecture. Modern architecture is a return to the pure, traditional forms of the Mediterranean. It is a victory for the Latin Sea! (Gatcpac, 1395b, p. 33)

By Christmas 1934, the *AC* magazine published an article by Sert called *Architecture without “style” and without “architect”*, which focused on various aspects related to the constants of traditional Mediterranean architecture. In this same issue, Sert talks about architecture and highlights the change that is going on in Modern architecture in a quote dedicated to works made by Le Corbusier:

Modern architecture can use all materials. The architect does not have to impose strict limits. You can continue using traditional materials, such as stone, alongside reinforced concrete forms. Alternate flat and curved surfaces. It’s the modern spirit, whatever the play is. Wide spirit and in constant creation. (Sert & Prats, 1934, p. 33)

Finally, Persico will note just after the celebration of II CIAM, the final death of Italian rationalism:

For us, Italian *rationalism* is dead. Born as an artificial need for novelty (...) it has never been interesting except as a document of a spiritual uneasiness that has failed to consistently establish the terms of the problem. Abroad, *rationalism* has been a fruitful movement of ideas and experiences and has renewed the deepest foundations of European taste; In Italy, on the other hand, it has dispersed in the rhetoric of controversy, so that at the end of the day, there is not much war left but the memory of some brilliant

writer and some paradoxical purpose. The truth is that Italian *rationalism* was not born of any deep need, but of amateurish positions, (...) or of practical pretexts from which any reason of ethical interiority is excluded. (Persico, 1933)

3.4. Triennale 1936

The next exhibition event offered by the Triennale was the one directed by Persico and Pagano, opening on June 4th 1936. Focusing once again on the house, this time is presented, in one of the pavilions, the *Mostra dell'architettura rurale nel bacino del Mediterraneo*, which is a significant photographic section on Italian rural architecture. In fact, in an article published the year before in *Casabella* he details the interpretive parameters of this architecture: “The elements of composition [of rural architecture] are not linked to stylistic architecture (...). The whole anti-academic rebellion is in germ, being able to find here the value of a very modern rhythm” (Pagano, 1935, p. 76). Thus, the recovery of the tradition left by the modern Italian culture reaches its maximum apogee and integrates the forms of the minor past in the new typological and expressive modalities of building (Fig. 10).

Regarding the Catalan contribution to this Triennale, it has the same distinctive features. Agnoldomenico Pica (1907-1990) praises the Mediterranean Catalan way:

(...) It consists of a series of photographs illustrating examples of Catalan Gothic and agricultural constructions on the coasts of Catalonia (...), grouped under the name of *Mediterranean Tradition*; next to the photographs there will be other works by archi-



Figure 10. *Mostra dell'architettura rurale nel bacino del Mediterraneo* at the VI Triennale (1936) (Archive AFGATCPAC-AHCOAC, Barcelona).

sects members of GATEPAC, who claim to adhere to this tradition in its purest form by studying its functional principles and their application to current architecture, which must meet the needs of modern life, directing it towards a greater awareness of the needs of the community. (Pica, 1936, p. 139)

4. Conclusion

Based on the principles transmitted by the International Style, both Gruppo 7 and GATCPAC will try to modify the design trend that in that period is pre-established in their respective countries.

There will be many affinities between the Lombard and Catalan associations: from the historical period in which the modern mobilization began to the appearance of Le Corbusier as an indisputable guide figure; from the vindication of the international movement to the creative search for an autonomous path of adherence to this “referential cosmology” (Pizza & Rovira, 2006, p. 116); from the recurring practice of study trips and contacts with European representatives to a committed self-promotion activity. And it is that the historical, artistic, topographical and climatic roots will be too strong to be dragged along by Germanic radical centralism. For these two groups, but also for the municipalities and regions they represent, the link with the *place* is such that it is impossible to give up their personality. Thus, the link with the Mediterranean is the common denominator that is beginning to develop in these areas.

The Second World War and the Spanish Civil War will mean a radical break in the chronological continuity of modernizing architectural events; and once passed, the long, dark period of

recovery will remain. In the case of Milan, the post-war period lasted less than five years and Italy resurfaced and managed to continue the architectural precepts it preached before the war. The case of Barcelona will be more complex. The establishment of the Franco regime will mean a terrible social, political, economic, and cultural setback. And in terms of the autarkic academicism and monumentalism architectural context, it will be the only path accepted by the regime.

But after the first years of twilight and strict repression, and on the celebration in Barcelona of the V Assembly of Architects in 1949, a light of a re-modernization will begin.

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He is occupied with street art and mainly with large-scale murals. He’s worked individually and with his team, Really? Team, in various parts of Greece.

He also works as a designer, illustrator, street artist and musician. His interests include photography, production and direction of audiovisual works, writing and acting. His research interests revolve around Design, Art and Creation, focusing on the design processes that precede, are subject to and follow the creation of works of Street Art, and how they are qualitatively and quantitatively related to Design, in terms of productivity, quality, performance and user experience.

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Currently he is professor of industrial design at the Faculty of Applied Arts, Helwan University. The academic history extends gradually, starting from a teaching assistant to a professor. During those periods, he taught at many public and private universities, which have departments of industrial design and product design. He published more than twenty research papers in refereed scientific journals and local and international conferences, supervised many master's and Ph.D. theses, and participated in the discussion and judgment committees for scientific theses. He received the award for the best master's thesis at Helwan University, as well as the medal of the Faculty of Applied Arts. Patent design for a white cane model for the blind. Held several workshops for designing and prototyping in addition to many participations in the field of industry, especially the manufacture of handmade models, as well as community service and volunteer work for people with special needs.

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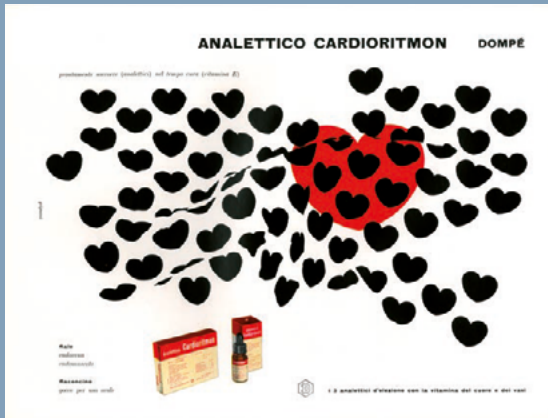
His scientific research is concerned about digital and physical products and interaction design. In his professional activity, he collaborated on several projects of user interfaces and interactive systems.

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