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**Twenty-four built thoughts**  
**A tool for investigating the space between form and structure**

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Author: Tiziano De Venuto, Giuseppe Tupputi  
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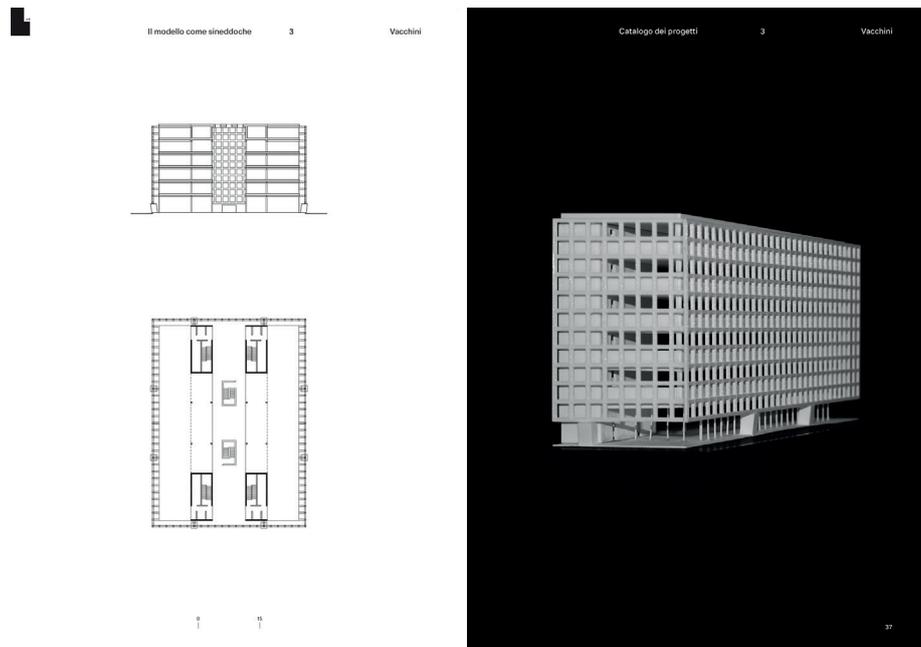


*Il modello come sineddoche* is a book that starts from the collection of the results developed in four didactic sessions – within the Architectural Design ateliers of the dICAR department of the Polytechnic University of Bari, altogether by teachers Anna Bruna Menghini and Carlo Moccia, with Giuseppe Resta, Tiziano De Venuto and Giuseppe Tupputi as teaching assistants – that however expands beyond the horizon of the single course experience. Configuring itself as a moment of necessary synthesis, by the authors Tiziano De Venuto and Giuseppe Tupputi, it constructs the opportunity to focus on some points, in a research path that starts before its formation, and that, as can be seen from reading the volume, intends to proceed in subsequent phases of study and critics. A question not so obvious, that certainly arises from the posture of the authors: young architects who are also involved in teaching activity, and who therefore, as Carlo Gandolfi recalls in the *Appunti* at the end of the book, «study architecture together with their students»<sup>1</sup>.

The crucial point of the research is the investigation around some remarkable examples of modern and contemporary architecture, elaborated in a critical interpretation with a clear trajectory, taking as parameter the relationship between the conception of space and its constructive order, in a constant dialogue, referring to the comparison between architecture and the «art of structures»<sup>2</sup>.

The clarity of the decision of the research perspective does not hide, but rather explores with conviction, the problems underlying the chosen thematic core: the relationship in architecture between spatial ideals and constructive logics in the «generative process, or we could say genetic, of its form»<sup>3</sup>, supporting the undertaken path by the *synecdoche* produced in the ateliers.

The material produced over the years of work with the students is in fact precisely defined: synthetic drawings on 1:200 scale, with an effort on the careful selection on representation, constantly looking for correspondence between sign and meaning. And above all a panorama of models, all in 3D printing of the same resin, which choose to represent the analysed building by making a reduction to *a part for the whole*, capable of unveil, reducing the architecture to the essential, those «hierarchical relationships interior to every single architectural organism»<sup>4</sup> crucial for the critical node of this study, and aimed at understanding the «syntactic unit endowed with the



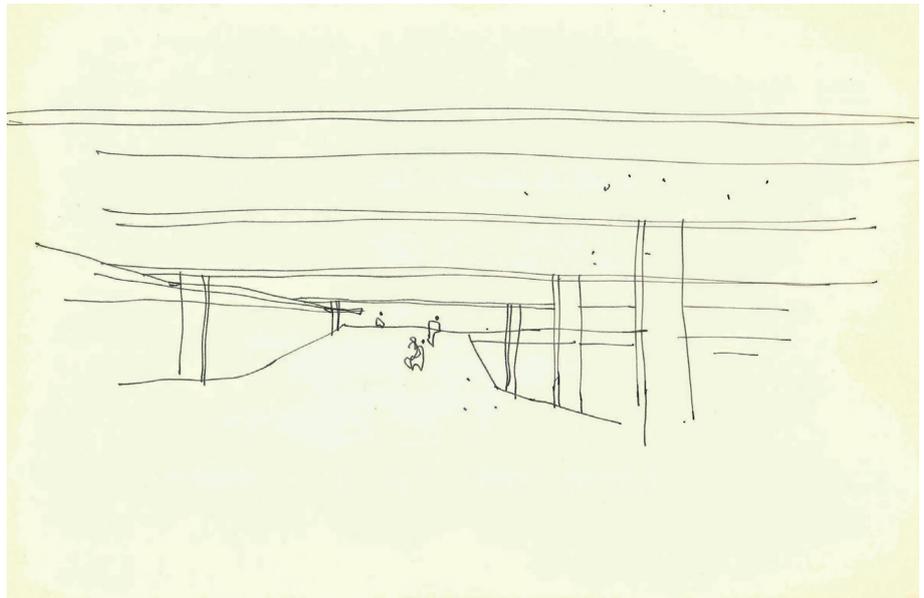
**Fig. 1**  
Pages of the book. First sheet of the toolkit, about Livio Vacchini's Ferriera in Locarno.

complexity and autonomy necessary to represent the spatial concept of the entire building»<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, the choice of homogenization of drawings and models brings the whole study back to an ideal worktop which constitutes a basis where is possible to compare the examples with each other, through their *synecdoche*.

The figure of speech underlines the desire not to reproduce the buildings in their integrity and formal conclusion, but rather to follow the experimental search for expression of the «relationship that is created between the architectural organism and the structural organism, between the character of the space and the forms of the building, according to an anatomical tension»<sup>6</sup>. The decomposition operation proves to be fundamental if, mentioning Martí Arís, «what characterizes the structure is its relational dimension, the essential factor of which are neither the elements nor the whole, but rather the relationships [...] that allow the formalization of the whole»<sup>7</sup>.

The works investigated in the volume are twenty-four, all architectures developed - not always built - by modern and contemporary Masters, from 1929 to 2015; chosen as a part of a historical process of consolidation of the collaboration between architectural and engineering disciplines, which is fundamental for the desired outcome: the shaping of forms that are the expression of a spatial concept materialized through a specific relationship with construction techniques. So that they can therefore be enclosed in a «constructed thought»<sup>8</sup>. And, moreover, they are all architectures that unfold as variations on the same functional theme: the large collective building. It is in fact here that the research underlying the book identifies the possibility of investigating the intrinsic potential of the great structural bay, which summarizes the relationship between form and structure.

The teaching method adopted in the ateliers has therefore built over the years a clear correspondence between the theoretical principles on which it was intended to investigate and the praxis of the assigned exercise. The examples are arranged in a catalogue that can be consulted in the central part of the book, easy to consult thanks to the precious editorial work that assembles the volume, and to a practical synoptic table. Each example is presented with a synthetic plan associated with the elevation, and then subsequently a possible second plan, and the section. The sheet ends with a



**Fig. 2**

Image from the book, perspective of the entrance of Paulo Mendes da Rocha's MAC USP, drawing from the Archive © Acervo Paulo Mendes da Rocha

photographic image, also structured as an investigation tool, which allows the eye to overturn the two-dimensional drawing in the sculptural plasticity of the built work, and virtually navigate the physical model. In an economy of representative gestures, the origin and elementary relationship between form and structure of each work is made clear. The sequence of the architectures studied and presented does not proceed in chronological or classificatory order: the itinerary proposed by the authors is also the result of the continuous questioning posed by the underlying problem of the relationship between the formal quality and the construction, choosing to arrange the examples by chaining them in a succession created step by step, «through the recognition of some *structural* analogies of some types of space»<sup>9</sup>.

The catalogue is presented as a *toolkit*, underlying the authors' intent not to crystallize the collected results, but rather to put them back on the worktop. Its position in the centre of the pages of the book is also perhaps metaphorically a reference to the central position in the debate that the two authors carry out between the lines. The decision to alternate themselves in the writing of the chapters reflects indeed the constant dialogic dimension recalled by De Venuto and Tupputi in the texts. The themes and the method are introduced in the chapters before the "booklet" of the catalogue of, while the chapters that follow it implement the methodology and extensively analyse four works extrapolated from the toolkit. They go deeper into the question, staging a close comparison between the chosen examples, extracting their ability «not to flaunt the audacity and structural effort as a value in itself»<sup>10</sup>, but rather they're being the source of a process where «even the structural logics and the construction techniques are intended in a compositional sense»<sup>11</sup>.

But to get to the root of the question in the reading of the architectures, the role played by the model in this study is preponderant and effective, restoring a use of the maquette in the didactic of architecture not linked to the pre-vision of the project, but, on the contrary, to the study that follows it. Bringing the students back to that sensory experience typical of the practice of the maquette, «constructed by an infinite series of different particular views and panoramic overviews of the same physical object, which are able to provide a *representation* of reality that is not anchored to the *depiction* placed on the support»<sup>12</sup>. And this takes place in the full

awareness of those who guide the educational path: in fact, referring to the use of the model that precedes the project, the authors declare that «in an inverse process, these *synecdoche* would rather represent the principles, the paradigms contained in our master works, building a wall of tools and techniques useful for the experience of *making* in the didactic of the project»<sup>13</sup>. Through a peculiar use of the model that allows to understand «therefore the construction as a poetic act, through which the thought underlying the space is made manifest»<sup>14</sup>. And thus, sharing not the results treated as finite data, but rather an ongoing process, part of a necessary debate on the addressed issues.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Gandolfi C. (2022) – “Appunti sulla didattica della costruzione in architettura”. In: De Venuto T., Tupputi G., *Il modello come sinecdoche. Spazio, Struttura, Forma per un'idea di architettura collettiva*. Libria, Melfi, p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> Muttoni A. (2006) – *L'arte delle strutture*. Mendrisio Academy Press, Milan.

<sup>3</sup> Gandolfi C. (2022) – “Appunti sulla didattica della costruzione in architettura”. In: De Venuto T., Tupputi G., *Il modello come sinecdoche* op. cit., p. 195.

<sup>4</sup> Tupputi G. (2022) – “Il modello e la sinecdoche”. In: De Venuto T., Tupputi G., *Il modello come sinecdoche* op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup> De Venuto T. (2022) – “La forma dello spazio come tema per la struttura”. In: De Venuto T., Tupputi G., *Il modello come sinecdoche* op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>7</sup> Marti Aris C. (1990) – *Le variazioni dell'identità. Il tipo in architettura*. CittàStudi edizioni, Milan.

<sup>8</sup> De Venuto T. (2022) – “La forma dello spazio come tema per la struttura”. In: De Venuto T., Tupputi G., *Il modello come sinecdoche* op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> Tupputi G. (2022) – “Sollevare/Sospendere”. In: De Venuto T., Tupputi G., *Il modello come sinecdoche* op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>12</sup> Braghieri N. (2020) – “Piccoli strumenti per grandi progetti”. In: Maillard N., Veillon C. (ed.), *Isle of Models. Architecture and Scale*. Triest Verlag, Zürich, p. 123.

<sup>13</sup> De Venuto T. (2022) – “La forma dello spazio come tema per la struttura”. In: De Venuto T., Tupputi G., *Il modello come sinecdoche* op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>14</sup> Tupputi G. (2022) – “Il modello e la sinecdoche”. In: De Venuto T., Tupputi G., *Il modello come sinecdoche* op. cit., p. 16.