



Valslerena Seminar 3 in collaboration with FAM

SELECTION TO PARTICIPATE AT THE SEMINARY OF VALSERENA

third edition 23-24 October 2026 entitled:

Urban Ontology of Architecture

The Seminary of Valslerena

The Valslerena Seminars are the result of a collaboration between some professors from the Schools of Architecture of the Universities of Parma and Bologna, and will be inaugurated in 2024 with the conference entitled *The architectural question of soil in the time of relative space: a problem of order?* (Mimesis proceedings 2025) then with the second edition in 2025 entitled *Figure and Counterfigure in Architecture*, which took place in the Aula Magna of the Malatesta Library in Cesena. The third edition now proposes the theme *Urban Ontology of Architecture* for the appointment scheduled at the CSAC at the Abbey of Valslerena on 23 and 24 October 2026.

It is a meeting, in the form of a seminar, between professors of architectural and urban composition, i.e. those belonging to that sector of the architectural discipline most responsible for the meanings and functions of the forms of the designed space, called to reflect in depth but with an open vision on the conceptual mechanisms that condition the philosophy of the architectural sub specie project in the historical becoming. This is an opportunity to promote the taking of positions and therefore of real confrontation on problems of a theoretical nature by those who do not renounce, within the Italian and European schools of architecture, to recognize the responsibility of thought in determining an art destined to be applied in the concrete material of its trans-scalar construction, between building, city and territory.

Thematic incipit

The title of the Seminar first of all raises the question of whether a

"discourse of being" is possible in the urban sense of architecture (*lògos*, discourse, and *òvτος*, of being). That is, of an architecture, understood as a complete autonomous unit, which in its formal essence is the bearer of the meaning of the city. A question to be posed on a non-ideal, absolute level, given the characteristics of architecture as an entity set in reality and through different ways of relating to the real city or the idea of the city. A first interpretation comes to us from Aldo Rossi when, perhaps the first one, he poses the question already in the title of his famous essay: "The architecture of the city". A "della" that we can understand in the sense of belonging to the city, since the individual architecture is revealed through a project aimed at building itself and rooting itself in it, that is, when the city actually comes to share semantically as well as physically every architecture. Therefore, the city, according to this outcome of the composition, can be assumed to a single great architecture through a historical palimpsest from which to derive constants of character that structure its identity. Rossi himself in the introduction: "The city, the subject of this book, is understood here as architecture". In fact, the urban reality is made up of architectures but at the same time it disregards it, creating the city its own morphological and functional entity up to an identity definition involving the *civitas*, as well as the *polis*, which makes citizenship - as the German philosopher Johann Herder, one of the fathers of European cultural identity argued - the very language of its city and of the "ame del'âme del cité" the reasons for its intersubjectivity.

But if, on the other hand, speculating to solicit responses from the guests to the seminar theme, we invert the terms of Rossi's title, the condition of belonging can change as "The city of architecture" would allude to how much of the urban character, in its multiform formal expression, can find an intrinsic role in architecture, that is, it conditions its spatial structure in whole or in part, the typological peculiarity of distribution, the functional logics and, last but not least, the experience of the inhabitant with respect to a landscape that from the outside becomes internal according to similar visual mechanisms. The much-cited painting of St. Jerome by Antonello da Messina turns out to be a figurative manifesto of this borrowing between architectural and urban space, between an analogical give and take of extraordinary evidence. The archetypal experience is vast in this sense, from the great imperial and royal complexes of the classical world, to the abbey epic starting with the model repeatedly cited by Canella of the Abbey of San Gallo not to mention the concentrations of the fortification, up to the Renaissance apparatus for civil use, among all the hospital, and so on to arrive at the large devices of the types of public service between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and also residential of the '900. A manifestation of urban morphology that would seem to live already within the body of architecture. And contemporaneity is no less in terms of similar experiences despite the changed conditions. A reciprocity that Giuseppe Samonà has been able to cultivate through deliberately unitary theoretical and design research as an antidote to forms of specialized determinism and naïve positivism. This condition of variegated urban characterization intrinsic to the form, starting from the

layout, of the architecture is not always reconciled with the real city, the one of which it is geographically part. This is the case of Le Corbusier's Unité d'habitation which, as Semerani reminds us quoting Samonà, suffers from the prototype limit of being a city in itself, so as to make it self-referential with respect to the urban context in which it is inserted. In other ways, the case of the Beaubourg (Cittàbella), for example, represents an architecture that metabolizes and condenses a typically urban complexity that is contrary to the formal characteristics of the city of species, that is, of that part of the historic center of Paris. The urban ontology of architecture therefore lends itself to bringing out controversial interpretations with respect to the relationship between architecture and city in the structure of architecture itself, to the point of being able to recreate a city within the architectural envelope indifferent to the real city according to Koolhaas instead of MVRDV or simulacral and scenographic if we think of the typology of many shopping centers. In this framework, the role of typology is obviously privileged in the critical investigation for how it is capable, in its dispositive clarity, of revealing the rate of urban meaning and its functional and formal quality. A typology that takes charge of historical development and the structural and cultural dynamics that determine it in different urban contexts where the role of the city varies with respect to territorial space, the dynamics of land use, and an urban dimension crossed today by the phenomena of the virtual world that have grown up in the climate of globalization. All the more reason, in this growing and contradictory relativism of the settlement space, we can ask ourselves whether for architecture to involve the characteristics of the city (which city?) in its structure, therefore in an ontological sense, can constitute a decisive presupposition for its affirmation. And here the variables of the public and private spheres of architecture are also inserted, both with respect to the variation of collective functions and no less than those of housing. In any case, as Polesello is keen to recall, "the city has been taken as a place of origin and return for the experience of architectural design" and therefore it seems useful to search in this path for what remains, settles and takes root of the urban within every architecture, how much and how the ontology of every architecture can be urban.

Participation in the call

Participation in the Valserena 3 Seminar is open to national and international architectural scholars. From this next edition it is also expected to invite 6 speakers, in particular young scholars, identified among the participants in the open selection procedure compared to the 18 speakers in total, of which 12 directly invited among scholars and architects of clear fame who, in recent years, have dealt with the chosen theme through theoretical research and projects.

The selection is structured in a single phase where participants are asked to upload a Word file on the platform containing a 2,000-character

summary of the intervention proposal, 5 keywords and the biography of the author(s) with the data for the appropriate contacts.

These texts are to be written directly in the [Word Template](#) downloadable from the platform.

The proposals must be unpublished, the result of an interpretation of an original critical theoretical nature, through compositional research in its many ways, also partly making use of experiences already carried out but consistently reported in the economy of investigation of the proposed theme. In order to better clarify this approach, aimed at best restoring the research objectives set by the Seminar, the promoters reserve the right to contact the selected scholars directly in order to clarify the characteristics of the expected contributions.

The selection of proposals is by the promoters and organizers of the Seminar Prof. Carlo Quintelli, Lamberto Amistadi, Enrico Prandi, Carlo Gandolfi.

Deadlines

The proposal must be uploaded no later than **March 29, 2026**.

In summary:

- 20 February launch of the call for selection
- 29 March date of upload of proposals
- 21 April communication of the results of the selection
- 23-24 October: participation in the Seminar
- 15 February delivery of written intervention for the publication of the acts.

How to participate in the Seminar

The speeches, by the directly invited speakers and the participants selected through the call, must last 20 minutes with the possible contribution of PPT images.

Each intervention will be placed in the two-day program, in one of the three sessions, according to the logic of thematic complementarity.

The return of the proceedings in the Mimesis series "Seminari di Valserena" is expected to be released by the fourth edition of the Seminar in October 2027.

All participants are required to be present continuously during the three sessions of the seminar (from Friday 23 October early afternoon to Saturday 24 late morning).

Hospitality expenses are covered, excluding travel expenses.

Info: redazione@famagazine.it