

Synthesis of Arts: Ico Parisi's Interiors

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“Il y a dans l'air du temps des possibilités extraordinaires enivrantes, stimulantes, une rencontre de la Porte-Dorée des arts majeurs. L'un aidant l'autre, ils dissiperont les brouillards qui noient et les idées et les artistes”(Le Corbusier 1946, 17). With these words, in 1946, Le Corbusier focuses the debate on the relationship between the artist and the architect, an approach that will be object of reflection, subject of many exhibitions and ideal to chase for a long time. He is convinced that architecture must once again work together with sculpture and painting enabling the creation of a new architectural register, a new artistic expression able to overcome the individuality of each discipline. After the Second World War, collaborations between artists and architects represent one of the cores of architectural studies. These assumptions give birth to some movements and expositions that experiment and carry on with all the studies done up to that point, spreading the knowledge on this subject and increasing their international interest. Emblematic examples of this collaboration between artists and architects are the IX and the X Triennials of Milan, held respectively in 1951 and 1954, and the exhibition of 1957 entitled *Colori e forme nella casa d'oggi* held at Villa Olmo, in Como. All events were promoters of the *synthesis's* concept, not as “affaire théorique, discussion byzantine entre esthètes, mais avant tout [comme] une affaire de pratique courageuse, de croyance, de croisade” (Guéguen 1967, 55). Some domestic interiors, designed by Milanese architects from the late 1940s to early 1970s, could be considered as a field of experimentation of interactions between architecture and artistic disciplines. The work of Ico Parisi fits into this historical and artistic context, in particular, some emblematic examples of the mutualism between arts and architecture are recognizable in his works presented on the occasion of the exhibitions mentioned above.

For the IX Triennale, inside the *Abitazione* section, the project for a holiday home, conceived as a single large room, is created by Parisi in communion with the architects Renato Angeli and Gianni Saibene and it's part of a series of experiences that promote an architectural direction of painting and sculpture. Here Parisi treasures the contribution of numerous artists in order to obtain unity between architectural design and artistic expression: Mario Radice, Umberto Zimelli, Vittorio Tavernari, Antonio Voltan, Giancarlo Illiprandi and Aligi Sassu. During the X Triennial, among the park's installations, Parisi's project for the *Padiglione del Soggiorno* conceived with Silvio Longhi and Luigi Antonietti is paradigmatic. A plastic spiral structure, “result of the collaboration between

architects and engineers, together painters and sculptors – Bruno Munari, Mauro Reggiani, Francesco Somaini – [...] informed by shared views and aspirations” (Lietti 2017, 179).

Within the Como exhibition, focused on the “problem of interior architecture considered as the point of greatest adherence of the plastic arts to life”(Associazione Belle Arti della Provincia di Como 1957, IX), Parisi presents two projects: the *Casa per vacanze* – with Gian Paolo Allevi and Luisa Parisi – conceived as an example of an “industrial standard” applied to the artistic disciplines to which the artists Giovanni Campi, Mario Radice, Manlio Rho and Francesco Somaini contribute (Ibid., 4-17); the *Stanza per bambini* where, “the collaboration between architects, – Ico Parisi, Salvatore Alberio, Fulvio Cappelletti, Silvio Longhi – painters –Mario Radice and Manlio Rho – and sculptors – Francesco Somaini – had the opportunity to take place in the whole setting”(Ibid., 64).

Leaving the temporary dimension of exhibitions, again in those years, precisely between 1957 and 1958, Ico Parisi designs with his wife Luisa Aiani Parisi, his own house, which they themselves call *La casa della vita* and that is located on the top floor of the Sant’Antonio condominium – also built on a project by Parisi – in via Scalini in Como. The architect, convinced of the importance of a design integrated to the artistic intervention, with this project shows that “creative unities will be formed, in which architect, painter and sculptor, in the manner of the Comacini Masters, will give a new face to modern architecture. [...] The synthesis of architecture with the other arts can only be conceived in the coexistence of architects with painters and sculptors” (Gualdoni 1999, 7). For that reason he call to him his circle of artists, namely Francesco Somaini for the sculptures, Lucio Fontana for the floor, Fausto Melotti for ceramic tiles and Bruno Munari for the art’s works as well as numerous other artistic presences that dot the interiors. The choice is to “create a sort of scenic space in which the artist’s work is not subordinate to the project but necessarily completes it” (Lietti and Brambilla 2019, 36). A single large open-space without any wall division dug under the roof at the top of the complex “like a real hut, [...]a house of atmospheres, climates, temperatures even more than shapes” (Gualdoni 1999, 12). In that sense, the link between the architect and the artists is much more than a simple professional collaboration, it is a partnership that generates new experiments and new research every time.

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Design Driven Research

The figure of Ico Parisi and his design path, that led him to deal insistently with the theme of the synthesis between arts and architecture, will be examined through an in-depth investigation which aims to achieve greater and more articulated knowledge and awareness of the project. Through the tool of drawing and by retracing the steps of production and elaboration it will be possible to understand the maturation of the design process and, within the latter, to carry out the form of collaboration and the variety of figure and effects that the dialogue between arts and architecture leads to. The investigation of the spatial complexities, of the relation between internal and external places, the analysis of spatial experience and so the phenomena of interaction with architecture and its inhabitant and the examination of the cooperation between the architect and the artist will allow to open different perspectives on the project and above all to understand the mechanisms and the project methodologies used. In that sense the project, or perhaps better to say the step by step reconstruction of the project, can become the beacon of a research that aims to extrapolate a design practice and the peculiarities of an architecture, typical of the second postwar period, that saw a close collaboration between architects and artists.

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