

A Conversation with Stanislaus von Moos

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Self-Organized Magazine?

Gabrielle Schaad: Among the things that stick out about *archithese* is the fact that it appears as relatively “self-organized.” Compared to other publications founded around 1970 it didn’t have an institutional base. For instance, *ARCH+* in Germany or *Oppositions* in the United States emerged from an established discussion culture: the former at the Institut für Grundlagen moderner Architektur und Entwerfen (Institute for Principles of Modern Architecture, IGmA) established 1967 in Stuttgart, and the latter at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (IAUS; 1967–1985) in New York. For *archithese*, the situation was different. As a federation of practice-oriented architects, the Association of Independent Swiss Architects (FSAI) may have occasionally provided a framework for roundtables and conferences that could result in a publication. Yet, unlike the IGmA or the IAUS—not to mention the recently founded Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture (gta; 1967) at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich)—FSAI was not a significant institutional space for intellectual exchange.

Stanislaus von Moos: In fact, it resulted from a strange kind of convergence of interests. I had played around with doing “little magazines” ever since my student years. So, I suspect the subject was in the air when I first sat together with Hans Reinhard, who was then at the helm of FSAI (Fig. 1). On the other hand, it is fair to assume that he thought the upgrade of the FSAI’s quarterly bulletin (to which I had occasionally contributed as an author) to a small magazine might add some cultural and intellectual luster to the federation’s then still somewhat uncertain status within the profession (Fig. 2). Reinhard assumed the publication would allow for voices to be raised against the de facto monopoly in matters of architectural culture then largely claimed by the Bund Schweizerischer Architekten / Federation of Swiss Architects (BSA / FAS) and its organ, the journal *Werk*. Be that as it may, five years later, in 1976, when BSA and FSAI came together to decide on the



Fig. 1—Hans Reinhard, “Wohnhaus in Hergiswil, 1969 [Reinhard’s private mansion, 1969],” *fsai. Verband freierwerbender Schweizer Architekten 2* (1969): 8–9.



Fig. 2—*fsai. Verband freierwerbender Schweizer Architekten 2* (1969), 29.7 × 21 cm.

upcoming merger of the two journals *Werk* and *archithese*, that mission at least could be said to have been “accomplished”!¹

I can only say that, for Reinhard, working with us as editors probably turned out to be more of a challenge than it was for us to work with the FSAI. A report on the housing conditions of immigrant workers in Switzerland published in the very first issue almost brought about the end of the adventure—it had caused an uproar within the association. But the FSAI president’s unwillingness to compromise on the principle of our editorial independence saved the operation.²

Torsten Lange: Since you mentioned it, I would like to briefly focus on *archithese*’s “first cycle”; that is, the first four numbers published in Lausanne (1971). What strikes us most today is the variety of authors and themes featured in those issues. Journalistic criticism of then-recent architecture alternates with scholarly discussions that speak to the then-emerging interest in preservation. The politics of housing and the role of architects in society are also addressed—often from a distinctly Marxist perspective.³ Then, there is an interview with the philosopher Henri Lefèbvre and an article by Yona Friedman that extends over two issues. Grappling with so many challenges and crises at once somehow looks like a welcome escape from an art historian’s solitary work in the Biblioteca Hertziana in Rome.

Fig. 3—Stanislaus von Moos, *Turm und Bollwerk: Beiträge zu einer politischen Ikonographie der italienischen Renaissancearchitektur* (Zurich: Atlantis-Verlag, 1974).



SvM: The architectural journalist Jean-Claude Widmer was my first-year coeditor of the magazine together with the architect Albert Büsch, who represented the FSAI. The interview with Lefèbvre—a highlight of the entire series—and the contacts with Yona Friedman and Ionel Schein go entirely on Widmer’s account.⁴ Charles Jencks, Jacques Gubler, André Corboz, and others were my “acquisitions.” Anyway, you are right, I was in Rome at that time, and it might have been better to remain focused on my dissertation during my tenure at the Swiss Institute there.⁵ But then, in the way I tried to understand them, the issues at stake in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are often not that different from those of today (Fig. 3).



Fig. 4—Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky, *Transparenz, Kommentar von Bernhard Hoesli (Le Corbusier-Studien 1)*, “gta” 4 (Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1968).

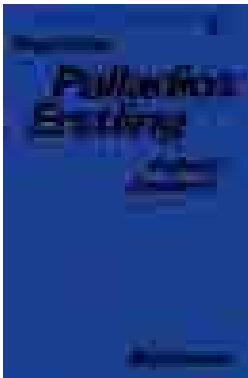


Fig. 5—Paul Hofer, *Palladios Erstling - Die Villa Godi-Valmarana (Palladio-Studien 1)*, “gta” 5 (Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1969).

TL: Well, but— from a Zurich point of view— what made *archithese*’s eclectic approach so different, so appealing in comparison to the recently published first issues of the gta publication? You had lampooned the latter for its antiquated methods and for the inconsistency between the scholarly posture of its work in comparison to the neo-avant-garde allure of Hans-Rudolf Lutz’s graphics for gta.⁶ You also criticized the series’ underlying editorial strategy as a mixed-bag approach that included Étienne-Louis Boullée, Rowe and Slutzky’s “Transparency” essay, and a collection of writings rescued from the drawers of one of the gta chairs— including one about a hitherto neglected Palladio villa (Figs. 4–5).⁷

SvM: Looking back, the gta publication roster’s variety is one of its virtues. It is granted that my somewhat insolent book review didn’t earn me many friends at the ETH [laughs]. As to *archithese*’s even more strident eclecticism of subjects and approaches, it may well have been one reason for its short-term collapse— after only one year of operation. However, when we founded the magazine, the gta Institute was undoubtedly the least among our worries. We had neither cash nor an academic base to work from, nor were we confronted with the challenge of a weathered institutional aura that needed to be defended and illustrated.

But since you are pointing to a particular strategic “indecision” that both operations seem to have shared in their early moments, let me point at two differences. First, as you suggested, *archithese*, perhaps just following the zeitgeist, ventured into an area of sociopolitical analysis and critical theory that was somewhat off-limits for the gta at the time— due to chronic territorial claims within the school and the generation gap.⁸ Second, there is also a “structural” difference. While the gta book series was conceived as a venue for the faculty who ran the institute, you will find but a few articles by Jean-Claude Widmer and myself in *archithese*. We both liked to see our names printed but were realistic enough not to think of the magazine as being primarily a stage for our ambitions as authors. In the long run, *archithese* (if not indirectly the FSAI) may even have played a role in fostering

academic careers. After all, a few of our most productive collaborators later joined the ranks of the gta Institute — even its board of directors (André Corboz, Werner Oechslin, and Kurt W. Forster, in particular)!

GS: Was it ever the magazine’s ambition to reach out to non-academic audiences? Looking back: Did you target the academic, the professional, or the broader public audience with *archithese*?

SvM: We never really thought about it — but then again, in the early (“luxury”) version of *archithese*, we decided to have pieces that were “scholarly” or in any way “theoretical” printed on gray paper, with more journalistic and less formal essays on white. We thought that would help readers to choose between the “lighter” and the “heavier” offerings. ... Something like the “Schweiz” [Switzerland] and the “Literatur und Kunst” [Literature and art] sections in the Swiss newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, although the initial model was the *Architectural Review*, with its light-blue or yellow pages for the “intellectually highbrow” articles. Academic audiences were on our radar. Then came what you call “the broader public”: people interested in the political and economic contexts of architectural production. No doubt we somewhat neglected the strictly “professional” audience — and, understandably, we were criticized for it.

GS: But wasn’t it precisely this fluid and dynamic character that made the journal more “postmodern” in its pluralistic approach to topics and methodology?

SvM: Our “pluralism” was structural: the lack of an institutional structure or of a compact group of colleagues behind me that could have secured a unity of interest, orientation, let alone doctrine. “Postmodern?” — I don’t know. In my own work, I avoid the term, knowing well that we are all part of the phenomenon.

TL: Referring to what you just said about *archithese*’s role in paving the way toward “careers:” What about yourself

as a teacher? Have you benefitted from your past as *archithese's* editor?

SvM: Probably, yes — although outside of Switzerland more than inside. At least for the architects among my colleagues at the Technical University in Delft, the two *werk.archithese* issues about “Monotony” may have carried more weight than my so-called academic credentials.⁹ But that is a mere suspicion!

Looks and Politics

GS: Published in Switzerland, *archithese* in its early period was very much produced “on the move.” It is tempting to think that its “clip, stamp, fold” approach was partly born from your own nomadic lifestyle and from the aesthetic, political, and even academic sympathies and affiliations that came along with time.¹⁰ Digital communication channels did not yet exist when the magazine began. The FSAI granted for the production just enough to cover the printing, distribution, and some modest author fees. In that sense, yours was probably not a job to make a living at. Does *archithese's* international outlook therefore need to be seen as a reflection both of the limited means at your disposal and of your own itinerant career — kicked off, I assume, more by your work on Le Corbusier than by your Renaissance studies?¹¹ After your stay in Rome and the first issues appeared in print, Cambridge, Massachusetts, became your primary address. Still, when referring to the beginnings of *archithese*, Kurt W. Forster, a one-time director of the Swiss Institute in Rome, pointed to the variety of small architectural magazines then circulating in Italy and their role as instigators of architectural discussions in that country and beyond.¹²

SvM: I was hopelessly fascinated by these magazines, as Forster probably was too. In my case, by their looks perhaps even more than by their contents. I spent more time browsing through them in the libraries than researching and studying their contents. Of course, there was Paolo Portoghesi's rather



Fig. 6—*sele arte* 8, 49 (January–February, 1961); (*sele arte*: *architettura, scultura, pittura, grafica, arti decorative e industriali, arti della visione*, Florence: 1952–1966), 21.5 × 15.5 cm.

Fig. 7—*op. cit.* 129 (May 2007), 14.5 × 22.7 cm.

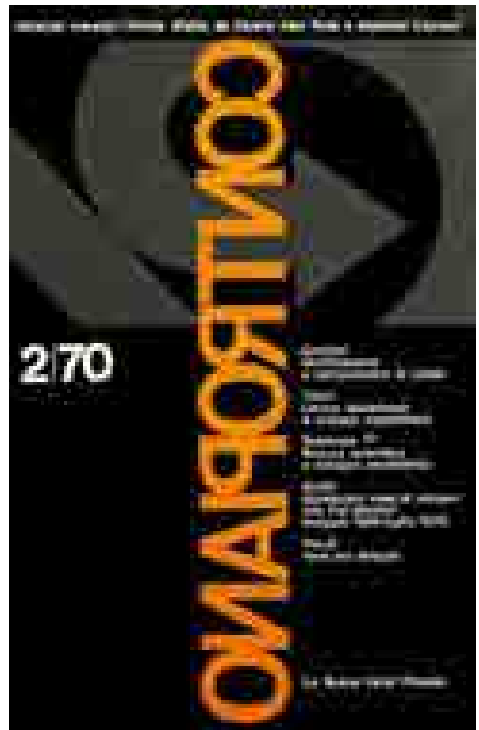
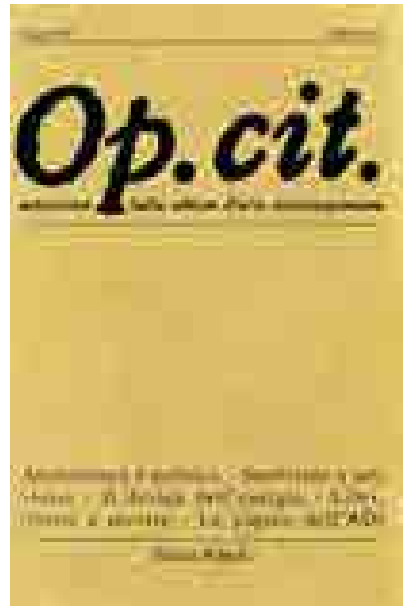


Fig. 8—*Contropiano* 2 (1970), 20 × 13 cm.

omnivorous *Controspazio*. I heard of *Contropiano*, its more radical Marxist and theory-oriented counterpart, much later. But for me, the motivation to do a magazine was not primarily political in a partisan sense. Furthermore, my interest went toward the art criticism-oriented *sele arte*, edited by Carlo L. Ragghianti, and *op. cit.*, edited by Renato De Fusco. I found them informative, intellectually elegant, and extremely handsome. Italy provided the most immediate plausible models indeed (Figs. 6–9).

GS: It is intriguing that you were so impressed by *op.cit.* The magazine was founded in 1964 by the art historian Renato De Fusco in Naples. Inspired primarily by Max Bill, the Swiss concrete art protagonist, De Fusco had joined the Italian Movimento per l'arte concreta in the early 1950s. The magazine *arte concreta*, running fifteen issues, was the loose movement's mouthpiece from 1951 to 1953. In your student years you did an entirely lowercase magazine for literature and criticism called *ventil*. While its title sounds vaguely technoid, the graphics are distinctly inspired by the typographical aesthetics of "konkrete kunst." Here, perhaps, we have one of the sources for *archithese's* "look" (Fig. 10)?



Fig. 9—Renato De Fusco, *Architettura come mass medium: Note per una semiologia architettonica* (Bari: Dedalo, 1967).

SvM: I'm thrilled to learn about De Fusco's early involvement with *arte concreta*—I had no idea about it. Through *op.cit.* I knew of his notoriety in semiology and his interest in mass culture—only later did I discover his important book *Architettura come mass medium* (1967) (Fig. 9).¹³ My infatuation with "straight," sans-serif typography and lower case—or, more broadly, with Max Bill and what I thought he stood for in terms of form-giving, art, design, and architecture—was rather naive.¹⁴ When Marcel Wyss, who ran the splendid and opulently printed neoconstructivist magazine *spirale*, agreed to exchange ads with our mini-journal *ventil*, it was for me like a knightly accolade! Then, somewhat later, I was blinded by the graphics of Gerstner, Gredinger and Kutter (GGK), the notorious Basel advertising agency as reflected in a series of "youth supplements" I ran with my friend Felix Bucher for the *Luzerner*



Fig. 10—*archithese* (dummy) (1970); Cover design and layout by Stanislaus von Moos, 17.5 × 22 cm.





Fig. 11—*Forum* [supplement to *Luzerner Neuste Nachrichten LNN*], May, 6, 1961; guest editors Felix Bucher and Stanislaus von Moos.

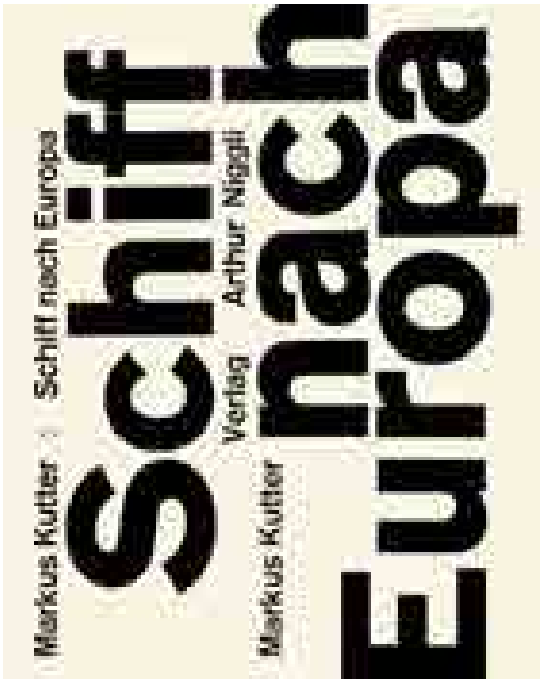


Fig. 12—Markus Kutter, *Schiff nach Europa* (Teufen: Arthur Niggli, 1957); Cover (above) and layout page 155 (below). Design and typography by Karl Gerstner.





Fig. 13—*konkrete poesie* I (1960), 21 × 15 cm.

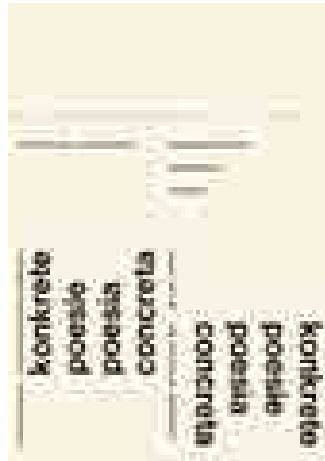


Fig. 14—Ordering coupon for *konkrete poesie*, ca. 1962; left and above: design and typography by Eugen Gomringer.



Fig. 15—Advertisement leaflet for *ventil*, ca. 1960, 21 × 14.3 cm.

Fig. 16—*ventil* 6 (November, 1960), 14.5 × 14.5 cm.





Fig. 17—Advertisements leporello for *ventil*; Design and typography by Melchior Küttel, 45.1 × 15.4 cm.



Fig. 18—Advertisements leporello for *ventil*, verso with sponsoring ads by, e.g., *spirale*, Diogenes Verlag, etc., 45.1 × 15.4 cm.

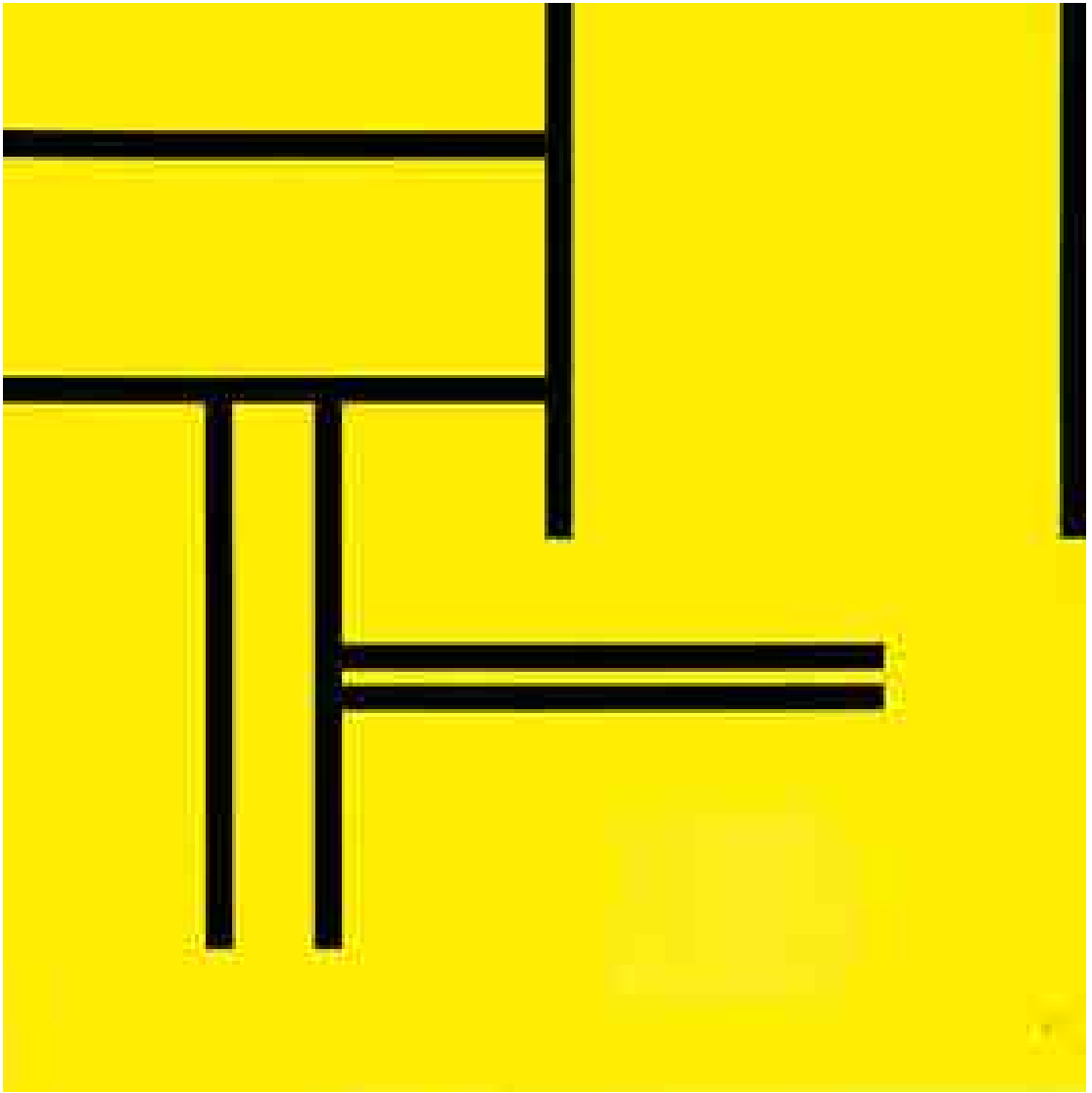


Fig. 19—*spirale*: *Internationale Zeitschrift für Konkrete Kunst und Gestaltung* 6/7 (1958);
Cover design by Marcel Wyss, 35 × 35 cm.

Neueste Nachrichten (Lucerne latest news, LNN] around 1961 (Figs. 11–19).¹⁵ But all this certainly stood behind my fascination with those Italian magazines.

GS: But then, your friends from the FSAI didn't like your first design proposals for *archithese*.

SvM: No, no, they decided to hire a professional designer, Paul Diethelm, who translated my minimalist and deliberately "ascetic" proposals into something that had the allure of a design brochure or a product catalog. I was not too happy with the compromise, but then, while the typeface for "archi / these" (on two lines) looked too bombastic for me, at least it was consistent with the lowercase dogma (Fig. 20).

GS: After just one year, however, *archithese* was taken over by Arthur Niggli, an internationally known publisher of architecture and art books working from Teufen, near Appenzell in remote rural Switzerland. He dropped both the graphic formula and the French-speaking coeditor (Fig. 21).

SvM: Alas, the first year had resulted in an economic fiasco. It had become clear that the formula we had agreed upon — every issue covering a somewhat arbitrary range of approaches and subjects — failed to trigger both the advertisements and the subscriptions needed to keep the magazine above water. Also, working with a print shop that was not itself involved in marketing the magazine (in our case the Imprimeries Réunies in Lausanne) and with a professional graphic designer proved too heavy a burden on the budget. What ultimately saved the project was the generosity of the members of the FSAI who agreed to cover the accumulated debts and to try a fresh model.

GS: But how did the collaboration with Arthur Niggli come about? I understand you had known him before.

SvM: I had never met him personally, but he knew of my earlier stabs in the field of publishing and magazine making.



Fig. 20—*archithese* I–4 (1971);
Cover design and typography by Paul Diethelm.

Fig. 21—Double spread from Jean-Claude Widmer,
“Architecture et participation,” *archithese* I (1971): 22–24.



In fact, I had contacted him around 1961, hoping he would post an ad in the student paper *ventil*—which he in fact did (as did Diogenes Verlag in Zurich, among others). So, when I approached Niggli ten years later, he was quite open to the idea of a collaboration. But above all, he must have liked the first four 1971 *archithese* issues, for he decided to stick to the given format of a “little magazine,” albeit under the condition that it would become a “journal in the format of a series of thematic publications [*Zeitschrift als Schriftenreihe*].”¹⁶ In this way, he hoped to sell subscriptions as well as individual issues in the bookshops. On the other hand, he didn’t like the idea of there being two editors instead of just one (good for me that, among the two options, he preferred the one who spoke German). To compensate for the loss of the French-speaking coeditor, Irène von Moos, my wife, provided in-house German-French-German translations to keep the readership from the French-speaking part of Switzerland happy. Finally, and perhaps most important, Niggli was determined to provide graphic design in-house. So, he kept the small format, kept Diethelm’s typeface for the title, but dismissed the graphic designer, thus granting himself as well as his editor a considerable margin of creative improvisation regarding cover design, layout, and typography.

GS: For the Niggli series, you adopted a simple grid system to distribute texts and images on the spreads, but then you undermined the canonic “Swiss style” with interspersed historical, sometimes almost “mannerist” typefaces! You seem to have enjoyed this unorthodox playfulness—perhaps you saw it as highlighting the magazine’s interest in history, everyday life, and popular culture?—a playfulness that seems to have allowed the journal to forge different and new arguments to reflect architecture’s changing role and impact through the centuries critically. In a way, your informal DIY graphic design looks like the perfect vehicle for the “search for postmodernity” that we claim as a motivation for the present book.

SvM: I love your way of reasoning by looking! However, the “mannerism” was not exclusively mine. It is in fact Niggli

who needs to be credited for the covers of the first five or six numbers of the new series that started in 1972 (“Zürich & Co.,” I find the most beautiful among them).¹⁷ Later, Niggli lost interest in hand-crafting the covers, and nos. 8–20 certainly go on my account (my wife, Irène, helping!).

Remember that Niggli had done many books about typography. The three volumes entitled *Lettera* are reference works in the field—a treasure trove of normal as well as utterly fanciful historical and historicist typefaces (Figs. 22–23).¹⁸ With these three books, Niggli contributed to a substantial modification of “Swiss style” in graphics, and *archithese* thus became one among his playing fields, and mine.¹⁹ The result, in terms of “corporate identity” of the magazine, was indeed a mess of rather haphazardly executed graphic ideas—all betraying a process of rapid deprofessionalization of most aspects of design a magazine is confronted with. All in all a curious anticipation of what was later to become the paradigm for a growing part of suburban building and living in Switzerland ... On the other hand, and as a short-term side effect, the new freedom allowed us to differentiate ourselves from the “official” Swiss professional magazine *Werk*. Meanwhile, Peter Eisenman and his friends from the Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies in New York (IAUS) began publishing *Oppositions*, thus demonstrating that orthodox “Swiss style” in graphic design was far from dead (Fig. 24)!

Fig. 24—*Oppositions 1* (1973); Cover design and typography by Massimo Vignelli.



Transcultural, Trans-Atlantic

TL: One step in the 1972 relaunch was the deliberate deprofessionalization in design; the other was the move from thematically open issues to the format of a thematic serial publication. Also, the journal now featured an impressive and extensive list of permanent staff (Max Bill, Lucius Burckhardt, Walter M. Foerderer, to name only a few), an editorial board of sorts that consisted predominantly of historians and thinkers. Did they contribute to a shift in the journal’s focus?

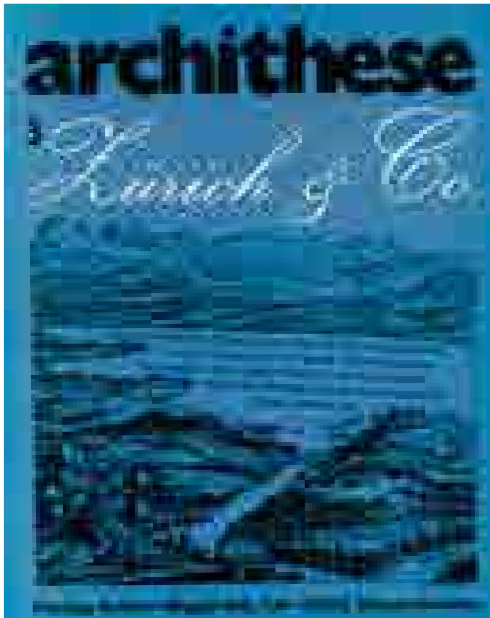


Fig. 22—“Zürich & Co.,” special issue, *archithese* 3 (1972); Cover design by Arthur Niggli.

Fig. 23—Armin Haab and Walter Haettenschweiler, *Lettera 2* (Teufen: Arthur Niggli Ltd., 1961).



SvM: “Permanent staff?” I don’t think that is precisely the right term ... The list came together rather empirically and was a way to compensate for the lack of an institutional base for the magazine. It consisted of people we had already been in contact with through the early issues or whom we hoped to recruit as authors for upcoming topics. In fact, the “editorial board” never actually met and never intervened (except for Max Bill, who occasionally voiced his discontent with our choices).²⁰ In the end, some of our most interesting issues ended up being prepared or edited by our “board members”: Kurt W. Forster, Martin Steinmann, Werner Oechslin, Erwin Mühlestein, Claude Schnaidt, Lisbeth Sachs.

TL: Besides, there are some “elder statesmen” on the list (Max Bill, Julius Posener, Hans Curjel). Why did you not include Reyner Banham? In terms of approach and subject matter, your own work seems closer to Banham’s writing than to the majority of the “board members.”

SvM: A surprising observation, but you may be right. It so happens that I am a “Banham fan,” although I only met him in person twice. His solid, unadorned, and often witty (perhaps “pop”) pragmatism in history writing strikes me as more inspiring than the gnawing profundity of many among his Mediterranean colleagues. Though he knew about my work, it did not even occur to me to ask for his participation (Fig. 25).²¹ That’s perhaps because my primary London contact in those days was Charles Jencks, Banham’s doctoral student. In hindsight, I am even more worried by Alan Colquhoun’s absence from the “board.”

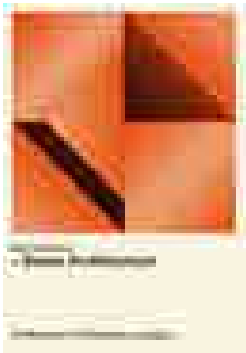


Fig. 25—Jul Bachmann, Stanislaus von Moos, *New Directions in Swiss Architecture* (New York: George Braziller, 1969).

GS: Though it may not be apparent from your “board,” the United States (or “America”) was a major preoccupation throughout the history of *archithese*. On the other hand, we see hardly a trace of the French architectural debate—except for the first year, when Jean-Claude Widmer was coeditor. The transcontinental cross-examination began early on, with *archithese* 4, “Hochschulpolitik” [Higher

education politics; de facto: “Politics of Architectural Education”], with Kenneth Frampton and Michael Mostoller (at Columbia and Harvard respectively) as respondents to *archithese*’s questionnaire on how to outline architectural pedagogies in the aftermath of 1968. Later, from 1973 to 1976, the cross-examination developed around three major thematic clusters: social housing, realism, and “Metropolis.” Then, “USA/Switzerland” literally brought the subject home.²² Was the Swiss fascination with the “Big Brother” what led to framing those topics? Or was it the “expatriate’s” frustration with the perceived gridlock and retardation of the situation at home?

SvM: Probably a bit of both. In view of “USA/Switzerland” we had invited Peter W. Gygax, Niklaus Morgenthaler, and Dolf Schnebli to speak about their experience as architects in the United States. At a symposium we organized at Bürgenstock, a mountain resort overlooking Lake Lucerne, they presented their respective musings. Morgenthaler offered a sharp characterization of the U.S. and the political torments that shaped the American everyday at that time (Fig. 26). Schnebli, in turn, presented a detailed scrutiny of the beautiful law school extension he (or rather the team Schnebli, Anselevicius, Montgomery) had built on the campus of Washington University in St. Louis. Later, these talks, supplemented by a long, illustrated list of projects built in the USA by Swiss architects, appeared in *archithese*. By the way, this was the one instance where Niggli was thoroughly “not amused” by the typeface I chose for the cover!

Visiting St. Louis a few years ago, I tried to find Schnebli’s 1960s law school, but it had since been replaced by a piece of neo-neo-Victorian campus architecture. As to France: Please don’t forget that the late Jean-Louis Cohen’s first magazine essay was published in *archithese*!²³

GS: Morgenthaler is primarily known as one of the designers of the Halen settlement near Bern (1955–1962, together with Atelier 5), so his humorous recollections were a particular



Fig. 27—Double spread from Niklaus Morgenthaler, "Amerika–Schweiz: Mutwillige Vergleiche," in "u.s.a. – switzerland," special issue, *archithese* 16 (1975), 10–11.

Fig. 28—Peter Blake, *God's Own Junkyard: The Planned Deterioration of America's Landscape*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1964).



Fig. 29—Rolf Keller, *Bauen als Umweltzerstörung: Alarmbilder einer Un-Architektur der Gegenwart* (Zurich: Verlag für Architektur Artemis, 1973).



Fig. 26—Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972).

surprise (Fig. 27). As to your essay “Phase Shifts,” it, too, is based on the talk you gave on this occasion.²⁴ Blatantly inspired by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown’s *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972), you were trying to analyze the Bürgenstock resort as well as similar locations in terms of architecture as a “language of signs.”²⁵ You also took advantage of the occasion by reflecting critically architect Rolf Keller’s book *Bauen als Umweltzerstörung* [Building as environmental sack] (1973) and his very striking and figurative accusations of the “monotony” and “chaos” in 1960s urban development (Figs. 28–29).²⁶

SvM: The essay in fact reflects my perhaps rather naive curiosity for an ethnographic or socio-anthropological reading of architectural form—or rather, for everyday “architectural semiotics” (though I never used the term). I am still struck by how this approach has hardly been implemented in the European context.

TL: How do you explain this paradox? You once mentioned that, while attempting to implement Venturi/Scott Brown’s tools, you found that their method’s usefulness turns out to be rather limited in a European situation, particularly so in Switzerland.

SvM: I think it is because the local culture does not yield the same extremes as the U.S. The settings here seem to be both more complex and more nuanced than along the American “Strip,” where Venturi’s and Scott Brown’s “pop-theorizing” originated and to which it is so easily applicable.

GS: And yet, as reflected in “Phase Shifts,” I think your stance does reveal an interest in semiology—albeit semiology understood as a way of recovering the “meanings” architecture can embody, be they intended by the designer, attributed by the public, or arbitrarily aggregated by circumstance—including metaphor, ambiguity, rhetorical nuance, and metonymy, as they inevitably occur in the production of space, in design,



Fig. 30—*ARCH+ 1* (1968).

and in architectural writing. At the opposite end of this discourse, we could locate the semiotically inspired structuralist, systems-theory-linked approach taken, for example, by the magazine *ARCH+* in its founding years (Fig. 30). There, cybernetic thinking was enlisted to help analyze, theorize, and improve the (built) environment. However, cybernetics and information theory were hardly ever invoked on the pages of *archithese*—except perhaps in a rather flippant side remark in your editorial for the issue dedicated to HfG Ulm (Fig. 31).²⁷

TL: There are other overlooked areas in the history of *archithese*. Browsing through the “little magazines” that were so instrumental in shaping architectural discourse around 1968, one keeps stumbling over playful openings and flashes of critical thinking by way of paper architecture, imaginatively visualized radical utopias, or even dystopias. In turn, *archithese*, inspired by the work and writing of Venturi and Scott Brown, was content to prompt the idea of “realism” in architecture and graphic discourse. This turn to “realism,” not least by way of critically revisiting the failed historical utopias of the twentieth century—including Karl Moser’s redevelopment plan for Zurich’s old town (1933), or the dreams of “socialist architecture” in the USSR, or even the most recent utopias from the 1960s—seems indicative of a magazine “in search of postmodernity.”

GS: Despite its distinctive graphic design, *archithese* never adopted the visual language of, for example, science fiction, as found in radical paper architecture and many of the “little magazines”—though you seem to have been interested, to a certain extent, in Archizoom’s ambiguous synthesis of the real and mass media.

SvM: After all, the very first issue of the relaunched *archithese* in 1972 opened with Superstudio’s “Cautionary Tales”—a classic in the field of reasoning by way of radical utopias!²⁸ That the Superstudio “cartoon” remained a maverick in *archithese* has little to do with a theoretical stance against this sort of work (Fig. 32). I wish we would have had more contributions of that



Fig. 31—“hfg ulm. ein rückblick une rétrospective,” special issue, *archithese* 15 (1975).

type. But I must admit, after 1971, when I was teaching in the U.S. at Harvard's Visual Arts Center, I was quite disconnected from the avant-garde paper architecture scene, except for occasional visits to the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London. Whereas, due to my day-to-day job, I was naturally drawn to the kind of subjects that became titles in the *archithese* series. As to the term *realism*, it was nothing like the series' chosen motto. I believe it was not even explicitly referred to in *archithese* before 1975.

GS: And yet, in art-historical discourse, “realism” or the idea of engaging with “reality” could be called excessive throughout the 1960s and early 1970s—think only of the then emerging performance art. The epoch-making documenta 5 (1972) in Kassel that promised an “inquiry into image worlds” was touted by its director, Harald Szeemann, as “questioning of reality.” You once mentioned that, for you, realism meant “the reality of experiencing the built environment” and that the *Zeitgeist* centered around “realism” had no effect on your interest in Renaissance architecture.²⁹

SvM: What I remember is that the term *realism* wasn't really part of my critical vocabulary before 1975—even though surely it ought to have been. After all, I rationalized my interest in the pragmatics and the semiotics of Renaissance military architecture as being clearly antithetical to the (in my view esoteric) idealism of Rudolf Wittkower's *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (1949).³⁰ Thus “realism,” in fact, was just around the corner, as was “brutalism,” for that matter. In retrospect, these preoccupations probably had more to do with the “Return of the Real” as later theorized by Hal Foster than I could have realized then.³¹

GS: What about the theorizations of an “inner-architectonic reality” of buildings in the aftermath of Aldo Rossi's *Architettura razionale* exhibition at the Triennale di Milano (1973) and his earlier teaching at ETH Zurich (1972); for example, in *archithese* 19 (“Realismus/réalisme”) (Figs. 33–34)? Your guest editors,

Fig. 33—Ezio Bonfanti, Ricco Bonicalzi, Aldo Rossi et al., *Architettura Razionale: XV Triennale di Milano. Sezione Internazionale di Architettura* (Milan: Franco Angeli Editore, 1973).



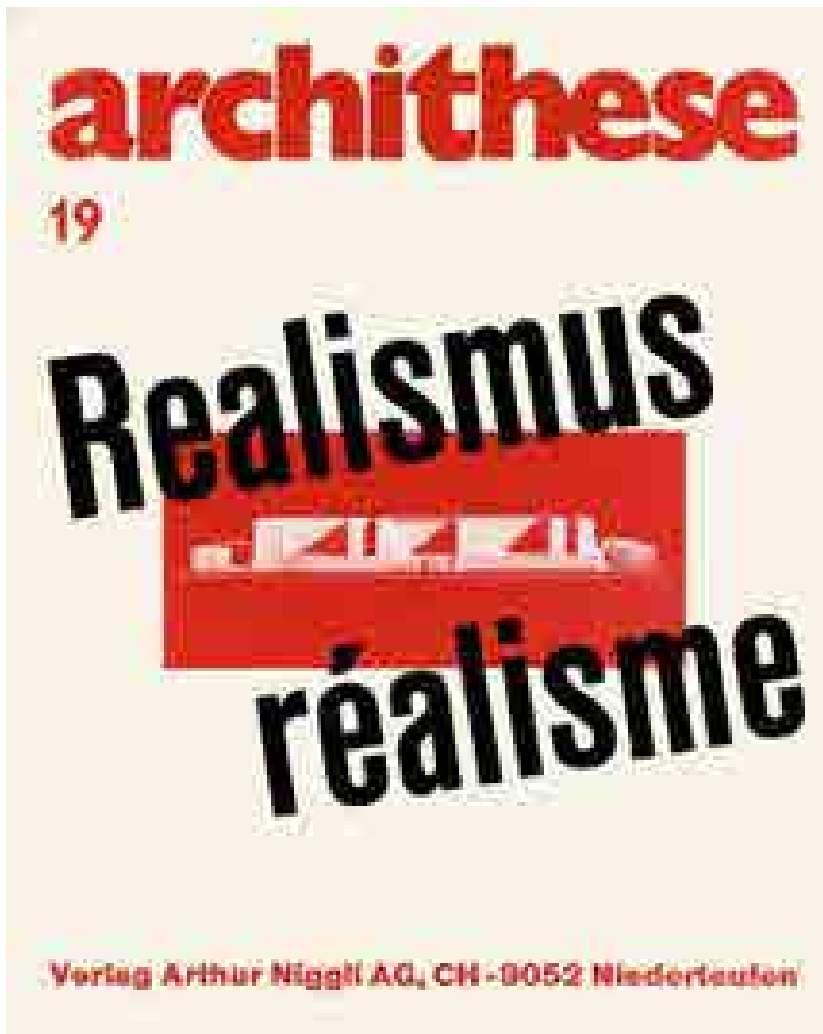


Fig. 34—“Realismus – réalisme,”
special issue, *archithese* 19 (1975).

Bruno Reichlin and Martin Steinmann, celebrated Rossi's "realism" to the point of (over)identification, but you didn't participate in the discussion.

SvM: Not directly, except for having introduced the term *realism* in an earlier issue and except for having designed the cover. I did return to the subject in another context, however.³² As to "inner-architectonic reality," I still find this notion somewhat mysterious. Architecture inevitably serves a multitude of practical and symbolic functions, including imperatives that have little or nothing to do with the art of building as such. To locate the demands of "reality" inside the art of building seems either tautological or oxymoronic, depending on one's definition of architecture. In preparing the issue, Reichlin and Steinmann, my two guest editors, had asked Aldo Rossi to submit a text. Did the master sense the risk of being trapped by the straitjacket of a theory he would have to reject, even though it was concocted by close Zurich friends and former collaborators? Be that as it may, he ended up submitting a poetic text that spoke about literature and cinema and thus reframed architecture in the wider field of art ("Une éducation réaliste" / "A realist education").³³ Rossi's failure to play the role his friends had assigned him as the mastermind of "realism" appears to have been a major disappointment to my guest editors. Reichlin's uncharacteristically self-ironic recollections of the episode still carry a scent of bitterness.³⁴

Theory / History Today

TL: From today's perspective, the combination of rigor and apparent ease with which the authors covered their wide-ranging topics is remarkable, even irritating at times. The journal *archithese* carved out its specific niche, bridging between academic and professional worlds, history and theory, activism and criticism. What has changed since then regarding criticism and given the widespread institutionalization of architectural history and theory at architecture schools?

SvM: I think I know what you mean by “irritating” [laughs]!— To return to your question, I wonder myself. In any case, at the time we began with *archithese*, “theory” still played but an unclear role in architectural education. Ten years earlier, when I began studying at the ETH, the school had just reorganized its program following the model of a Bauhaus-inspired “Grundkurs” [foundational course]. Here, theory meant coming to terms with the dialectics of figure and ground, positive and negative space, with using line drawing for exploring three-dimensionality, experiencing rectangle and sphere as a means of form giving, et cetera. Then, in the “structure” classes, design at least was grounded in facts, albeit still taught as a craft or at best as an “approach”—in no way as an intellectual pursuit. Only in the architectural history classes or when teachers occasionally talked about their experience with buildings that they considered important did one begin to suspect that there must be more to design than just structure and form. If I left ETH after just one year in architecture, it was because I found more answers to my queries outside architecture school than within (and besides, mathematics was not my thing to begin with).

Ten years later, with the freshly founded gta Institute within the school, the situation was certainly no longer the same. But room nevertheless appears to have been left among students or even faculty for critical perspective. In hindsight, that appetite for, if you will, the philosophical dimension of design may have been our chance as a magazine.

TL: In the subsequent years, theory and history offerings exploded in most schools of architecture—especially so in the U.S., to the point of moving the very culture of architectural design (the “craft” or the “art” part of architecture) out of focus.

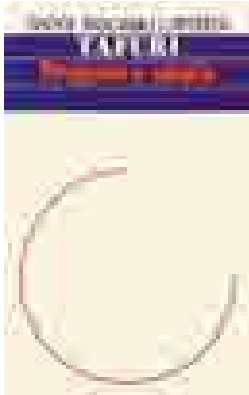
SvM: I couldn’t agree more. The good thing however is that more and more architects learned to write. Many have made brilliant careers as historians, theoreticians, and critics—especially those inspired by art. Meanwhile, outside of academia, the fascination with theory has slowly but conspicuously given way to other discursive elixirs. Or do you know of a contempo-

rary “starchitect” who would defend his position in terms of theory? When I look back, it bugs me to realize that from 1971 to 1976 in *archithese* there was almost no reflection of what was going on in art at the time—or in the sociology of art.

TL: Architectural theorist Joan Ockman recently summarized the shift toward more research-oriented forms of academic architectural practice as “privileging hunting and gathering over more sedentary tasks like reflecting and questioning.” She argues that—and I’d like to cite her here—“instead of history/theory today, what we now have is ‘research’: Research as the holy grail of contemporary architecture education. The ‘laboratories’ in which it is carried out—by white-coated architectural technicians, figuratively speaking—are its shrines. As for criticism: arguably, we now have something like ‘curation.’ History/theory has turned into research/curation.”³⁵

SvM: Joan Ockman is probably right. As a former editor of *archithese* I should deplore this trend. But then, as a historian, I am inevitably of those who are first engaged in “hunting and gathering,” granted that, in history writing, that works only in conjunction with “reflecting and questioning.” ... In my case it never worked the other way around, but that is because I am neither philosopher nor theoretician. Does “History/Theory” versus “Research/Curation” make sense at all as an alternative?

Fig. 35—Manfredo Tafuri, *Progetto e Utopia: Architettura e Sviluppo Capitalistico* (Bari: Laterza & Figli, 1973).



GS: In Italy a similar “impasse” was brought into focus when Manfredo Tafuri set out to criticize *storia operativa* (operational historiography) as practiced by architect/historian Bruno Zevi, among others, and pleaded—demonstratively so in Zevi’s book *Michelangiolo architetto* (1964)—for a “critical” history of architecture in a Marxist sense.³⁶ In an essay published in 1982, you, too, looking back upon your experience with *archithese*, seemed to disassociate yourself from *storia operativa* in favor of a position that is, after all, close to Tafuri’s. What brought you in contact with Tafuri? It is intriguing that, in his seminal study *Progetto e Utopia* (1973), he should discuss the very same “case” you had chosen for your first article ever published in *archithese*:

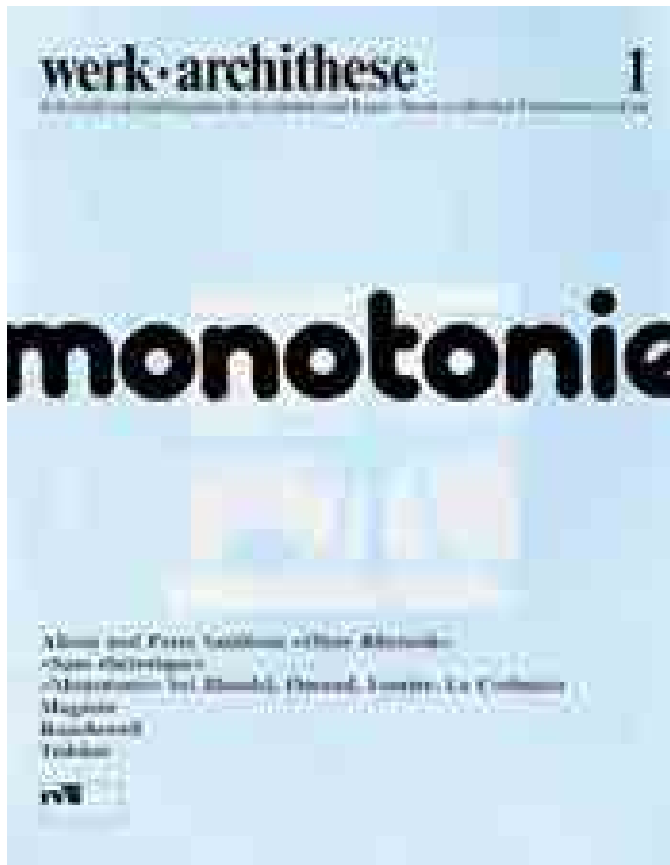
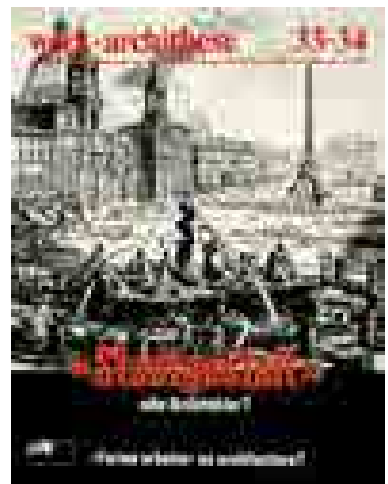


Fig. 36—“Monotonie,” special issue, *werk.archithese* 1 (1977).

Fig. 37—“Stadtgestalt’ oder Architektur,” special issue, *werk.archithese* 33–34 (1978).



Le Corbusier's Plan Obus for Algiers (Fig. 35). Needless to say, he followed a different agenda.³⁷ Whereas you never relied on bolstering your reading with authoritative sources like Althusser, Benjamin, et cetera, Tafuri heavily drew on Marxism and critical theory.

SvM: I always had a tremendous respect for Tafuri's work, even though I read and understood only parts of it. Tafuri for me was synonymous both with my fear of theoretical or heavily philosophical or psychoanalytical writing in art and architecture and my secret "homesickness" for it. You are right, I certainly shared his critique of *storia operativa*—the article you quoted may serve as an example. Although, probably, much of what I myself was writing about Venturi and other architects at that time was itself a form of *storia operativa* and hence part of the problem. I first met Tafuri during a visit in Rome while preparing *archithese* 7 ("Socialist Architecture? USSR 1917–1932," 1973).³⁸ He knew of me because of Le Corbusier and probably saw "my" magazine (and, later, *werk.archithese*) as a potential echo chamber, or at least as a vehicle for having his work brought to a German-speaking audience. His contributions, especially the later one for *werk.archithese*, became notorious among my Zurich friends, particularly the ones among them who were summoned to help with the predictably herculean task of translation (Figs. 36–37).³⁹ More than one of these essays later appeared as chapters in Tafuri's *La sfera e il labirinto* (1980).⁴⁰

TL: I would like to briefly talk about the last numbers of the Niggli series—17, 18, and 20—all entitled "Metropolis" and centered on New York (interrupted only by no. 19, "Realism") (Fig. 38). The subject appears to have arisen from Werner Oechslin's research interest in American architectural history. He also supervised them editorially, focusing on history—thus, somewhat contrasting with your interests in method transfer in contemporary criticism and theory. I guess Rem Koolhaas's essay about the "Rockettes"—a preview of what would later become a chapter in his *Delirious New York* (1978)—fell rather in line with your interests?⁴¹

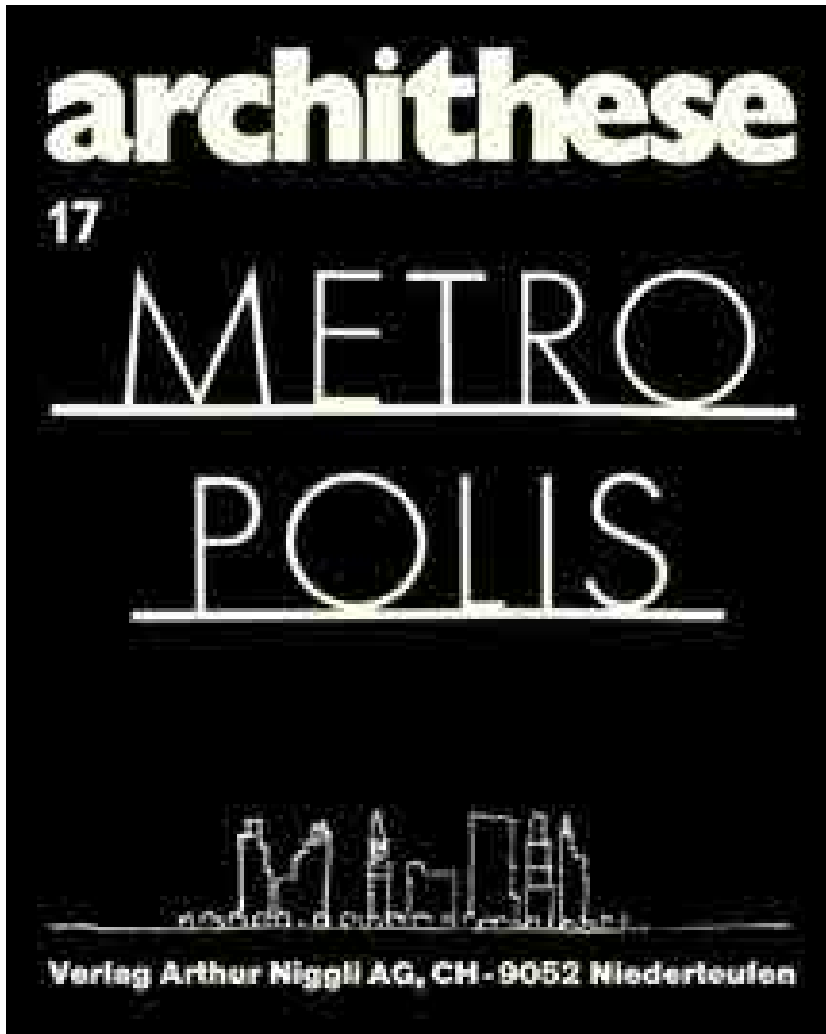


Fig. 38—“Metropolis,” special issue, *archithese* 17 (1976).



Fig. 39 — Double spread from Andreas Adam, “Skyline,” in “Metropolis,” special issue, *archithese* 17 (1976): 4–14, here 4–5.

SvM: Werner's role was crucial with these three issues, yet recruiting the many authors and editing their essays was definitely a collective effort. William Curtis I knew from my time in Cambridge, Massachusetts; Rem Koolhaas I had first met around 1975, when he began working on *Delirious New York* (I remember we had breakfast at Kenneth Frampton's house in New York); Rosemarie Haag Bletter, Cervin Robinson, and other contributors to these three issues were also contacted then.

TL: To see the FSAI, a Swiss federation of practicing architects, sponsor three "volumes" of academic deliberations about the American metropolis is rather unexpected! And at a time when the resulting lessons were even less likely to be applied in Europe than the critical tools of Venturi/Scott Brown.

SvM: Of course, we never planned to produce three numbers. But Manfredo Tafuri's and Mario Maniera-Elia's responses to Werner Oechslin's "call for papers" were so extensive that it became clear we needed more than one issue to host their texts. Obviously, some leftovers hadn't made their way into the great volume on the history of the American city that had just been published in Italian (1973).⁴² (The book, by the way, never appeared in German.) All this and a shared gusto for accuracy and footnotes among Italian and Italophile scholars created a momentum of its own. Hence, within weeks, we had an overflow of valuable material, including Andreas Adam's incredible collection of postcards from New York (second only to Madelon Vriesendorp's) (Fig. 39).⁴³ For a "poor" journal, it would have been crazy to forego the chance to publish it all. Sometime later, Academy Editions in London played with the idea of producing the material in one volume as a book (with Banham as proposed author of the introduction)—a pity this collaboration never materialized.

TL: This planned anthology truly sounds like it would have hit a nerve. Indeed, the topic of the early twentieth century American metropolis very much appears to have been "in the air" at the time—perhaps unsurprisingly, given New York's

drastic transformation on its way to becoming a global city, as Saskia Sassen later analyzed. Rosemarie Haag Bletter's *Skyscraper Style* (1975) shortly preceded your "Metropolis" series. Only a couple of years after it, in 1978, Koolhaas released his retroactive manifesto *Delirious New York*. And Tafuri's *La sfera e il labirinto*, with one of its chapters dedicated to the New York skyscraper, was published in 1980. Moreover, these last two projects first saw the light in *archithese*, where they were presented in their early stages.

GS: So, maybe the publisher, Academy Editions, felt that everything had been said? Andreas Adam's postcard collection, on the other hand, got turned into a richly illustrated book recently. I guess this proves not only the series editors' foresight but also the lasting fascination of the American city.

1 Over the years, *archithese* has had several publishers and name changes. It was first published by Imprimeries Réunies, Lausanne (issues 1–3/4, 1971); then by Niggli Verlag, Niederteufen (issues 1–20, 1972–1976); then, as *werk.archithese*, also published by Niggli Verlag (1976–1978); and finally in 1980, again as *archithese*.

2 Eliane Perrin, "Immigrant Worker Housing in Switzerland," 404–19 in this publication. First published in *archithese* 1 (1971): 2–11.

3 See, for example, *ibid*.

4 See J.-C. Widmer, "Questions for Henri Lefebvre," 232–40 in this publication. First published in *archithese* 2 (1971): 11–15.

5 A member of the Swiss Institute in Rome from 1968–1971, von Moos was then working on the book version of his PhD thesis, published later as see Stanislaus von Moos, *Turm und Bollwerk: Beiträge zu einer politischen Ikonografie der italienischen Renaissancearchitektur* (Zurich: Atlantis-Verlag, 1976).

6 See Sylvia Claus, "Phantom Theory: The gta Institute in Postmodernist Architectural Discourse," *gta papers* 3

(2019): 121–35, here 124; Stanislaus von Moos, "Schriftenreihe des Instituts für Geschichte und Theorie der Architektur an der ETH Zürich," *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 27, 4 (1970): 236–43, here 236.

7 Adolf Max Vogt, *Boullées Newton-Denkmal Sakralbau und Kugelidee*, "gta" 3 (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1969); Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky, *Transparenz*, Kommentar von Bernhard Hoesli (Le Corbusier-Studien 1), "gta" 4 (Basel: Birkhäuser-Verlag, 1968); Paul Hofer, *Palladios Erstling—Die Villa Godi-Valmarana* (Palladio-Studien 1), "gta" 5 (Basel: Birkhäuser-Verlag, 1969).

8 See AA.VV., "Project-Based Learning at the ETH: Critical Rather Than Technocratic," 328–37 in this publication. First published in *archithese* 3/4 (1971): 62–66.

9 See *werk.archithese* 1 (1977); *werk.archithese* 17–18 (1978).

10 Beatriz Colomina and Marie Theres Stauffer, "Interview with Stanislaus von Moos," in *CLIP/STAMP/FOLD: The Radical Architecture of Little Magazines, 196X to 197X*, ed. Beatriz Colomina and Craig Buckley

(New York: Actar; Princeton, NJ: Media and Modernity Program, Princeton University, 2010), 483–88.

11 Stanislaus von Moos, *Le Corbusier: Elements of a Synthesis* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979). Originally published as *Le Corbusier: Elemente einer Synthese* (Zurich: Huber, 1968), with French, Spanish, Japanese, and Korean editions following.

12 Colomina and Stauffer, *CLIP/STAMP/FOLD* (see note 10), 483–88.

13 Renato De Fusco, *Architettura come mass medium: Note per una semiologia architetonica* (Bari: Dedalo, 1967).

14 Von Moos's assessment of the term *concrete* in art theory triggered an angry letter from Bill. See "diesen sommer ... oder: was heisst 'konkret,'" *ventil* 6 (Summer 1960): 30–31.

15 Upon reading a high school student paper von Moos had written about *Schiff nach Europa* (Teufen, Switzerland: Arthur Niggli, 1957), Markus Kutter offered him a job at GGG (founded by Karl Gerstner, Paul Gredinger and Markus Kutter). Von Moos turned down the offer, though, and chose to enroll as an architecture student at the ETH Zurich instead.

- 16 See Editorial, *archithese* 2 (1972): n.p.: "archithese ist eine Zeitschrift in Form einer Schriftenreihe. Jedes Heft enthält ein in sich abgeschlossenes Thema. Die Hefte werden fortlaufend nummeriert [sic]. Dies ist Heft 2/1972."
- 17 *archithese* 3 (1972).
- 18 Armin Haab and Alex Stocker, *Lettera: A Standard Book of Fine Lettering / Standardbuch guter Gebrauchsschriften / Nouveau répertoire d'alphabets originaux* (Teufen: Arthur Niggli, 1954). Followed by Armin Haab and Walter Haettenschweiler, *Lettera 2* (Teufen: Arthur Niggli, 1961); Armin Haab and Walter Haettenschweiler, *Lettera 3: A Standard Book of Fine Lettering / Standardbuch Guter Gebrauchsschriften / Nouveau répertoire d'alphabets originaux* (Teufen: Arthur Niggli, 1968).
- 19 Christof Bignens, *Swiss Style: Die grosse Zeit der Gebrauchsgrafik in der Schweiz 1914–1964* (Zurich: Chronos, 2000).
- 20 Max Bill was at odds with von Moos's commissioning of Claude Schnaidt as guest editor for a retrospective on the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm (Ulm School of Design) published as *archithese* 15 (1975).
- 21 See Jul Bachmann, Stanislaus von Moos, *New Directions in Swiss Architecture* (New York: George Braziller, 1969); Reyner Banham, "Jul Bachmann and Stanislaus von Moos, Swiss Architecture; Robert Stern, American Architecture; Udo Kultermann, African Architecture; Francisco Bullrich, Latin American Architecture, Braziller (New Directions Series)," *Art Bulletin* 54, 4 (1972): 565.
- 22 See *archithese* 16 (1975). The essays included in this issue had been presented in talks given at a symposium organized by the FSAI at Bürgenstock near Lucerne in 1975.
- 23 Jean-Louis Cohen, "Villejuif, une architecture dans les lutes," *archithese* 7 (1973): 42–48.
- 24 Stanislaus von Moos, "Phase Shifts," 92–107 in this publication. First published in *archithese* 16 (1975): 26–36.
- 25 Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972).
- 26 Rolf Keller, *Bauen als Umweltzerstörung: Alarmbilder einer Un-Architektur der Gegenwart* (Zurich: Verlag für Architektur Artemis, 1973). See also Peter Blake, *God's Own Junkyard: The Planned Deterioration of America's Landscape* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964).
- 27 See Editorial, *archithese* 15 (1975) 2–4, here 4.
- 28 Superstudio, "Three Warnings against a Mystical Rebirth of Urbanism," 242–51 in this publication. First published in *archithese* 1 (1972): 3–6, 36.
- 29 Colomina and Stauffer, "Interview with Stanislaus von Moos" (see note 10), 485.
- 30 Stanislaus von Moos, "Kunstgeschichte der Technik? Zum Problem der 'Zeitbedingten Optik' in der Architekturgeschichte," *Orbis Scientiarum* 2, 1 (1972): 73–90; Stanislaus von Moos, "Poscritto sul tema: Fortificazioni e architettura moderna," in *L'architettura militare Veneta del Cinquecento*, ed. André Chastel and Antonio Corrazin (Venice: Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio di Vicenza; Milan: Electa, 1988), 170–78.
- 31 Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).
- 32 Stanislaus von Moos, "Zweierlei Realismus," *werk.archithese* 7–8 (1977): 58–62.
- 33 Aldo Rossi, "A Realist Education," 188–93 in this publication. First published in *archithese* 19 (1976): 25–26.
- 34 Bruno Reichlin, "Amarcord' Erinnerung an Aldo Rossi," in *Aldo Rossi und die Schweiz*, ed. Ákos Moravánszky and Judith Hopfengärtner (Zurich: gta Verlag, 2011), 29–44.
- 35 Joan Ockman, "Slashed," *e-flux Architecture: History/Theory*, October 27, 2017, <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/history-theory/159236/slashed/>.
- 36 Paolo Portoghesi and Bruno Zevi, *Michelangiolo architetto* (Rome: Einaudi, 1964).
- 37 See Manfredo Tafuri, *Progetto e utopia: Architettura e sviluppo capitalistico* (Bari: Laterza e Figli, 1973); Stanislaus von Moos, "Von den Femmes d'Alger' zum 'Plan Obus': Hinweis auf die Kunsttheorie Le Corbusiers," *archithese* 1 (1971): 25–37.
- 38 See Manfredo Tafuri, "Les premières hypothèses de planification urbaine dans la Russie soviétique 1918–1925," *archithese* 7 (1973): 34–41.
- 39 Manfredo Tafuri, "Borromini und Piranesi: Die Stadt als 'zersprengte Ordnung,'" *werk.archithese* 33/34 (1979): 6–12.
- 40 Manfredo Tafuri, *La sfera e il labirinto: Avanguardia e architettura da Piranesi agli anni '70* (Rome: Einaudi, 1980).
- 41 Rem Koolhaas, "Roxy, Noah, and the Radio City Music Hall," 296–307 in this publication. First published in *archithese*, 18 (1976), 37–43.
- 42 Giorgio Ciucci, Francesco Dal Co, Mario Manieri-Elia, and Manfredo Tafuri, *La città americana dalla Guerra Civile al New Deal* (Bari: Laterza, 1973).
- 43 Andreas Adam, "Skyline," *archithese* 17 (1976): 4–14.

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Contributors

Editors

Torsten Lange is Lecturer in Cultural and Architectural History at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Switzerland. He studied architecture as well as the history and theory of architecture at Bauhaus-Universität Weimar and The Bartlett School of Architecture in London, where he received his PhD in 2015. His work focuses on the conditions underpinning the production of the built environment during late socialism and on writing histories of queer spatial practices. He is co-editor of *Re-Framing Identities: Architecture's Turn to History* (Basel, Berlin: Birkhäuser, 2017), the special issue "Architectural Historiography and Fourth Wave Feminism" of *Architectural Histories* (8/2020), and of *Care: gta papers* 7 (Zurich: gta Verlag, 2022), and published several essays and articles.

Gabrielle Schaad is an art historian and postdoc at the Chair of Theory and History of Architecture, Art, and Design, TU Munich. She coordinates the study program *Exhibiting and Making Public* at the Zurich University of the Arts ZHdK, where she is a Lecturer and Curator in the Bachelor Fine Arts. Her doctoral thesis received from the Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture (gta), ETH Zurich, focused on techniques aimed at emancipation in art and architecture and their pitfalls, transforming space-time in Cold War Japan ("Performing Environmental Textures – Intersected Bodies of Gutai and Metabolism (Japan, 1955–1972)"). She has been awarded research scholarships by the SNSF, the MEXT Japan (2013–2015), and Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart. In addition to her monograph *Shizuko Yoshikawa* (Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2018) and academic contributions, she recently co-edited *Care: gta papers* 7 (Zurich: gta Verlag, 2022).

Authors

Irina Davidovici is an architect, historian, and the director of the gta Archives at ETH Zurich. Her doctoral thesis on German-Swiss architecture in the 1980s and 1990s received the RIBA President's Research Award for Outstanding Doctoral Thesis in 2009. Her ETH Habilitation thesis *Collective Grounds: Housing Estates in the European City, 1865–1934* is a comparative study of early housing estates in London, Paris, Amsterdam and Vienna focusing on their urban aspects. She is, among many other publications, the author of *Forms of Practice. German-Swiss Architecture 1980–2000* (Zurich: gta Verlag, 2012, 2nd expanded edition 2018) and editor of *Colquhounery. Alan Colquhoun from Bricolage to Myth* (London: AA publications, 2015). After *The Autonomy of Theory: Ticino Architecture and Its Critical Reception* (Zurich: gta Verlag, 2023) she is currently working on *Common Grounds: A Comparative History of Early Housing Estates in Europe* (Zurich: Triest Verlag, 2024).

Samia Henni is a historian of the built, destroyed and imagined environments. She is the author of the multi-award-winning *Architecture of Counterrevolution: The French Army in Northern Algeria* (Zurich: gta Verlag 2017), and *Colonial Toxicity: Rehearsing French Radioactive Architecture and Landscape in the Sahara* (Amsterdam, Zurich: If I Can't Dance, edition fink, 2023), and the editor of *Deserts Are Not Empty* (Columbia Books on Architecture and the City, 2022) and *War Zones* (Zurich: gta Verlag, 2018). She is also the maker of exhibitions, such as *Performing Colonial Toxicity* (Amsterdam, 2023–04), *Discreet Violence: Architecture and the French War in Algeria* (various exhibition venues, including Zurich, Rotterdam, Berlin, Paris and Johannesburg, 2017–22), *Archives: Secret-Défense?* (ifa Gallery, SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin, 2021), and *Housing Pharmacology* (Manifesta 13, Marseille, 2020). Currently, she is an invited visiting professor at the Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture (gta) at ETH Zurich.

Marie Theres Stauffer is professor for the history of architecture and urbanism at the University of Geneva. She has published on topics of the 20th century, such as *Figurationen des Utopischen. Theoretische Projekte von Superstudio und Archi-zoom* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2008), or *Ensembles urbaines Genève 21 Alfred-Bertrand. Champel* (with Raphaël Nussbaumer; Gollion: Infolio 2023). A second focus is on the architecture of the 17th/18th century, including her habilitation thesis *Spiegelung und Raum. Semantische Perspektiven* (University of Bern, 2008), as well as *Machines à percevoir/Maschinen der Wahrnehmung/Perceptual Machines* (with Stefan Kristensen; Köln: Böhlau 2016). She has taught at the Universities of Konstanz, Bern, Zurich and at the ETH Zurich. Her research has been awarded the Prix Jubilé of the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences (SAGW) (2004) and the Swiss Art Award of the Federal Office of Culture (2006), among others, and she has also received fellowships from the Max Planck Society and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation.

Stanislaus von Moos is an art historian and professor emeritus of Modern Art at the University of Zurich (1982–2005) and the founding editor of *archithese* (1971–1976). Apart from his doctoral thesis (*Turm und Bollwerk. Beiträge zu einer politischen Ikonographie der italienischen Renaissancearchitektur* (Zürich, Freiburg: Atlantis Verlag 1976)), his monographs on Le Corbusier (*Le Corbusier. Elements of a Synthesis*, first ed. in German 1968, with revised and extended editions in several languages from 1972 to 2014), he has published on *Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates* (vol.1, 1987; vol.2, 1999) as well as on artists and architects like Karl Moser, Max Bill, Thomas Hirschhorn, Peter Fischli / David Weiss, among others. He has curated major exhibitions and held lecture- and professorships in Europe and overseas. His most recent books include *Eyes That Saw. Architecture After Las Vegas* (ed., together with Martino Stierli, Zurich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2020), *Erste Hilfe. Architekturdiskurs nach 1940. Eine Schweizer Spurensuche* (Zurich: gta Verlag, 2021) as well as *Twentyfive x Herzog & de Meuron* (together with Arthur Rüegg; Göttingen: Steidl, 2024). In 2023 the Swiss Federal Office of Culture awarded him the Grand Prix Meret Oppenheim.

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Authors (essays)

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Editing

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