a bricolage layout
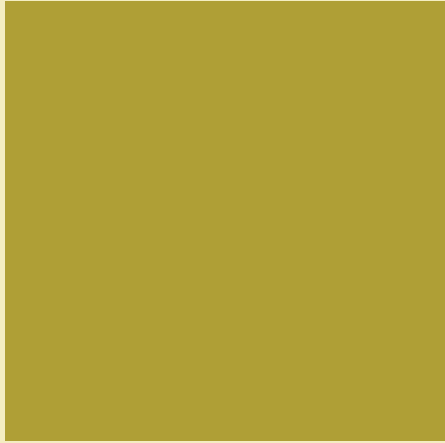
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INTRODUCTION

I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bricolage meaning - Starting from history, Architecture
The value of the process - Language

Bricolage context - Today

II. BRICOLAGE EXAMPLES

Literature - O.M. Ungers
Architecture - Flores y Prats
Material culture – H Arquitectes
Art - Herman de Vries
Design – Enzo Mari, Charles and Ray Eames
Cinema – "What time is this place?"

III. LAYOUT

Mindset: how to observe things - Architect as detective
Culture: Heritage or not? Cultural reuse of "fingerprints"
Materials: Material reuse, how little we know

bricolage layout - letter

INTRODUCTION

This is the research portion of my graduation thesis. The project came forth from a personal fascination with tradition, values, materials and human behaviour.

I often complain of people's unawareness of the need for quality in the built environment. In my opinion, architecture plays a fundamental role because it is a transversal discipline that affects everyone and it must be avoided for it to become commonplace. Architecture today is one of the few disciplines that can seek change to build an aware and sustainable society, and in my opinion, to make this possible a bricolage approach it is the starting point.

We live in a society where everything we need can be found, be bought or be discovered. Especially due to technology we are losing interest in curiosity, creativity and difference. The Bricolage approach makes us wake up from the flow of growth and consumption, of speed time and repeatability, letting us take a break and focus on the essence of us just like human beings part of our natural environment.

If I reflect about it, it is a pity that we are able to do many things with machines, but almost nothing with our hands. Robinson Crusoe was a survivor, an engineer, an architect and many other things but

first a bricoleur. The bricolage approach allowed him to acquire knowledge from his actions and appreciate the simple beauty of the outcome. Our senses and emotions, our creativity are what make us unique creatures and we should never forget that.

How do we do not forget?

We start from the common things, the ordinary and extraordinary and we take advantage of it. We highlight what is around us, what we forgot about. Instead of avoiding it or beating it, we simply use it, or reuse it and revalue it as our local resource. We have to start to have a critical look at what appears simple, ready and time saving. We have to accept our environment for what it is, for what it offers, valuing the rawness of it.

In the architecture field we do it starting with history, traditions, local materials and local needs. This discussion has been influencing architects along the years, but there is not a clear definition of what bricolage is, that is why I aim to talk more about it, hoping to highlight the implication this approach brings to society and to architects.

"Is the future behind us?" An interview with Kenneth Frampton and Juhani Pallasmaa By Ingerid Helsing Almaas, 2011

JP: I have often used the word "impure" to describe the architects' reality, in the sense that it brings together categories that don't fit together. Yet that's what we need to deal with. Architecture must be logistically and philosophically one of the most complex and contradictory human endeavours.

KF: That reminds me of Alvaro Siza's great aphorism when he says "architects don't invent anything, they transform reality." In other words, he has to transform noncorresponding synthetic demands. And that contradiction is already out there, in the realisation of something. Therefore the making of architecture cannot be purely a logical operation.
I think that history, in the sense of tradition, is the one essential catalyst by which these contradictory conditions can be culturally and significantly resolved.

IHA: I sense that you're not talking about tradition as a material or constructive continuity?

JP: I would say that tradition means understanding that the acts of construction take place in a cultural continuum. And in this there is respect, there are an echo and reverberation, and there is a responsibility. Backwards and forwards.

I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bricolage meaning
Starting from history

Any place is archaeological: if we excavated we would find ruins of ancient constructions, fragments of the thought of those who preceded us. These remains "uprooted and mutilated words, words of others" (Borges, 788), constitute the basis on which the ultra-personal culture is founded, the only one that really has value because it does not belong to anyone. (Martí Arís, 2002, 25)

In the first chapter of his book regarding human knowledge and its roots, Carlos Martí Arís simply explains the power of communication between past and present. He cites Borges to explain the communicative power of culture and the thoughts of others. Language and compositions of ideas are the only richness we have because we do not own them. We find and try to decipher them to have a better understanding of time. The value of the past is considered as an object to dialogue with, because it does not belong to anyone, but it is for all.

A found persistence, an object, belongs to a past language that could be hard for us to understand. For this one of the most significant division lines in art is to divide the ones that want to tackle the problem and make an effort to solve it, and others that leave the problem suspended, without including it.

Martí Arísproposes a strategy for the architect that is in the middle: the eclipsis of the language. Adding a filter to avoid the language to be too bright and be able to see other lights. The language of the past arrives with reflection (Martí Arís, 2002, 35), not direct, and in this way, we see shades and relief that we did not predict. Perception increases, language becomes permeable and we are capable of going over it, linking it with another way of communicating. However, we do not have to consider linguistic as a process that applies only to humans, but it belongs to the environment to which they belong. Language is part of a slow process that unfold and inspires creativity, growth and development for everyone.

Everyone shapes their own language in their mind since they were children. Children learn how to speak from their parents and create their own invented rules that keep changing and evolving in time. The human mind has the innate capacity to create a pattern language that is built up and diversified by experiences, so there is a variation from person to person. If there is a distinction between people, the difference within the culture will be even more evident. Culture is a composition of pattern languages, a bricolage language of traditions and experiences. Christopher Alexander compares this phenome-

non to genetics: individuals have overlapping genes and only a few different. Evolution implies that some genes are replaced by others and combined in new genes combinations. (Alexander, 342) Differences, singularities, complexities are what evolve recomposing in a new combination, a new language. Nature chooses for us, we cannot establish our genes, because we do not own them.

But what about human behaviour in the environment? Should not mankind act in the same way, and allow this combination, this new language, to be a composition of different patterns or fragments as the guiding principle to generate creativity and progress?

The architect and theorist Irenè Scalbert faced existential confusion in architecture revisiting the notion of architect-bricoleur. "In our own time, buoyed by the rise of ecology, the architect is more Robinson Crusoe than a scholar, salvaging what he can from the shipwreck of culture and making the most of nature." (Scalbert, 2001, 70). What Scalbert means with the "shipwreck of culture" is in my interpretation the incapability of deciphering the communicative power of pre-existence in the contemporary world, and an invite to the modern architect to start from it without detaching from human ecology.
The critic also discussed the value of pre-existence in cities in his

lecture "Difference matters" at TU Delft in 2020 (Scalbert, 10). Scalbert argues that in recent years has been assumed equivalence among humans that made all differences equivalent when they are not. The architectural critic states that is the role of the architect to assume the full significance of differences, because they are infinite but not arbitrary. In modern times the difference is the only response to individualisation, a link to democracy, appropriation, to avoid the shallow development of repetition that would elude progress.

Modification, belonging, context, identity, specificity, are a group of words that seem to presuppose a pre-existing reality to be preserved by transforming it, handing down the memory with the traces in turn founded on the basis of the traces that is, a reality that appears in the physical form of a geography whose cult cognitive and whose interpretation provide the backbone of the project. (Gregotti, 35)

To conclude, I will make clear my own definition of language, pattern and fragments that will explain my point of view of the role of the architect in my times.

A language is a system used to produce communication among humans. It is a combination of written symbols or sounds that identify meaning for that specific culture. A language can also be referred to

a specific subject, in this case, architecture. But I do not mean it in sense of terminology, but a theoretical approach that is subjective and not imposed by rules. In other words, an architectural language we are creating by experiences without knowing the outcome, like children do when they learn.

Fragments are partial reminiscences of a whole that are not re-composable any more. They are reminiscences of the past, sometimes the only evidence of an enormous knowledge belonging to the past history. In every field of appliances, they seem insignificant, but if we do not have a closer look at them we will never have the possibility to understand their value. For instance, in linguistic, pieces of engraved stones, little papyrus writing, give glimpses of stories, languages or meanings that will be maybe impossible to decipher. So fragments do not be to be materials, or not only. Reminiscences do not need to shape materiality, but they can also be identified as strong communicative immaterial elements or events that belong to the past that make sense to reintroduce.

In this sense it is easier to make clear this concept introducing the meaning of pattern. A pattern is a model or a form proposed for imitation, unwritten habits coming from the past that have been rewritten, reinterpreted and diffused overtime. The interesting character-

istic of patterns is that we do not notice, but they all around us, and everything we live today is the result of a pattern combination.

Bricolage meaning
Architecture

The word bricolage has acquired and specified its meaning along the years. It has significance in every academic discipline and it is becoming more contemporary because the relation with the climate change.

 "Bricolage" is the appropriation of materials with a specific usage that are ready-to-hand to inspire a new object. The materials lead to a new function and turn upside-down their meaning, for the purpose of transmitting new knowledge. The creative act is strictly related to the bricoleur's identity, the will of the maker to use the found object as an originator to think with. Bricolage can be identified as a system of diverse elements that seem unrelated but when gathered they create one whole harmonic identity. As Jerome Levi mentions, this act of unifying wholeness summarizes the multiplicity of expression to one comprehensible language. (Levi, 2009)

The French term "bricolage" signifies human endeavour, improvisation as a necessary act to incorporate in the creative action. Levi-Strauss in the first chapter of his book "The Savage Mind" stresses the validity of the mythical thought mixed with a scientific one

talking about them as parallel way of thinking, but never opposite. The author believes that mixing this two, and to explain the mythical thought, the sensible observation it is necessary to introduce the bricoleur. Strauss describes the role of the bricoleur as someone dissimilar from the engineer because she/he practises the ability of the craftsman using the material at hands and creating new tools. Strauss also mentions that the modern world is mostly focused on the production system of the engineer, while the bricoleur is more focused on observing the world with a sensible approach. On the other hand, the bricoleur is conflicting to a totalizing imposition from the society, because she/he is imaginative and open to unpredicting occurrences or shifts.

In the architecture field, the bricolage approach develop in practicing creative thinking about previous significance and new statements. The act of making, the capacity of producing objects with the essence of surviving resources cohabiting in one spatial and temporal framework. The difference of the bricoleur of dealing with signs and their mythical meaning implies a link with culture, tradition. While the engineer deals with concepts. One open possibilities because is flexible and unrelated, the other recycle and repropose

a persistence of the past. But being architects both bricoleurs and engineers need to find a new language to explain both the signs and the concepts to relate to the context they are acting.

Scalbert in a lecture about the importance of diversity in architecture analyses cities connecting experience and diversity to the new way to improvement, suggesting the transformation of fragments as the only approach left.(Scalbert, 2020)

The fragments Irenè Scalbert refers to are the found objects of the bricoleur. The objects have exceedingly communicative supremacy, belonging to a whole that vanished. They are embodiment of the recurrence of history, they belong to the societal value of the past. As bricolage objects they do not have an internal stability in time and scale, so when necessary are able to generate their own context and language. They are the bricolage object from the past that should be the input of other creative acts. Fragments are decomposed objects meaning transformation in part for new generations, as heritage, but without having the fluke of being protected.

Bricolage is a multidisciplinary approach that value nondetermin-

Giuseppe Penone, *Tree of 12 Meters*, 1980-82.

istic environments. Regarding resources, bricolage can be the solution in every discipline for overcoming challenges and the right approach for turning the challenges into opportunities. The role of the bricoleur is to be the mediator analysing the quality of the resources available and recombine them to illustrate their possibilities in every discipline. In this way, bricolage can become an active research with a methodology which includes ethical and critical thinking contrasting the passive methodologies that do not consider the tools at hand. (Scalbert, 2011)
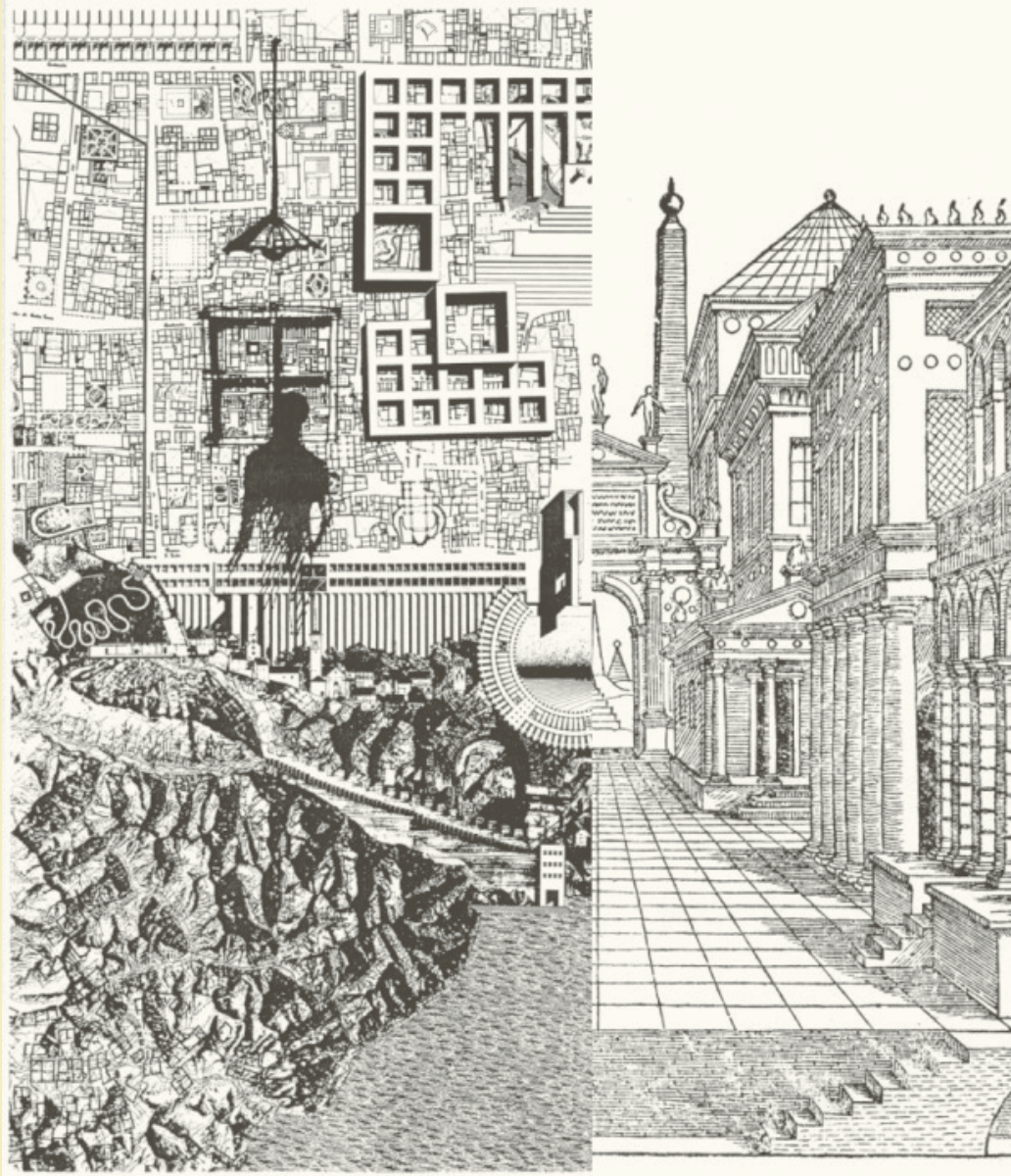
Aldo Rossi, Eraldo Consolascio, Bruno Reichlin, Fabio Reinhart,

La Città Analoga, 1976, *La città analoga*, 1980-82.

The value of the process
Language

The city cannot be traced back to a single formal fact, but it is a superimposition of completed elements (patterns) and fragments. In our epoch, we are far from the city as a foundation act, but probably as an object of modification in which the fragments are the objects that inspire projects. For objects is meant the artefact that is capable to become alive again for the observers' narration.

Fragments of history today belong to a built fabric and countless of them are hidden or shadowed from new buildings The architect bricoleur estimate fragments as a social and material resource crafting benefit from their role in history but also their capability to adapt and spawn a memorable framework in time.

Built fabric is often pulled by politicised claims, so fragments not being protected or listed, happen to lose their significance in the city fabric and be destabilised. Once destabilised, the cultural value they posed is eclipsed and risk to be lost in the past. Nevertheless, architects must know that any intervention implies a modification of the built fabric and the place undergo alteration that requires authentic planning of new imaginary.

In this sense, for understanding how fragments are composed and how to recognise them it is necessary to consider diverse characteristics. By choosing different scales of patterns, C. Alexander (Alexander, 1979) elucidates how cities and buildings are constructed and why they are perceived differently in quality and time, suggesting a method for design.

Alexander in his book "Timeless way of building" (Alexander, 1979) analyses the communicative relation among human being, nature and building through the concept of pattern, a common entity among them. Through several phases: the Quality, the Gate and the Way, the author offers a method of analysis of the world around us and all the possible relation to taking into account. The phases are useful to morally research the pattern values of a place and use fragments as a tool to be included in the design process.

Alexander's can be considered a bricolage method of research, because it can be summarised as an analysis of the qualities of the object, the gate that opens a door between creative improvisation and preceding knowledge, followed by experimentation to generate a way to innovative narration. The process implies the use of existing resources available that need to be recombined to generate a

new design tool.

But patterns of the urban fabric are not the only element relevant to consider as an existing resource of a place.

Other un-material resources available that need to be considered as a tool are social physiognomies. Physiognomies are the real nature of an object or a society, but it can be assumed from the outsider from a different perspective. For instance, a painting outlook stays the same, but two people can have totally different perception and feelings when looking at it. The same is for the built environment: everyone projects their own-self in what they see.

Amos Rapoport argues works of art are related to aesthetic learning, and the built environment is a complex work of art that should be decoded from everyone. To understand it, so decomposition of the characteristic of a place is possible only if the buildings communicate so that they can facilitate people acceptation of their values.

The decomposed built environment offers patterns of all kinds, and some of them are more relevant to some, others are relevant to others. The difference is with fragments belonging to the past. Fragments are considered as work of arts belonging to the built

environment, there is the moral requirement to interpret them and transform them into accessible objects for people benefit. They represent a socio-cultural physiognomy from the past that everyone should be able to respect, defend and get inspired from.
"If every century has its ruins and its own way of putting them in image by making them landscape." (Gregotti, 2000, 142)

The power of fragments is given by the unawareness of all the narrative related to them and the power of human brain to create it. For how much we would like to know it, we will never be able to re-trace it completely, so we are given the chance to integrate them in our present and the future generation forthcoming hoping that they will inspire more and more everyone. (Pallasmaa 2012)
Therefore, when patterns of a place are analysed in different scales it is possible to find fragments as tools. The tools, through an un-predictable creative act, can be recomposed from the bricoleur to a new ensemble. The new language created by the bricoleur dia-logue with the past, with the previous meaning of the tools, and so should be able to generate a new perception of time span.

The 21st Century represents the limits of the human species in materials usage. The globe has reached its limits, and people are already suffering the effects of past century design choices. Contemporary use of materials is moved by the economic benefits it brings, but reuse of materials (and not materials) discuss the possibility of transmitting values of a pre-existences through a physical relocation, creating a new communicative ensemble. But reuse is not a common choice among architects, because it implies overcoming societal practices and ethical debates about sustainability.

However, even for who approach it, Bricolage is not a clearly defined concept, especially in the architecture field, and this research aims to add new visions and new prospects about its development in the academic and practice world for minimizing environmental damage and valuing material reuse as a resource.

Sustainability is the capacity of an object or entity to be resilient in harmony with its surrounding, bringing advance and boosting the existing.
Brain-washing, and in this case green-washing so related to the sustainable approach, is the act that reduces the critical thinking

and the moral judgement of the human mind, implying consequences such as a decrease of moral responsibility, sensitivity and creativity.

Today we talk a lot about being and acting sustainably, but most of our choices are related to green-washing principles. If human population continues growing, material needs remain high or even follow the rise, bringing to more material scarcity and more waste production. In all fields, how do we intervene? How can an architect behave sustainably being aware of the impact? What is the risk of one choice creating a new unsustainable impact?

The architecture discipline is a long time process that includes a lot of phases. Being hard to define how to establish a sustainable approach for every phase Simon Guy & Graham Farmer (2001) established a table of environmental logics. The authors define a logic following Hajer, as "a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts and categorisations that are produced, reproduced and transformed in a particular set of practices through which meaning is given to social and physical realities." (Guy, 2001,141)

The authors make these logics flexible and intelligible, interpretative frameworks that every project should consider avoiding collision among the logics.

But how does bricolage relate to it? (economical aspects, time-consuming)

A Bricolage always implies a never-ending possible scenario of negotiation, interchange, unpredictability, criticism and debates, especially about the economical aspect of the design choices. Being time and space the main concerns of our society, Bricolage is seen as a time-consuming practice in a fast-speed civilisation. However, Bricolage should be approached as a mix of environmental logics of innovation inclined to a reflective attitude about our daily choices as people and not only as architects. Eco-technic, eco-centric, eco-aesthetic, eco-cultural, eco-medical, eco-social logics of sustainable architecture are all included in a bricolage layout with interpretative resilience related to the specific project.

Bricolage is the will of emphasising this unconventional way of approaching architecture, decoding it and create a communicative ensemble. The conceiving of new possible scenarios in critical contexts is related to the nonlinear approach of research.

Sometimes the scenarios seem aged but are a deep relation with tradition, history, a philosophy that help us understand the sustainable choice it suggests about material reuse. The different environmental logics can be considered a way of explaining sustainability

in all features of architecture, aiming to raise questions and debates about the architectural practice but also opening it to other bricolage fields.

II. BRICOLAGE EXAMPLES

Oswald Mathias Ungers
Literature

O.M. Ungers was a German architect and theorist who focused of basic geometrical forms to inspire his designs. The theorist used his formal language to detach from the variable perception of architecture. In his research " Morphologie: city metaphors", Ugers looks at new perspective of thinking and producing a design composed by images, metaphors and analogies, as in any other disciplines.

The first way is empirical, and study the evidences related to the phenomena that can be structured in a pragmatic methodology process. The second possible way is related to experiences, so the subjective vision of the image as a whole. The first way is related to science, the second way is related to psychology field and the Gestalt social theory.

If we think about it, imaginative process is what generate creativity and that is when knowledge increases and it is possible to generate science. So one way of thinking is strictly connected to the other, it is just the approach that might be altered in different fields of application.

For Ungers images play an important role to create reality, or a description of it. While metaphors are related to the communicative expression and figure one image for another. Metaphors are based on similarities, symbols related to an object but bypass the logical
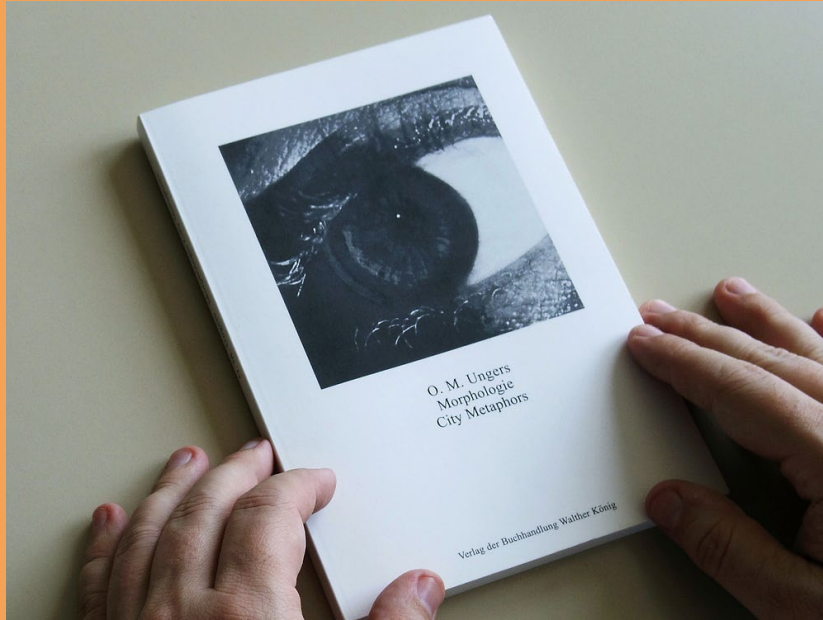
Oswald Mathias Ungers, *City Metaphors*, 1982.

process behind them. Analogies are the tools that make it possible to happen. They are the comparative references that extend inter-disciplinarity and knowledge, creating a narrative.

Ungers in his book make a complex thinking explained in obvious images, metaphors and analogies. He uses the Gestalt tools of mul-tistability, invariance, and reification related to the perception of the images and repropose them for design. For instance, he compares unrelated images with a similar geometrical shape to challenge them in new meanings and relations. All the relation that he choose in his book become inspirational and the way we look at things changes to new interpretable prospective.
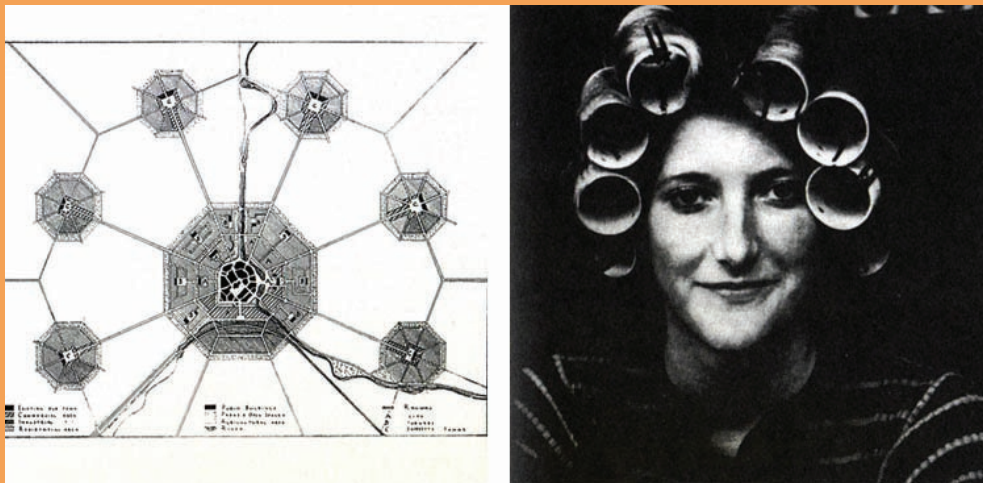
Oswald Mathias Ungers, *City Metaphors*, 1982.

Charles and Ray Eames, Enzo Mari
Design

Charles and Ray Eames were a married couple of designers that met when they were students at the new Cranbrook Academy of Art in 1940. The couple was fascinated by the new possibilities of materials and the functional research, so they based their studio on new high-quality technology, affordable for everyone. They were the first creators during the American economic expansion to bring social implications into the design. One of their researches included the construction of "Case study houses", using plywood in a new way to be used as a structural material and manufacture quickly and with quality. Moreover, in their research about furniture, they were the first designers to use fibreglass as the complementary material to metal, creating the "La Chaise" chair. The couple not only developed an interest in design but also films, like the famous "The powers of ten", and architecture.

The capability of the designers was to see the quality in everything they found at hand to transform it with a new function significant for every user. In their projects, they always established a peculiar relation between order and event, uniformity and variety to give value to something that was not visible to the eye at first sight. The card game "House of Cards" was designed by the Eameses to highlight the beauty of common things and suggest their infinite spatial com-

Charles and Ray Eames *Charles and Ray Eames sitting on the La Chaise prototype,*, 1948.

binations. The game was used as an educational and collaborative tool to centre the eye on natural beauty and the value of everyday objects, always present the pitch of irony of rules and freedom co-living.

The game uses a new linguistic to inspire a new vision of simple things, the different meaning of things stimulates a new perception of the values of the present.

Enzo Mari was an Italian modernist artist born in 1932 that in his professional life was influenced by the art and craft movement. One of the most famous design representations is the game "16 animals" in which the artist made a composable puzzle that have a multiple interlocking structure. The designer idea started from creating a game that could have the most efficient use of the wooden table, to give the maximum with the minimum amount of material. This idea bought him to this design that was inspired from natural form and allowed him to transform the animals form simple shapes to symbols. In one piece Mari could synthetize utopic design, ludic features, practical use and critic to the economical accessibility; allowing children to compose the figures in many creative ways without strict schemes. common things and suggest their infinite spatial combinations. The

Charles and Ray Eames , *House of Cards*, 1953.

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The game uses a new linguistic to inspire a new vision of simple things, the different meaning of things stimulates a new perception of the values of the present.

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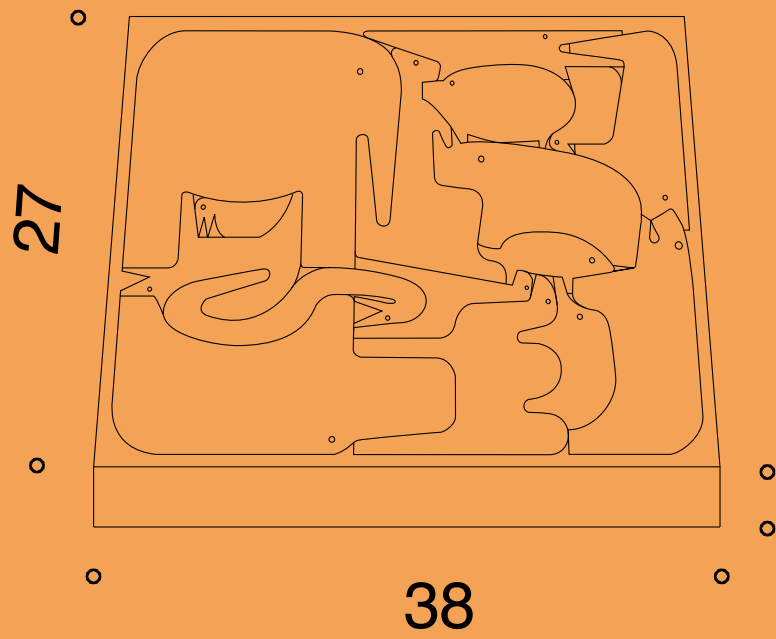
Enzo Mari, *16 animali*, 1957.

Herman de Vries
Art

Herman de Vries is a contemporary Dutch artist researching the role of nature and its manifestation of reality. Being a biologist Herman de Vriest felt the urge to open his mind with interdisciplinarity and new approaches to nature through art. The artist, using many techniques, emphasises the flustered relation between man and nature. Through the collection, seriality and impartiality de Vries highlights the beauty of the process in nature, showing the reality of the components for what they are.

For the artist unity and diversity are in straight connection and help us to focus on what is around us in a new way. With this work, the user simply realises that when focusing on the details nothing is replicable, but everything is unique and has value. But this becomes easy to realise only because the object, with its own story, has a new context, a new point of view for reading the same thing.
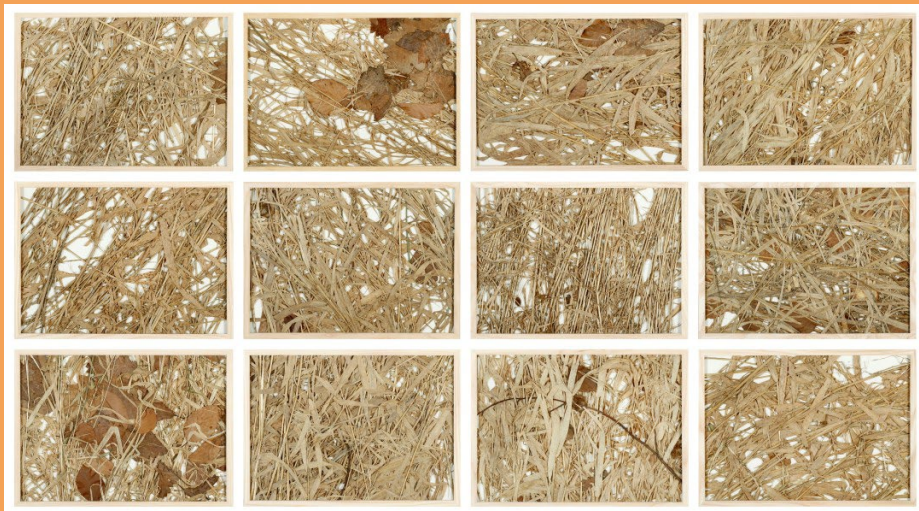
Herman de Vries, *Mixed Media*

grass between paper and glass, 2016.

Flores y Prats
Architecture

Flores y Prats are two architects based in Barcelona that founded their practice in 1998. They both worked for Enric Miralles where they approached the use hand-drawing in practical projects and also the importance of the different tasks in the process. The architects started to be fascinated by the richness and complications of existing realities around them and decided to further investigate the theme in their own practice.

Richardo Flores y Eva Prats use models and hand-drawings at all scales to always get the best proportions and scale of the projects, and their context. In this way, every project of them is deeply investigated in value and seen as a social responsibility in which the architect is the guiding line to the emotional outcome. One stunning example is the Sala Beckett project located in Barcelona and completed in 2014. The Sala Beckett Theatre was a long-time project because because the building was not listed, but brought to the architect a lot of significances form the past that took time form them to analyse and understand. The building was on a state of decay, nevertheless the architects used an archaeological approach to analyse and catalogue all the unmissable characteristics of the building to save and reuse. The documentation, the hand-writing, helped them to have a closer connection with the old building and "talk with the ghost of the

Flores y Prats, *Sala Beckett*, 2016.

past "belonging to the place. They did not have the goal to return it to its original condition, but reinterpret and reuse the pieces in a new way that would have allowed a better inhabitancy of the place, but also highlight the elements of the past in a new unfinished reality.

game was used as an educational and collaborative tool to centre the eye on natural beauty and the value of everyday objects, always present the pitch of irony of rules and freedom co-living.

The game uses a new linguistic to inspire a new vision of simple things, the different meaning of things stimulates a new perception of the values of the present.

Flores y Prats, *Sala Beckett*, 2016.

H Arquitectes
Material culture

H arquitectes are an architectural studio established in 2000 in Sabadell, Barcelona.

Their approach to architecture contribute to the theoretical moral and philosophical basis of building misfits. They use material that have at hands, so local materials, and make the most of them, because they believe that traditional architecture has always been capable of making beauty for less use of materials. What the architects propose is a paradigm shift in the architecture discipline about alternative qualities of materials. They were able to discover new spatial qualities through reinventing new tools and methods to develop new thinking and rethinking about the real qualities of architecture in the overall of today concern about material scarcity.

An exemplary project is, for instance, The Centro Cívico la Lleialtat Santsenca finished in 2017 in Barcelona. The building make use of the plot as strictly connected part of the urban fabric, to the cooperative and the sensitivity associated to story of it. Many existing elements were reused with a new meaning and new similar materials introduced to propose new spaces that would guarantee a stronger connection between old and new. The architects started with the elements they could make use of, because a building organization was already there, given, and removal would only be proposed if the

H Arquitectes, *Centro Cívico la Lleialtat Santsenca*, 2017.

conditions could be improved. They define their way of approaching PRexistences a sense of trans-historicity, because most of the time the materials had a function that change in time and this implies a deep study of the material and the value of it. This approach have a broader respect of the local material culture, not only because of using the material as they are, but because an intense study allow to give them dignity and transforming them in unique pieces connected to their context also if they are maybe industrial materials such as hollow bricks or wooden structural elements.

H Arquitectes, *Centro Cívico la Lleialtat Santsenca*, 2017.

The short movie "What time is this place?" is a visual experiment of the Bricolage Studio at the Tu Delft University of Technology completed in 2020 during the first quarter of the Graduation Studio of Urban Architecture.

The movie technique and montage revealed buildings as actors, to convince the audience not of physical value as figures, but of cultural value in history. Buildings are entities preserving considerable proceedings to narrate the prominence of memories along time. The authors proposed and manufacture a new language, represented by a space of tension, a not-place of memory and dreams where characters (models) generated an atmosphere of time with their light, outfits, audio, movements, text. The characters were chosen and composed by a deep study of the local patterns, traditions, remaining communicative fragments and social relation to them. This was expressed in a new but universal language a manifestation of several interconnecting elements belonging to the city of Nijmegen.

Among the three main characters, the Molenpoort character was described as an anthropomorphised being responding to people needs about time. From a guesthouse to a police station to a shopping centre the building was approached from a big scale object (oversized to be perceived at human scale) to an anthropomorphic storyteller of

Studio Bricolage, Poster *What time is this place?*, 2020.

history. It was one of the many fragmented entities of the city who, as people, was looking for eternity on the social stage. The building suffered many articulations of time caused by history and the film suggest the audience to question the value of time in a shopping centre "death" compared to the previous urban configuration of an open courtyard "alive".

Indeed, the social evolution of the characters of the film, due to their understanding of an evolving society, is the reflection of where our society is leading today. The images of the film attempt to show the remaining fragments and the blurred vision of them today, taking as an example the water pond of Molenpoort's parking lot envisioning it as a place of quality thank to the prominence of the patterns belonging to it.

The film underlines how the city, in this case, Nijmegen, has become a reflection of human faintness to quantity, purchasing and economic lead interests. It is the product of misuse of resources, repetition and standardization, it does not value the fragments of every entity, the cultural identity of cities have been shadowed by commercialization, forgetting about the inestimable value of diversity.

Studio Bricolage, *What time is this place?*, 2020.

Personal significance examples are analysed because I believe that reading of bricolage is subjective and exceptional, made of personal experiences. These examples are divided into themes, trying to categorize them into paradigms that can induce readers to reflect, and find their way of identifying bricolage in them or maybe inspire more act of bricolage, or just find other bricoleurs.

I remember an artist selling jewellery made of recycled materials in the centre of Rome close to the Pantheon, and me when I was 13 y.o. being one of his major fans. He would make bracelets, rings, and ordinary objects with plectrums, cutleries and flexible materials. Maybe the artist was just trying to reproduce something knowing Bruno Munari's design, for instance "Forchetta parlante". At the moment I did not know anything about Bruno Munari, and that artist transmitted me his love for reuse and bricolage, which had a major influence in my youth, and maybe still has it today.

Aldo Rossi, *La cupola for Alessi*, 1988.

LAYOUT

Architect as detective
How to observe things

As explained in chapter II, to start a bricolage mindset the architect should act as a detective, finding information about undefined precedencies. The detective uses a wide range of tools and soft skills to redraw a line from the past and connect it with the present. It is a constant connection of time and events, traces and footprints. However, the Architect is also called to a context for a need of transformation. To better understand the context and propose the right transformation the architect has to start the process revealing what from the context its permanence.

The architect's activity is, therefore, an activity that reveals something that already exists. It exists that he must know it and make it evident, that he must, let's say, transform back into architecture. This is the aspect of the project cognitive activity in the most general sense of the term, an activity that transforms an aspiration, the tendency towards something barely glimpsed, into areal and material data that is a recognizable form of its realization.(Monestiroli, 2004, 22)

The architects deeply investigate the objects found and the action they take use persistence as the leading element for the future outcome. The architect as an detective collects a variety of objects creating a narrative that contributes to the single object but also gives new functionality to it. The object does not have the function it had

before, but being memory of it can transform from ruin to memory. It is here when tradition and innovation come together. But tradition is meant as duration and not as a representation of the past. Tradition is different from conservation because conservation does not imply a development, so duration and adaptation. Tradition implies reformulation, diversity and never-ending innovation.

Culture: Material or intangible?
re-use of fingerprints

My personal revelation on this scope relates to the cultural value of fragments and their influence in the perception of time and space. More in detail the role of fragments in different scales of approach: city's history and how they relay to the eternal recurrence of time, and in material culture as objects, always contrasting the shifting speed world, but also the not-material fragments belonging to the unwritten memory.

The contemporary architect has the possibility to value everything that is at hand and make long term choices. Long time and space guarantee a sense of belonging and identity in the social panorama that make it harder to separate, but easier to care and evolve. We want architecture to be preserved and become strategic, a functional shape resilient to change. Especially in the Netherlands, were a building life is estimated to be around thirty years and then adapted or be demolished for new societal needs, the sense of authenticity and identity of a building is extremely important. Not only for the societal value and the community that live the building, but also for the material waste is created.
We have to build long term, for the contemporary and future needs, we build for adaptation, resilience and re-use, for new life and new outcomes, for new perspectives and creativity.

we build for adaptation, resilience and re-use, for new life and new outcomes, for new perspectives and creativity.

material reuse reduced knowledge

Architecture is also a construction process, where material needs to be chosen. How to decide for materials? Which are the best materials to use?

"The use of any material must include the construction of a place and its transformation" (Rossi, 1982, 8)

Aldo Rossi in his Autobiografia mentions the importance to use local materials, but also the ability of materials to be transformative. Materials allow critical thinking and generate new detachment from the past or a past significance; they allow reflection on the present as a long-term situation in which materials need to acquire a different significance from the past.

As the archaeological method that implies patience and dedication, the material architectural act is needed when there are found materials that have not been noticed and valued in the recent past. Like the Dadas that took the object of the past and changed their context, sometimes in the city we realise how many fragments are without a context and how those object before belonged to a language that was communicative and today is lost.

"In this place, in the text assimilated to the contemporary city, where every juxtaposition appears casual, where every hierarchy is definitively suppressed, the only way to emerge from this indistinct

cluster of fragments seems to be entrusted only to the modality of "Estrangement", a peculiar practice of surrealism." (Core, 6)

So materials can small scale fragments themselves, that the architect finds or have to research. The capacity of the bricoleur is to compose them, give them a new place and maybe a new function re-using them. Natural or traditional materials prevail because they have the communicative power in the construction process as a long term process made by people, creating material and intangible attachment to the place.

As an archaeologist the architect brings a series of materials on the table, consider the composition, the relations that a material is able to create. The transformability and resilience of materials make them contemporary, so the existing materials belonging to the context are extremely important elements to understand the traditional construction process of the place, reinterpret it in a new significance.

The layout is a scheme, an assembly of parts that should be "laid out", placed, arranged to compose. The layout is the final part of the act of composition, it is the result that can no longer be changed, it is the finished product.

A bricolage layout is an oxymoron. Bricolage is the composition of parts that are disconnected from each other, the layout is a composite part. But that layout is legible because it is placed in the ordered compositional condition to be read as a product, but its hidden reality is the disordered composition of many thoughts, ideas, representations that are open to new interpretations. A bricolage layout is reflection, composition, knowledge, but also the starting point, perhaps for someone else, or perhaps for ourselves in another time frame of the creative process. So why not highlight and enhance the bricolage aspect of each layout, the imperfect and untidy part that if drawn in an understandable, written or narrated form becomes communicative, engaging, emotional.

For me, bricolage layout is the conclusion of a path, the ordering of thoughts, experiences, knowledge, encounters, studies, research, chance, passions, fears, beliefs and hopes that take refuge in the architectural process. Each project enters the history of the architect and becomes part of it, interfaces with the past, present and future, becomes a perennial thought, like a living being.

A task, like the breath that keeps a living being alive.

A context, a mainly social responsibility that lasts over time, that time we are unable to foresee or control. We can foresee everything without the certainty that that will be its fulfilment.

In a project, the architect surrounded by infinite information tries to create a taxonomy, a recognizable and reusable lexicon of places, people, history and culture. The architect looks around without evaluating what is beautiful or what is ugly, but aims to find the intrinsic values of something that she/he does not yet know. Architects try to use bodies to experience the positive and negative sensations that forms, symbols, materials transmit them, but also to observe people, behaviour, needs, embodying themselves into each of them trying to interpret the wishes and needs.

Bricolage layout is a path that every architect should take in overcoming his/her own limits, those limits imposed by the society that surrounds us and things that seem to be imposed and cannot be changed. It is the path by which we evaluate the process of others, the process of ourselves, we overturn it, decompose it, assemble it to create something useful and meaningful not for us, but for those around us and those who will experience it.

The Bricolage layout contrasts the dogmatic vision of power or consumerism, but questions existences starting from the bottom, the needs and values that are offered by the place.

The bricolage layout is the only way to exalt and overestimate the

ethical human being, because ethical people have their personal responsibility as guides towards a group of people. All this to ensure that things work out, and I do not mean apparently, but that they really work, and every reality is visible and accepted as long as it is different.

I am aware that a society of individuals who behave correctly is a utopian vision, but I want to call it heterotopic because it seeks change, tries to improve itself. Moreover, to find or obey an ethics superior to its own where there are no rules imposed from above, but where we feel young intellectually even when we are old, where we feel motivated and unprepared at the same time, where the love for what we are, our authenticity overcomes every other need.
This does not work when there is someone, possibly a government, a municipality, or a manager who imposes a one-way, ethnocentric cultural vision. Like Calude Leviss Strauss, I believe in anti-ethnocentrism and I believe that a cultural imposition is wrong, but it is the mutual exchange that draws the foundations of a functioning and renewing society.

The state of gentrification that has taken place and is being renewed in Nijmegen and Molennpoort is just one example of what happens every day in the cities. We architects, designers, creatives, are who imagine and shape the world trying to influence it, trying to synthe-

size everyone's thoughts on a product, trying to put together what is offered to us to make it usable and accessible to all. Our products have the power to generate emotions, to live people's lives in different ways, to take different forms than we had foreseen, for this we must best represent all realities, for this we must learn to listen and observe.

To conclude, I hope that this ethical path to design, my bricolage layout, is only a starting point for a perennial process of which architects are part of. We enter time frames, in places for a limited period of time and we get out when time continues to pass there.

We learn to value the process, even if it is slow and full of obstacles, because change, improvement, involvement take time. We must make morally right choices not only for ourselves, but for the impact they have on a global level, without forgetting diversity, but starting from it. We, ourselves, have to be authentic, to be the fruit of our experiences and we will be able to see in places and in people what is hidden, what is not said.

Let's show it off, let's create heterotopias, let's plan diversity, we'll always feel young, creative, and alive, we'll always feel authentic and without judgment.

Let's create forms that are understandable, coherent but at the same time full of diversity and disorder, so we leave room for the unpredictable, and the shape will encourage authentic behaviors. Let's treat all the reminiscences as heritage, as the starting point for a

new interpretation, not to make monuments, but to transform places in space for people and their identity. Let's enhance what we already have because it is what we have to deal with, and if we are not capable of doing it and we avoid it, it will reappear and we will be unprepared and we will lose it. Let's Value the existing, and every city will be the best bricolage layout to live in together.

Laura, Rotterdam, May 2021.
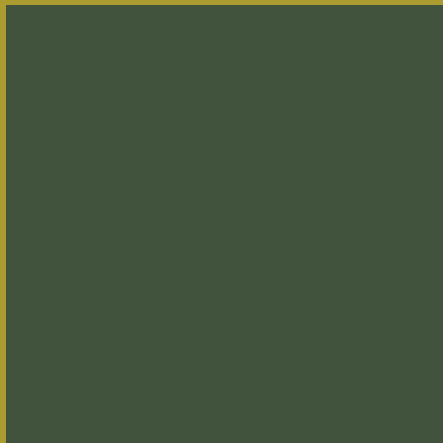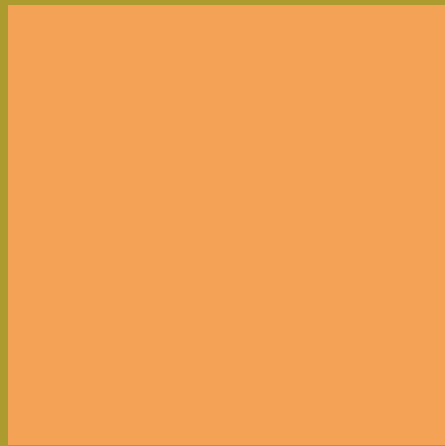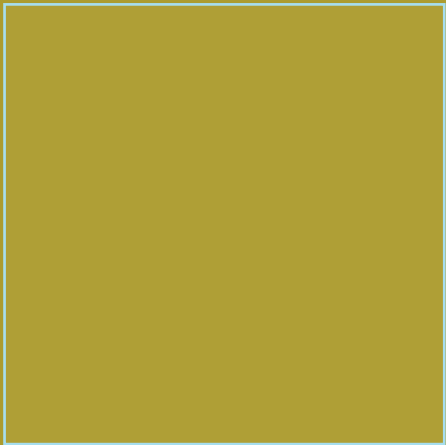
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