

Biographical Profile

Born in Bogliaco sul Garda (in the province of Brescia) in 1948, Francesco Moschini graduated from the University of Rome's Faculty of Architecture in 1975. As a lecturer at the same faculty from 1983 to 1987, he held courses on the relationship between architecture and the visual arts from the 1500s to the present day. He is currently Professor of the History of Architecture at the Politecnico di Bari where he teaches History of Architecture and History of Art at the Faculties of Engineering and of Architecture. From 1993 to 1998 he also held courses on the History of Architecture at the new Faculty in Ascoli Piceno.

In 2008 he was nominated scholar-member of the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, and in 2011 he became Secretary General of the academy.

Since 1974 he has been a member of AICA Associazione Internazionale dei Critici d'Arte (the International Association of Art Critics). He is a member of the advisory board of the journal "Rassegna di Architettura e Urbanistica" and the technical committees of the journals "Paesaggio Urbano", "l'Industria delle Costruzioni", "Il Disegno di Architettura", "Anfione e Zeto", as well as the Centro di Studi per la Storia dell'Architettura.

Editor of several series of architectural volumes including "Città e progetto", "Progetto e dettaglio", "Architettura e materiali", "Esercizi" and "Quaderni dell'A.A.M." for Edizioni Kappa, he is also the author of a series of catalogues entitled "Monografie di architettura" (Centro Di, Florence). He contributes to various important architectural journals.

For several years he was Scientific Director of the European Institute of Design in Rome, and a member of the Institute's Board of Directors.

In 1978 he founded A.A.M. ARCHITETTURA ARTE MODERNA in Rome, a centre for the development and promotion of cultural initiatives, studies and research, which remains one of the cultural organisations most actively committed to exploring not only the culture of the design/artistic project in Italy, but also the subtle relationships that exist at the heart of the art system. Right from the start A.A.M. has acted as a catalyst, its small exhibitions often anticipating important themes then addressed at a public level, making it a sort of centre for progressive contemporary culture, an active point of reference and a meeting place for several generations of artists and architects.

In 1993 Francesco Moschini further extended the range of his cultural activities, opening a new branch of A.A.M. in Milan. He has curated numerous exhibitions, with relative catalogues, in Italy and abroad, among which, and of particular note, those at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville in Paris and at the Forte Belvedere in Florence, as well as the recent exhibition at Poggio a Caiano dedicated to his prestigious collection of architectural drawings. In November 2000 he was awarded the Premio INArch in recognition of his cultural activities.

He is currently involved in the comprehensive reorganisation of the Bibliographic Collection that he recently donated to the Politecnico di Bari, along with the cataloguing and organisation of his large collection of architectural drawings dating from the 1700s to the present day.

His work as a whole – as an overall cultural project – is characterised by an unflagging interest in the relationships between **theory**, **history** and **project**, both in the field of architecture and in the visual arts more generally. These three terms should not, however, be seen in meta-historical terms as instances of one specific vision of the world. The plurality of positions that exist within the contemporary cultural debate suggest that we should, rather, speak of theories, histories and projects. The contemporary era is living out its own crisis in an entirely new way, seeking to legitimize and establish a place for its own "project" in history.

The objective of historical studies, especially as far as regards any form of history concerned with the modern era, is that of unearthing in works of art and architecture what they seem, amid a confused plurality of references, to conceal. Constant references to history (masking the loss of any real connection with our own traditions) are a defining characteristic of contemporary cultural production, as are the theories that support a form of art and architectural design which is both nostalgic for the demagogic role of the architect and artist and at the same time employed in work that addresses contexts that involve a multiplicity of interests and stakeholders: and finally, the architectural (or artistic) project itself, which in these conditions becomes a link to and the formalisation of a state of relative marginality, inevitably evolving amid conflicts and contradictions not only within the world of culture but also at an urban, institutional and political level. In this sense there is no attempt here to reconstruct or propose a new humanistic approach to reality: the intention is, instead, to

concentrate on the discontinuities present in the histories, the theories, the projects, and in their reciprocal relationships. Our a-topical triad is also, if anything, even more directly relevant to historical research, to ongoing work concerned with the history of architecture and of art as starting points from which contemporary projects develop and evolve.

Autobiographical note

In 1969, having finished my secondary school studies in Brescia, I moved to Rome to frequent the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, at the same time enrolling in the Faculty of Architecture.

My predominating critical and historical interest in the phenomena of art and architecture led me to frequent a series of courses at the Faculty of Literature and Philosophy, where I took exams in Art History with Giulio Carlo Argan, Aesthetics with Emilio Garroni, Modern Literature with Alberto Asor Rosa and Theatre and Entertainment History with Ferruccio Marotti.

During the somewhat breathless student years lived between Valle Giulia [the Faculty of Architecture] and the University's central campus [the Faculty of Literature and Philosophy] my interests began to lead in three directions on which I continue to work today: art history and criticism, architectural history and criticism and editorial activity.

The presence of this third aspect has, from the start, been an important and defining characteristic of my work: very little separates the moment in which I began my research from that in which I began to write and edit books. I see the interweaving of these activities as an original way of re-proposing and reorganising not so much the thinking and doing of intellectual work as its different facets: pure research and cultural activities.

Still a student, I began to dedicate myself to these three areas of activity from 1973 onwards. In that year, thanks to Bruno Zevi, I began teaching at the Soprintendenza all'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea of the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, and up until 1975 I prepared lessons for high-school students, along with teaching material and photographic documentation on the themes of Italian and international art and architecture from the mid 1800's onwards.

At the same time I began to intervene on these arguments in some of the courses that I followed, and I was given the job of editing the "Modern and Contemporary Architecture" section of the faculty's library journal, the "Bollettino della Biblioteca". Here I began to publish interventions on art and architecture, small pieces of monographic research – my interest already focused on the evolving ferment in these disciplines, observing the field of the visual arts in its entirety and using periodic and systematic critical work as a tool for exploring it.

In 1973 I also had the opportunity of making a trip to Scandinavia proposed by the Faculty of Architecture's Istituto di Critica Operativa under the direction of Bruno Zevi. Over the course of this visit I furthered my studies of Aalto, Asplund and Scandinavian Romanticism. 1973 also saw me engaged in the work of cataloguing and organising the exhibition of the Venetian painter Andrea Celesti with the Soprintendenza della Lombardia.

The following year a scholarship from the University of Grenoble and the French Cultural Centre enabled me to frequent a course on "Le Corbusier and his relationship with the painting of his time", and thanks to another field trip promoted by the faculty's Institute of Architectural Methodology I was able to see the works of architectural Cubism in Czechoslovakia.

Starting with the academic year 1973-4 and up to and including that of 1978-9, I held seminars in Rome on architectonic analysis, and at the same time I contributed lessons to the "Compliments to the History of Architecture" course at Reggio Calabria's Istituto Universitario di Architettura. The subject of these seminars was the combination of architectonic experience and contemporary debates, studied via a series of in-depth analyses – an approach that forms the basis of my "teaching style".

After having graduated in 1975 with a thesis on Architectonic Composition, I received a scholarship from the Italian Foreign Ministry and the French Government with which I frequented A. Chastel's courses at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in Paris and for which I wrote a thesis on Roman Palaces of the 1500s. Returning to Italy later that year, I began the work in architectural publishing that would continue and increase in volume until 1978, the year in which I became Cultural Director of the A.A.M Cooperative. In these three years the volume and the profile of my work as critic and scholar acquired consistency and a greater regularity.

Before considering the significance of A.A.M. and of my teaching activities, it is perhaps worth sketching out the other aspects of my work which have formed the background to these: the research, the articles, the pieces of criticism, the books and the catalogues that intersect on diverse levels. I believe that in this continuous intersection, and in the constant reference to the wider panorama, there emerges a strategy, a direction and a

body of interests that the systematic flatness of the categories generally applied in *curricula vitae* (so many articles, interviews, conventions and courses all recalled in chronological order) tends to overly mince up and separate. This style of work is, after all, an inevitability for the modern intellectual to whom neither the monastic cell nor the philosopher's ivory tower are conceded.

When, in my work as critic and historian, I have encountered opportunities that have seemed too apparently singular I have often needed to repeat to myself Fortini's exhortation to be as astute as the doves. On the other hand the teaching work that I continued to undertake in parallel with these occasions gained from and incorporated them. As far as methodology is concerned, the term itself has never been very dear to me (L. Colletti defined it the poor man's science); I have, rather, borne in mind the lesson of one of my professors, Asor Rosa who, in the 1960's, when he set about attacking what in literary populism he saw as being one of the most powerful of modern Italian culture's ideological forms, warned that criticism, even on the slippery slope of ideological polemics, cannot do without the most sophisticated of investigative tools.

This is the way in which I confront contemporary architectural production, so many manifestations of which seem to have the value of pure "symptom". Here, therefore, there lies one of the central threads of my work, the putting into order of a great quantity of details – whilst the tumult of contemporary ideas tends to address the overview – aware that details appear even more insignificant when observed from the stratospheric heights of the sweeping syntheses produced by previous generations.

In 1978 I put into action an idea of mine regarding the fact that in order to confront the problems of contemporary architecture an efficient cultural structure is (also) necessary. So I created a study centre, of which I am still Cultural Director, organising a multiplicity of initiatives: from exhibitions on architecture to the publishing of books and the creation of working relationships with public organisations and institutions, but here I would also underline the sense of a structure capable of responding to the new conditions in which culture is being produced.

A.A.M. has never been a commercial initiative, nor does it compete with official cultural institutions, neither does it confuse research with promulgation, but has always occupied a place in the vanguard of scholarly production. Above all, A.A.M. is not a "container", nor a space at the service of what already exists. Every phenomenon addressed (be it a theme, an artist or a period) has an impact, an urgency that draws attention to it as an original cultural project. A.A.M. has also provided the structure through which I have occupied myself with the architectural culture of Rome. This activity has forced me towards the most "militant" aspect of my work, a part of my work that has been difficult because one tends to consider it to be in conflict with scholarly commitments on other fronts, but which is also challenging at a personal level.

From the mid 1970's I began the work of patiently reconstructing the previous decade and the whole network of ties with a more distant past. I believe that I have kept provincialism and parochialism at arm's length: at heart I don't much love Rome and I regard her humours with detachment. On the other hand what does interest me is the importance of a culture of people and of places that possess specific identities, which acts as a counterbalance to the trend towards a globalized uniformity typical of the world of architectural publications.

I am not, here, referring to the notion of "place" in architecture. That idea, from the moment in which, in 1966, Aldo Rossi powerfully redefined it as contrasting with the concept of "environment", has itself gradually been so overused as to have now become something akin to the newly equivocal term of "context".

For this reason I have tried to define Rome in terms of a "situation", in order to throw light on aspects of a cultural situation in architecture whose concerns reach beyond those of the architectural tradition (memories etc.).

My teaching work began again between 1979 and 1981 with the conferral of the title of "studioso della materia" [academic specialist]. On 12th June 1979 at the faculty meeting of the Politecnico di Milano I was nominated academic specialist for the courses History of Architecture 1 and History of Architecture 2. In 1981, through a commission made up of E. Vittoria, F. Menna and C. Dardi, the Faculty of Architecture of Rome nominated me academic specialist for the Stage Design course, with particular reference to the historical avant gardes' relationship with the theatre.

Finally, in 1983 I was awarded a lecturing contract (as "Professore a Contratto") at the Faculty of Architecture of the Università degli Studi di Roma "La Sapienza", my work supporting that of C. Dardi (Architectonic Composition V) and F. Purini (Drawing and Relief), a contract which was renewed for the academic years 1984-5 and 1985-6. Between the two principle didactic experiences of my career up to that point – that of the seminars in Theory and History of Modern and Contemporary Architecture in the period from 1978-9 and that of the lecturing contract – I believe a significant shift can be seen in the development my own work and in that of the school of architecture. Against a backdrop of hesitant initial experiments with new teaching methods, meeting with opposition and under pressure from a situation of very real political tension, that first course of seminars represented a moment of freedom, a first openness to infrequently addressed themes.

The seminars were the first historical/critical experience for a couple of generations of students and an exercise in contributions and communication for a series of young lecturers, all of this countering an attempt to debase the quality of the university's didactic activity which was being instrumentalised by a certain form of political agitation, and instead forcing the "thinking" element of the university movement to confront the more difficult aspects of the discipline.

For this reason it was essential to "offer" a wide selection of themes, whilst avoiding any simplification or lowering the level of discourse: "Fin de Siecle Vienna up to the fall of Austrian Marxism", "Germany up to the Weimar crisis", "Post-war architectonic research in Italy", "Ideologies of the 'Maestros' of the Modernist Movement".

In the hiatus that followed, with the recruitment of lecturers blocked whilst our new legal status was discussed and recruitment exams began, any experimentation was kept within departmental boundaries and teaching roles were redefined.

When, in 1984, I took my place in what was, for better or for worse, the school's new structure, I felt it as necessary to make my contribution clear-cut and specific – closing in on a particular area of the relationship between architectural culture and the visual arts – as it had been to make my previous work open to the themes that it was culturally urgent to confront in Rome. For the same reason it becomes important, today, to hold my lessons on the Café Aragno's third room or on the encounter between Boccioni and Bussoni.

In the mid 1980s, when, with the architects U. Colombari, G. De Boni, M. Ketoff and M. Petit, I was a consultant on the project which was to be among the finalists in the competition for Paris's Citty della Musique et della Dance, I had, over the course of my many visits to Paris over a period of two years, the opportunity to renew and enrich the research that I had begun between the mid and late 1970s,

Apart from the volumes and catalogues listed below (many of which I have edited personally), I have also written for Segno, Casabella, Controspazio, Lotus, and, with greater regularity, Domus, Corriere della Sera and, recently, Rinascita. Notwithstanding the various differences in context and occasion, these pieces have represented (I believe with equal rigour) a continual return to one consistent line of discourse.

More recently, in addition to a more continuous collaboration with professional journals such as L'Architecture D'Aujourd'hui or L'Industria delle Costruzioni (which, uniquely, permits me what are literally exhaustive dossiers on the threefold theme of the gamble of the experimental, the profession's awareness of its own theoretical foundations, and, finally, in-depth analysis of work that is of significant and definitive importance for the progress of the architectural debate) I have also, with no false scruples, written for non-specialist magazines such as Pan, Casa Vogue or Abitare, almost as though to explore the need to confront a wider public, one without the vices of specialisms that have now almost become a form of secret code and which are increasingly distant from the most pressing of real necessities.

In my current role as Professor of the History of Architecture at the Politecnico di Bari I am ever-more frequently confronting my own studies (for years conducted as an offshoot, if not exactly surreptitiously) with the demands of my role as an educator – one that has increasingly come to mean the imparting of a discipline – without sacrificing scholarship, but also without hiding away in an impenetrable ivory tower.

Over the years I have sought to instill in every student not just a passion for the discipline but also a sense of the necessity of confronting oneself wherever possible with architecture's diverse realities, from that of the ancient world to that of the present day, so that as few cultural, thematic or problematic areas as possible are left uncovered, even at an historical/geographical level, the aim being a form of scholarship that necessarily presumes a familiarity with our entire historical heritage. I have aimed to stimulate in my students a passion for careful critical analysis of historiographical trends and for a correct methodology in reading and in approaching the problematics of the history of architecture.

I have dedicated ample space to the identification of several specific lines of research which are intended to form the basis for a critical approach to the literature of the discipline via a comparison of different interpretative approaches, different works and historical periods, and direct and systematic readings.

I have sought to stimulate curiosity in my students – a desire to acquire knowledge and the ability to interpret the historical value (and qualities) of works of engineering and architecture, identifying and considering their place in specific cultural contexts. Above all, the closer we get to more contemporary architecture all of this becomes increasingly focused on "intersecting visions", the crossover between and the "mutual contamination" of different realities.

I have sought to complement my lectures with a series of other activities, organising meetings, workshops, conferences and theme-based projects which, from the beginning of the 1990s to date, have had a different character each year, with the aim of creating a sort of "permanent and ongoing teaching activity".