

foreword

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The choice to produce a printed academic journal today may sound both hopeless and naive. We are well aware that *l'âge d'or* of traditional architecture publishing is long time gone and that generally all the periodic publications in our field live a very hard life, overcome by popular media (culture & fashion magazines, TV, cinema) on one side and web-zines, blogs, websites and – especially – social media on the other. Nonetheless, fueled by curiosity and scholarly commitment, we think this general picture has to be looked at from a closer distance. The framework appears then to be more diverse and articulated. The historical (especially Italian) format of the architecture review is living some sort of *post-mortem* life, since it has lost both its two main *raison d'être*: information and cultural identity (of defined groups and specific critical positions). Still, many traditional reviews resist, although with much smaller numbers and decreasing commercial value. Some of them stand as fortresses of specific areas of cultural power; some seem to be alive only as abstracts of their digital, more expanded, versions; some finally find their role by becoming platforms for the communication of a waterfall of programs and events (competitions, festivals, prizes). At the opposite edge

we find a surprisingly flourishing field of low-budget academic journals and reviews focused on theory and criticism. They feel the market pressure much less, they can adjust to a limited number of issues per year, they navigate with easy indifference between the paper and the web and take rich advantage by the ambition of the young scholars and researchers who aim to fulfill the needs of the contemporary systems of evaluation by compulsive publishing. Boldly speaking, we think that in this area there definitely is a space for the *villardjournal*, especially if our publication will succeed both in adding to the scholarly solidity a high degree of interest in the actual conditions of architecture phenomenology and in building bridges between the theory and the practice of architecture. Technically, the journal springs off from an international PhD program based at IUAV, Venice, and run by a consortium involving also TU Delft, Paris Belleville and an alternation of Spanish schools (ETSAM Madrid, ETSAS Seville) and it is so far funded mainly by the IUAV PhD International School. But programmatically it aims at working as (and becoming) an open and independent infrastructure for sharing research production and for discussing theory of arts and architecture today.

Obviously we are well aware of the implicit ‘non-neutrality’ of any kind of infrastructure – cultural or not – which generally leads us towards a specific direction. In our view, the journal will have to progress in two main directions. The first, already announced before, is the creation of a lively and credited platform for architecture scholars, fueled by the network condition provided by the already existing Villard platform, to be considered only as the starting station for reaching the largest possible space of dialogue. Our second task is less focused on the tools and aims at addressing more directly the contemporary condition of research and theory today. We believe that there is the time and space today for rethinking the philosophical, ideological, political and technological frames for architecture theory, beyond the linguistics obsessions of post-Utopia, the sociological drift of the last decades of the 20th century, the self-referential dream of the pan-digital theology.

We hope there is a way of developing free and open research without driving theory too far away from the domain of built architecture, or architecture designed to be built. Contemporary thinking spreads along opposite tracks, an intense nostalgia for utopia on the one hand and a strong sensibility for new forms of realism on the other. We want to open our views to catch a picture of what happens in between and to frame the new ground where architecture theory has to play, in a world daily shaken by whatever kind of violent change. Therefore we offer this open platform to encourage scholars to go both deeper and wider in the survey of contemporary ideas and events, with the final scope of offering designers and thinkers an updated lexicon of the contemporary space of architecture.