THE RETURN OF EXPRESSIONISM AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF LUIGI MORETTI

***ADRIAN SHEPPARD**, FRAIC*
McGill University
Montreal, Canada

Whatever objections continue to be raised against this type of architecture, against this style of architecture – it is nonetheless both in type and style the architecture of the future.

Rudolf Steiner, 'Das Ratsel des Menschen', lecture given July 29,1916

EXPRESSIONISM AND NEO-EXPRESSIONISM

Much has been written about European Expressionism in the pictorial arts and in architecture. The term Expressionism is generally used to denote the activities of German, Austrian, Dutch and Danish avant-garde artists during the Interbellum. The idioms Neo-Classicism, Neo-Palladianism, and Neo-Gothic imply the revival of an earlier style. In this instance, the taxonomy of Neo-Expressionism is somewhat different from that of the Revivalist styles in that this particular movement was not concerned with stylistic revival but primarily with a return to, and rediscovery of an earlier attitude towards architecture. The Revivalists believed in the authority of precedent which they often replicated faithfully, while the Neo-Expressionists never favoured copying previous Expressionist buildings.

Expressionist architecture is particularly difficult to characterize. Ian Boyd Whyte, in speaking of Expressionism, noted that "the movement has usually been defined in terms of what it is not (rationalist, functionalist, and so on) rather than what it is"[1]. Despite the lack of any clear definition, the concerns of the movement are patent: expression of angst, subordination of objectivity and realism in favour of symbolic expression of inner experience, abstraction, and a critical position vis-à-vis Modernism. The impulse to distort reality for subjective or emotional effect is exhibited in all art forms. The underlying objective of any art is to achieve a new and visionary dimension which Expressionism pursued more than most other avant-garde movements.

In the pictorial arts, the movement focused on capturing vivid reactions through powerful color, dynamic composition, formal distortion, and the desire for expression. In architecture, on the other hand, Expressionism emphasized form, abstraction, repudiation of modernist rationalist ideals, and the traditional classical box. The recurring formal themes were often inspired by natural phenomena, such as caves, crystal, rocks, and organic, non-geometric forms. The reason

[1] Quoted by Alan Colquhoun in *Modern Architecture,* Oxford University of Arts series, 2002

for focusing on the organic rather than the geometric was to produce an architecture of motion and emotion, ambiance, radicalism, and sweeping change. This encouraged expression of subjective interpretation rather than the reproduction of aesthetically pleasing subject matter. The loss of design restraints implied an inevitable dismantling of the immediate past.

The term Expressionism was originally coined in France in 1901[2] to describe the paintings of Matisse and his entourage[3]. In 1911, this art-historical designation was used for the first time in connection with architecture[4]. This decade-long delay corresponds to the usual time lag between ideas developed in the pictorial arts and their application to architecture, as was the case with Futurism, Constructivism, De Stijl and other avant-garde movements. Expressionism, in both art and architecture, became prevalent in Europe in the 1920's and 1930's but by the end of the decade the movement already began to wane. Architects lost interest in the movement and its fixation on the use of expressive forms at the expense of traditional concerns of architecture. Critics dismissed it on the grounds that it placed too great an emphasis on subjectivity. By the end of World War II the movement was totally rejected by historians as being irrelevant, eccentric, and out of touch with the Machine Age[5]. It was not until the 1950's that historians such as Henry Russell Hitchcock, Reyner Banham, and Franco Borsi[6] wrote important compendia on Expressionism re-evaluating the pertinence of the movement in a positive way. As it turned out, critics and historians, especially those of the postwar era, were wrong in believing that Expressionism was a spent force for it continued as an artistic concern right through to the present day. It is ironic that Expressionism and extreme formalism emerged today as the primary forces shaping architecture. Despite condemnation and dismissal of the movement, many Neo-Expressionist buildings such as those of Le Corbusier, Alto, and Moretti are still greatly admired and are seen as some of the most provocative projects of the postwar era.

[2] The painter Juline-Auguste Herve referred to the paintings he exhibited at the salon des Independants as *expressionismes*

[3] Henri Matisse defined his work as follows: "The whole arrangement of my picture is expressive … Composition is the art of arranging in a decorative manner the various elements at the painter's disposal for the expression of his feelings.

[4] The term appeared in the catalogue of the *Berlin Sezession exhibition* of April 1911.

[5] In his most influential book, *Space, Time and Architecture* (1941), historian and critic Siegfried Gidieon dismissed Expressionism as peripheral to the development of Modernism. He declared that "Expressionism could have no influence on architecture"

[6] *Architecture, Nineteenth and Twentieth Century* (1958); *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (1960); and *Architettura dell'espressionismo* (1967).

NEO-EXPRESSIONISM IN EUROPE

The acknowledged masterpiece and most significant example of sculptural, expressionist architecture of post-war Europe is Hans Scharoun's Berlin's Philharmonie (1956-63), which he designed towards the end of his career and which shows that Scharoun's early expressionist impulses remained very much alive. The Philharmonie (*Figs. 1 and 2)* is a quintessential product of the Expressionist movement. The building elicits strong emotions from the concertgoers, it breaks the traditional box, and it rejects angular geometry and symmetry in favor of organic forms. The configuration of the hall is played out sculpturally and spatially in the public areas without as well as within the theatre. As is the case with many Expressionist buildings, the Phiharmonie does not relate to its neighbouring buildings or the city. Scharoun, like most Expressionist architects, had little sympathy for the notion of city as a place of memory.

Another compelling example of Neo-Expressionist architecture is the chapel of Notre-Dame-du-Haut at Ronchamp (1950-54) *(Fig. 3).* Le Corbusier began his career by preaching the gospel of rationalism. He spoke of an architecture resulting from an intellectual approach propelled by a vision of technology, industrial prototypes, and economy. His early seminal buildings as well as his urban proposals were, to a great extent, a product of logical and quasi-mathematical principles. Le Corbusier defined the house as *une machine à habiter*, the *machine* being a metaphor for logic and efficiency. When it came to designing Ronchamp, Le Corbusier negated his earlier notions of Purist composition and rationalism in favor of plastic lyricism. Ronchamp is totally personal, original, and visionary, and speaks of pantheism, mysticism, and emotions. Nikolaus Pevsner condemned the chapel as "a retreat to irrationality" for it betrayed Le Corbusier's earlier concern for an architecture of pure reason. Yet Ronchamp, more than any other early post-war work of architecture, gave credence to and revived the Expressionist movement. Ronchamp stands as the most powerful and poetic icon of the Neo-Expressionist movement.

Le Corbusier was not alone in the quest for a more expressive architecture. Similar concerns were raised in Italy, Germany, Belgium, France, Denmark, and America. In France, architects Jacques Couelle, Andre Bloc, Andre Gomis, and Pascal Hausermann *(Fig. 4)* pushed the boundaries of the movement even further than Le Corbusier, though never reaching the commanding heights of the master of Ronchamp. Nonetheless, their common work was significant for it demonstrated once again that Modernism was not a fundamentalist movement with a unique orthodoxy as some claimed. Couelle is perhaps the most daring and experimental of the French group. He designed a number of houses which he referred to as *sculptures habitables*, in opposition to Le Corbusier's pre-war aphorism that a house is *une machine à habiter*.

Couelle had a visceral aversion to the traditional box which is subdivided into rectangular spaces filled with rectilinear furniture lining the walls. His houses are not shaped by geometry, rules of orderly composition, or program, but by topography of site, views from wall apertures, and by his passionate fondness for organic forms. Couelle's houses are landscapes of levels, valleys, and unique shapes and spaces. He was interested in movement within his houses and created surprisingly extended *promenades* within restricted volumes. In both plan and section, one rarely finds a straight line. His is a language of curves, shells, spirals, cavities, and domes.

Typical of Couelle's architecture is a small housing subdivision in Castellaras *(Fig. 5)* on the Mediterranean, near Grasse, consisting of five two-storey vacation houses overlooking the sea. The project is a dense assembly of eccentricly shaped buildings which are closely related to the nature of the existing landscape. Couelle's desire to experience the shape of the land within the house led him to break up space into an environment that has many levels which are inter-connected by a half dozen stairs. Here stairs, both interior and exterior, are more than simple means of communication between levels - they are signals of spatial punctuation.

In the Castellaras project, the houses *(Figs. 6 and 7)* were conceived as freestanding objects placed on an open tract of land. These 'objects' sit comfortably in their surrounding relating to views, sun, orientation, topography, and one another. In his Frankfurt project (1973) *(Fig. 8)* Couelle pursued the same formal language of curves, irregular spaces, and non-rational forms. Here, the project is situated in a rectilinear parcel of land in an urban environment conditioned by the usual restrictions and presence of existing buildings. Couelle's architecture cannot answer to the complexities and contradictions of an urban setting. As a result, the Frankfurt project fits awkwardly and unconvincingly in its site. The city, unlike open nature, imposes rules on architecture and urban design.

Yves Salier and Adrien Courtois are equally associated with the neo-Expressionist Movement in France. In 1958, they designed a house at Artigues *(Fig. 9)* which was widely published. Seen from the outside, the house is an amorphously-shaped sculptural object defined by a disquietingly long, curving wall in which there are hardly any apertures. In Oscar Newman's terms, one could refer to the house as a prototype for defensible architecture. The House at Artigues is totally introverted and turns its back on the surrounding environment. The surreal quality of the perimeter wrapping is misleading, as the shell envelops a Modernist residence made of orthogonal spaces which bears no formal relationship to the outer wall. The shell is a counterpoint to the spatial concept of the house. The presence of a partial perimeter wall also distinguishes Moretti's La Saracena, but unlike the House at Artigues, Moretti's shell is not a protective wrapping placed around a collection of rooms, but the poetic generator of the plan.

In general, it is easier to create unusual or highly personal architecture on a small scale, and more specifically in a suburban or rural context. Larger projects are inevitably subjected to all manners of constraints of every type, making the out-of-the-ordinary difficult. France, however, always had a propensity for architectural *ensembles* that are often provocative, and blatantly anti-Modernist. In 1972, Vladimir Kalouguine built a multi-storey public-housing project in Angers *(Fig. 10)* which approached in spirit the work of the German Expressionist architects of the 1930's. This is both a flamboyant building and an urban eccentricity. Like Couelle and Hausermann, Kalouguine pushed the notion of plasticity to its utmost, but unlike Auguste Perret, who limited the use of concrete to skeleton frame and infill panels, Kalouguine used concrete as a material that could be shaped, moulded, sprayed, or poured. In the Angers Housing project, which is eleven storeys high, Kalouguine uses a conventional reinforced poured-concrete skeleton, but the building envelope is made of sprayed concrete which allowed for free shaping of the walls. The configuration of these walls responded more to the architect's whims than to any program.

In the late 1960's, Jean Renaudie designed a housing project in Ivry-sur-Seine *(Fig. 11)* which in essence followed the ideas of Kalouguine. However, instead of using free curves to determine the form of the envelope, Renaudie adopted a system of angular geometry to achieve the same

end, namely, articulated forms, numerous roof terraces, negation of any symmetry, and an ad hoc composition of façades. Like so many Expressionist and Neo-Expressionist projects, the housing at Ivry-sur-Seine stands in sharp contrast to its context, to the city as a whole, and to the rich French urban tradition. It is a radical and personal urban statement.

Emile Aillaud's Cite de l'Abreuvoir in Paris-Bobigny *(Fig.12),* and Cite des Courtilieres in Paris-Pantin (*Fig.13),* each containing about 1,600 dwelling units, were built just outside Paris during the late 1950's. The two projects were amongst the most talked-about housing estates in Europe at the time. L'Abreuvoir and Courtilieres are conceptually and visually far-fetched. Emile Aillaud was strongly opposed to classical urban-planning concepts which he deemed sterile, academic, and consisting of endless right angles and abstract geometrical compositions.[7] Aillaud refused to author a project that resembled the traditional city, which he viewed as inhuman. Instead, he embraced a fluid approach to spaces and building forms that was more modern and humane. In the Cite de l'Abreuvoir Aillaud combined a cluster of thirteen-storey-high silo-like towers with endlessly-long four-storey buildings which he snaked across the entire site. In the Cite des Courtilieres he repeated the diagram of the Bobigny project and did all he could to avoid parallel blocks, right angles, and geometrically-constructed spaces. Here too, he wound a six-storey, one-kilometre-long building relentlessly throughout the site. Ironically, in his attempt to avoid repeating his perceived monotony of Paris, Aillaud replaced it by a new form of monotony creating a no-man's land which was to become the curse of modern urban housing developments.

In Italy, a country known for its high-spirited architecture, Marcello D'Olivo, an architect from the region of Friuli, designed a number of buildings which clearly belongs to the Neo-Expressionist movement. D'Olivo stands apart from his Modernist colleagues. His architecture reflects a near-obsession with the geometrically-constructed curve at the expense of all other considerations. Most of his buildings are conceived as autonomous sculptural elements in an open, rural surrounding.

D'Olivo planned a number of beachfront resort developments at Ligano Pineta (1954), Lido di Fumicino (1956), and Rosolina (1960). In each instance, the villas in these resort developments used the same language of curves and spirals found in their master plans. Villa Spezzotti *(Fig. 14)* and Villa Ellero (1955) *(Fig. 15)* reflect D'Olivo's preoccupation with curvilinear geometry, much as we find in Wright's early houses which were planned with compulsive circular or triangular modules. D'Olivo's architecture is radical in many ways. The planning order of his villas is subjective and eccentric. Geometric patterns rather than function, spaces, forms, and structure constitute D'Olivo's formal determinants. Contrary to Moretti's approach at La Saracena which represents an architecture of freedom and dynamic movement, Villa Spezzotti is static and constraining.

The most convincing and eloquent Neo-Expressionist architect in Italy is Giovanni Michelucci, whose work is an amalgam of Rudolf Steiner and Poelzig. His church of San Giovanni Battista (1962) *(Fig. 16),* built in Florence-North along the *Autostrada del Sole.* It is an arresting building in which the sculptural quality is derived not simply from subjective criteria of feeling but from a

[7] Years later, Ricardo Bofill attempted to rejuvenate the tradition of *grands ensembles urbains,* albeit in a superficial manner.

logical structural system. The church is a perfect blend of reason and feeling. It is also a complete departure from the intransigence of International Modernism. Unlike D'Olivo, Michelucci, together with Moretti, was the only architect of significance in Italy to explore the use of non-geometric, curved forms. His church is, to this day an icon of European Neo-Expressionism. It has been suggested there is a similarity between the works of Moretti and Michelucci but the comparison is questionable. The form of San Giovanni was influenced directly by the work of the German Expressionist architects and the church at Ronchamp. Moretti's La Saracena, on the other hand, owes no discernable allegiance to any previous architect or building.

Compared to other western European countries, Portugal and Spain remained relatively isolated from the rest of the continent and from America during the 1940's and 1950's. Spain developed its own form of modern architecture, one mostly influenced by a pre-Civil War Modernism, by the conservative practice of the Franco regime, and by an under-developed technological tradition. The eventual reconnection with European Modernism began in Barcelona, the city in Spain most open to outside ideas. The architect who best understood the potential of the new age is Jose Antonio Coderch who developed his own architectural language, which, though modern, owed little to Western European Modernism. His two most significant works, one rural and one urban, are the Casa Ugalde *(Figs. 17 and 18)* in Caldes d'Estrac and the Barceloneta Apartment building *(Figs. 19 and 20),* in Barcelona, both completed in 1951. Casa Ugalde perched on a cliff overlooking the Costa Brava, is a unique and personal statement shaped to respond to view, topography, and orientation. One cannot but compare it to Couelle's Castellaras project. Contrary to Couelle's formal language and distaste for straight lines which makes his architecture obsessive, Coderch's architecture has a sculptural quality clearly derived from program and site conditions. Unlike Castellaras, Casa Ugalde does not pretend to grow organically out of the ground, but stands as an affirmative work of architecture, a man-made artefact. Couelle's architecture is governed by the principle of harmony through continuity, while Coderch practiced the idea of harmony through opposition. Despite curves, multiple angles, sculpted forms, and vernacular references, Casa Ugalde possesses a silent logic and a simple elegance.

NEO-EXPRESSIONISM CROSSES THE ATALANTIC

The European Expressionist movement of the 1920's and 1930's had little or no impact on North American thinking before World War II. In the mid-fifties however, well after the demise of the movement in Europe, some architects in America began to question current architectural trends at home. These doubters of Modernism found their inspiration in various models of non-conventional architecture, including the Pueblo style, the more unusual work of Wright, the Amsterdam School housing *(Fig 21),* and the architecture of Rudolf Steiner in Germany. Much like their European counterparts, American Expressionist architects took a radical position with respect to their work. They shared an anti-academic and anti-historical attitude towards design and believed that architectural unity could be best served by formal continuity rather than by the application of compositional or geometric rules. They adopted a language of sweeping curves, jagged surfaces, uneven or distorted structural systems, sculptural effects, asymmetry, and dynamic forms. Although the number of Neo-Expressionist architects in America was relatively

small, their work was a confirmation that the movement constituted a potent force on the continent.

The most extravagant of the American architects was Bruce Goff who taught and practiced mainly in Oklahoma and its neighbouring states. Goff was both fearless and formally exploratory, and was labelled by Peter Cook as the primary exponent of Experimental Architecture in the United States. Goff's lifelong plea was for a highly creative form of architecture, and he produced a totally original vocabulary. For Goff, every building had to be a prototype and a unique experience. He spoke often of a 'continuous present'[8] and of notions of composition that had no beginning and no end. Goff had no specific architectural style. He switched easily from free-form, to the use of bric-a-brac, to highly geometric configurations, to pseudo-Wrightian modes. His architecture was one of wilderness romanticism and *objets trouves*, of *had hoc* solutions, and of the use of discarded industrial materials. He believed that architecture was an impure art because it had to solve a multitude of problems. Not only did he accept the notion of compromise, but he embraced it. Like Venturi, he was totally opposed to an exclusive, idealized architecture.

No building of Goff's epitomizes his approach to architecture more eloquently than the Eugene Bavinger House (1950) *(Figs. 22 and 23),* near Norman, Oklahoma. The house is a complex, indefinable composition of circles, masts, and spiral walls. The roof as well as secondary volumes is supported by an idiosyncratic cable structure attached to a central mast. The outer walls of the Bavinger House are made of rubble masonry and other materials. In other houses, Goff used coal, rope, paper, and material retrieved from rubbish heaps. He became a hero of the architectural counter-culture of the 1950's and 1960's. His place in the culture of America is similar to that of Lucien Kroll in Belgium. The latter also maintained that Modernism is essentially a totalitarian barbarism that is exclusive, but aught to be inclusive. Goff designed the Green House (1960), also in Norman, and similar in nature to the Bavinger House. The house is a collage of eccentric shapes, unusual materials, and rich textures. Critics see his houses as a true expression of Mid-western regionalism.

A parallel can be drawn between the radicalism of Goff and Venturi. Both architects were "bored" by the blandness of Modernism, both took a populist stand, and both sought to create an architecture of richness, joy, and ambiguity. They wanted to enrich the language of Modernism and invent a new way of approaching architecture, yet despite their common concerns, the two architects are profoundly different. Venturi's view of design is highly cerebral and based on the interpretation of precedent and history, while Goff is all gut, feeling, and subjectivity.

Frank Lloyd Wright was by far America's most versatile architect. Although he cannot be considered an Expressionist in the true sense of the term, some of his post-war buildings clearly embody the values and formal ideas associated with Neo-Expressionism. The Guggenheim Museum in New York is, *par excellence,* a Neo-Expressionist icon. In the 1940's, Wright produced some highly unconventional houses which were radical departures from his earlier Prairie domestic architecture. Neil Levine speaks of the figurative nature of Wright's Prairie houses which can be read and understood much like the figurative paintings of Cezanne and

[8] Bruce Goff borrowed this phrase from Gertrude Stein, a writer he greatly admired. Both he and Stein liked the concept that things had no beginning and no end, that one could add, subtract, or alter anything.

Picasso. In the Herbert Jacobs House (1944) *(Fig. 24)* in Middleton, Wisconsin, known as the Solar Hemicycle, the domestic figuration is gone and the forms bear little resemblance to the conventional elements that make up Wright's Prairie houses. In the Jacobs House, form is not dictated by precedent and local design traditions, but by the sensibilities of the architect, the nature of the land, and the premise of the program.

The Italian-born Paolo Soleri, more than any other American architect deserves the label of Neo-Expressionism. Soleri produced an enigmatic body of work which belongs to the world of sculpture rather than that of architecture. His buildings, while interesting and provocative, are places and spaces one can inhabit but in which one cannot live. Their beauty is derived from their poetic logic and their philosophical underpinnings. Soleri is not as concerned with the here and now as with the development of a Utopian world of reveries, shapes and sustainable ecology. From 1956, when he settled in Scottsdale, Arizona, Soleri devoted his life to creating an environment of on-going experimentation in desert ecology and urban planning. His work is strongly influenced by the Jesuit Paleontologist movement and by the writings of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. His most famous project, Arcosanti *(Fig. 25)*, begun in 1970 [9] is a dream-like 'city on the mesa' and more a poetic manifesto than a work of architecture. Similarly, Soleri's design studio in Scottsdale (1961) *(Fig. 26)* is an outlandish building which looks like an assembly of skeletal elements, strange shapes, tilted knobby columns, ribbed vaults, and a myriad of odd architectonic elements. The studio has a Gaudi-like appearance *(Fig. 27)* which is no coincidence but the result of similar interests in using structure as a primal design instrument.

During the 1960's, Eero Saarinen was one of America's principal masters of the Neo-Expressionism movement. It is ironic that he was also one of America's most successful establishment architects. He was able to produce a body of significant Expressionist works for corporate and institutional clients who usually seek the route of safe, conservative architecture. Saarinen was one of the few architects who convinced his clients that daring, unconventional buildings made corporate sense. He began his career as a committed follower of Mies van de Rohe and produced a series of highly disciplined buildings, most notably the General Motors Technical Centre in Warren, Michigan (1948-56), which he designed with his father, Eliel. The Centre was as pure and rational as any Mies building, no less an essay in rationalism and visual order than Mies' campus for the Illinois Institute of Technology.

Soon after the completion of the General Motors Centre, Saarinen changed his vision dramatically. His first and most significant Neo-Expressionist building was the TWA Terminal (1959-1962) *(Fig. 28)* at Kennedy Airport (formerly Idlewild). In this project, he attempted to express the idea of flight. Allan Tremko described the Terminal as "an abstraction of spatial liberty, expressed in continuous movement beneath the soaring roof". Saarinen believed that modern architecture lacked drama. He wanted to create memorable buildings with daring structural techniques. His goal was "to express the drama and the specialness and excitement of travel"[10]. His solution was to create a vast 315-foot-long concrete shell made of four intersecting barrel vaults supported by four enormous Y-shaped columns. It was a totally new solution for an

[9] Arcosanti was begun in 1970, and by 2005 only 3% of the entire project was completed. It is a view shared by the great cathedral builders of the past who took well over a century to complete a project.

[10] David P. Handlin, in *American Architecture*

airport terminal building. The terminal was an optimistic statement and a prototype for a new monumentality, setting a conceptual precedent: the transformation of the classical notion of monumentality. Only Hans Scharoun's Philharmonie in Berlin and Jorn Utzon's Opera House in Sidney have attained the same level of free-form monumentality and Expressionism.

Concurrently, Saarinen designed two other significant Neo-Expressionist buildings, the Ingalls Hockey Rink at Yale University (1956-1958) and Dulles International Airport (1958-1962) in Chantilly, Virginia (near Washington, DC). Both buildings used a suspended flying roof system to span the great space below. In the Yale Ice Hockey Stadium *(Fig. 29)*, Saarinen suspended a steel-cable roof on both sides of a central concrete arch spanning the entire building longitudinally. From a formal point of view, the building is a dynamic interplay of convex and concave forms, of sloped and straight walls, of high and low spaces. Together with the TWA Terminal, it is the building which best conveys Saarinen's interest in architectural dynamism. Dulles International Airport *(Fig. 30)* has a simple rectangular plan, but the form of the building is complex. The terminal is a compact building and an exercise in architectural and technical formalism. The structural concept is manifest and consists of colonnades of tilted and tapered columns on the two long facades of the terminal from which is suspended a steel-cable roof. The roof is high in the front, lower in the rear, and its lowest point, as in all catenaries structures, is in the middle of the span. The colonnades, together with the curved shape of the roof, emphasise the dynamic qualities of the building.

VILLA LA SARACENA: A NEO-EXPRESSIONIST TOUR DE FORCE

It is important to emphasize that the postwar work of Luigi Moretti is an integral part of the Expressionist movement. However, Moretti never claimed to be a founder or a follower of any specific architectural movement. He was genuinely uncomfortable with labels, be it Rationalist, Functionalist, Formalist, or Expressionist. He was free of any *appartenance*. He saw himself as an artist, a creator of modern architecture, and a visionary. In that sense, he was different from many of the early Modernists architects such as the Futurists, the Constructivists, and the Neo-Rationalists who assumed a didactic role adhering proudly to a movement for doctrinaire reasons.

There is a certain danger in labelling an architect like Moretti who is primarily an individualist and a professional maverick. He would have objected to the conclusion that his later work belongs to the Expressionist movement or for that matter, to any movement. His vision was broad and solitary. He acknowledged his debt to Gaudi and to Borromini who informed his ideas about spatial freedom, dynamics, manipulation of form and space, light, and movement. Nonetheless he saw himself as an architectural soloist fighting a continuous battle with his clients, his colleagues, and with society. Therefore, is it accurate to refer to Moretti's latter work as Neo-Expressionist, given that the connotation 'Expressionism' is so loaded with meaning and illustrious precedents? However, as mentioned earlier, the meaning today has been enlarged to refer to "any architecture that exhibits some of the qualities of the original movement such as: distortion, fragmentation, or the communication of violent or overstressed emotion". The best of Moretti's post-war architecture, which includes not only La Saracena, but also the Concilio

Sancta Maria Mater Ecclesiae church in Rome (1965-70) and the Primato di San Pietro on Lake Tiberiate sanctuary (1965-68), fit this definition. Luigi Moretti held his architecture as works of art. He depended on a formal language of distortions of form for emotional effect, on originality, on creating a new aesthetic sensibility, and on romantic reference to forms in nature.

Villa La Saracena (1953-57) at Santa Marinella is Moretti's most significant work of architecture and the distillation of his post-war architectural thinking. The villa is a paradigm of Expressionism and belongs to the family of great European Expressionist buildings which includes Erich Mendelssohn's Einstein Tower in Potsdam (1921), Hans Poelzig's Grosse Schauspielhaus in Berlin (1919), and Rudolf Steiner's Goetheanum in Dornach (1928) *(Figs. 31, 32, and 33).*

The project in Santa Marinella includes three villas built on three separate but contiguous lots. They are known as La Saracena, La Califfa, and La Moresca. In the interest of brevity, the present discussion is limited to La Saracena. La Saracena *(Figs. 34 and 35)* is a relatively small two-storey seaside residence built in 1954 in Santa Marinella for the Principessa Luciana Pignatelli-Cortez. The house sits on a deep, narrow lot that slopes down towards the sea. Tectonically, it is a very simple building using the vernacular construction of the region. This consists of conventional non-insulated unit-masonry walls covered inside and out with deep-textured sprayed-on stucco. The material palette for the Villa is common to seaside architecture. Like Villa Savoie, the construction system is elemental, but the concept and the form are complex.

La Saracena is a work of modern of architecture but one that departs radically from Modernist tenets and design canons. Its formal language is Moretti's own, and its plan is the embodiment of the architect's theatrical sense of movement across the land. The villa is an abstraction of primitive Mediterranean architecture and can only be explained in lyrical or musical terms. Its otherworldly environment is reminiscent of De Chirico landscapes, silent and transcending time and place. The environment is provocative, calm, and joyous. Moretti did not believe in the primacy of program. Instead, he focused his interests on the formal and experiential aspects of design. As in most of his projects, his work was driven by a search for semiotic and syntactic meaning. In La Saracena, he was offered a singular opportunity to explore ideas of form, space, light, movement, landscape, and metaphor.

The plan of La Saracena is stretched longitudinally towards the sea to create a *promenade architecturale* similar to that of Villa Savoie, acting as a connector of the different components of the house *(Fig. 35).* But, unlike Le Corbusier's *promenade*, the path in La Saracena is primarily horizontal. Its topography follows the lay of the land; it cascades rhythmically from a mysterious forecourt and the main entrance located under a large cantilevered terrace, ending at a generously glazed wall overlooking coastline and sea. The spatial progression through the villa is cinematic in nature, involving a sequence of architectural events. The narrative begins at the garden gate - the point of access to the enclosed entry court. The court represents the first event in a progression of experiences. It is a filter and a secret space separating the house from the hustle and bustle of the outside world. The main door leads to a linear vestibular area which bifurcates into two parallel lines of movement, one leading to and through the outside garden and to the sea, the other, internal, leading to the kitchen-dining-living suite, which also overlooks the sea. Here the sea is the ultimate moment in the two pathways.

The existence of the promenade, from street to sea, creates an experiential inversion, where front becomes rear, and rear becomes front. As a rule, the front of a house is where the entry from the public domain is positioned. Yet, immediately upon entering the villa, one becomes aware that the front is essentially on the seaside, at the opposite end of the entrance. The same phenomenon occurs in a traditional church with a basilical plan, where the narthex becomes the rear wall once one has entered the church. This inversion is consistent with Moretti's love for theatrics in architecture.

EXPRESSIONISM, MORETTI, AND LA SARACENA

For most of the second half of the 20th century, deviations from Establishment Modernism was scorned or dismissed. The consensus amongst architects, critics, and historians was that for architecture to be relevant it must follow established orthodoxy. The ascetic architectural diet of pure Modernism became the norm. Fortunately, from the 1940's, a group of practitioners and theoreticians questioned the prevailing attitudes of exclusiveness and limitations. Both as a group and individually, they rejected abstraction and reductionism, and instead sought a different and more personal way of creating buildings, and of responding critically to place, culture, and technology. Their revisionist attitudes towards Modernism led to a slate of new movements, from Brutalism, to High-Tech, to Post Modernism, to Neo-Historicism, to Neo-Expressionism. Most of these movements were short-lived. In their eagerness to jettison the Modernist style, the Revisionists consciously created new styles, all of which proved to be visually interesting but failed to address many of the fundamental issues of architecture. As history has shown, a style cannot survive for long if it is based primarily on "taste". Despite its visual appeal, Art Nouveau is an eloquent example of a consciously created style which died barely ten years after it took Europe by storm.

Neo-Expressionism, on the other hand, cannot be called a style *per se.* It is a mind-set about architecture, and has little to do with taste and fashion. Though it came about as a reaction to Modernism, it was principally concerned with the fundamentals of architecture rather than with stylistic consideration. It sought to create an architecture that could provide an intellectual and emotional sustenance. Architects like Moretti felt that Modernism was doomed because it was too limiting. The International Style had been a powerful and revolutionary movement, but as Venturi pointed out, it was too exclusive and too puritanical. Architects were yearning for an opportunity to work with a richer palette of ideas and forms than the International style allowed.

By temperament, culture, love of challenge, and spirit of contradiction, Moretti veered away radically from his pre-war architectural pursuits. His passion was now in the new world epitomized by La Saracena. The Villa teaches us two things: it encapsulates Moretti's new architecture, and it is the most convincing demonstration of the expressive powers of a non-doctrinaire approach. To understand his Villa is to define the author. The phenomenon of defining an architect through seminal houses is not uncommon. Many important architects have made their defining statements and developed their mature voices through the design of the private house. Collectively and individually, Wright's Robbie House, Le Corbusier's Villa Savoie, Aalto's Villa Marea, Venturi's Vana Venturi House, Rietveld's Schroeder House, and Mies' Farnsworth House are not just iconic buildings but, to a great extent, definitions of the modern movement.

La Saracena is the distillation of Moretti's Expressionist architecture. It is a building that evokes the power of romanticism and the assimilation of Modernism into Moretti's personal and artistic sensibilities. The Villa is both complex and primitive. It is a convivial domestic environment and a heroic statement, a rational house conceived with irrational boldness, a passive and lyrical environment drawn powerfully towards the sea. Like Ronchamp, La Saracena's power is derived from its sculptural presence. Vincent Scully, in writing about the work of Le Corbusier, refers to an "attempt to integrally resolve the Italic tradition of interior space with the Hellenic one of the articulated sculptural integument". Moretti, in his own way, achieves this fusion. La Saracena escapes from the International Style by means of sensuous forms, manipulation of walls, and fluid spatial sequences. The Villa is as much a symbol of the modern world as a work by Picasso, incorporating both the primitive and the contemporary. Moretti's architecture transcends time and place, and like all great works, links the ages together.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1 PHILHARMONIE, Berlin, 1956-63
Interior View
Hans Scharoun

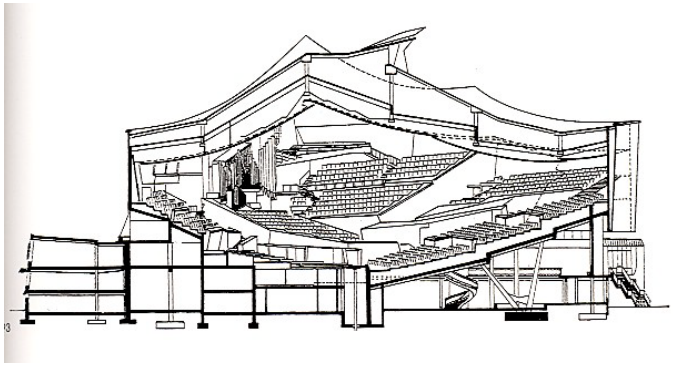

Fig. 2 PHILHARMONIE, Berlin, 1956-63
Cross Section
Hans Scharoun

Fig. 3 NOTRE-DAME-DU-HAUT-RONCHAMP
Le Corbusier

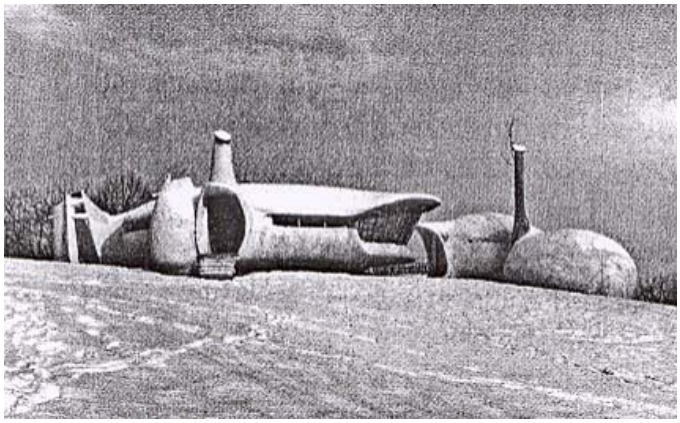

Fig. 4 CENTRE DE LOISIRS, Sainte-Marie-du-Mont (Savoie) ,1966
Pascal Hausemann

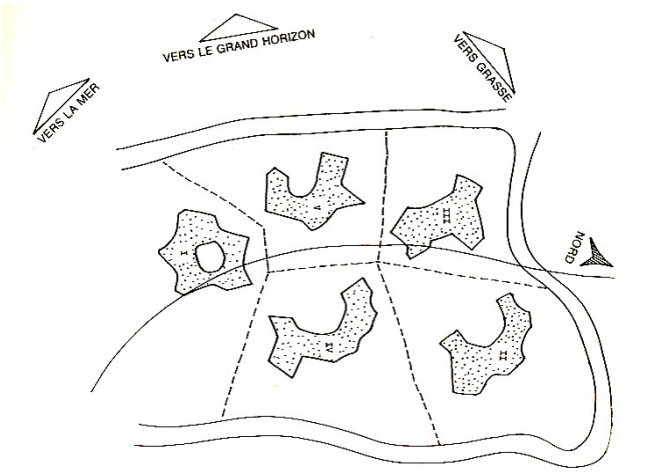

Fig. 5 HOUSING PROJECT, Castellaras-le-Neuf, 1962-63
Site Plan
Jacques Couelle

Fig. 6 HOUSING PROJECT, Castellaras-le-Neuf, 1962-63
Prototypical House
Jacques Couelle

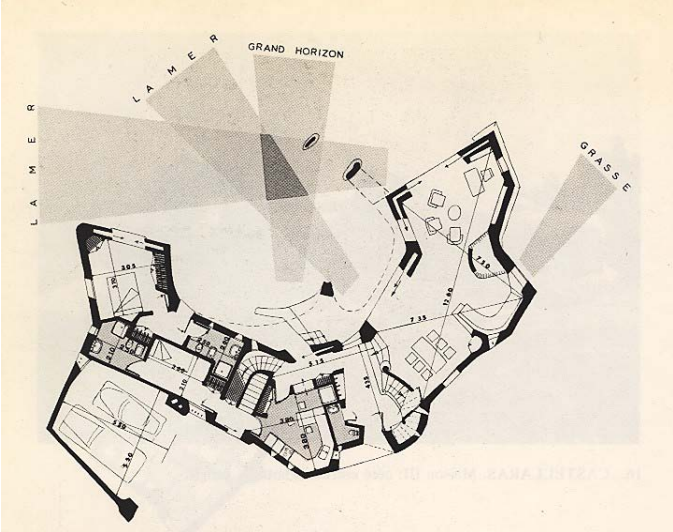

Fig. 7 HOUSING PROJECT, Castellaras-le-Neuf, 1962-63
Ground Floor, House IV
Jacques Couelle

Fig. 8 IMMEUBLE-SCULPTURE, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1973
Ground Floor Plan
Jacques Couelle

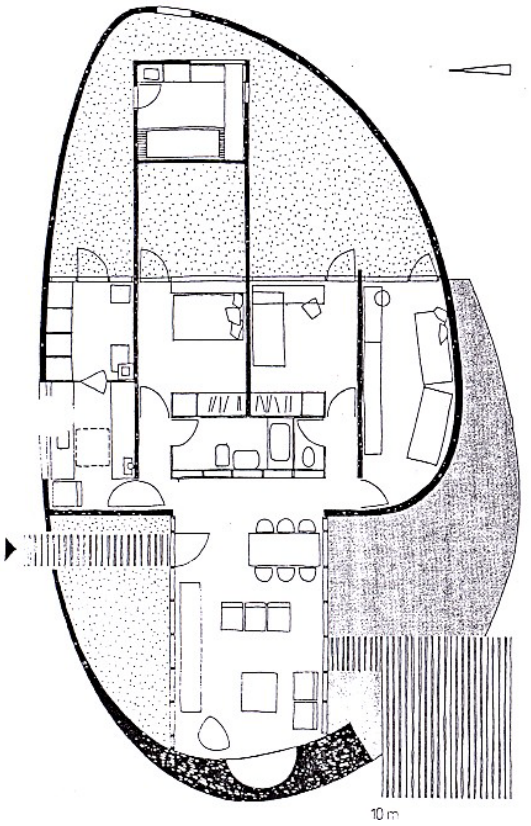

Fig. 9 HOUSE AT ARTIGUES, Artigues, 1958
Yves Salier, Adrien Courtois

Fig. 10 HOUSING PROJECT, Angers (Maine-et-Loire) 1972-76
Vladimir Kalouguine

Fig. 11 HOUSING PROJEST, Ivry-sur-Seine (Val-de-Marne) 1969-81
Jean Renaudie

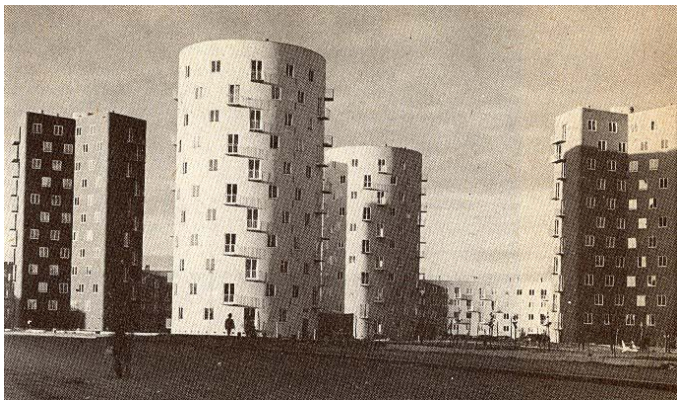

Fig. 12 CITE DE L'ABBREUVOIR, Paris-Bobigny, 1953
Emile Aillaud

Fig. 13 CITE DES COURTILIERES, Paris-Pantin, 1953
Emile Aillaud

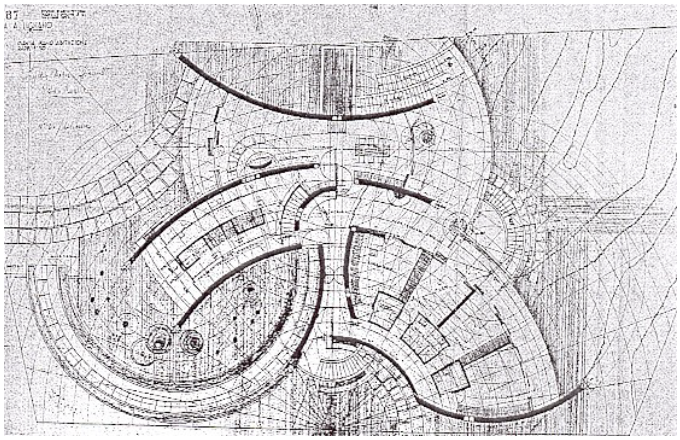

Fig. 14 VILLA SPEZZOTTI, Lignano Pineta, 1955
Marcello D'Olivo

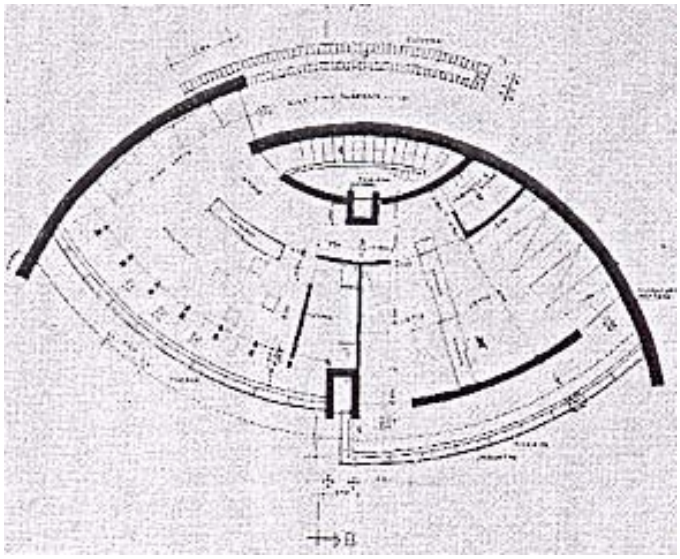

Fig. 15 VILLA ELLERO, Lignano Pineta, 1955
Marcello D'Olivo

Fig. 16 CHURCH OF SAN GIOVANNI, Florence-North, 1962
Giovanni Michellucci

Fig. 17 CASA UGALDE, Caldes d'Estrac, 1951
Jose Antonuio Coderch

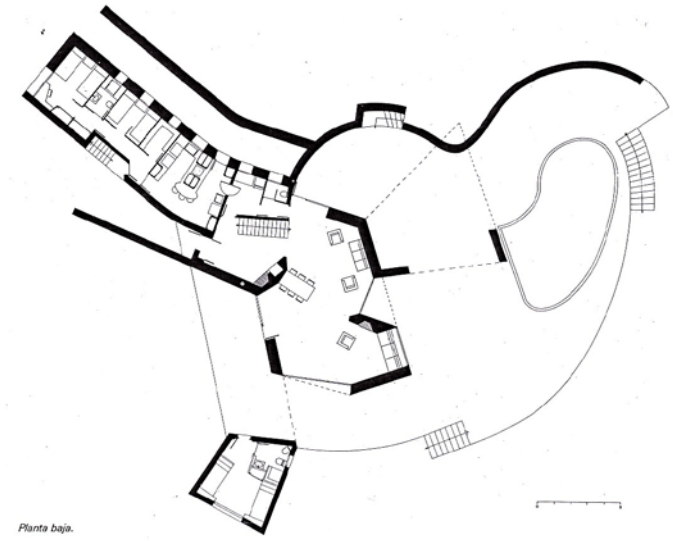

Fig. 18 CASA UGALDE, Caldes d'Estrac, 1951
Floor Plans
Jose Antonuio Coderch

Fig. 19 LA BARCELONETTA APARTMENT BUILDING, Barcelona, 1951
Jose Antonuio Coderch

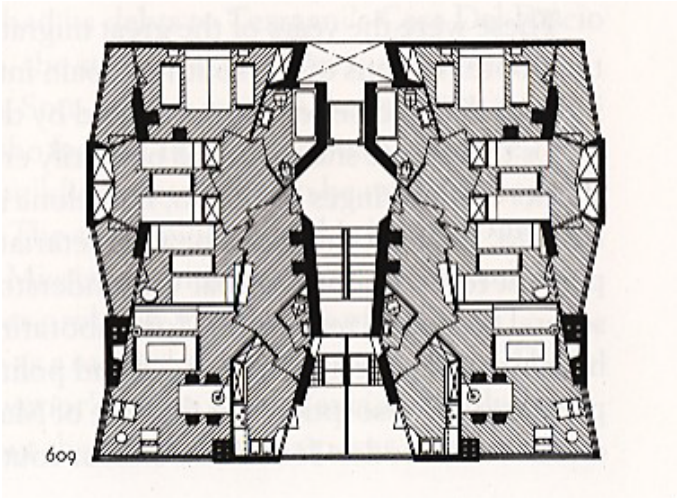

Fig. 20 LA BARCELONETTA APARTMENT BUILDING, Barcelona, 1951
Typical Plan
Jose Antonuio Coderch

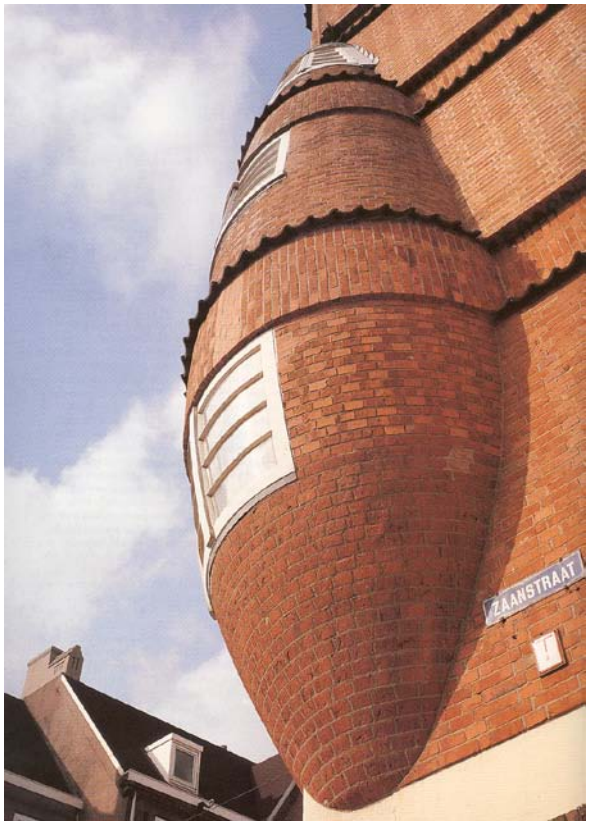

Fig. 21 EIGEN HAARD HOUSING ESTATE, Amsterdam, 1917-20
Michel de Klerk

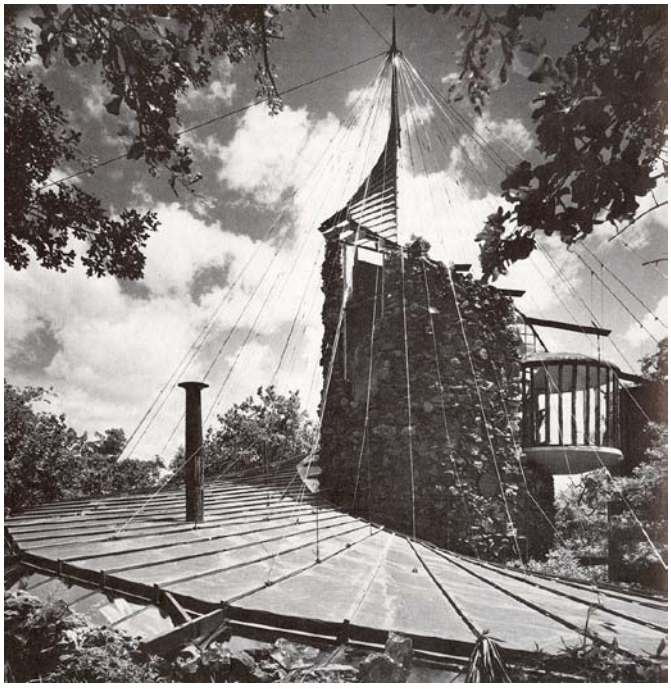

Fig. 22 BAVINGER HOUSE, Norman Olahoma, 1950
Bruce Goff

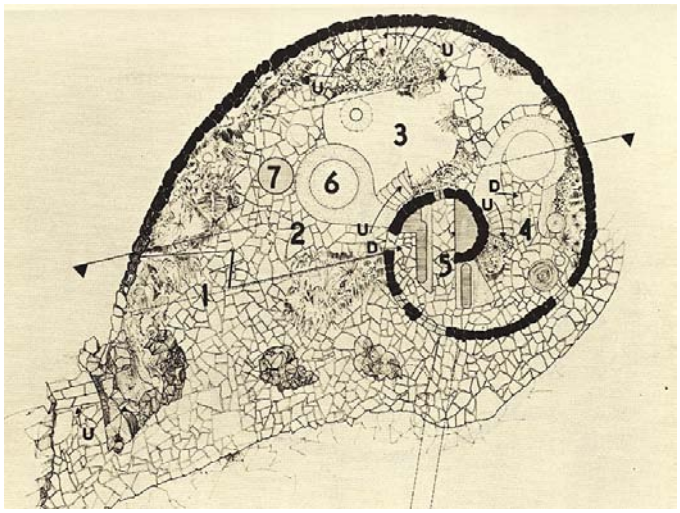

Fig. 23 BAVINGER HOUSE, Norman Olahoma, 1950
Ground Floor Plan
Bruce Goff

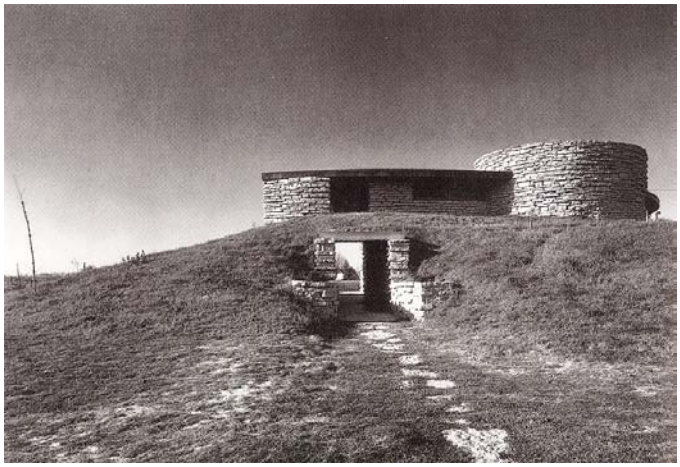

Fig. 24 HERBERT JACOBS HOUSE, Middleton, Wisconsin, 1944
Frank Lloyd Wright.

Fig. 25 ARCOSANTI, Scottsdale, Arizona, 1970-1999
Paolo Soleri

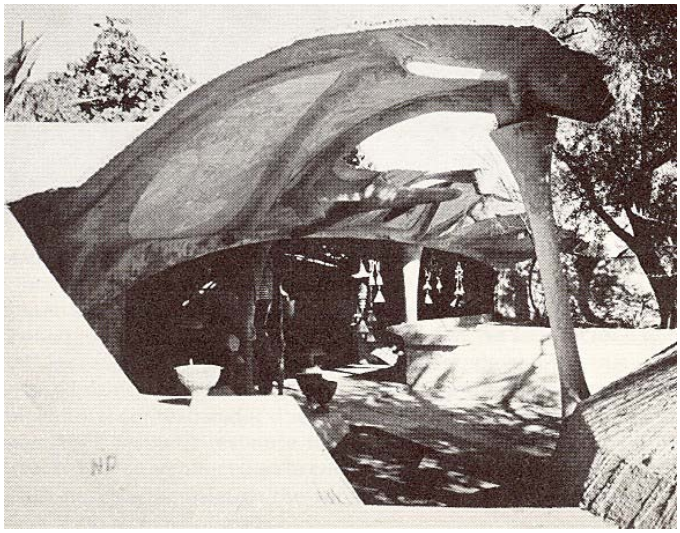

Fig. 26 SOLERI STUDIO, Scottsdale, Arizona, 1972
Palo Soleri

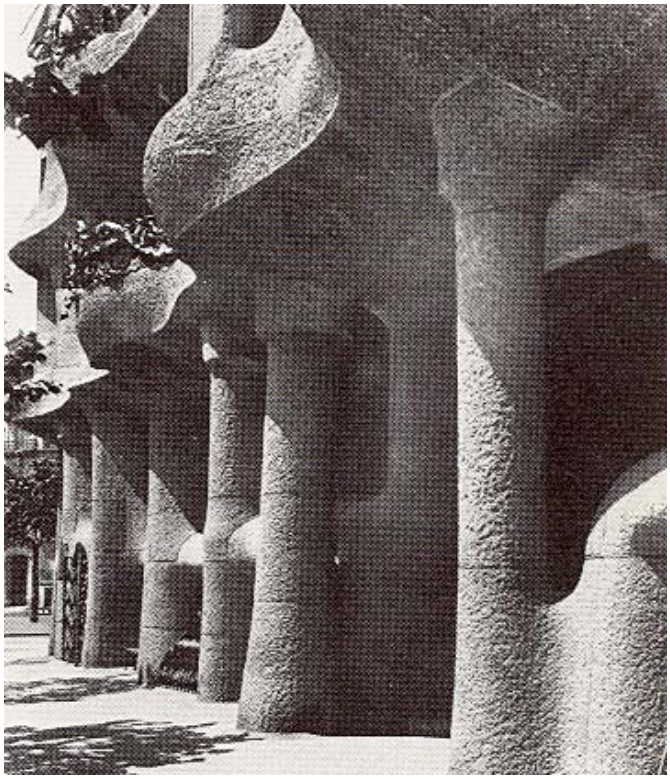

Fig. 27 BARCELONETA, 1906-10
Façade Detail
Antoni Gaudi

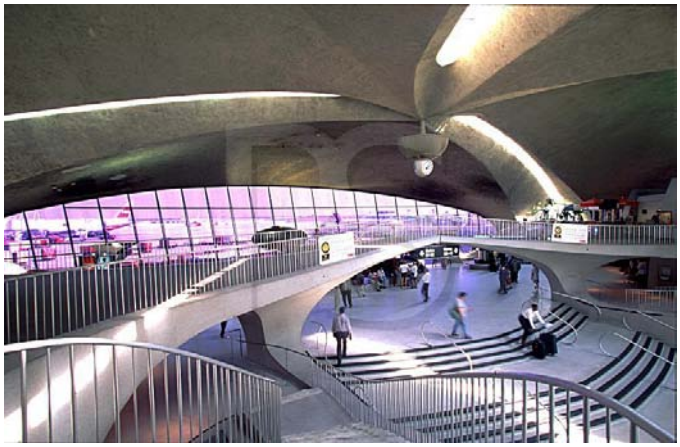

Fig. 28 TWA TERMINAL BUILDING, Kennedy International Airport, New York, 1956-62
Eero Saarinen

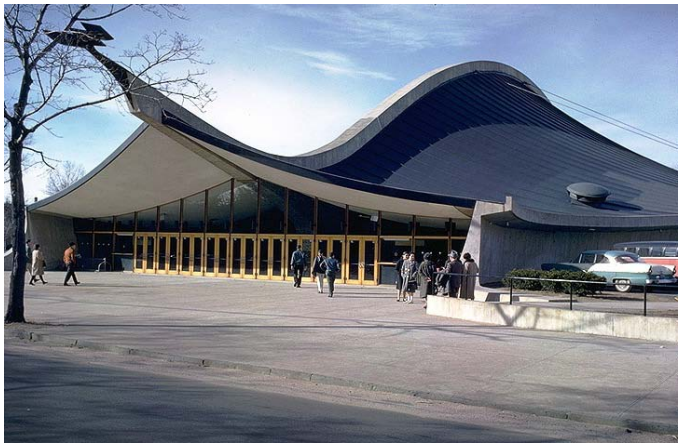

Fig. 29 DAVID INGALLS ICE HOCKEY RINK, Yale University, New Haven, CN, 1953-59
Eero Saarinen

Fig. 30 DULLES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, Chantilly, VA, 1958-63
Eero Saarinen

Fig. 31 EINSTEIN TOWER, Potsdam, 1919-24
Erich Mendelsohn

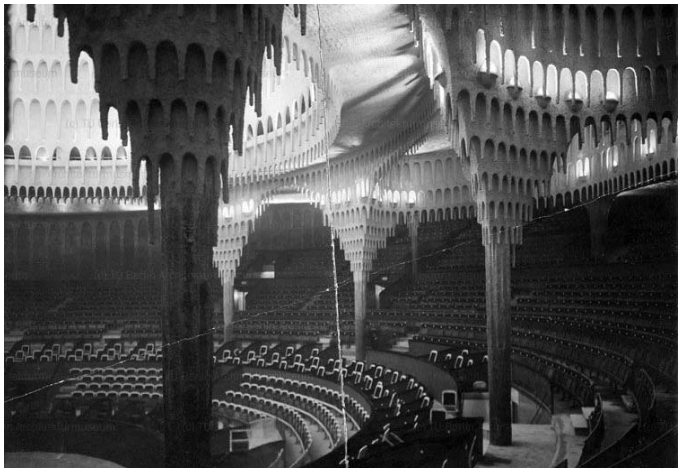

Fig. 32 GROSSES SCHAUSPEILHOUSE, Berlin, 1919
Hans Poelzig

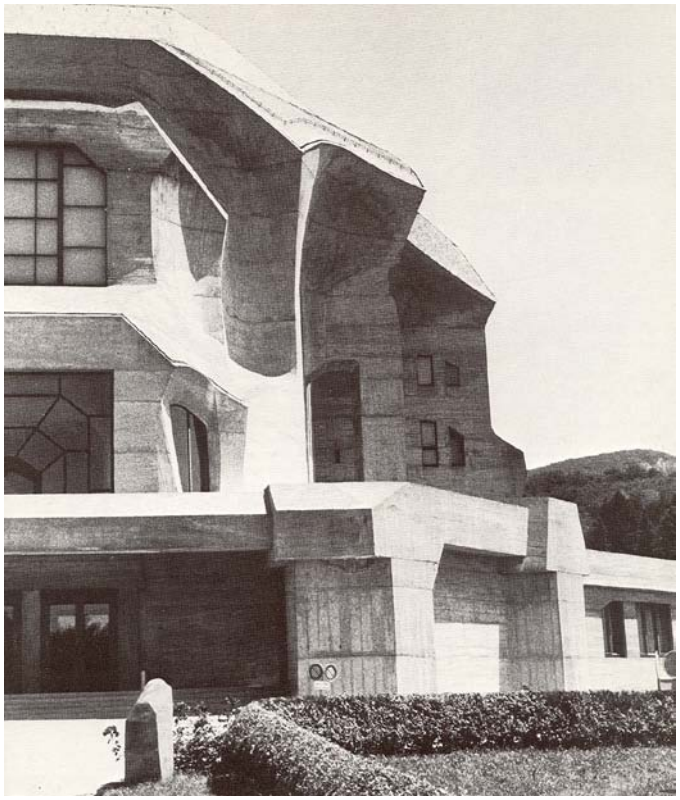

Fig. 33 GOETHEANAEUM, Donnach, 1924-28
Rudolph Steiner

Fig. 34 LA SARACENA, Santa Marinella, 1954
Front Façade
Luigi Moretti

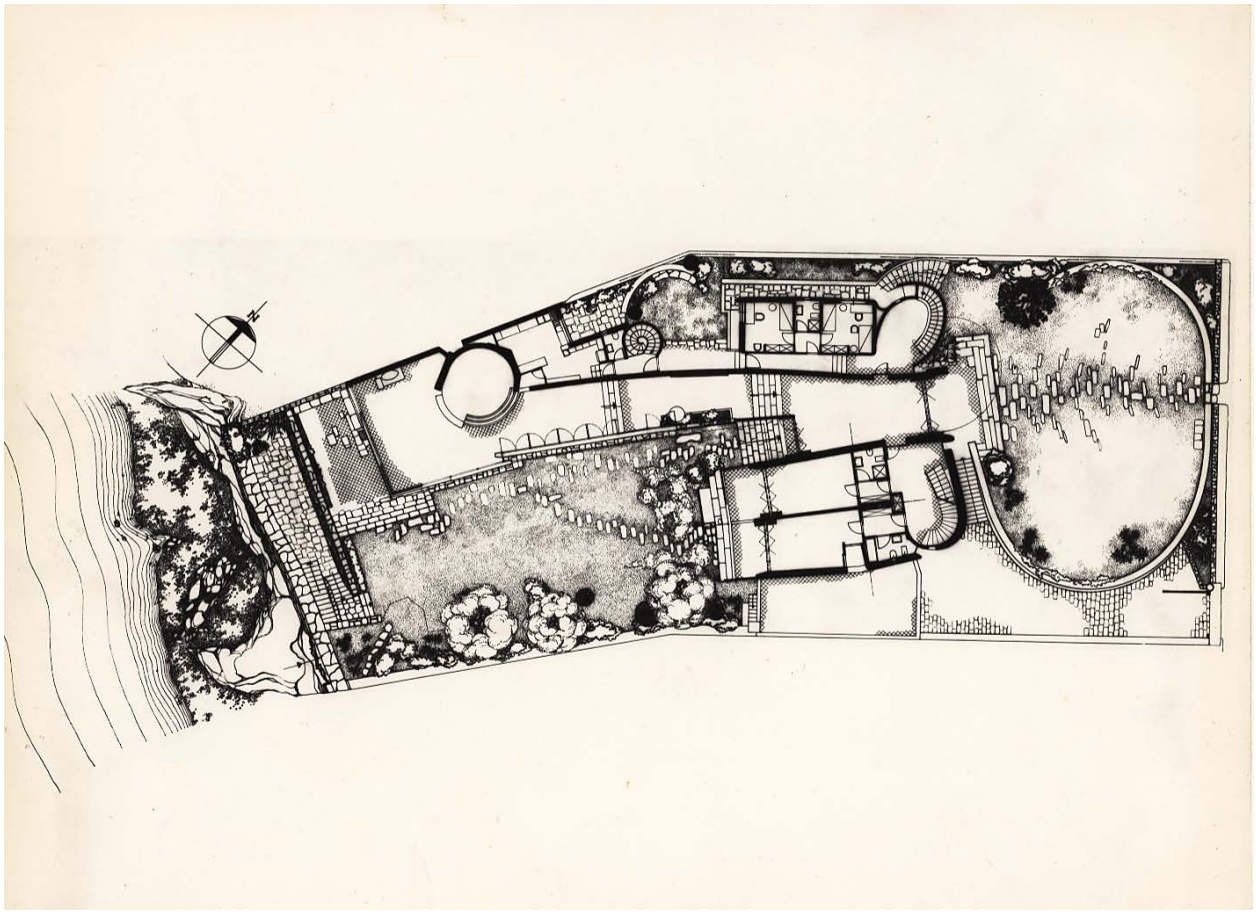

Fig. 35 LA SARACENA, Santa Marinella, 1954
Ground Floor Plan
Luigi Moretti