

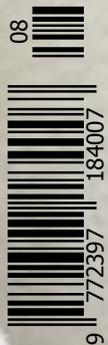
C O L L E C T I B L E

DRY

VOL. 8

pre-fall
2018
UK £8
IT €10

The truth of art lies in its power to break the monopoly of established reality to define what is real. HERBERT MARCUSE



SOPHIE PODOLSKI
ANTON RENBORG
SUPERSTUDIO
ZABRISKIE POINT

MARLENE DUMAS
PSYCHEDELIA
JEAN-PAUL SARTRE
DANIEL COHN-BENDIT

DOMEN / VAN DE VELDE
MIKA ROTTENBERG
MARCO PIETRACUPA
PALERMO MANIFESTA 12

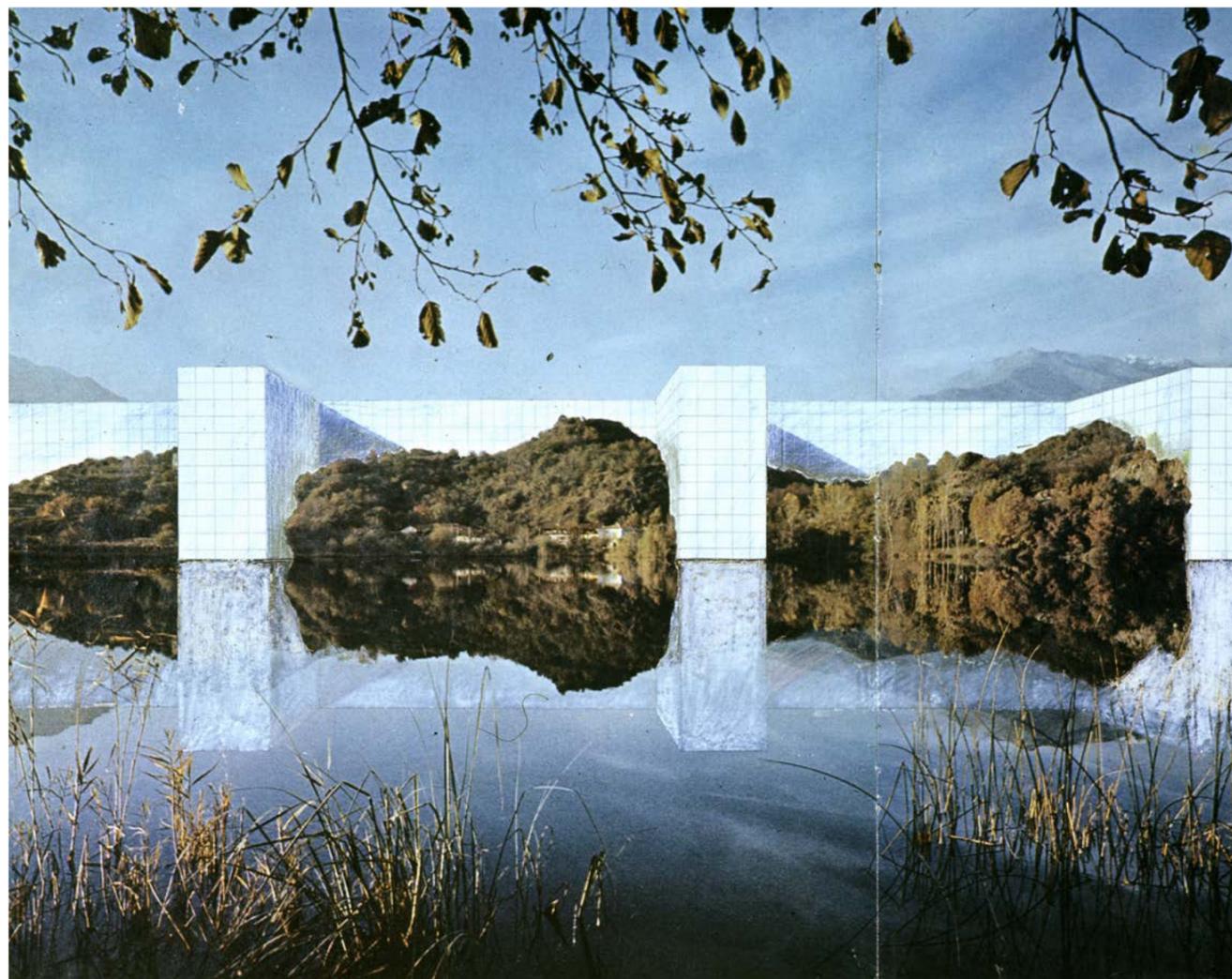
SAGG NAPOLI
KETTY LA ROCCA
UGO LA PIETRA
AUBREY POWELL

imagination in power

S U P E R A R C H I T E C T U R E

I S T H E A R C H I T E C T U R E O F S U P E R P R O D U C T I O N , S U P E R
C O N S T R U M P T I O N , O F T H E S U P E R I N D U C T I O N F O R C O N S U M P T I O N ,
T H E S U P E R M A R K E T , T H E S U P E R M A N A N D T H E S U P E R P E T R O L



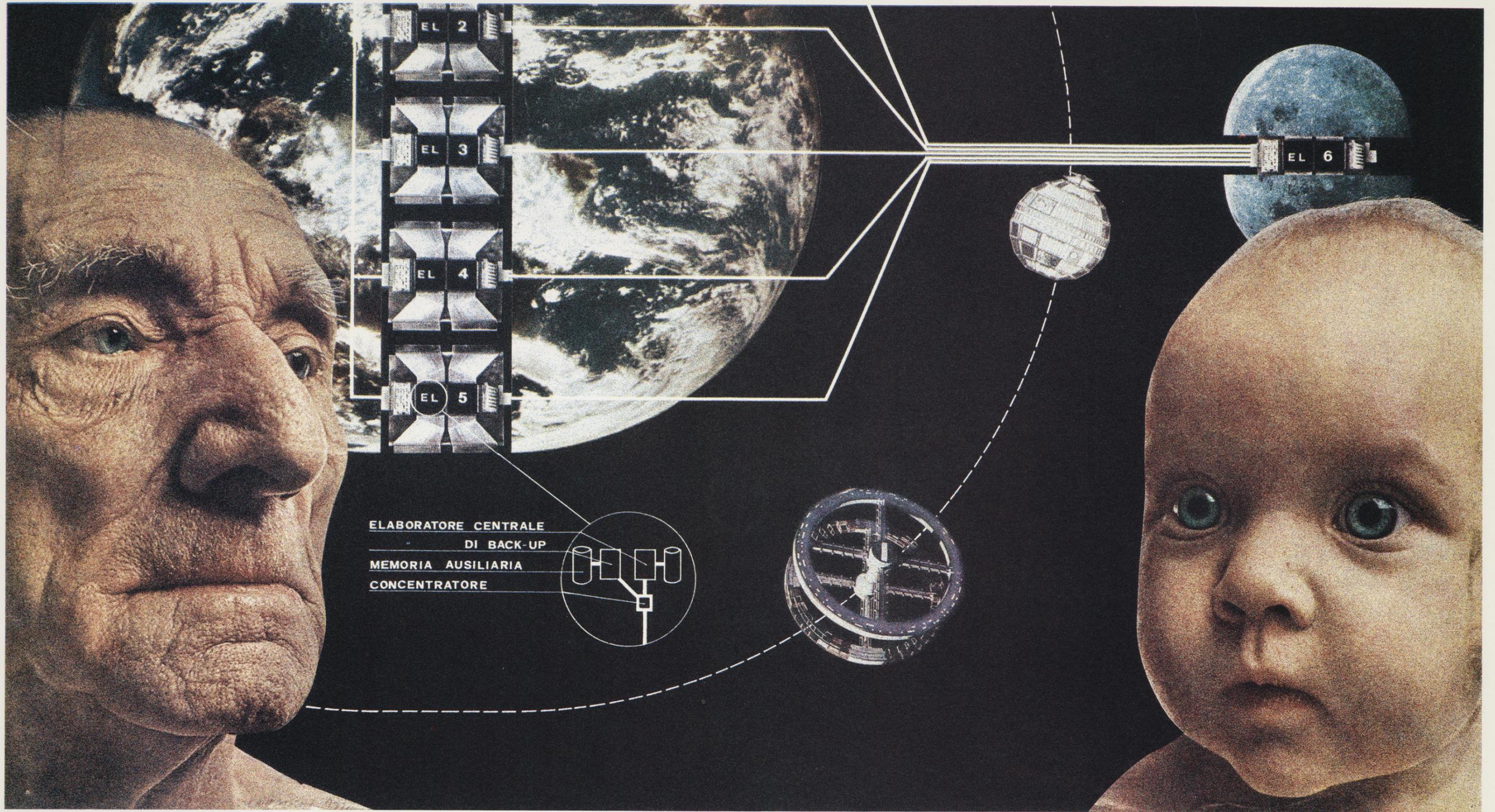




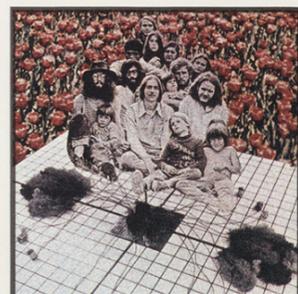
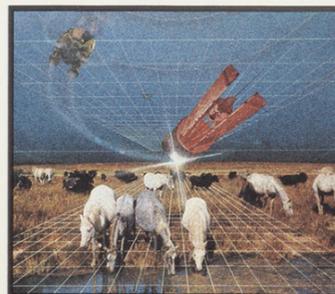
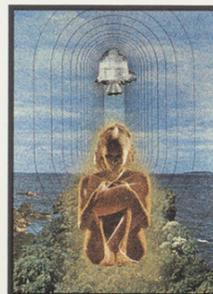
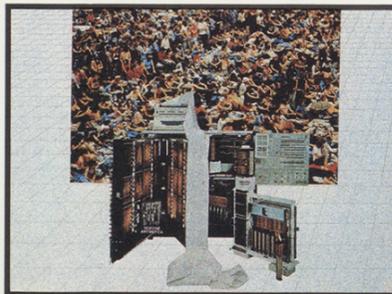
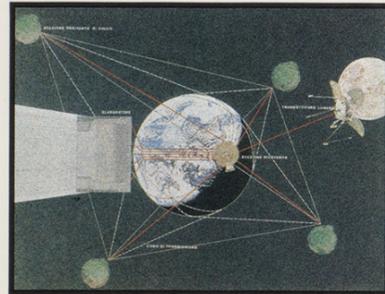
Superstudio ▲ Bazar Divano Componibile, 1969
Made by Giovannetti. Photo by Cristiano Toraldo di Francia



Superstudio ▲ Superficie 1971



ELABORATORE CENTRALE
 DI BACK-UP
 MEMORIA AUSILIARIA
 CONCENTRATORE



EDUCATION

A project for a universal system of information exchange. Imagine five continental continents each composed of a central computer, a feedback computer, relative auxiliary memory banks and a communication. These computers collect all available information. They are connected together by a sixth computer, situated on the moon, equipped with receiving and transmitting apparatus. Four orbiting relay stations cover the whole planet with their areas of transmission. In this way, every point on the earth's surface is connected up to the network of computers. By means of a specialized terminal, each single individual can connect to the network described above, and have instant access to all the world's information. If the answer does not satisfy the enquirer, he can refuse it; the machine from then onwards will bear his refusal and the program administered to him, and will transmit it together with the information required by others. In this way, the machine supplies data for decision-making without interfering the decision themselves: everyone is connected to everyone else in a form of an ordered memory in which education as a continuous process is consistent with life itself.

In 1966 architect, designer and photographer Cristiano Toraldo di Francia founded Superstudio in Florence, together with Adolfo Natalini. For the past two decades this group of avant-garde architects, including Gian Piero Frassinelli and the brothers Roberto and Alessandro Magris, have conducted far-reaching investigations into the language of architecture, objects, environments and the city. Toraldo was a pioneer of the so-called “Radical Architecture,” and later pursued an anthropological reconstruction of architecture.

How would you present yourself, personally and professionally?

As a man, a grandfather. I have been an architect, a photographer, a student of humanistic subjects in the same Florentine high school my mother, father and grandfather attended, acquiring a classical, traditional bourgeois education. The house I was born in was destroyed by the Allies, by American bombing, because it was close to the railway, and this event held powerful symbolic meaning for me.

What is your story?

My story took an important turn on 26 March 1963, during the first university occupation in Florence. It was the first in Italy to impose conditions on professors: those conditions were to have architecture classes only in the morning and to dedicate the afternoon to political discussions in order to extend the field of architecture to other disciplines. We also asked the headmaster to keep the university open until midnight. As we clearly faced strong opposition, we occupied the university. We actually brought mattresses into classrooms... I think that Superstudio started in that moment. For me the birth year of the group was 1963, not 1966. Adolfo Natalini and Piero Frassinelli were my classmates, but they were not part of this more politicized group, which aimed to reconsider a series of architectural needs, trying to turn architecture into a field of research, into a tool that raised problems before solving them, rather than an activity of merely solving living people’s technical issues.

How did Superstudio begin?

The creation of Superstudio occurred throughout an encounter with Adolfo Natalini at the university. I had already met Andrea Branzi and Massimo Morozzi, with whom I had a great friendship, sharing political and ideological thinking that led us to carry out an important group project in 1964: the first group work in which, through just one project, we fulfilled the requirements of four university courses. The project considered the city of Florence as a production line, showing it as a representation of architecture,

not merely technical drawings, but also any kind of representative constructions, from graphics to comics, music and poetry... The project became a real performance, intrinsically linked to serious architectural drawings and models. Architecture was still a science, not just an end in and of itself, but aimed at being a theoretical subject through which to investigate societal problems.

I had taken some exams with Piero Frassinelli during my first years at the university, then we parted ways. He was nice, and I was interested in his ideas and his encyclopedic mind. When I met him he was putting together an encyclopedia made up of a lot of volumes, all created by him, using the yellow paper sheets that at that time were normally used to pack foodstuffs. He attached all kinds of newspaper clippings to them. It was a very strange encyclopedia. Back then it was a precursor to the mania of archiving, cataloging and relocating images.

My relationship with Adolfo was more ordinary. We had some mutual female friends. We used to have picnics together and I got to know him very well. At that time he was part of the group of the four painters from Pistoia, along with Barni, Ruffi and Buscioni. I photographed their first painting catalogues. They were pop artists. Arriving from the United States, pop art exploded in 1964 at the Venice Biennale, influencing our world of art. I began to appreciate his human and intellectual qualities, as well as his manual and technical skills as a painter, a creator of images. So at some point, just before the flood in Florence, when we were about to graduate, I asked him if he would be interested in working together after university. That intention exploded along with the floods and with a painting exhibition at Jolly 2 gallery in Pistoia, where Adolfo had been invited. Initially it was supposed to be a solo exhibition of his work, but he decided to extend it to include his Archizoom friends, since he didn’t want to do an exhibition of just paintings. It was to be held in November 1966 but had to be postponed to the end of December because of the flooding. This overwhelming natural event brought an enormous amount of devastation at both a human and a mental level into this otherwise rational, classic, perfect and a bit retro city. It had the power not only to destroy the programming of that small exhibition, but also to bring us back to the idea that nature governs over architecture, introducing a new feeling into the rational and functional world of architecture. Originally initiated with the modern movement, that feeling brought back a sensuality that architecture and design - as tools of national and conclusive production - had previously removed. The exhibition then turned into a strange kaleidoscopic mechanism where, entering in a controversial world, you couldn’t grasp its purpose. It was all self-sustained with cardboard boxes and painted plywood: there were a series of objects and sculptures that later became famous pieces of architecture, but at the time were simply Trojan horses carrying questions, criticism and creative ambiguity into the domestic spaces, in order to find reasons for these spaces and to break the traditional imperative that form had to follow function. In that case, they were pure forms to which everyone could assign the function he or she imagined.

Was it your first work as a group?

Actually the theses of both Superstudio and Archizoom had several manual contributions, for example coloring the boards, but the most important thing to me - including when we came up with the name “Superstudio” - was to remove the guise of the famous artist; to become a multidisciplinary working group which would allow our different realms of knowledge to develop together. I was a photographer and Adolfo was a painter, so we reconstructed our areas of expertise inside Superstudio, turning them into a new source of professionalism.

Were you aware at the time that these were extremely innovative ideas?

Yes, we wanted to disrupt the myth of famous names. At the university, we were taught about Wright, Le Corbusier... We had grown up with the myth of these famous people, but we wanted to get into reality through metaphors. We wanted to be like factories. It was a time of working class men, when people were fighting for worker autonomy. A time of institutions and unions, gathering universities together with the working class. So there were important political movements that encouraged us to work as a group, not as individual artists. But then this intention waned. In fact today architecture has adapted to consumer society, which we tried to oppose, as well as to the system of individualism, of division, of considering a project as a definitive, rational mechanism that creates needs, desires, consumption and new poverty.

Today architecture has absorbed all these principles and once again it is built over celebrity endorsement: it has become a pure commodity. Cities have architectural objects that accomplish the same logic of the market of small objects, lamps, furniture... I’ve seen the first guitar-shaped skyscraper. We used to draw these kinds of things, but as negative utopias: they were critical utopias that pushed architectural creation processes to the limit in order to show their unfeasibility and non-intelligent design. The incredible thing is that today these negative utopias are taken seriously. We’re seeing things like Gregotti’s University of Calabria - a continuous monument crossing four or five hills - as well as other creations. Back when we first designed the Monumento Continuo (The Continuous Monument), it was nothing more than a city-scale histogram.

Where do the definitions of “radical design” and “radical architecture” come from?

First I have to explain an important shift: the most recent exhibitions of super-architecture talk about “radical architecture.” I have always said that radical architecture doesn’t exist. It began to exist when first Germano Celant, and second Alessandro Mendini, gave it this name. Then came the 1972 cover of Casabella, on which a gorilla can be seen carrying the label “radical design” in one hand. Up to that point, there had been no radical architecture. There were a series of group projects that pursued systemic criticism through syllogism, rhetoric, the so-called “horse move” (an Italian expression used to define a smart and unexpected act), and a series

of philosophical images represented with various photomontages and movies. Today all of that is called “radical architecture.” It is the Memphis movement, which then became the new market’s target. At that time there was a Radical Party, but they were very different from us: maybe we engaged with some of their theories, but in a political rather than architectural sense. So the most important phase was between 1967 and 1968, when the Superstudio took a step back from this colorful image, one that was very imaginative concerning the escapism and innovative design trends that ultimately made Poltronova and other furniture companies so successful. We understood that as the movie *Tempi Moderni* demonstrated, any controversial object you offered to the system, any element you created to impede the production line, derived from the capital itself, from the system, which was subject to market rules and adopted consumerist patterns. So we told ourselves: it’s good for the architect to abandon the drawing board, but then he or she should get behind it by throwing a series of catalogues of measures onto the table, so that there are no longer issues of quality, color, sensuality, of form following function, but rather pure neutral quantities left on the table. We called these spaces *istogrammi* (histograms). They were ever-expanding grid surfaces, the measurements of which could vary according to the space available in order to define any projects. If one measured three centimeters, it brought out Zanotta’s tables to the fore; if it measured thirty centimeters, it would emphasize the villa catalogues; and if it measured three meters, it would give life to structures like the Continuous Monument. Superstudio was practically the only one involved in this very important process. Archizoom was partially involved too, but not the other groups. The UFO group has continued to give performances using their *Urboeffemeri* (Urbo-ephemerals): “inflatable” elements designed to upset social norms and architectural referenceness, inspired by imperialist and capitalist imagery and symbolism. But have never placed a specific accent on architecture as a science, as a scale, as a construction of objects of architecture and for the city.

This history provides a very clear interpretation for your work. Did you also distance yourself from the other groups of your day?

Yes, absolutely. We have always distanced ourselves. There was a first joint effort to break form and function, of interdisciplinary investigation, of bringing performance into architecture, but we continued to work on architecture, on the relationship between object and city. It’s a very important theme for us.

Why have these visions and utopias expired?

For us they have expired quite naturally. There was a third phase to our process. After the histogram phase, which culminated in 1972 with the exhibition “New Domestic Landscape” in New York - the apotheosis of the object, of beautiful Italian design - where we declared a world without objects, without architecture, presenting the movie *Supersuperficie* (Supersurface): An Alternative Model for Life on Earth. This grid-model, which embraced tables, >>

histograms, architecture, villa catalogues, cities and the Continuous Monument, began to spread across the surface of the earth, which became a large, divided, square architecture resembling what Thomas Jefferson had already imagined in the New World. It became an intuition of the wire network extending the earth's surface to allow the rational communication of information, of food, with "plugs" placed at a regular distance. Architecture became the planet's surface. Then, with interplanetary architecture, it extends to other planets as well: man first set foot on the moon in 1969; then an entire series of other facts led us to use science to build houses in completely unnatural places. The astronaut's suit may well be an example of perfect architecture; it allows him to go beyond space and live on a planet that would otherwise be inhabitable. In that case the architecture of a Palladian villa would be insufficient. That's another type of architecture that science, medicine, physics and design must come together in order to build. So you can see that there were incredible upheavals that forced us to take the entire planet into consideration. For example the fact that physical borders collapsed - the epitome of which came in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall - and were replaced by those of a nomadic humanity. Large migrations began, and have never stopped growing. Bearing in mind the shift of architectural production from physical subject to a ritual subject that is different for each individual ethnic group, we started an anthropological investigation displayed through visual and written images that we gathered together in a volume edited by Quodlibet, and then spread globally. We call them the five basic acts: life, education, ceremony, love and death. Architecture usually ignored these five moments in our lives, considering them things that had already been sorted out. We investigated them through an anthropology, through photomontages and through five movie storyboards (the first one, made for New York, was particularly important). Therefore Superstudio experienced a particular phase that enhanced a ritual conception of architecture. The study of ritual in fact led us to study extra-urban material life, a disappearing kind of life: the life of farmers for example.

From planetary vision to anthropological research...

Together with another friend of mine who joined the group, Alessandro Poli, along with Frassinelli and Natalini, we spent a few years studying a Tuscan farmer from the Maremma, Zeno Fiaschi. I brought this effort to the 1978 Venice Biennale, in which we saw the coexistence of memory, invention, transformation, use and restoration of all that had become organized into temporal rather than physical divisions in our urban life. The architect designed, the factory produced, one person distributed, another person purchased... but nobody knew anyone else. It was interesting to document this coexistence of memory's creative capacities, of transformation and something that would later become fundamental: recycling. The farmer recycled naturally. He even recycled the residue of war, the famous corrugated iron

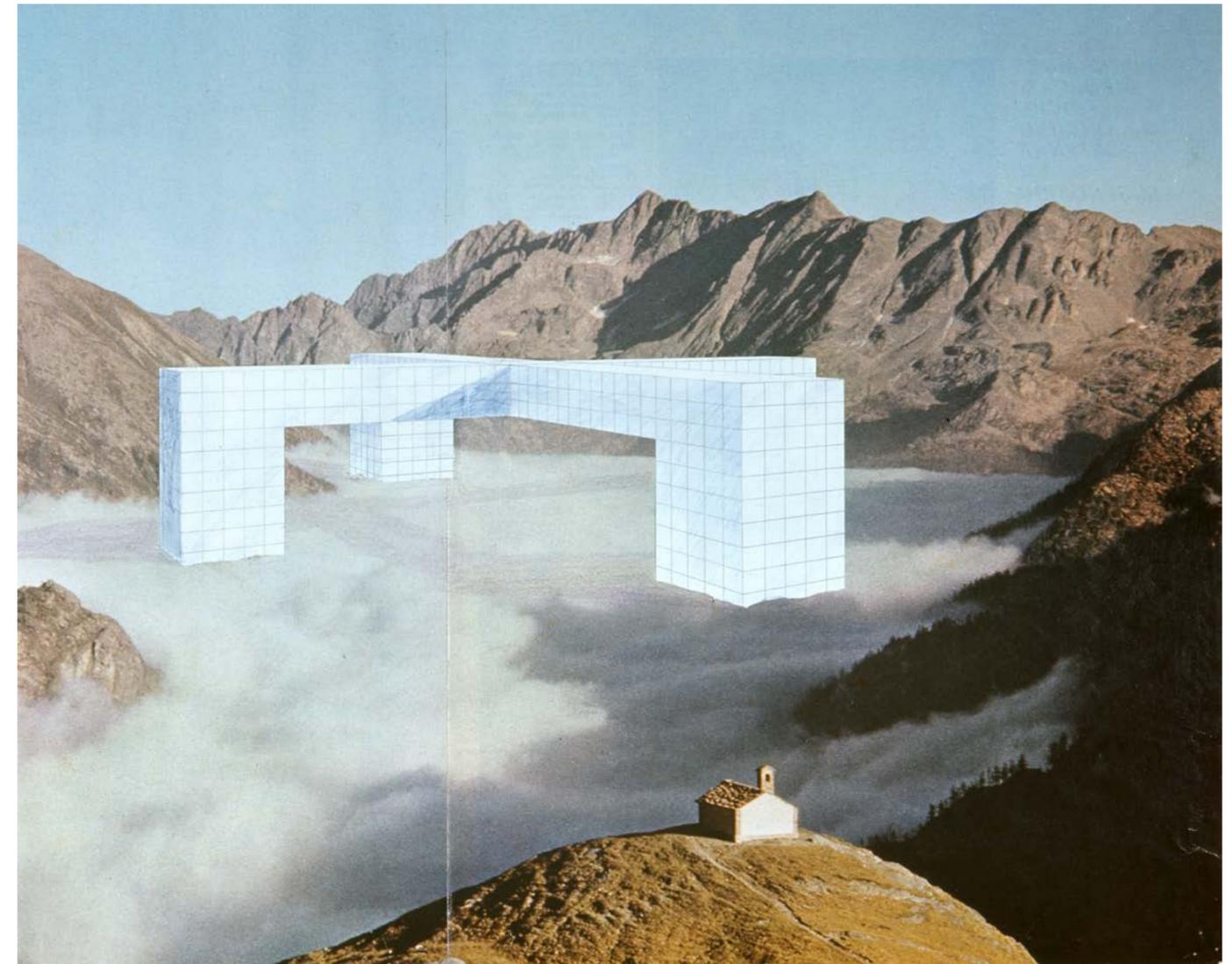
left by Allied troops, which he turned into a henhouse... The pieces of any material were recycled. I brought some things that Zeno Fiaschi gave me to the Biennale. One of these was a small, very low chair, probably intended to be set beside the fireplace. This chair continues to travel with Superstudio exhibitions today. Originally it was a dining chair, with a trunk divided into four pieces as the four legs: then these pieces were gradually replaced, cut and adapted until there were only two pieces left of the original chair. The rest was all transformation, recycling, reuse. Today people would love all that!

Your greatest intuitions emerge clearly from this route. Some of them have remained hidden for several years, but as we've seen they're flourishing today...

Today there's a need to return to the idea of community, to rediscovering architecture. I fully agree with what Mario Cucinella said in your interview for Lifegate: "I want young architects understand that they don't have to make a building in Hong Kong to be a great architect. An architect is a person who participates in social and civic life also through considered and fair operations, small buildings, things that are useful and that serve the community." Cucinella took the trouble to rebuild Camerino, which was literally devastated. I too share his love for southern Italy and Calabrian origins.

Which are your recent projects?

My book titled "Ri-vestire" (Re-wear), released a few weeks ago by Quodlibet. It documents the past five years, during which I taught at the University of Camerino, focusing on dressmaking. I live in Filottrano, a beautiful village in Italy's Marche region, in a district of menswear manufacturers. There are a lot of factories around here, and I was surprised to discover that the university's design department didn't look into this kind of "soft" architecture, i.e. clothing. Architecture no longer exists as an accumulation, but there is a structure at which layers are placed, just as men's and women's clothing is manufactured. There are similarities that lead back to intuitions we had at the time, and which today have become even more important because they involve recycling. In agreement with a series of factories, with companies that collect used clothes and send them to be recycled just as they used to do in Prato, or which send them to markets in Asia or Africa, I have urged design students to attend the course "Ri-vestire," working for many years on the concept of suitable and recyclable clothing. The book starts from my childhood, when all my clothes were recycled during the war. Recycling can be a source of wonderful inspiration, and in fact we just finished an exhibition in Pesaro that included the students' work, some of which is documented in this little book made up with all my photos. I'm currently editorial director of the magazine *Mappe* (mappelab.it).



An Alternative Model for Life on Earth

In this postcapitalist utopia people live with and not for objects, whose magical, mythical, and sacred functions so enabled a more direct experience of reality. It's a negative utopianism that would look to the American counterculture and to another alternative lifestyle: nomadism.