

CONSTRUCTION SITE

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Mobility and adaptability: the concerns of an architect “about the future of the construction site’s culture” often seem somewhat helpless to me. I think that we, as architects, should come to terms with the radical transformations in the construction field and its associated areas in the same manner as the surgeon, whose operating room — in a certain sense, “his construction site” — is fundamentally transformed every ten years.

Reality and Pragmatism: the dream of a wholesale industrialization of building has long been expended. Even shortly after the war in France, for example, *préfabrication lourde* had already displaced *préfabrication légère* because it was closer to the reality of the time and thus more pragmatic. Every small entrepreneur with three or four employees could purchase a vibrating table and with it, enter the prefabricated concrete component business in smaller series without requiring large financial investment to turn his business into a mechanical shop, as the example of Jean Prouvé in Maxéville shows. This realistic way of seeing things, the pragmatism of deciding on a case-by-case basis (conventional construction and/or the deployment of prefabricated components such as “wet” elements, elevator shafts and facade elements) still characterize construction sites today. It is precisely this fact that produces the variety of constructional/tectonic solu-

tions as represented impressively in the exhibition *Detail – Architecture Seen in Section* presented by the IUAV at the 2014 Biennale and curated by Marko Pogacnik, Orsina Pierini and others.¹

Curiosity: Architects such as Angelo Mangiarotti and Marco Zanuso have set a high standard with their buildings in terms of the intersection between construction and architecture, creating a building culture that can hardly be achieved under contemporary conditions (see below). What nonetheless remains is the uncompromising will and curiosity of these architects to see things differently every time, especially when considering how a construction site is organized.

The social: construction sites create jobs. This was also one of the intentions, which motivated the founding of *INA Casa*. Often employing workers from more than ten different countries with different religions, a construction site is a *social project*. Increasingly, however, we are also dealing with an opaque conglomerate of subcontractors. Pay rates below minimum wage and socially precarious living conditions for workers, especially those from Eastern Europe, are therefore no longer rare.

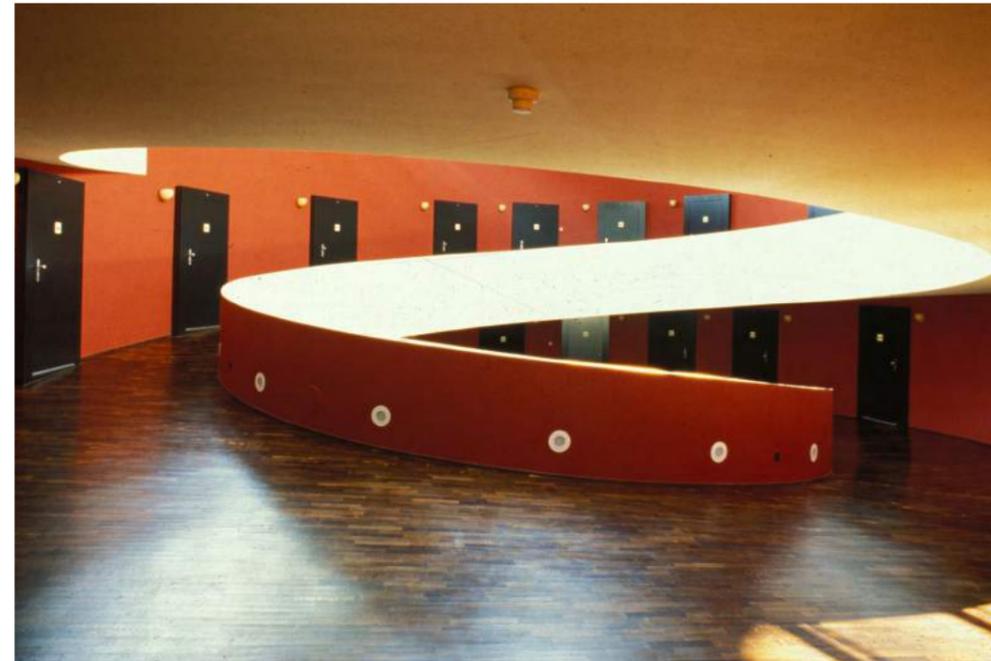
Profession and construction site: the productive rejuvenation of the architectural discourse, the critique of *naive functionalism* and so forth in Italy in the late 1960s also meant a strong ideological turn in the debate “away from the profession and towards a social



project.” Those especially subject to critique were the so-called *professionisti*: here one recalls Tafuri’s “curse” on Caccia Dominioni.² It is no coincidence that many of these architects are being rediscovered and rehabilitated today, including Asnago and Vender, Caccia Dominioni or Giulio Minoletti.³ Profession and construction site were, for these architects, a natural, uncontested whole, a responsible, realistic “way of seeing things” without any romantic transfiguration.

Serenity and potentials: we like to go to the construction site, often also on weekends when work is paused and there is an atmosphere like that of an archaeological excavation. The construction site is a place where architects can still make changes at the last minute. We see a space for the first time in its raw form and can transform it again radically using color, an intervention less than one mm thick, as, for example, in the Hotel Zürichberg: the color red works against the space centrality and its construction — concrete ramp and the back wall of the hotel rooms (see construction photo) — and instead emphasizes the space’s tangen-

Construction site, interior, Hotel Zürichberg.



tial perception. It denaturalizes, to a certain degree, the construction devices.

1.

See www.detailsinsection.org.

2.

Elli Mosayebi, *Luigi Caccia Dominioni — der Architekt im Fauteuil*, in: “Werk, Bauen Wohnen“, 12, 2013 p. 13, Footnote 15.

3.

In the fall, the first comprehensive monograph on Giulio Minoletti will be published by the Archivio del Moderno AdM in Mendrisio, edited by Christian Sumi, Annalisa Viatti and Cristina Loi. See also: Maria Vittoria Capitanucci, *il Professionismo Colto nel Dopoguerra*, edited by Alessandro Sartori and Stefano Suriano, Ordine degli Architetti P.P.C. , Abitare, Milan 2015.

Interior, Hotel Zürichberg.