

Architectural Criticism and Cultural Promotion. Contemporary Alpine Architecture (1987-2022)

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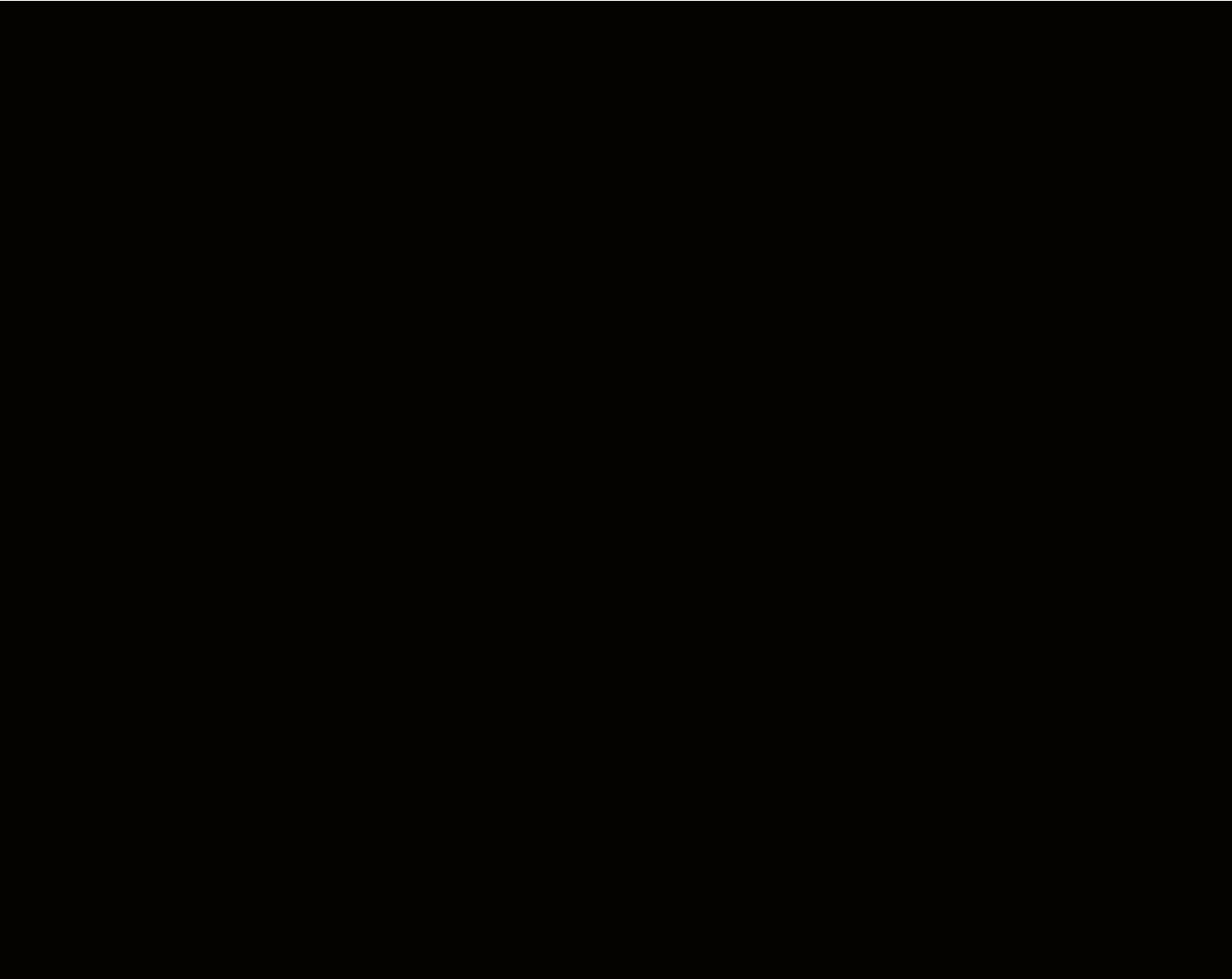
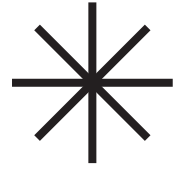
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PhD in Architecture.
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ARCHITECTURAL CRITICISM AND CULTURAL PROMOTION. CONTEMPORARY ALPINE ARCHITECTURE (1987-2022)



Matteo Tempestini

Cycle
36° - PoliTo Grant

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2020 - 2023

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Research Group
IAM – Institute of Mountain Architecture

Contemporary architectural production in the Alps is a phenomenon that has enjoyed considerable international significance since the 1990s. In 1992 the *Neues Bauen in den Alpen* prize was established in Sesto in South Tyrol. The prize will gain more and more importance and participation in the three successive editions - 1995, 1999 and the last one in 2006 - also thanks to the publication of the catalogues, enriched by significant theoretical and historical contributions and by the travelling exhibitions, present not only in alpine galleries and museums but also in the Scandinavian peninsula and South America, as further confirmation of the attention and essential role that Alpine architectural production plays within the global scenario of contemporary architecture. Another fundamental date for the change of general vision towards the Alps is 7th November 1991, when the European Alpine countries sign the Alpine Convention. The most important product of the Convention, as regards the architectural field, was born in 2010: it is another architecture award, namely *Constructive Alps: prize for sustainable architecture in the Alps*. The debate that arose after the establishment of the *Neues Bauen in den Alpen* prize, and subsequently with *Constructive Alps*, also involved the sector magazines, which from that moment on began to take an interest in the Alpine territory. More and more Alpine projects are published in international magazines such as «Casabella», «Domus», «The Architectural Review», «el Croquis», and «a+u», especially Swiss projects from the canton of Grisons and Austrian ones from Vorarlberg or Tyrol. The interest is

also condensed in some exhibitions of great importance and resonance. Starting from those that accompany the prizes mentioned above, to others, such as the famous exhibition entitled *Constructive Provocation*, concerning the architecture of Vorarlberg and organized by the *Institut français d'architecture and the Vorarlberger Architektur Institut (VAI)*. In the wake of the activities of the *Sesto Cultura* association, which before the *Neues Bauen in den Alpen* award had organized several exhibitions concerning architecture in the Alps, other cultural institutions began to take an interest in Alpine architecture. This is the case of *Kunst Meran / Merano Arte* which organized some international exhibitions, above all the *Wohn Raum Alpen - Abitare le Alpi* in 2010.

The beginning of the 1990s witnessed a profound change in the imagination of the Alps in Europe, at a legislative, regulatory, and perceptive level (De Rossi, Dini, 2012). In particular, some events, such as the stipulation of the Alpine Convention in 1991, or the research of some scholars, especially the one carried out by the German geographer Werner Bätzing, contribute to this transformation. In the same period, in the architectural

Bätzing, W. (2005). *Le Alpi. Una regione unica al centro dell'Europa*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri
De Rossi, A., Dini, R. (2012). *Architettura alpina contemporanea*. Scarmagno: Priuli & Verluccha
Mayr Fingerle, C. (Eds). (1992). *Neues Bauen in den Alpen - Architettura contemporanea alpina 1992*. Bolzano: Edition Raetia



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field, the *Neues Bauen in den Alpen* prize, announced for the first time in 1992 by the South Tyrolean association *Sesto Cultura*, contributed to the creation of the concept of "Alpine architecture" as a cultural construct (Mayr Fingerle, 1992). The *Neues Bauen in den Alpen* prize is part of a set of tools for the cultural promotion of architecture that has allowed the international diffusion and critical success of the architecture produced in the Alps in the contemporary world, especially starting from the end of the 80s to the present day. The research aims to analyse the role of these different cultural promotion tools, including exhibitions, sector magazines, new digital media, and architecture awards. The thesis is therefore divided into four chapters that intercept these four different devices. These chapters will be interspersed with project sheets of some architectural case studies chosen because of the publication on one of the promotional tools. The case studies will mainly be selected in two Alpine regions, Vorarlberg in Austria and Graubünden in Switzerland, which have received the most significant critical acclaim internationally between 1987 and 2022. Through the study of a paradigmatic case such as that of the architecture produced in the Alps, a pivotal and barycentric territory in Europe, the research aims to understand how some tools of cultural promotion allow the development of a particular architectural culture and consequently also the creation of quality architecture, and how architectural criticism, through its narratives and different historiographies, can influence this process. The Alps are taken as a para-

digmatic case that can lead, as argued by the geographer Werner Bätzing, to a "deeper understanding of Europe" (Bätzing, 2005) and, consequently, of its architecture. Furthermore, it is of particular interest to study the reasons for the attention paid by critics and sector journalists to the architectures produced in the Alpine territory (with some regions leading the way, such as Vorarlberg and Grisons), especially starting from the 1990s forward. The research aims to analyse this "stage", using the architecture produced in the Alps as a case study to understand the reasons and mechanisms that can lead a "regional" architecture to a particular public success and how this success, in turn, can affect the architectural quality of the region in question.

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COLOPHON

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“The PhD Program in Architecture. History and Project (DASP) was born out of two long lasting traditions of doctoral level studies and research in the area of Architecture at Politecnico di Torino. The PhD Program programmatically investigates the complexity of architectural cultures starting from the multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary interweaving between the history and the design of buildings, cities, territories.

On the one hand, in fact, urban and architectural composition and technology of architecture favor an interpretation of the project as a tool for measuring the stratifications of theoretical elaborations, technical

innovations and modifications of built environment.

On the other hand, the historical disciplines for architecture and the city, far from a local vision and thanks to the cooperation with other histories (the economic, social, anthropological and aesthetic ones), trace paths that can be traveled by architects and urban planners, but also by other humanities scholars, such as philosophers and linguists”

Marco Trisciuglio

(from the document Proposal for the accreditation of doctorates - a.y. 2023/2024, presented to the Italian Ministry of University and Research on June 5th, 2023)