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Introduction

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12 October 2026

WOMEN'S CREATIVITY SINCE THE MODERN MOVEMENT

AN EUROPEAN CULTURAL HERITAGE

Caterina Franchini and Emilia Garda

MOMOWO

WOMEN'S CREATIVITY SINCE THE MODERN MOVEMENT

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On behalf of the partnership, we are deeply grateful to the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union.

Emilia Garda and Caterina Franchini
MoMoWo international coordinators

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An European Cultural Heritage

Caterina Franchini and Emilia Garda

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Introduction

Emilia Garda and Caterina Franchini

This book presents the 'conceptual architecture' of the MoMoWo Database for mapping women's cultural legacy and heritage in Architecture, Construction and Design, and includes annexes on some of the most significant practices, outputs and deliverables so far achieved, resulting from the cooperative research activity between all MoMoWo's international partners whom we directed at the Polytechnic of Turin (Polito). A collection of case studies enriches the volume by providing the reader with examples of specific thematic approaches at several geographical scales.

The conception of the Database with the application of a Geographic Information System (GIS) has opened the way to making maps of the careers of women architects, civil engineers and designers, and of their works in the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, urban planning, architectural and urban restoration, civil engineering, interior and furniture design, from the past to the present time.

The released online map, www.momowo.eu/database-webgis, displays part of the results issued from the principal research tool we created in order to build an interactive and participatory platform for sharing knowledge and fostering new studies that can pass the limits of our partnership in its future developments. According to this aim, we planned a 'conceptual architecture' that is suitable to guide data collection following a vision of a long-term work in progress.

From the technological point of view, Francesco Fiermonte, expert at the Laboratory of Sustainability and Safety for Social Challenges (Polito-DIST), has put into practice "An Open Source Approach for the MoMoWo GIS Database" that you will find in the first annexe.

Through the scientific methodological approach adopted for the Database, each multidisciplinary partner's team contributed to gathering the biographical data and data on the works by women at various stages of research. These stages comprised the preparation of the International Travelling Exhibition "100 Works | 100 Years | 100 Women" (which opened in July 2016 at the University of Oviedo), the cultural-tourist itineraries for the Guidebook *MoMoWo. Women Architecture & Design Itineraries across Europe* (published in September 2016), and the three international History Conferences/Workshops on women designers, architects and civil engineers between 1918 and 1989 (Leiden, 2015; Ljubljana, 2016; Oviedo 2017), as well as the Symposium *Women's Creativity since the Modern Movement (1918–2018): Toward a New Perception and Reception* (International Conference, Polytechnic of Turin, July 2018).

In the frame of the Database activity, the MoMoWo Polito's team created a special section devoted to Women's archives. Technical aspects concerning the presentation of archives and archival collections on the online map were covered by archivist Enrica Maria Bodrato of the History and Cultural Heritage Laboratory (Polito-DIST), and they are concisely illustrated in the second annexe "Searching for Women's Architectural Archives: The Italian Case Study".

Moreover, envisaging further developments of the MoMoWo Database, two members of Polito's scientific team, Roberta

Spallone and Marco Vitali (Polito-DAD), carried out feasibility studies for the creation of a "Collection of Digital Reconstructive Models" (annexe 3) of architectural works to be added to the archival section. By studying archival documents, the aim is to visualise in 3D those architectures that were demolished, transformed or changed on the drawings, thus allowing the preservation, interpretation and creation of images of cultural heritages that no longer exist in their original shape or remain unbuilt.
Last but not least, three additional annexes enrich the book with illustrations and tables showing whose Database demonstration initiatives aimed to spread visibility and raise awareness about the cultural heritage created by women, via the social media output of our project as well as in local public events and guided tours on the architectural routes of the Guidebook.
The Portuguese team, led by Maria Helena Souto (IADE), produced the section "Women's Gallery" which has been posted on the MoMoWo Website and Facebook since 2015. Meanwhile, the Slovenian team, led by Helena Seražin (ZRC SAZU), has focused on the discovery of "Slovenian Women Pioneers" whose work-in-progress results were exhibited during the annual *MoMoWo Open Day in women's professional studios* (2015, 2016 and 2017).
The last annexe "MoMoWo Travel, Tourism, Architecture Design and Women" by Marjan Groot (VU) presents some reflections on travel and tourism resulting from the 125 works by women architects and designers collected in the Database and published in our cultural-tourist itineraries.
All these initiatives have reverberated beyond the boundaries of our project, thus engendering an inspiring imitation process that is magnifying the MoMoWo mission, and giving voice to both material and immaterial women's cultural heritage in Europe and beyond.

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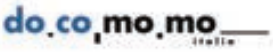

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Emilia Garda, MoMoWo project leader since 2104, is an architect and associate professor of Building Design at the Department of Structural, Construction and Geotechnical Engineering of the Politecnico di Torino (DISEG). In 2017, she received the qualification of full professor in Design and Building Technology in Architectural Design. She holds a PhD in Building Engineering, a Specialisation in Architecture, Technology and Urban Areas for Developing Countries (POLITO) and a Master's in Culture Technologique des Ingénieurs at des Architectes du XXè siècle (Institut Français d'Architecture - IFA, Paris). She is the author of numerous essays and books. Her research interests include the twentieth-century history of building technology, conservation, and restoration of the architectural heritage of the Modern Movement and gender studies in architecture and engineering.

Caterina Franchini, MoMoWo international coordinator since 2014, is a researcher in History of Architecture at the Inter-university Department of Regional & Urban Studies and Planning (DIST) of the Politecnico di Torino. In 2017, she received the qualification of associate professor in Design and Building Technology in Architectural Design. She holds a PhD in History and Criticism of Architectural and Environmental Assets. Her thesis investigates the specificities of contemporary architecture through the policies and strategies for the protection and enhancement of architectural assets in the European Union (2002). She holds a Master's in Advanced Studies in Conservation of Historic Towns and Buildings (Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation - KUL, Leuven). She has been teaching History of Visual Communication and Design since 2011. Her research interests include the twentieth-century history of architecture, urban planning and design, architectural and design heritage of the Modern Movement, and gender studies in architecture and design. She is a member of the Steering Committee of DoCoMoMo Italia. She has been a speaker at many international conferences and is the author of numerous publications.

The European Cultural-Cooperation Project MoMoWo

MoMoWo is a four-year project devoted to women –architects, civil engineers and designers– active in the world of construction, a crucial sector where the female gender –traditionally invisible– has found it more difficult to assert itself. The project aims to value the experience of women who have worked in the past to create a bridge between generations. As such, this is why in the project title there is a reference to the Modern Movement, a historical stage in which professional women have known their first emancipation from the point of view of work in the world of design and construction.
The different actions –project management, cultural, creative, communication and support activities– have been jointly planned and targeted, not only to reach the highest possible number of participants but also to create a platform for sharing skills and knowledge for the continuation of activities beyond the time limits of the project. To guarantee greater access to documentation and knowledge, free and open-access modes have been privileged.
The primary tool of communication is the website, appropriately recalled and amplified through the use of social networks. The different actions of the project have been closely linked to each other, starting with the International Design Competition for the MoMoWo's visual identity and promotional objects, in which we wanted to create the identity of MoMoWo through a bottom-up approach, involving young designers. To continue with the database which is the subject of this book, an essential cultural moment of research and information gathering was conducted, comprising the organisation of three workshops and public interviews with women professionals held in Leiden, Ljubljana and Oviedo. These were crucial stages of involvement and cultural comparison culminating in the international symposium at the Polytechnic of Turin (June 2018). All these initiatives reverberated through countless public presentations. The Open Day of women's professional studios in partner countries has taken place every 8th March in three years, a media event par excellence that, through the contemporary opening to the general public of professional studios run by women, allowed the involvement of the younger generations, thus going far beyond the theme of gender. The International Photo-Competition for reportage on women designer's own homes has aimed at highlighting the difficult conciliation between home and work. The Travelling Exhibition, with its stops in several cities of Europe, spread the visibility of women's creativity.
Finally, the travelling exhibition book, the guidebook of architecture and design itineraries, the open-access publications on the results of workshops, the e-book on the symposium results, and this book represent the main outputs of the project.

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