

Leonardo Mosso: the poetry of structure

*Original*

Leonardo Mosso: the poetry of structure / Bosia, Daniela; Marzi, Tanja. - In: DOCOMOMO JOURNAL. - ISSN 1380-3204. - STAMPA. - 64:(2021), pp. 89-89. [10.52200/64.A.3QDP8M1X]

*Availability:*

This version is available at: 11583/2988764 since: 2024-05-15T22:33:31Z

*Publisher:*

Docomomo International

*Published*

DOI:10.52200/64.A.3QDP8M1X

*Terms of use:*

This article is made available under terms and conditions as specified in the corresponding bibliographic description in the repository

*Publisher copyright*

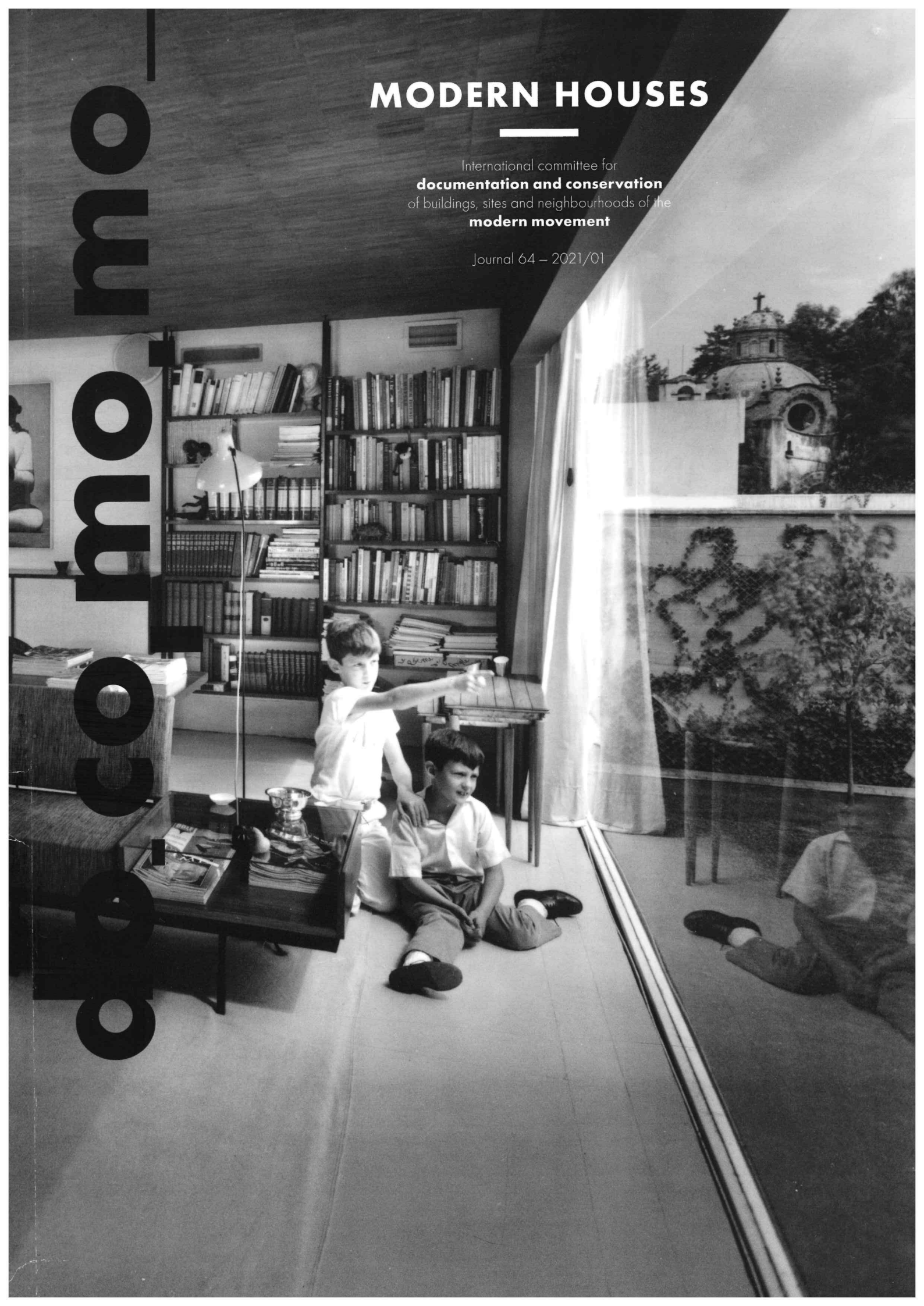
(Article begins on next page)

# MODERN HOUSES

International committee for  
**documentation and conservation**  
of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the  
**modern movement**

Journal 64 – 2021/01

mo  
mo  
co  
co



**Editor-in-chief**

Ana Tostões

**Guest editors**

Louise Noelle

Horacio Torrent

**Editorial Board**

Hubert-Jan Henket

Louise Noelle

Scott Robertson

**Advisory Board**

Anthony Vidler

Barry Bergdoll

Hilde Heynen

Jean-Louis Cohen

Michelangelo Sabatino

Sarah Whiting

Tom Avermaete

Wilfried Wang

Vittorio Lampugnani

**English editor**

Scott Robertson

**Coordination and Production**

Joana Coutinho

Silvio Alves

**Collaborators**

Alan Hess

Claudia Costa Cabral

Claudia Rueda Velazquez

Elisa Drago Quaglia

Hannia Gómez

Giacinta Jean

Macarena Cortés Darrigrande

Maria Alice Junqueira Bastos

Susana Landrove

**Design**

Ana Maria Braga

Madalena Boavida Guerra

**Printing**

Maiadouro, Portugal

All rights reserved. © of the edition, **docomomo** International,  
© of the images, their authors and © of the texts, their authors.

**docomomo** Journal Published twice a year by the

**docomomo** International secretariat.

**docomomo** International Instituto Superior Técnico,

Av. Rovisco Pais, 1, 1049-001 Lisboa

Phone: 00351 21 8418101 / 02 / 03 · docomomo@tecnico.ulisboa.pt ·

www.docomomo.com

**docomomo** International is a registered trademark,

ISSN: 1380/3204 · D.L.: 380259/14

The publisher has made all the efforts available in order to obtain the commitments relating to the reproduction of photographs presented in this work. In case of remained legitimate rights, please contact the publisher.

On the cover: Augusto H. Álvarez, house at Lazcano 20, Mexico City, Mexico, 1959-1961, view of the family room. © Fondo Augusto H. Álvarez, Archivo de Arquitectos Mexicanos, Facultad de Arquitectura, UNAM. Photograph of Guillermo Zamora, 1962

**Contribute to the next journal**

Authors who would like to contribute to the **docomomo** Journal are kindly invited to contact: docomomo@tecnico.ulisboa.pt.

**Guideline to contributors**

· A copy on CD / USB flash drive or an e-mail version of the text. The CD should be clearly labeled with the author(s) name(s), the title, and the names of the files containing the text and illustrations.

The name and version of the word-processing software used to prepare the text should also be given.

· The title and author's name should be clearly mentioned on each page of the text and the name, title, postal address and e-mail address should also be given at the end of each contribution.

**Form**

· All texts must be in English; if translated, the text in the original language must be enclosed as well.

· Texts should be written with double spacing and liberal margins with all pages numbered in sequence.

· A short resume of the author(s), in connection with the contribution, must be included.

· Illustrations referred to in the text should be mentioned and abbreviated as follows: (Figure 1).

· Articles must include a short bibliography of about 5 to 10 reference books or articles.

· Endnotes should be numbered and should follow the following style:

Books: Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design: From*

*William Morris to Walter Gropius*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1960.

Articles: Julius Posener, "Aspects of the Pre-History of the Bauhaus",

*From Schinkel to the Bauhaus*, London, A.A., 1972, 43-48.

**Illustrations**

We accept 3 to 6 illustrations for short contributions (about 600 words) and up to 10 illustrations for full-length articles (about 1500 words). It is essential that authors provide good quality illustrations either printed on paper or as digital data (size of images: 300 dpi for an A5 format).

For figure captions, the order of information is: designer, name of building or object, location, date, description, source. If a building has been destroyed, include that information.

EDITORIAL

02 **The Home at the core of Modernity, an optimistic architecture**

— BY ANA TOSTÓES



INTRODUCTION

04 **Searching Paradise**

— BY LOUISE NOELLE AND HORACIO TORRENT



ESSAYS

10 **Chochikukyo: cultural property representing “Japanese Timber Country Modernism”**

— BY AKIRA MATSUKUMA

18 **Houses beyond manifestos**

— BY RUTH VERDE ZEIN

26 **Casa Fullana: a model for modern living in the tropics**

— BY ANDRÉS MIGNUCCI

34 **The House of Augusto H. Álvarez in Mexico City: an Integral Architectural and Personal Project**

— BY LOURDES CRUZ

42 **Modern Heritage, organic space, material permanence: Torres Posse House in Tafí del Valle**

— BY HORACIO TORRENT, OLGA PATERLINI, ANNA BRAGHINI AND LAURA CUEZZO

50 **The Delcourt House: the last house by Richard Neutra**

— BY RICHARD KLEIN

58 **Paganin House: a risen phoenix**

— BY SCOTT ROBERTSON AND NONI BOYD

66 **A hidden beauty. Siza’s adequacy lesson at the secret and delicate MMH**

— BY ANA TOSTÓES

74 **Casa Albero: an architecture experiment**

— BY SILVIA SEGARRA LAGUNES



DOCUMENTATION ISSUES

80 **Modern Movement Houses in the Colonial Capital City of Nairobi**

— BY YASMIN SHARIFF

84 **Past Readings, Present Findings: on Intervening Emilio Duhart’s PDVN House**

— BY ALEJANDRO BEALS AND LORETO LYON

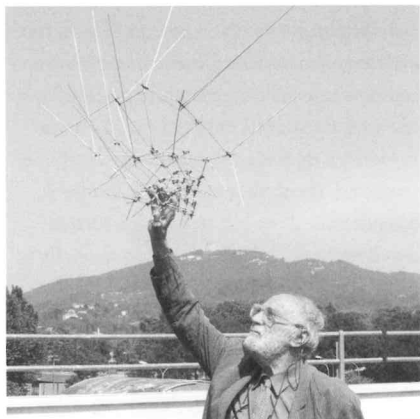
88 HERITAGE IN DANGER

89 IN MEMORIAM

90 BOOK REVIEWS



96 APPENDIX



01 Leonardo Mosso raising one of his structures;  
© Photos L. Mosso, T. Marzi, Archivio Istituto  
Alvar Aalto-Museo dell'Architettura Arti Applicate  
e Design, Pino Torinese.

## Leonardo Mosso: the poetry of structure

Leonardo Mosso (1926-2020) was able to combine art and architecture. He was a collector and an interpreter of 20<sup>th</sup> century culture that he shared and passed on to succeeding generations of students and collaborators who attended the Alvar Aalto Institute. For many, he was an unsung Maestro, a generous polymath, who maintained an extraordinary curiosity and child-like enthusiasm throughout his long life.

It is not easy to define his complex identity: architect, artist, photographer, researcher, semiologist, professor (at the *Politecnico di Torino* and several European Universities, such as Berlin and Karlsruhe), a man of culture (co-founder of the National Museum of Cinema Association), an activist in the conservation of 20<sup>th</sup> century architectural heritage... and a poet of contemporary architecture.

He was born in Turin (Italy) in 1926, son of Nicola Mosso (1899-1986), a rationalist and futurist architect, and his career began in his father's studio. Together, they created one of the most evocative religious buildings of post-war Turin, the church of *Gesù Redentore* in Mirafiori (1953-1957), extraordinary for its modular geometry and complex vault structure, perforated by light.

In the early 1950s, on reading *Space, Time and Architecture*, he was struck by Sigfried Giedion's (1888-1968) description of the

Sunila paper mill designed by Alvar Aalto (1898-1976) where "no human being is misused to become an adjunct to a machine." Fascinated by this humanistic approach<sup>1</sup> and the generative forms of Alvar Aalto's architecture, after a train journey across a Europe still wounded by war, he arrived in Finland where he joined Alvar Aalto's studio in 1955 and remained until 1958.

Through numerous articles in architectural magazines he wrote in the 1950s, Leonardo Mosso became a key-figure in the growing interest in the Finnish architect in Italy. Some of his articles became genuine references, such as "The light in Alvar Aalto's architecture."<sup>2</sup> This renewed interest led Leonardo Mosso to become the curator of the first monographic exhibition on Alvar Aalto at the *Palazzo Strozzi* in Florence in 1965-1966.<sup>3</sup> From 1964, he became Alvar Aalto's partner in his Italian projects that, unfortunately, were never realized, such as the *Villa for Erica Olivetti* in Moncalieri (1969-1972), the innovative satellite-city in Pavia (1966-1968), warehouses for the Ferrero company (1965-1970), and a congress center in Turin (1964-1965).

From the 1960s on, he devoted himself to the design of flexible, versatile structures with infinite potential for transformation. Together with his wife, Laura Castagno (1938-), a partner in his life, work, and research, he carried out some prescient and highly original studies on structuralism, on territorial planning through the relationship between man and the environment, and on the early use of computers for managing urban form. He developed a "theory of semiotic structural design" and "non-authoritarian programming," placing the concept of "structure" at the center of his research, with functional, aesthetic, and social applications.<sup>4</sup> In all his architectural and artistic works, he always followed a structural logic, in the sense of "structure as a system of transformation and of possibilities" according to the definition given by Jean Piaget (1896-1980). At the same time, Leonardo Mosso undertook experimental research aimed at "understanding the potential unions and relationships that could be obtained through connections." Those steps from experimentation to theorizing led to poetic work at different scales: algorithmic combinations and astonishing inventions in rhythm and

color, such as the *Cappella della Messa dell'artista* (1962-1963) or the *Nuvola Rossa* set up in 1974 in the Museum of the Risorgimento in Turin, a large aerial structure of 400 m<sup>2</sup> consisting of red wooden elements and elastic neoprene joints, suspended from the vaults of the first Italian Chamber of Deputies.

But Leonardo Mosso was also a pioneer in the protection of 20<sup>th</sup> century Italian architecture, publicly denouncing unjustified demolitions (such as the Equestrian Club by Carlo Mollino (1905-1973)), a masterpiece whose demolition, in 1960, was excoriated by Mosso in an article he illustrated with his own photographs).<sup>5</sup>

In 1979, with his wife Laura, he founded the *Istituto Alvar Aalto* [Alvar Aalto Institute], in the woods of the Pino Torinese hills, which also houses the headquarters of the Study Center of Programmed Architecture and Environmental Cybernetics (since 1969), and the Museum of Architecture, Applied Arts and Design (since 1984). The Institute preserves important archive materials, the result of a lifetime dedicated to the protection, conservation, study, and promotion of the architectural heritage, artworks, design, and applied arts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Daniela Bosia and Tanja Marzi

### Notes

- 1 On the Sunila complex Leonardo Mosso, together with Tapio Peräininen and Italo Martinero, produced the film-documentary *Sunila, la fabbrica umana di Alvar Aalto*, 1955.
- 2 Leonardo Mosso, "La luce nell'architettura di Alvar Aalto", *Zodiac*, No. 7, 1960, 66-115.
- 3 Leonardo Mosso (ed.), *L'opera di Alvar Aalto*, Milano, Edizioni di Comunità, 1965. Catalogue of the exhibition at the Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, 14<sup>th</sup> November 1965 – 9<sup>th</sup> January 1966.
- 4 Laura Baccaglioni, Egidio Del Canto (ed.), *Leonardo Mosso: architettura e pensiero logico*, Mantova, Provincia di Mantova-Casa del Mantegna, 1981; Liborio Termine, *L'invenzione della meraviglia. Ragionamenti sulla poetica di Leonardo Mosso*, Torino, Edizioni di Lettera/Istituto Alvar Aalto, 1991.
- 5 Leonardo Mosso, "Un'opera perduta: l'ippica di Mollino", *Comunità*, No. 80, 1960, 70-82.

**docomomo** International is a non-profit organization dedicated to the documentation and conservation of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the Modern Movement. It aims at:

- Bringing the significance of the architecture of the Modern Movement to the attention of the public, the public authorities, the professionals and the educational community.
- Identifying and promoting the surveying of the Modern Movement's works.
- Fostering and disseminating the development of appropriate techniques and methods of conservation.
- Opposing destruction and disfigurement of significant works.
- Gathering funds for documentation and conservation.
- Exploring and developing knowledge of the Modern Movement.

**docomomo** International wishes to extend its field of actions to new territories, establish new partnerships with institutions, organizations and NGOs active in the area of modern architecture, develop and publish the international register, and enlarge the scope of its activities in the realm of research, documentation and education.

With the support of



With the special collaboration of

