CARLORATTIASSOCIATI. MG_Flat

Augmented Architecture Manifesto

La civilisation digitale cherche et trouvera son expression architecturale (apologies to Le Corbusier).

Forget the blobs, sob! The answer? Augmented Architecture!
Augmented Architecture is for Augmented Man (today’s homme nouveau) and his mobility, flexibility and freedom.
Augmented Architecture talks of the future but is rooted in the timeless spatial organization of the pre-industrial.
Augmented Architecture digitally augments space - a seamless interface between bits and atoms.
Augmented architecture, c’est ça!

MG_Flat is an interior design project in Turin, Italy, by carlorattiaassociatii. It was conceived for an archi-enthusiast landlord with an unconventional brief: refurbish the flat and rent it out.

Our design was informed by the following:

- According to Italian rental laws, tenants must paint walls and maintain hardwood floors at their own expense. The flat uses only two materials: plaster and low-cost industrial hardwood (legno industriale), which is produced by sawmill rejects. The floor bends and becomes a bed, staircase, kitchen.

The plastered wall curves and becomes a shelf, overhang, closet. When a new tenant moves in, he repaints the walls and cleans the hardwood floors. The flat becomes new again at no cost to the landlord.

- IBM’s everywhere display is a video projector with a rotating mirror that allows any surface around it to become a potential screen. Its envisaged use in this project informed the design and modeling of interior spaces.
The flat is designed around one core ambiente, with low-rise partitions in order to maximize the co-visibility of surfaces. This allows projections on most internal walls and potentially creates a home-like pervasive computing environment - as demonstrated by MIT’s House_n group.
- Today's architecture is obsessed by the notion of textured surface – be it the wrapping of a minimalist shoebox (a contemporary interpretation of Venturi's 'decorated shed') or a blob's skin. Conversely, our interest in this project is in the interplay between volumes and surfaces. Volumes fragment and recombine as textured surfaces. Surfaces bend and define volumes.

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MG_Flat is on show at the 2004 Venice Biennale exhibition, Italian Pavilion.

period: 2003-2004
place: Torino
architectural design: carlorattiassociati
design team: Walter Nicolino, Chiara Morandini, Anna Frisa, Ben Piper, Carlo Ratti
technology: MIT House_n project
photos: Walter Nicolino, Max Tomasinelli

Carlorattiassociati is a rapidly growing architectural office that started in 2002 in Turin, Italy. It draws on Carlo's research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and is currently involved in a number of architecture schemes, both nationally and internationally. In 2002 the office entered the final stage of the invited competition for the design of a new 240 million Euros railway station in Florence, Italy, (Michele Bonino, Daniele Baiotto, Carlo Ferrater, Geodata S.p.A., Whitby Bird & Partners) and gained the fourth prize after Norman Foster, Arata Isozaki and Santiago Calatrava. The office comprises four partners: Anna Frisa, Chiara Morandini, Walter Nicolino and Carlo Ratti.

Anna Frisa, architect, teaches at the Faculty of Architecture, Turin Institute of Technology, where her research interest deals with urban morphology. She worked on the structural design of large industrial plants, including a number of Fiat factories, before becoming a partner of carlorattiassociati in 2002.

Chiara Morandini holds a degree in architectural engineering from the Turin Institute of Technology. She worked with one of the largest general contractors in northern Italy before becoming a partner of carlorattiassociati in 2003. She just had her second child!

Walter Nicolino graduated in architecture at the Turin Institute of Technology. He was awarded the 2004 Archiprix for the World's Best Graduation Project as well as a number of other prizes in international architecture competitions. He is currently visiting lecturer at the Faculty of Architecture, Turin Institute of Technology.

Carlo Ratti is a civil engineer/architect who teaches at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he directs the SENSEable City Laboratory. He is a regular contributor of articles on architecture to the reviews Domus and Casabella and the Italian newspapers Il Sole 24 Ore and La Stampa.
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