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Enrico Frigerio: towards manufacture 4.0

A dialogue with the founder of Frigerio Design Group on the issues of workplace design, on which the studio has been engaged for some time. The latest project is the Ferrero Technical Center in Alba, at the center of the fifth monograph of the series "Radiografia del contemporaneo"



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The new Ferrero Technical Center FTC in Alba (Cuneo) enlarges the historic plant on the outskirts of the city. It creates a new technical building in order to research, design and build advanced machinery that would serve production in Ferrero factories throughout the world

1. The significance of the context, integrated design, the architectural quality, pre-fabrication and sustainability in the wider sense have been a part of the FDG approach to project design for many years, way before all this became the focus of attention as it is today. What is "slow architecture"?

Slow Architecture is the philosophy and manifesto behind our project development. In short, I think of it as progressive architecture with a reduced ecological footprint that lives in the present and is identified by the resources it takes from its surrounding context.
Method and process based on analysis and development along with the time factor all come into play. Construction testing is not the end of the project. Instead, it looks beyond it and re-focuses on man, his history and his future, the environment and its resources.
I would like to mention some contemporary philosophers who, back in the seventies, began to theorise a different approach to the context and its resources. One example is the Viennese pioneer in political ecology, André Gorz, who wrote: "to live better we have to produce and consume differently, do better with less, eliminate sources of waste and increase product life."
Or the Frenchman, Serge Latouche, promoter of the concept of de-growth in order to develop using the virtuous circle of the eight "Rs": re-evaluate, reconceptualise, restructure, redistribute, relocalise, reduce, re-use and recycle.
Lastly, Carlin Petrini, founder of the Slow Food movement, the friend of local businesses and enemy of globalisation, who in the introduction to my essay "Slow Architecture instructions for use" wrote: " Context is the key: Enrico Frigerio and his group have chosen it as the linchpin of their slow architecture and set the powerful treasure of indi vidual places as their inspiration, as opposed to the false universalism that operates under the label of globalisation."
It will, therefore, have to be a building that reflects and uses the resources of the place: its history, social profile, environmental and micro-climate characteristics. In my opinion, this is a condition capable of helping what we design to take root in the territory. This does not mean that the end result has to imitate, replicate, disguise or hide itself. It may embody the results of symbiosis or contrast that link or oppose one another: however, they will always be results that only a detailed study of the place can direct.

2. How has this approach helped, or will help to determine the makeup and locations of future work places? What with smart working and office working, IoT and sensors, will we be working more digitally and virtually?

To design buildings that best interpret the future needs of those who will live in them, and at the same time constructions that reduce their ecological footprint.

We are working with integrated design according to the philosophy of User Centred Design (UCD) that takes into account the user's point of view and requirements. This process is based on the interaction between different instruments of analysis and observation, design and verification, and introduces innovation. The various aspects and components in this increasingly complex business must be tackled by integrating professionals and experts to optimize the existing conditions, in order to achieve the best performance in a man-environment and building-installation system.

I also think that one of the major future aspects will be the ability to adapt the situations to become as flexible as possible, in order to respond to suddenly evolving, ever-changing needs. Today's work environment has become a place that provides identity and a sense of community to a far greater extent than it did in the past.

The digital evolution we are experiencing has provided us with some very powerful instruments, which have changed various social processes into productive processes at all levels and in all areas without any exclusion. We will work differently and we'll be able to do things that until yesterday were impossible, with the help of increasingly better performing, technological processes and instruments The recent pandemic has revealed a series of restrictions of our society and has led to deep reflection. However, at the same time it has accelerated our society's digitalisation process and has forced us all to adapt and evolve.

All this in the world of work, I think, will lead to hybrid situations, as we will retain those practices that have taken obvious advantages from the virtual world, whereas we will go back to past habits maybe in a new, more up-to-date light.

However, the most important thing is a different time management, as certain displacements are eliminated, passive costs are reduced, there's less pollution (because we move less) and the time saved can be devoted to activities with higher value added.

3. Vegetation has a new, increasingly important value in the creation of comfort for

work spaces that a new, or perhaps not so new biophilic design turns interiors into true landscapes that interact with the outdoors whenever possible. What developments do you envisage?

There will be a close correlation between artificial and natural structures, where vegetation has a positive, psychological influence on people and will also provide a microclimate in the rooms to encourage the physical and mental wellbeing of those working there. This will improve their relationships, creativity and sense of belonging to a community. Vegetation contributes to creating environments in which to feel and be well.

So I think the use of vegetation will develop to involve the external spaces more in the search to naturally reduce pollution, lower the pocket of heat and improve the local micro-climate.

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Read the interview in Italian

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Architetto e dottore di ricerca in Storia dell'architettura e dell'urbanistica, si laurea e si abilita all'esercizio della professione a Torino. Iscritta all'Ordine degli architetti di Torino, lavora per diversi studi professionali e per il Politecnico di Torino, come borsista e assegnista di ricerca. Ha seguito mostre internazionali, progetti e pubblicazioni su Carlo Mollino e dal 2002 collabora con "Il Giornale dell'Architettura", dove segue il settore dedicato alla formazione e all'esercizio della professione. Dal 2010 partecipa attivamente alle iniziative dell'Ordine degli architetti di Torino, come membro di due focus group (Professione creativa e qualità e promozione del progetto) e giurata nella 9° e 10° edizione del Premio Architetture rivelate. Nel 2014 fonda lo studio Comunicarch con Cristiana Chiorino, che, focalizzato sulla comunicazione dell'architettura, fa anche parte del network internazionale Guiding Architects. Co-fondatrice nel 2017 dell'associazione Open House Torino, è attualmente caporedattrice de "Il Giornale dell'Architettura" e curatrice de "Il Giornale dell'architettura, il nostro primo podcast".