

## Nature as an architectural element in SITE's work

In these last decades of climate change effects becoming more evident, there is a need for a radical cultural change for which the population of the planet must be prepared.

In this activity that promises to be a vast educational process, which should see all of us personally involved as researchers of the anthropized landscape, it is useful to reflect on the recent results obtained with the "Eco-Planning" projects aimed at facilitating the natural regeneration of habitats, but also to retrace the pioneering work of architectural design professionals who in the past, when the environmental emergency was not yet certified, in their professional activity were sensitive to the impact on nature of building activity and the correlations between the manufactured product and the human psycho-physical well-being.

In the text, reference is made to projects that originated from virtuous processes in which na-

ture is one of the elements of the architectural composition and, like the other components, contributes to defining a new creative domain where playful, humorous, self-mocking content and the plant world find their growing space. This is a trend of design research based on the principles of Architectural Psychology, the results of which are artefacts transfigured into a 'poetic' and 'magical' vision, true examples of 'environmental art'. In particular, we focus our critical thinking in some of the solutions drawn up by the SITE studio as these appear to us as qualified examples from which to begin a journey aimed at changing the status quo of what, with primitive specifications, we define as human shelter.



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## INTRODUCTION

Climate change and the loss of biodiversity are considered by scientific literature as two faces of the same coin, mainly described as phenomenon caused by the unsustainable use of our planet's resources (WWF, 2022). The 76th General Assembly of the United Nations expressed itself regarding climate change and declared humanity's right to a healthy environment.

Pending a radical cultural change, which to date our civilisation has been unable to make, the relationship between human activities and nature must continue to be the object of specific attention and at the same time, possibly with greater momentum, it is necessary to assist the population in getting to know the scenarios and previsional models created by the scientific community.

As a part of this activity, which presents itself as a vast educational process that should involve every one of us in person as scholars of the anthropized landscape, it is useful to reflect on the results recently obtained with "Eco-Planning" projects aimed at facilitating the natural regeneration of habitats. We should also look back at the pioneering work of the architects who in the past, when the environmental emergency was yet to be certified, showed themselves to be sensitive to the impact of construction work on nature and to the correlation between a building and human psycho-physical well-being.

In this regard, this paper aims to focus attention on a number of original design solutions in which nature is considered as an integral part of the architectural composition and contributes to the definition of a new creative dominion in which playful, humoristic, auto-ironic elements and the plant world find their own space to grow. This is a field of design research created using an alternative method to that of the Modern Movement based on the principles of "Architectural psychology" (Bonaiuto et al, 2012, 9-13) whose design solutions often result as distinctive within the urban panorama and offer valid solutions to the construction of mental urban maps, which contribute to human wellbeing, as discussed by the American architect

Kevin Andrew Lynch in his pioneering study of the city (Lynch, 1985).

In particular, we focus critical thought on buildings designed by the SITE studio, acronym for *Sculpture In The Environment*, a group of heterogeneous creatives that work on art applied to architecture and the environment. The investigation, imitating the creative process, begins with construction, analyses the functions, looks at the architectural volume and lastly focuses on the expressive system adopted for communicating the design principles to the wider public. Within this work method, the results of SITE's ante litteram experimentation appear as points of departure from which to create a new pathway, in which the harmony between art, architecture and nature, aimed at changing the status quo of that which, using primitive terms, we define as a human refuge.

## ART, NATURE AND ARCHITECTURE IN SITE'S WORK

The philosophical background that led to the formation of the SITE working group began in 1969 as a casual discussion of a few people who periodically met in James Wines' studio in New York City. The critical climate that inspired the dialogue between these people came from the disappointment they felt towards the traditions of art that intended artistic expression as an object to be exhibited. Furthermore, in the meetings at Wines' studio, the rhetorical logic of the Modern Movement that in this historical context conditioned almost every kind of design proposal on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean was also the subject of criticism.

The SITE design studio was officially established in 1970 with the aim of exploring new concepts for the visual environment. From the essays on architecture that Wines and associates wrote and published in their magazine 'ON SITE', it is clear that behind that acronym were particularly imaginative creatives intent on programmatically blurring the boundaries between the disciplines of human

knowledge; furthermore, their interest in «environmental art» (Celant, 2020, p. 5), the operational approach where the artists are called to actively engage with the habitat where they work in order to understand its historical, political, social and anthropological element, as well as its physical, chemical and biological conditions, which became widespread in western countries in those years of the 20th century.

James Wines and Alison Sky were the two historical founders of the SITE studio; they were later joined by Michelle Stone and Emilio Sousa. The first to join this creative group were Dana Drapper and Nensy Goldring, then came Robert Holmes, Peter Ruebel, Raphael Perozo, Richard Vitto, Michael Duddy, Christine Morin and Joshua Weinstein. All these actors were young intellectuals with personal interests rooted in poetry, photography, sculpture, architecture and graphics. This heterogeneity made the SITE studio a sui generis workplace, where the elements of traditional architectural language were challenged with creative implications in the design approach as in the architectural works; the basic premise being that «art, not design, is the supreme mission of a building» (Wines, 1987, p. 119).

The SITE projects, in fact, were architectures transfigured into a 'poetic' and 'magical' vision resulting from the fusion of sculptural and architectural art obtained by following the theoretical principles of a radical, unconventional, anti-functional, anti-formal design philosophy, founded on concepts such as logical inversion, in determination and fragmentation, developed in this same New York melting pot and called dis-architecture by the authors.

Therefore, the concept behind this new programmatic vision should be understood as a challenge to Modernism and Constructivism implemented by introducing previously unconsidered socio-psychological connections into the design concepts. While the objective commonly found in architectural design at the time aimed at a relationship between the form of the artefact and the needs of use, according to Louis Henry Sullivan's 1896 assumption «form follows function»<sup>1</sup>, which has

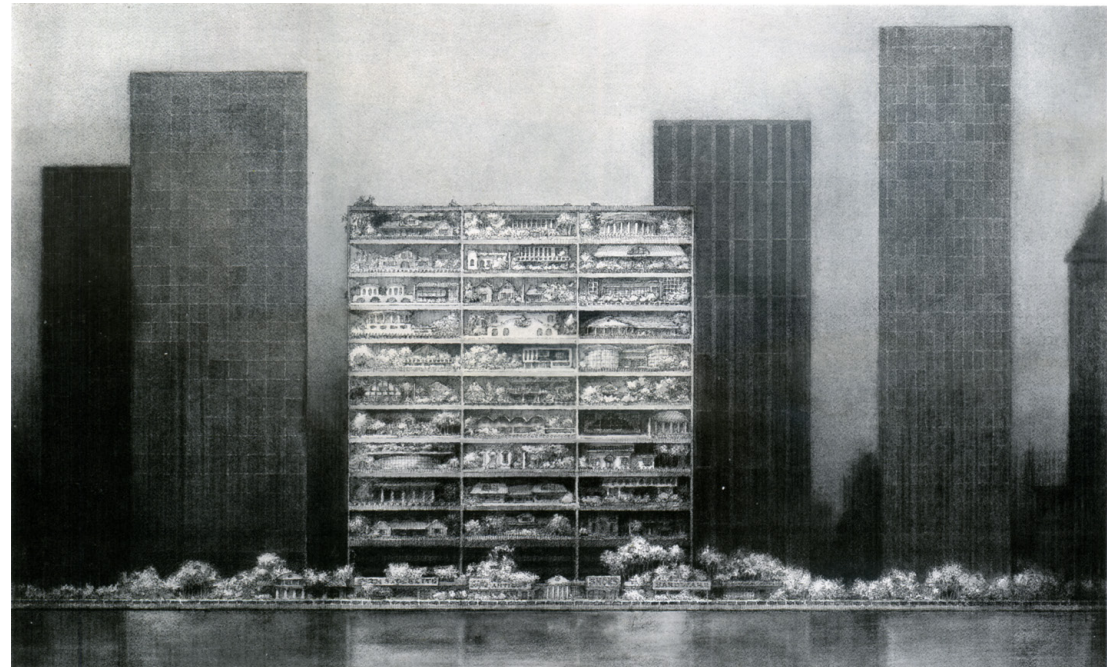
become the dogma of modern architecture, the SITEs addressed the relationship between external influences exerted by the building context and the internal functions of the artefact. This relationship allowed them to develop their design ideas by starting from the outside of the building towards the inside and not in the opposite direction as most of the Master of Modern Architecture sustained, including Adolf Loos (Loos, 2003, p. 264) and Le Corbusier, who wrote at this regard: «The plan is at the base. Without plan there is neither greatness of intention and expression, nor rhythm, nor volume, nor coherence. Without the plan there is an unbearable sensation of shapeless, of poverty, of disorder, of arbitrariness» (Le Corbusier, 2003, p. 36). In essence, the design approach followed by SITE moved «the emphasis from formal issues to com-

munication and commentary to favour architecture conceived and realised as art» (Zevi, 1979, p. 5). Moreover, for the founder of SITE, the priority was always the art and the environment over the technique. In fact, Wines had been working as a sculptor since 1955 and as he repeatedly stated, his «architecture [...] has always been much more connected to visual art and environment than to traditional form and structure» (Angrisano, 1999, p. 14). SITE have oriented their professional activity towards places that are considered 'alive', such as squares, open spaces, car parks, highways and shopping centres. In these SITE works, the operational process of Environmental Art had its starting point in the development of communication spaces between the interior and exterior of buildings, which, never banal, insignificant or

boring, took shape from an aesthetic synthesis between expressive medium, graphic representation, building site and time. From the foundation of the SITE studio to the present day, Wines and associates have signed about a hundred large projects and realised more than half of them. Among the most original creative ideas expressed by this American architectural firm are, by way of example, the following projects: Ghost Parking Lot (1978) (Fig.1); Highrise of Homes (1981) (Fig. 2); Pershing Square (1986) (Figs. 11-12); Hnsel Adams Center (1985-86) (Fig. 3); Highway (1986) (Fig. 4); Four Continents Bridge (1989) (Figs. 13-14). Although SITE's design proposals have been numerous, the best known are the BEST buildings, although some of these have now been demolished for more than two decades and/or radical-

Fig. 1 - Ghost Parking Lot, image of the buried cars [Wines 1986, p. 50].

Fig. 2 - Highrise of Homes, drawing of the building inserted into the urban context [Wines 1987, p. 160].



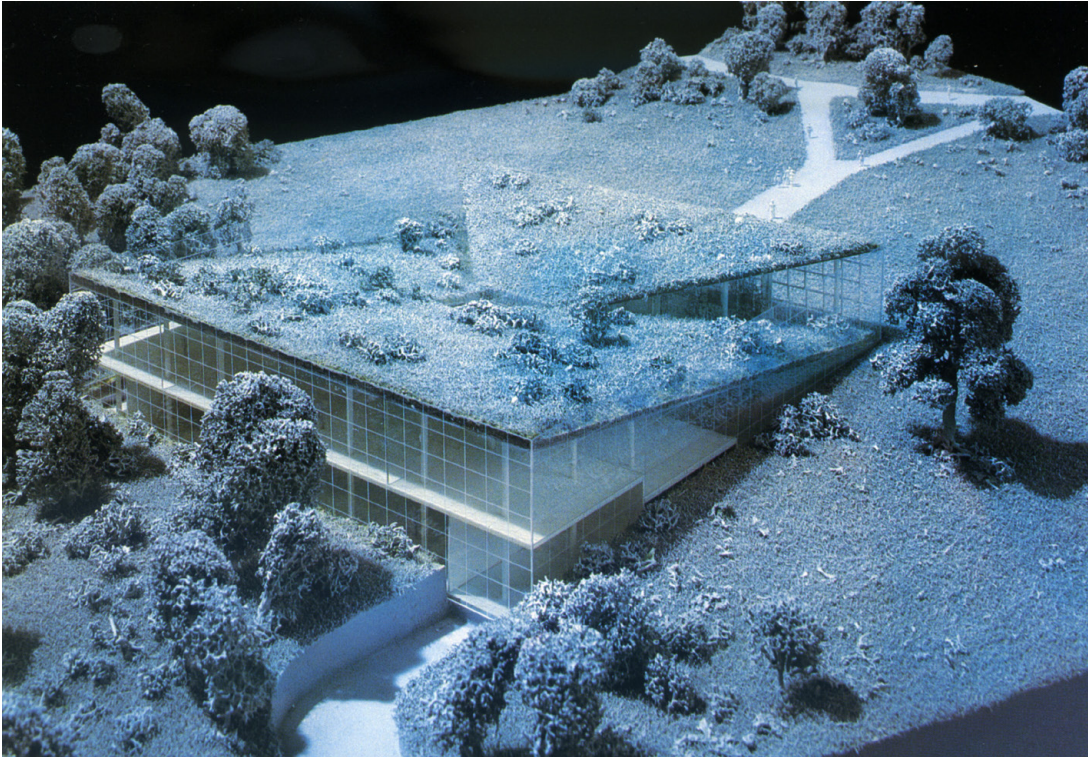
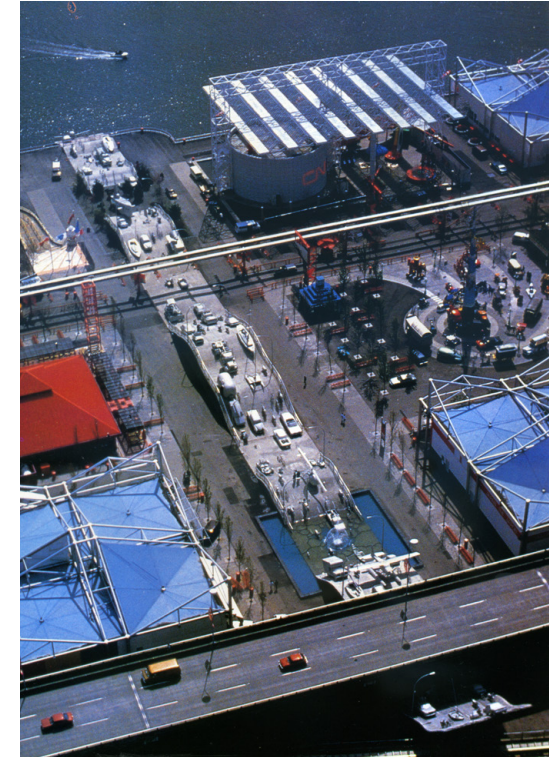


Fig. 3 - Ansel Adams Center, three-dimensional model [Wines 1986, p. 155].

Fig. 4 - Highway 86, aerial photograph [Wines 1986, p. 176].



ly modified to meet the needs of new functions. These are nine buildings designed between 1972 and 1984 for Sydney and Frances Lewis, founders of the US retail chain BEST Products Company Inc., in which the SITE group was able to experiment many innovative ideas that would later challenge the world of American shopping centre design. These were big boxes that with their original solutions shifted people's expectations about the nature of architecture, shopping and urban suburbia, stimulating conversations, questions, amusements, misunderstandings and protests. They made these historically standardised and completely anonymous buildings open to typological contamination as well as to the artistic ges-

ture, where not only the playful relationship between architectural language, construction logic and artistic vision, but also vegetal nature, intended as an element of the architectural composition, found space.

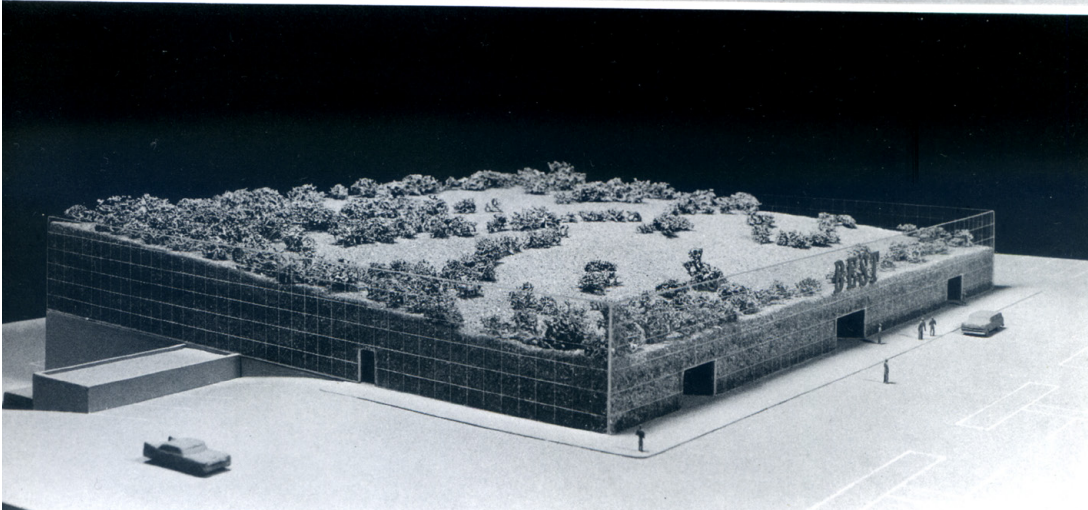
They are buildings that, due to their original aesthetic-formal characteristics, quickly became urban references, i.e. cornerstones of the mental maps of urban orientation of many American citizens; or architectural works «intelligible [...] by the strong local contrast between figure and background» (Lynch, 1985, pp. 93-96). The most interesting are the Terrarium Showroom (1978) (Fig. 5); Indeterminate Facade Showroom (1975) (Fig. 6); Notch Showroom (1977); Hialeah Show-



Fig. 5 - Terrarium Showroom, three-dimensional model [Wines 1986, p. 53].

Fig. 6 - Indeterminate Facade Showroom [Wines 1986, p. 32].

Fig. 7 - Hialeah showroom, partial photograph of the entrance [Toraldo di Francia 1989, p. 61].



room (1979) (Fig. 7); Forest Building (1980) (Figs. 9-10); and Inside/Outside Building (1984) (Fig. 8). These are commercial buildings made from new or from adaptive reuse processes of drab industrial artefacts in which, at a superficial glance, the static stability seems to be questioned as they appear crystallised in the act of crumbling. These projects are the material expression of the outcomes of the design research on American «non-places» [Augé, 2018, p. 93], conducted by

<http://disegnarecon.univaq.it>

SITE along a previously unexplored path of investigation in the design field, aimed at affirming the disappearance of architecture in terms of formal language in favour of a better integration in the building context, in which vegetation and architectural elements can coexist in a symbiotic relationship (Wines, 1990, pp. 166-70).

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Fig. 8 - Inside/Outside Building, photograph of the entrance [Toraldo di Francia 1989, p. 86].

## ENVIRONMENTAL ART – THREE CASE STUDIES

The civil, architectural, urbanistic and morphological riches of a city are those of its collective spaces in which daily life takes place, depositing itself in the memory. Among the architectural projects belonging to this group that SITE has created in a poetic and magical vision with the complicity of Environmental Art we would like to draw attention to: the Forest Building, Pershing Square and the Four Continents bridge.

The examples were chosen as they are projects responding to different human requirements structured with the plant world used as an architectural element, with which SITE has transformed the architecture from the object of the project to the subject of art. A design approach implemented by the New York studio in order to promote, in those using the structures, the development of a good environmental image and thus increase the sense of psychological safety, and therefore to «establish a harmonious relationship» (Lynch, 1985, p. 26). They are architectural works created during

the 1980s in which we find four theoretical themes that SITE designers have tenaciously brought into the cultural debate on architectural design as their personal contribution: perception in movement; the urban setting; irony of language and artialisation, that is: «creation through art», as the French philosopher Alain Roger wrote in one of his treatises (Roger, 1997, p. 100).

### *The Forest Building*

The Forest Building is one of the ironical and surreal designs by the SITE studio, created for the American commercial chain the BEST Products Company. The building, no longer in commercial use, was constructed in 1980 in a densely wooded suburb in the county of Henrico, Virginia (Figs. 9-10).

Originally it was a whimsical structure, fruit of the contamination between nature and architecture and of experimentation with the elements of American industrial and suburban decay. Looking at the iconographic documentation with which the

design was transmitted we cannot but notice that the original idea was also the fruit of a change in pace made by SITE in the creative phase, given that the content of the commercial volume was an extension of the context and the structure no longer a question of form and space but of information and thought; the form no longer followed the function. In fact, during the years in which this project took shape, the American attitude towards open spaces entered SITE's work in the form of the re-affirmation of the organic nature of Man's home and the external and internal spaces once again flow together in a single continuum. As Cristiano Toraldo di Francia observes «By now aware of the mechanisms that regulate the ecosystem man [...] no longer needs to build architectures as solid places on the earth's surface as a defence from a hostile nature. Instead, the building will function as an extension of the terrain with which it will try to integrate itself blending into a single ecosystem» (Toraldo di Francia, 1989, p.10).

By basing the design project for the Forest Building on this new operative philosophy, SITE has broken the traditional anonymous commercial volume into two different parts and positioned them along a longitudinal axis, thus obtaining the interposition of an empty space in which to plant oak trees and other local species. The aim of this was to increase the therapeutic anti-stress and anti-depressive function, in those using the showroom, noted by studies on the human psyche in subjects surrounded by vegetation.

This procedure offered them an apocalyptic illusion of a decaying building whose space is penetrated and consumed by nature, that is a window onto what was commonly imagined to be "nature's vendetta" on Man's actions and this visual experience of an apocalyptic greenhouse «is accentuated by the asphalt covering the carpark» [Zevi, 1979, pp. 88-91]. Moreover, with the BEST design, SITE also pushed their creative vein with regard to the road architecture where the spatial conformation is in relation to the vision "of who takes a quick look", that is: towards architecture designed as an advertising hoarding, one into which Man could enter.

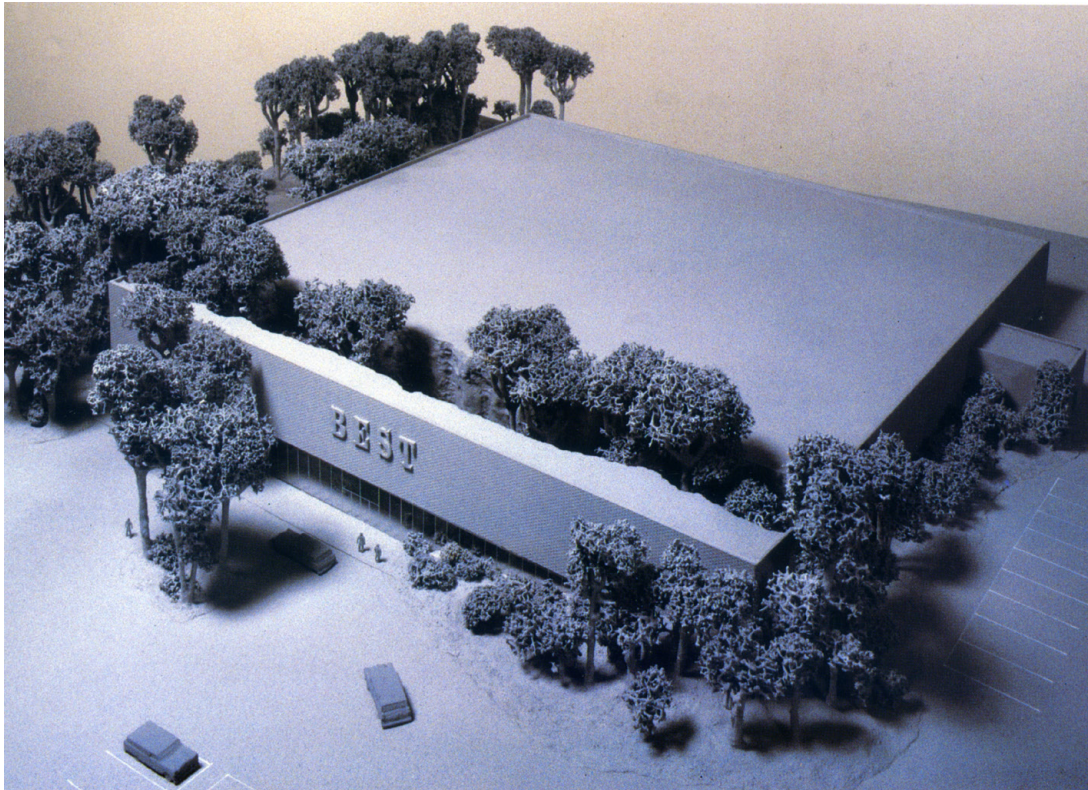


Fig. 9 - Forest Building, three-dimensional model [Wines 1986, p. 82].

Fig. 10 - Forest Building, photograph of the fracture in the facade and trees [Wines 1986, p. 80].

### *Pershing Square*

Pershing Square is a garden created for an expansion zone in Los Angeles, as the covering for an underground carpark, which the architects at SITE imagined as an urban marker and used the Californian city itself as a design metaphor. The idea was to create a perceptual microcosm of Los Angeles through a metaphorical "magic carpet" (Figs. 11-12).

In order to continue their intuition, the New York firm adopted a squared design grid, a paradigm of the city's urban layout, a framework that is in no way banal as at the margins of the project area it

changes its rigid state to replicate the undulatory effect that can be observed when the gridiron plan of Los Angeles meets the sinuous orography of the surrounding hills. Moreover, prompted by the desire to offer the park's users a wide selection of events in which to participate, Wines and associates fixed the minimal visual unit, that is the dimension of the grid squares, at c. 12 m<sup>2</sup> and established that this could be joined to other units and make use of the third dimension, in cases when the creative spirit required greater space and/or material substance for mini-environments. Each module in the grid, in the form of botanical collage, has associations with the districts of Los

Angeles, therefore: to the Hispanic tradition, the ethnic mix, local art and the natural resources. The three-dimensional visual units are also used as kiosks, fountains, areas for relaxation and exhibiting art; while the undulating zones, intended as modern fencing, incorporate the pedestrian entrances to the garden, situated at different levels, and constituting the covering to the volumes housing work activities connected to the park and the carpark access ways.

In this way SITE transformed the Pershing Square grid into a cultural kaleidoscope of Los Angeles and in the design intention the garden was to express the harmony between cultures illustrated by

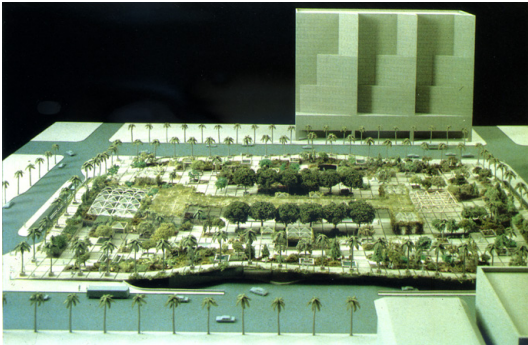


Fig. 11 - Pershing Square, three-dimensional model [Toraldo di Francia 1989, p.103].

Fig. 12 - Pershing Square, watercolour illustrations of the facade showing the entrance to the square and the internal avenue [Wines 1986, p. 193].



a botanical narration. Thus, the bougainvillea and citrus groves representing Hispanic culture, the acacia for African culture and Ginko biloba trees and bamboo for the Oriental culture. As regards the resources of the county of Los Angeles, the coast is represented by palm trees, the wetlands by reeds and ferns, planted in the shade of willow trees, the tropics by the Californian macchia, the national forest of Angeles by conifers and California by wild grapes and cotton.

### *The Four Continents Bridge*

The Four Continents Bridge is a steel and concrete structure built in the city of Hiroshima for the Sea & Island exposition of 1989, as a pedestrian link between the city and the island on which the event took place. The structure was designed as an element of public art and celebrates the connection between Man and the natural environment, the exposition's principal theme (Figs. 13-14).

The structure's design genesis was probably stimulated by Wine's memories of when he walked the historic streets of European cities and found himself crossing bridges, which not only made it possible to cross rivers but were equipped for temporary stops, that is: for rest, for meeting people, for viewing the panorama and for shopping, such as the Ponte Vecchio in Florence.

The geometry of the arch of the Four Continents Bridge and its architectural language has their archetype in the bridges in Japanese gardens, however, the SITE designers did not limit themselves to replicating the harmony of these structures, but integrated modern construction technology with contemporary interpretations of the landscape so as to offer surreal and alienating perspectives.

The bridge is separated from the surrounding context by partitions made of steel and glass, a veil of water descends from the bridge surface and flows into a lake, metaphor for natural water courses. Two rectangular arches situated at the extremities of the partitions allow access onto the bridge, while the surface is divided into two walkways joined by pedestrian crossways positioned at equal distances. The layout of the walkable areas delimits the nucleus of the bridge where the lake mentioned above is situated and separated from the latter by a glass and water partition, there are four areas in which trees and shrubs native of the four continents, Africa, Asia, America and Europe, are planted.

The SITE designers have even left their creative mark on the bridge's parapets and alongside the classic railing of steel tubing have positioned a blade of water that cascades into the bay, thus ironically the bridge becomes a spring and a



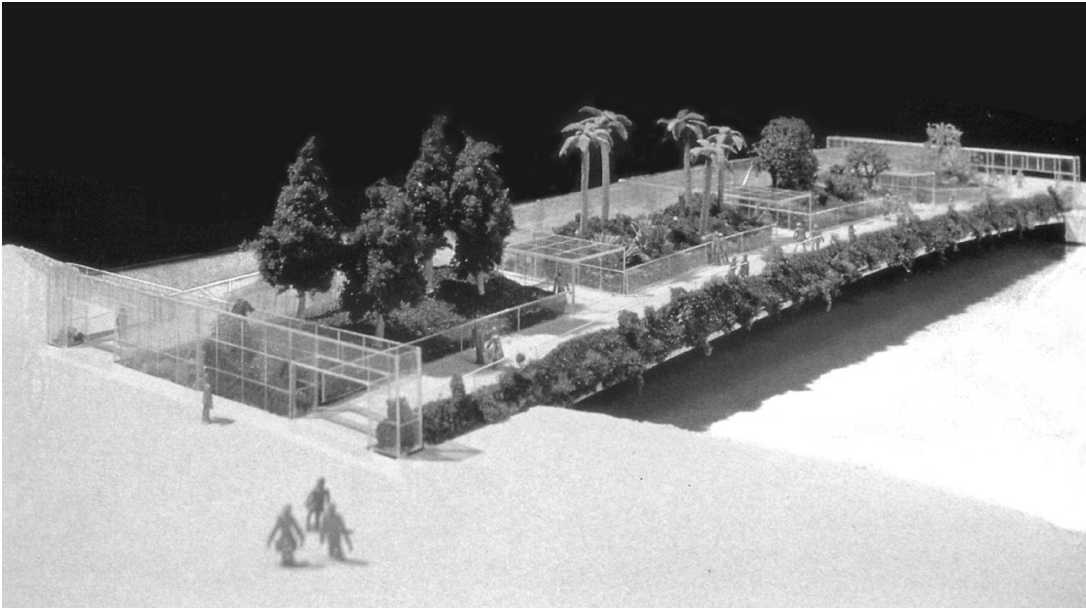


Fig. 13 - Four Continents Bridge, three-dimensional model [Toraldo di Francia 1989, p. 115].

Fig. 14 - Four Continents Bridge, perspective drawing of the entrance to the structure [Toraldo di Francia 1989, p. 102].

planter destined to house native aromatic plants and shrubs.

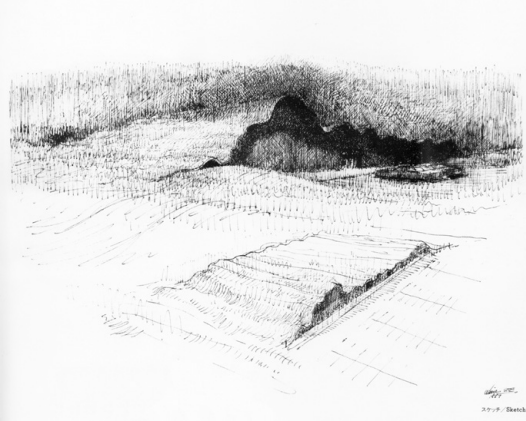
In this project, particular attention was focused on the positioning of the natural living materials in the thematic sequences to ensure their survival and the control of future development, so that the botanical collection would function as a “living iconography”, changing and evolving, and therefore contributing to the psycho-physical well-being of those who live the structure.

### THE REPRESENTATION OF THE ARCHITECTURAL PROJECT

Looking at the design drawings, it is evident that the SITE studio entrusted its formal and distributive research to conventional expressive models, based essentially on the hand-drawn graphic sign (Fig. 15). We can assume that the group recognised as its own that line of thought for which the design drawing must never be an end, but a clear and legible medium of elaboration and communication, as professed by the masters of 20th century architecture including Walter Adolph Gropius (Rosa, 1995, p.11).

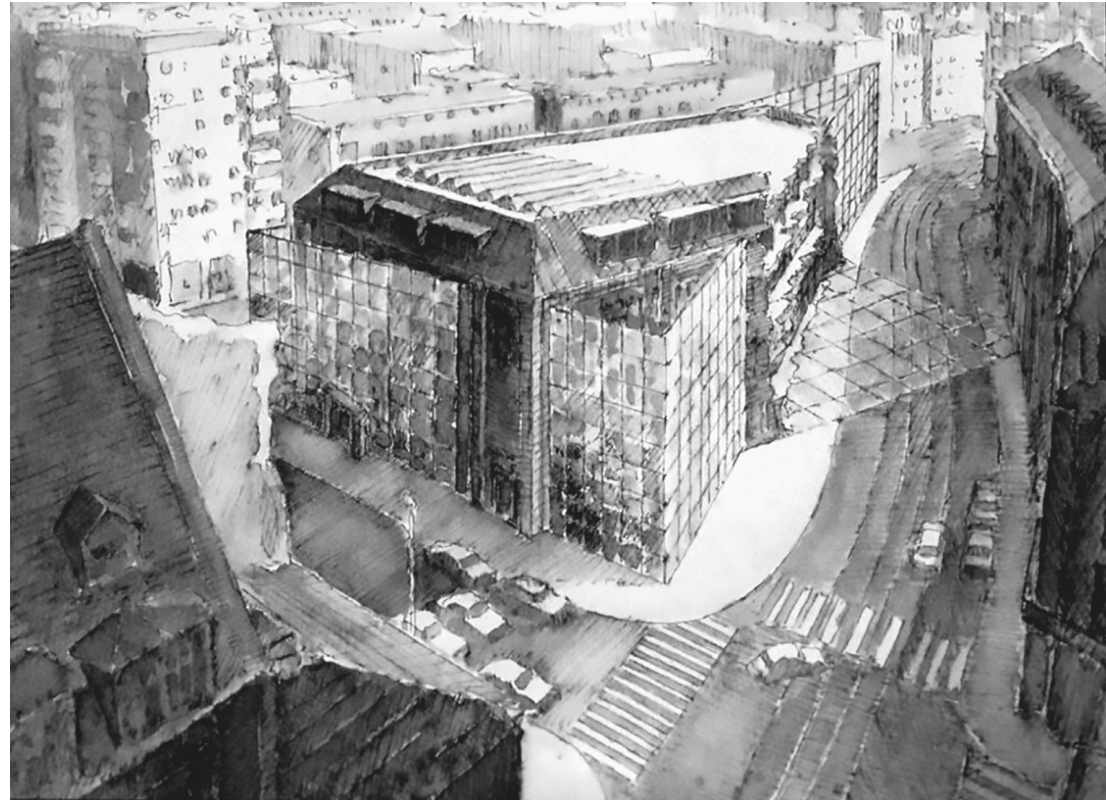
The group had no professional interest either in proposing ephemeral architecture or in «designed architecture» (Grütter, 2006, pp. 22-23), the theoretical-ideological manifesto of architecture where drawing is an expressive tool for theoretical reflection on architecture (Sacchi, 1989) and no longer exclusively linked to the realisation of the work.

Returning to the design drawings, another distinctive aspect of SITE can be found in the way they presented their creative ideas to the wider public. From these narratives made through graphic images, it is clear that SITE had almost systematically abandoned the plan view to represent their design proposals or, better, the horizontal section, the graphic expression that had characterised the architect's professional practice more than any other up to that time, and where they did resort to it, the plan was reduced to the simplest possible configuration. An unusual peculiarity that is diffi-



cult to understand if not as the fruit of the spirit of radical renewal followed by the group; the same spirit that led it to understand the building as a contribution to the construction of the urban image, therefore as an element of the mental orientation map before being a container of functions. As a result of this partial renunciation to Monge's graphic models, the result is an illustrated narrative of their design research carried out essentially with three-dimensional drawings, physical models, photographic images and texts illustrating design intentions, while only rarely the prescriptive graphics contribute to the narrative (Arielli, 2003, pp. 121-122).

Of this documentary set used by SITE to stage their vision of architecture, the perspective and axonometric drawings are particularly impressive, both for the choices made in the layout and selection of viewpoints, and for the accuracy of the graphic signs. Examining these drawings, we then seem to notice a selective criterion adopted to choose, from time to time, one or the other graphic model. In fact, the SITE basically entrust perspective representations with the task of documenting the relationship between the building context and the artefact, almost always with the intention of illustrating the conformation of the building's main entrance and the space in front of it, that is the



part of the artefacts in which they let their imagination run free most (Fig. 16); while axonometric representations, especially exploded and sections views, assumed the task of clearly illustrating the functions contained within the buildings and relating them to each other (Fig. 17).

These graphic expressions where «external space and internal space flow into a single continuum» (Toraldo di Francia, 1989, p. 10), were made freehand or at the drawing table, when the SITE wished to achieve greater reliability in the description of the spatial organism, using the graphic sign traced with pencils, ink pen and probably also marker pen, considering the chromatic tonal-

Fig. 15 - Parkin Lot Showroom, perspective sketches of the project [Wines 1986, p. 37].

Fig. 16. - The Frankfurt Museum of Modern Art, perspective image seen from above [Wines 1987, p. 156].

ity of the graphic signs, intensity, thickness, sinuosity, speed of execution and tracing action. The first sketches of the design process were not published by the studio, while it is possible to analyse those produced in the immediately following phase, when the idea of the artefact was developed in its main lines and the three-dimensional, monochrome, freehand graphic was needed to balance and establish the final elements of the architectural composition (Fig. 18). Due to the technique used to draft them and the absence of colour, we may advance the hypothesis that, like the preliminary sketches, the in-depth design sketches were also intended for a reduced audience of experts, probably only the members of the studio, who did not need the graphic precision nor the clarifying contribution of colour to perceive the visual effect produced by the realised artefact and express their opinions. This behaviour, of course, finds its opposite in

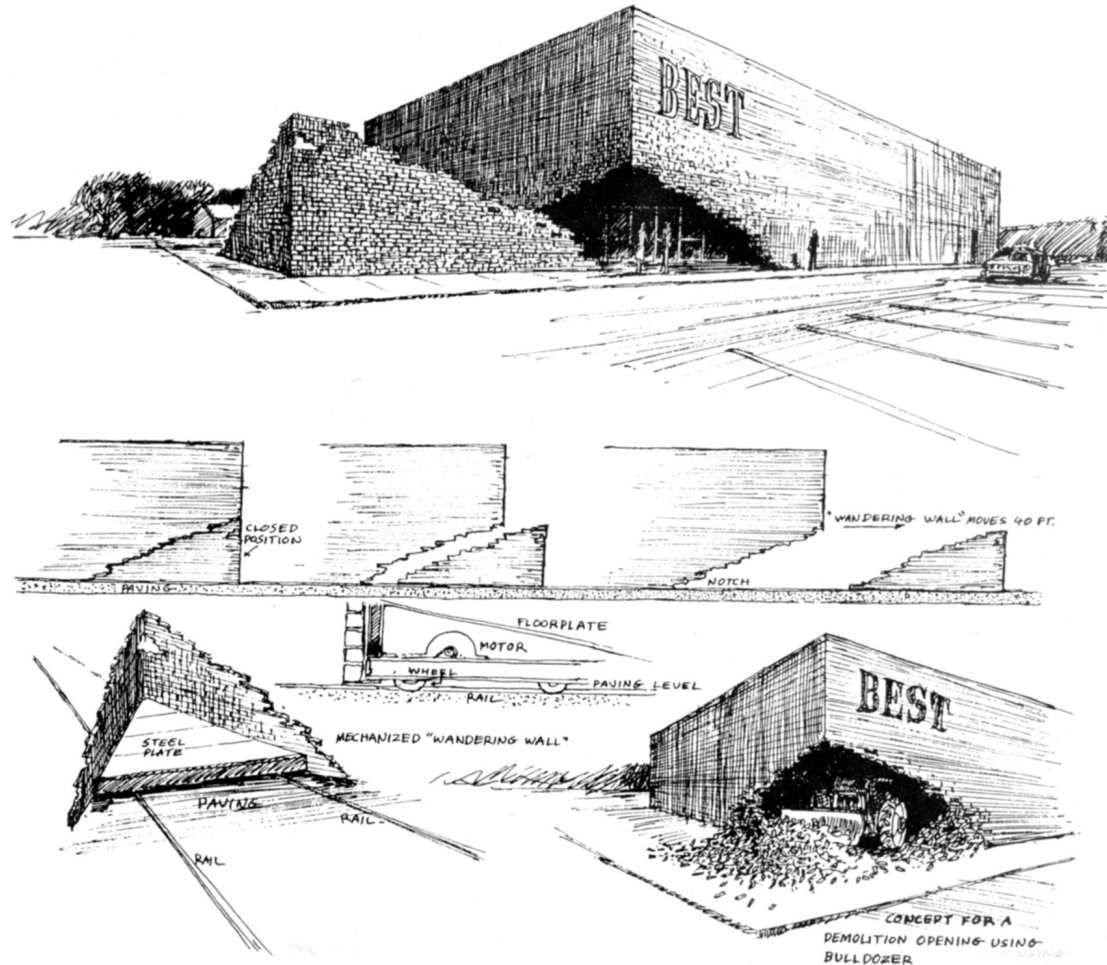
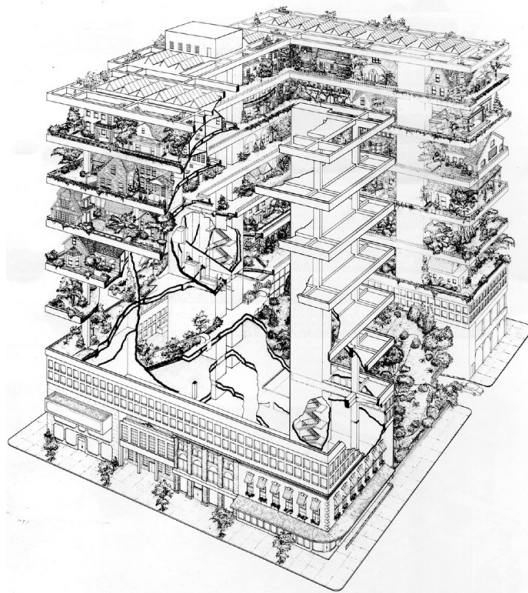


Fig. 17 - Highrise of Homes, axonometric drawing [Wines 1986, p. 100].

Fig. 18 - Notch Showroom, design sketches [Wines 1986, p. 41].



Fig. 19 - The Bedford House, watercolour perspective drawing [Wines 1986, pp. 118-119].

drawings intended for a wider public, where the graphic precision and colour tones are essential to prevent the process of alienation being triggered in the reader, especially when the latter is less culturally prepared. To this aim, SITE produces a series of coloured plates using the watercolour technique: the pictorial procedure whereby details are not depicted, but by means of colour glazes, drawings with a strong communicative value can be obtained, that are able to give the observer emotions regardless of their cultural level. In these drawings intended for the public, form and texture are revealed by the combined action of line drawing, marked freehand with pencil, and overlapping veils of colour, more or less dense (Fig. 19). An unusual representational procedure among professional watercolourists documenting architectural geometries, chosen by SITE because it is an expressive technique that makes it much easier for observers to read the materiality of architectural artefacts, as in these coloured drawings it is not necessary to rely on the strength of the light enveloping the geometric forms to distinguish the boundary between figure and background.

Finally, we find the three-dimensional material

model as a method of representation, used as a tool to stage their architectural vision. The models presented in the publications are representations that anticipate the designed reality to the public's judgement, thus they are 'persuasive' models. They are objects made with care, precision and in small to medium scales of reproduction, to describe the design idea in as much detail as possible; they are also representations of the design idea made with various coloured materials that correspond to the design reality, and accompanied by the elements that complete the real building scene, such as the urban surroundings, human figures, trees, hedges, means of transport and road signs, to support the observer in understanding the dimensions, proportions and plasticity of the designed geometric forms. This latter aspect is also emphasised in the photographic shots of the models with a masterful play of light and shadow (Fig. 20).

## CONCLUSION

In the text *Building, Dwelling, Thinking*, Martin Heidegger states that «dwelling is the manner

in which mortals are on the earth» (Heidegger, 1976, p. 98). Therefore, for the German philosopher the most important trait of the human being is dwelling. In this sense we dwell to maintain an individual identity within a complex community made up of material and immaterial things, built by those who came before us. In such a community a good environmental image provides a sense of security, which makes it possible to establish a harmonious relationship with the surrounding world. It is a correspondence that has the capacity to create a feeling within the individual that is opposite to the confusion felt by one who is disorientated, like the pleasant feeling generated by one's own home, which according to Lynch, is «stronger when the home is not only familiar but also distinctive» (Lynch, 1985, p. 26). It seems to us that the SITE studio has worked hard to obtain a good environmental image in the places where it has built architectural projects, given that the latter were created with the precise intent of being distinctive and therefore facilitating people in orientating themselves, and consequently offering them the pleasant, homely feeling of their own dwelling, even within an urbanised context. SITE has reached this objective through dis-architec-

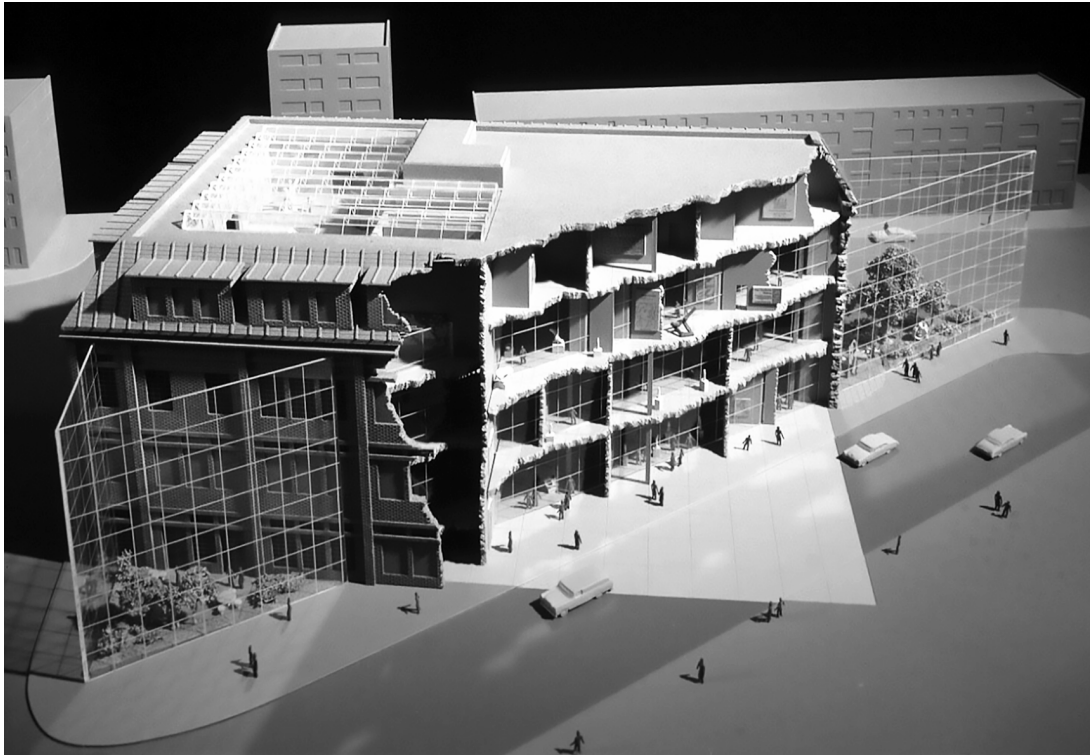


Fig. 20 - The Frankfurt Museum OF Modern Art, three-dimensional model [Toraldo di Francia 1989, p. 75].

ture which, as seen, makes use of contamination through the visual arts, in particular sculpture, and the plant world, to obtain results. However, although dis-architecture is a radical vision of architecture, it is not a licence for anarchy or the demolition of architecture but, rather, it is a paradoxical term to be used to critical and explorative ends.

We like to think that the spirit in which the SITE projects were developed, precisely the fruit of their explorative research, has not been lost but has found a way to continue to flow until ordinary architects metabolize those avant-garde ideas expressed by the New York studio. It is only recently that this spirit returned to the cultural debate finding acceptance in several architectural solutions that have enjoyed critical acclaim and editorial space in the relevant magazines and specialised internet sites.

Examples of this type have also appeared in Italy recently [Zardini, 2003; Aymonino e Mosco, 2006; Mafioletti Rocchetto, 2002]. In essence, we glimpse the functional contamination, the basic essence of the SITE architectural vision, in a number of projects for public spaces, in certain tower blocks, but also in the proposals for regenerated production areas and/or new constructions such as the supercar factories, fashion houses and wine cellars, which characterise the Bel Paese in the collective imagination, but above all we live the creative spirit of SITE by using the spaces of the new underground line in the city of Naples. Here, several artistic installations have been placed in the stations in order to reproduce, through functional contamination, firstly the feeling of bewilderment and then of psycho-physical well-being in the user, which fifty years ago Wines and partners sought to stimulate in the American population with their places of unusual qualities, in which the content of the structure was an extension of the context and the architecture «not merely a question of form and space, but of information and thought» [Ridone, 1989, p. 18].

## NOTE

[1] The phrase «form follows function» was coined by architect Louis Henry Sullivan (1856-1924) for his essay *The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered*, published in Lippincott's Magazine, London, March 1896 (pp. 403-409).

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