

A files

Afiles

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Happy Ghost of a Possible City: *Il Cretto, Gibellina*

Adrian Forty



Suddenly, along a remote Sicilian country road, leading nowhere in particular, you are faced with an entire hillside covered in a sheet of concrete, fissured with large cracks: here is what is left of the town of Gibellina, entombed in concrete by the Italian artist Alberto Burri in the late 1980s. What kind of a thing is this?¹

On the night of 14 January 1968 an earthquake in the Belice valley, in western Sicily, destroyed eight towns and left three others badly damaged. Around 90,000 people were made homeless overnight; 531 died, but the number would have been far greater had not many been sleeping in the open on account of tremors felt the previous day. The government responded to the catastrophe with promises of aid, but little happened and nine years later many of the survivors were still living in temporary huts. The government's inertia became a national scandal, a symptom of the paralysis and corruption that gripped the state and – according to the historian Paul Ginsborg – contributed to growing disenchantment with parliamentary government in the 1970s and the rise of worker militancy and terrorism.² The government's most positive measure was to offer financial inducements to the victims to emigrate, either to other parts of Italy or abroad – the traditional solution to hardship in Sicily.

Of the towns totally destroyed, one – Gibellina – had a population of 6,500, densely packed into 12ha. Few buildings in the area were left standing: three weeks after the earthquake a visitor said of a neighbouring town, Salaparuta, that it looked as if it had 'rolled down the hill', and photographs suggest that the same applied to Gibellina.³ In Sicily there is a longstanding tradition of moving a town to a new site after its destruction by an earthquake: the example often referred to is Noto, destroyed in 1693 and subsequently rebuilt, particularly magnificently, nearby. Five of the destroyed Belice towns were relocated to new sites, most of them close to the old towns. Gibellina was the exception: it was moved to a site 20km away, near Salemi, at the insistence of the town's new mayor, Ludovico Corrao, who argued that this location was better connected by road and rail to the main towns of western Sicily, and would offer better employment prospects than had been available in the isolated hill town. Corrao, who was to be the major figure in the redevelopment of the town, and in the creation of the *cretto*, was a political oddity. Trained as a lawyer, he became a career politician, and was elected as the parliamentary deputy for the Sicilian town of Alcamo, a constituency that encompassed the Belice valley. Corrao had been a key figure in *milazzismo*, a specifically Sicilian alliance of left-wingers and former fascists against the mafia and Christian Democrats, and this casual attitude towards conventional party allegiances remained characteristic throughout his later career: as a deputy, he sat on the independent left, voting with but never joining either the PCI (Italian Communist Party), of which he was highly critical, or the more centrist PSI (Italian Socialist Party). By 1968 he had a promising political career on the national stage. However, following the Belice earthquake, and the concern that he showed for its victims, he was invited to stand for election as mayor of Gibellina. Elected in 1968, he increasingly concentrated his considerable energies on the fortunes of this town, and seems to have virtually abandoned his national political career, although he was elected to the Senate in 1972. This unusual political trajectory, from national to local, was matched by his equally unorthodox political beliefs, which owed a good deal to Danilo Dolci, the sociologist and political activist, sometimes described as the 'Ghandi of Sicily', who drew attention to social conditions on the island, and promoted

interest in its peasant cultural traditions. Like Corrao, Dolci was an energetic campaigner for the victims of the Belice earthquake.

Against the government's semi-deliberate policy of social dismemberment of the populations of the destroyed towns, through incentives to emigrate, and the dispersal of the inhabitants of each town across different encampments, Corrao worked hard to preserve the social cohesion and identity of Gibellina. In the plans for the new town a significant part of his strategy lay in his extraordinarily ambitious programme of patronage of art and architecture. All public works in Italy had, by law, to include a two per cent allowance for art – a provision that the government suspended when it came to the reconstruction of the Belice towns. Corrao capitalised, relentlessly, upon this piece of discrimination. He insisted that art was not a 'supplement', to be ranked beneath the provision of basic necessities, but was itself a basic necessity. Treating art as part of the infrastructure of the town, he used it as a means to draw people together, to overcome political oppositions and obstacles, and to provide the town's inhabitants with an identity. In Corrao's hands, art was a catalyst: it made things happen when otherwise entrenched interests and old allegiances would have stood in the way.

Unlike the old town, which had been very densely inhabited, the new town was built at very low density, with single-family houses, wide avenues and many exceptionally spacious – and generally empty – piazzas. Somehow, all the fresh Italian ideas about alternatives to the modernist city elaborated by people like Ernesto Rogers and Aldo Rossi passed Gibellina by, and instead it followed a North American, garden-city model. Although Corrao defended the plan, he seems to have been aware of its shortcomings and anachronism, and set out to compensate by commissioning a range of architects with avant-garde credentials to work at Gibellina. Within the dispersed and altogether un-Sicilian layout of Gibellina Nuova a series of public buildings designed by a cast of well-known radical and experimental architects – Giuseppe Samonà, Ludovico Quaroni, Franco Purini and Laura Thermes, Francesco Venezia, Pierluigi Nicolini and Oswald Matthias Ungers – introduce bursts of hyper-reality into this otherwise low-voltage urban scheme.⁴ Since several of these buildings are themselves purposefully empty, like Venezia's Palazzo di Lorenzo, and others, like the new theatre, are permanently incomplete, being in the town feels like being on a filmset, or possibly in a de Chirico painting (a reference explicitly exploited by Purini and Thermes in their *Systema delle Piazze*). Outside Italy, Gibellina Nuova has not had a good press. The *Blue Guide*, not noted for its affection for modern architecture, writes of the 'unattractive site', 'disappointing architecture' and 'sad atmosphere'. Diane Ghirardo comments on its 'barren and inhospitable streets', its 'sense of emptiness and desolation', and calls it 'a massive failure'.⁵ These criticisms notwithstanding, Gibellina is, it has to be said, unique. Nowhere else will you find a town so stuffed with postmodernism, and least of all do you expect to find it bang in the middle of the Sicilian countryside.

The selection of the architects, and their commissions, came from Corrao, who likewise persuaded a wide array of artists to make works for the town. Gibellina has more public art per head of population than anywhere else in the world, and whether or not the town can stand up to it, it served Corrao's aim of making Gibellina known. One of the first artists whom Corrao commissioned was the sculptor Pietro Consagra, Sicilian by birth, though most of his career was spent in Rome. Collaborating with Consagra on one particular project was a Roman architect, Alberto Zanmatti.

Zanmatti was a friend of Alberto Burri, by the 1970s one of the most internationally important figures in contemporary art, best known for his scorched and sewn canvases, his burnt polythene works and his cellotex paintings or *cretti*, made by applying paint to a plastic film and allowing it to crack in random patterns. Burri's work could be said to have been concerned with rupture, and reparation. Corrao asked Zanmatti to try to get Burri to come to Gibellina with the hope of persuading him to make a work there. When he eventually arrived in 1981, to a town half built and already full of art, Burri's immediate response was 'I'm not doing anything here'. But he asked to see the ruins of the old town, and going there at dusk, as the sun was going down, walking over the rubble, he was deeply moved, almost in tears.⁶

The Gibellina Burri saw in 1981 had changed considerably since the aftermath of the earthquake in 1968. Many of the surviving structures had been pulled down by the municipal engineers' department, concerned about the risks to public safety. The result was, as Corrao put it, that they had flattened the town, or 'Coventryfied' it: the state, he said, had caused more destruction than the earthquake itself, obliterating what remained of the people's past.⁷ Ever since their enforced relocation, the citizens of Gibellina had been in the habit of going back to the old town, returning to their old houses, and walking the streets they had known. For the authorities, this was a problem since the structures were still, in 1981, dangerous, and the place was inhabited by wild dogs: they had to do something to make it safe, whether by fencing it off or, as happened at some of the other towns, by stabilising the ruins.

Burri went back to his hometown of Città di Castello after visiting Gibellina, but three days later phoned Zanmatti saying 'I have an idea'. This idea was to compact the masonry of the ruins within retaining walls, leaving the lines of the streets, and to cover the whole thing with white cement, making a gigantic *cretto* which would become a lasting record of the tragic event – with, as Burri himself pointed out, the double advantage of solving the commune's problem of what to do about the dangerous site. On a relief model of the hillside, Burri laid out flat a rectangular *cretto*, the lines of the cracks following the old street pattern (a *cretto* is a cleft or a crack, a resonant image for an earthquake site). A subsequent plaster model, with the lines of the *cretti* gouged out, provided the form of the work, which it was Zanmatti's task to scale up and make structurally stable while retaining as far as possible the roughness of the model. The steepness of the slope of the hillside in the upper part of the town made it particularly difficult to keep the ruins in place and prevent them from moving downhill. Zanmatti's solution was to design the walls and the pathways between the islands as a single monolithic reinforced structure. The tops of the islands were then covered with mesh and sprayed with concrete. A great deal of thought went into determining how high the islands should be: they settled upon 1.6m (though the actual height varies since the walls of the islands undulate slightly), high enough to feel enclosed, but not so high as to be claustrophobic.

Burri's original idea was for a rectangular *cretto* of 12ha, approximately the original extent of the town. In view of the likely cost, and the difficulties of construction, the size was reduced to 9ha – a decision that was met with indignation. 'We're making a postage stamp', Burri complained to Zanmatti. The supervision of the *cretto* was undertaken by a Sicilian engineer, Tilotta, who produced all the technical drawings for the contractors. There was no funding for

the work. Corrao, resourceful as ever, raised some money from local foundations, but the major part of the cost was met by diverting surpluses from other allocations for the reconstruction of the new town. The work was therefore begun without any assurance, beyond Corrao's own confidence, that there would ever be the means to complete it, and although Corrao later claimed that no public money was spent on the *cretto*, he may have been economical with the truth. Work began in 1985, when Corrao seized on the opportunity presented by army exercises in the region to persuade the corps of engineers to bulldoze the site into Burri's shapes. Construction took place in six phases between 1985 and 1989, as funds became available. Each phase was let as a separate contract, to different contractors: photographs during the construction period show a patchwork of blocks gradually being joined together to form a continuous sheet. Work stopped in 1989, when no more money was forthcoming, and although only 6.5ha had been constructed, the likelihood of its eventual completion vanished in 1994 when Corrao was not re-elected as mayor.

Quite apart from the logistical difficulties of transporting so much material and concrete to a remote site, the other main difficulty facing the architect and the engineer was the requirement to replicate the roughness and accidental variations of the original model, effects to which Burri attached great importance. With a contractual procedure normally geared towards eliminating chance and imperfection, such randomness was not the easiest thing to achieve. The height of the retaining walls was allowed to vary slightly, giving an irregular undulation to the profile of the islands, while each section of the steel formwork for the walls was secured by only two supports, allowing it to buckle under the weight of the liquid concrete. The same formwork was used throughout, becoming progressively deformed, so that the later sections have a heavily crinkled appearance – though Burri, who was never satisfied with anything, had wanted the *cretto* to appear more porous and pock-marked, and complained that the end result was too smooth.⁸

But the roughness of finish the contractors did manage to achieve ironically contributed to the rapid deterioration of the *cretto*, encouraging plants and lichen to attach themselves to the surface. By the early 2000s, the still incomplete work was in a state of decay, with grass growing on it, shrubs sprouting from cracks, signs of corrosion of the metal reinforcement, and spalling of the concrete. The original whiteness that Burri had wanted had also been lost. The *cretto*, a memorial to a ruin, was itself turning into a ruin. Although it could be argued that natural decay was consistent with Burri's own ideas about entropy, the authorities were not prepared to let nature take its course and, after considerable debate, a programme of restoration and repair was begun in 2008.⁹ The *cretto* today is free from vegetation, though no longer as white as it was originally. Responsibility for its maintenance rests with the Soprintendenza dei Beni Culturali, who periodically spray it with weedkiller: fortuitously, because the *cretto* was awarded a national architecture prize by the Istituto Nazionale d'Architettura in 1991, it has been designated a work of architecture, and so qualifies for the Soprintendenza's budget for maintenance of modern architecture.

Although its decay has been arrested, the *cretto* is still incomplete, and this remains a controversial question. Burri died in 1995, but in an interview a year earlier he made it clear that he was dissatisfied with the work as it stood. In 2010 there was an appeal, signed by 105 artists, architects, critics and curators, calling for not only its protection, but also its completion.¹⁰ It is hard to see this happening

now – what little chance remained of finishing it diminished even further when Corrao, its strongest advocate, was murdered in August 2011 in Gibellina, his throat cut with a kitchen knife by his Bangladeshi housekeeper. And while completion might achieve the fulfilment of the artist's vision, it is doubtful whether making it larger would add much to its already considerable effect.

Striking though the *cretto* is to the casual visitor, it seems to have particular meaning for the people of Gibellina, even for those too young to remember the earthquake. For them, it's a place for a day out, it draws people to it, it is *used* – unlike Gibellina Nuova, where the superfluity of monuments and public art shows no sign at all of being used. Occasional events, festivals, ceremonies are held at the *cretto* by the residents of Gibellina. Whereas most memorials merely allow things to be forgotten, this one hides what it commemorates, but retains a presence in people's everyday lives.

The *cretto* belongs to a tradition of making memorials out of concrete that goes back to the Second World War. The choice of material is paradoxical, since concrete is more commonly associated with the erasure of memory than with its preservation.¹¹ Nevertheless, most memorials constructed in the last 60 years are concrete, for reasons that are not always straightforward. The usual answers are to do with concrete's durability and its apparent absence of any iconography – its seeming blankness more absorbent of mental projection than other more symbolically redolent materials. Sometimes there are contingent factors – with the *cretto* one cannot overlook the *mafioso* associations of concrete, nor the fact that Sicily is allegedly the world's highest per-capita consumer of cement: its choice as a material in the Sicilian context is not innocent.¹²

The *cretto* is big, very big – so big that it has sometimes been referred to as a work of land art. Yet this description is hardly appropriate, since the artistic trajectory within which land art developed abhorred literalism and associational content. Works like Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* or Nancy Holt's *Sun Tunnels* were not *about* anything, they just *were*. The *cretto*, on the contrary, has content – it contains a town. Often described as a 'shroud', sometimes as

a *sipario* (a theatre curtain), it is a covering that marks a closure, the ending of something, in this case of a town. These are not properties consistent with land art as usually understood.

As a memorial, the obvious comparison in formal terms is with Peter Eisenman's Berlin Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, whose raised stelae correspond to the islands of the *cretto*. But beyond the superficial visual resemblance, the comparison breaks down. Unlike the Berlin memorial, a 'made-up' memorial in the sense that there is no particular reason why it should be where it is, nor the size that it is, the *cretto* is extremely specific. The Berlin memorial could be anywhere in Berlin, possibly even Germany, without it mattering much, nor would it make any difference if it were twice, or ten times, the area. But the *cretto* has to be exactly where it is, its projected size determined by the extent of the town of Gibellina, and even though only three of the pathways correspond exactly to the previous street pattern, the raised islands are urban blocks, not 'concepts' or abstract forms. What it commemorates

is not a generality – a people, a race – but, and this is an unusual subject for a memorial, a place, the town of Gibellina, whose ruins it contains. Unlike the Berlin memorial, allegorical, portentous and empty, the *cretto* is an actual sepulchre – nor is it melancholy or oppressive, on the contrary it seems cheerful and reparative, 'the happy ghost of a possible city', as Franco Purini put it.¹³

Its sepulchral function, as a covering for the ruins of the town, also gives rise to its being thought of as a work of architecture and although, as we have seen, this has been convenient to its protection, it is not truly a work of architecture either, in that it offers no opportunity of inhabitation – indeed it deliberately prevents such a use. In reality, the *cretto* conforms to none of the conventional categories for built works – and in its non-conformity lies part of its success. Without doubt the most lastingly successful product of Corrao's artistic patronage, it defies all attempts at classification. Corrao's own assessment of it, 'shroud, dream, symbol, pure thought', perhaps comes closest to describing what it is, though even he neglected to mention the sheer enormity of its presence.¹⁴



My thanks to Davide Spina for his assistance with the research for this article.

1. The bibliography on the *cretto* is large, and that on Gibellina Nuova colossal. The main sources used here are: Ludovico Corrao, intervista di Baldo Carollo, *Il Sogno Mediterraneo* (Alcamo: Ernesto di Lorenzo, 2010); Massimo Bignardi, Davide Lacagnina and Paola Mantovani (eds), *Cantiere Gibellina, Una Ricerca sul Campo* (Rome: Artemide, 2008); *Riso: I Quaderni Riso*, no 1, vol 1, 2008, Museo d'arte contemporanea della Sicilia, Palermo; Elisabetta Cristallini, Marcello Fabbri and Antonella Greca (eds), *Gibellina: Una Città per una società estetica – nata dall'arte* (Rome: Gangemi, 2004); Stefano Zorzi, *Parola di Burri* (Turin: Allemandi, 1995). Interviews with Alberto Zanmatti and Franco Purini in

Rome in April 2013 provided additional information. A 2010 documentary by Emanuele Svezia – Earthquake 68: Gente di Gibellina – tells the story of the *cretto* and celebrates a 2005 event when all the inhabitants of Gibellina assembled on the site. See <http://earthquake68.blogspot.it>.

2. Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy* (New York: Pallgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp 345–47.

3. J Eugene Haas and Robert S Eyre, 'The Western Sicily Earthquake of 1968', typescript Report for the National Academy of Engineering (Washington, DC: The National Academy of Sciences, 1969), p 24. <http://books.google.co.uk>.

4. Ludovico Corrao defends the plan in *Sogno Mediterraneo*, *op cit*, pp 286–88, while Franco Purini, in his interview, interpreted the programme of public buildings as a strategy of 'densification'. The public buildings are listed and described in Maurizio Oddo, *Gibellina La Nuova, attraverso la città di transizione* (Turin: Testo e Immagine, 2003).

5. Alta Macadam, *Blue Guide to Sicily*, fourth edition (London: A & C Black, 1993); Diane Ghirardo, *Italy* (London: Reaktion, 2013), pp 218–20.

6. Stefano Zorzi, *op cit*, p 59; Alberto Zanmatti interview.

7. Ludovico Corrao, *op cit*, p 245.

8. Federica Chezi, 'Il Grande Cretto: Come nasce il Cretto – Colloquio con Alberto Zanmatti', in Massimo Bignardi et al, *op cit*, p 88; Alberto Zanmatti interview.

9. On the restoration, see Giuseppe Mercurio, 'A New Worksite for Burri', *Riso*, *op cit*, pp 150–71.

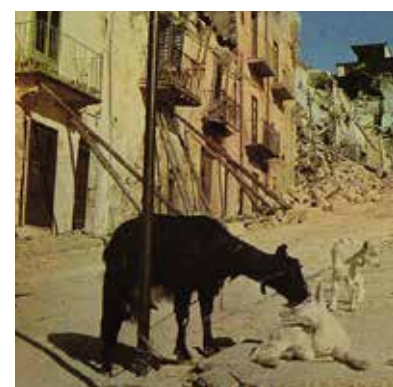
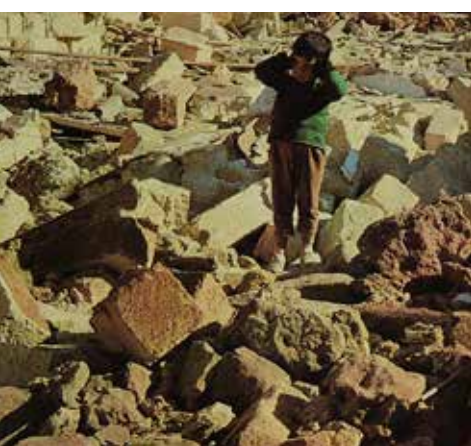
10. <http://www.fondazioneorestiadi.it/images/fotonews/dossier%20e%20appello%20cretto%202.pdf>.

11. See Adrian Forty, *Concrete and Culture: A Material History* (London: Reaktion, 2012), chapter 7, pp 197–223, on the use of concrete for memorials.

12. Suzie Mackenzie, 'The Outside Chance', *The Guardian Weekend*, 13 May 2006, p 35 makes the claim for Sicily's high use of cement.

13. Franco Purini interview.

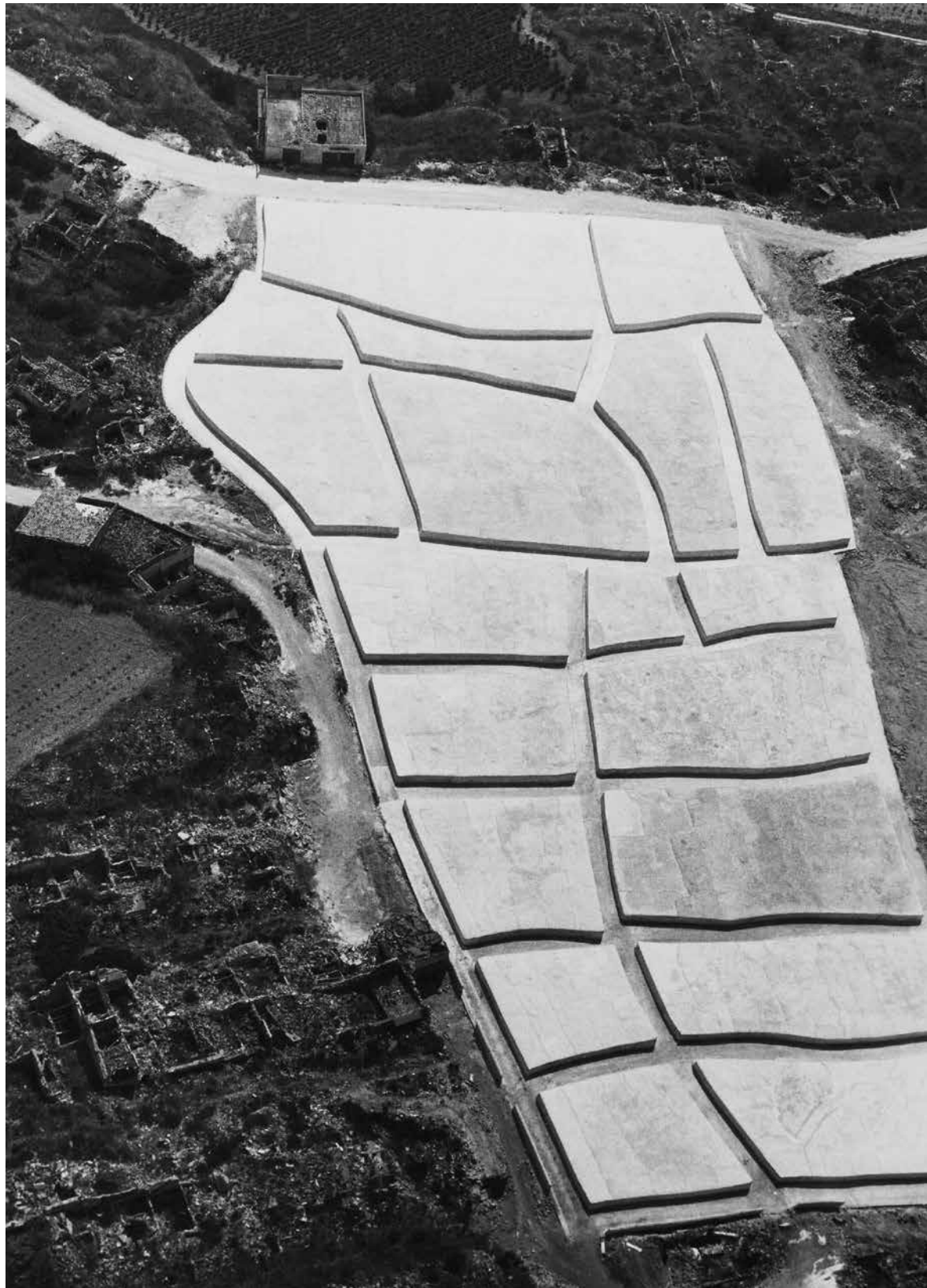
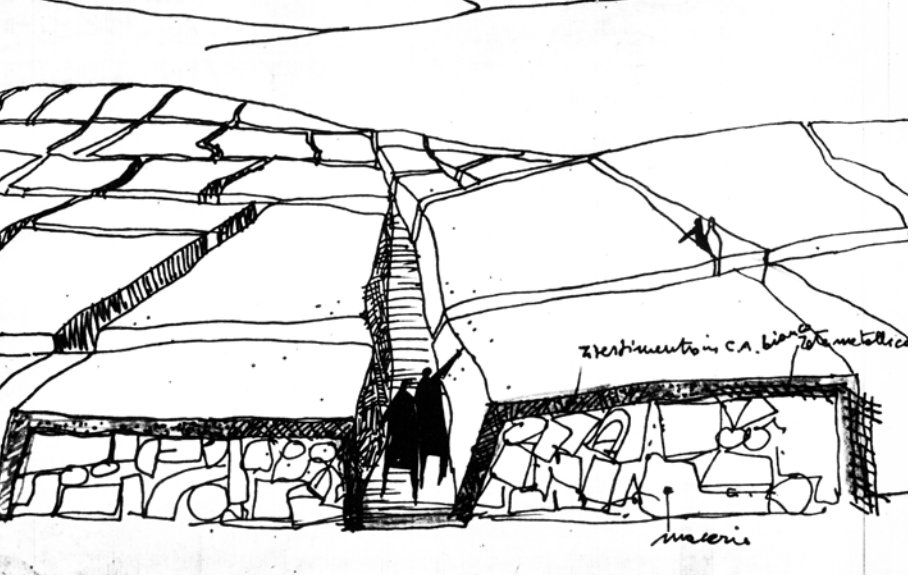
14. Ludovico Corrao, *op cit*, p 257.

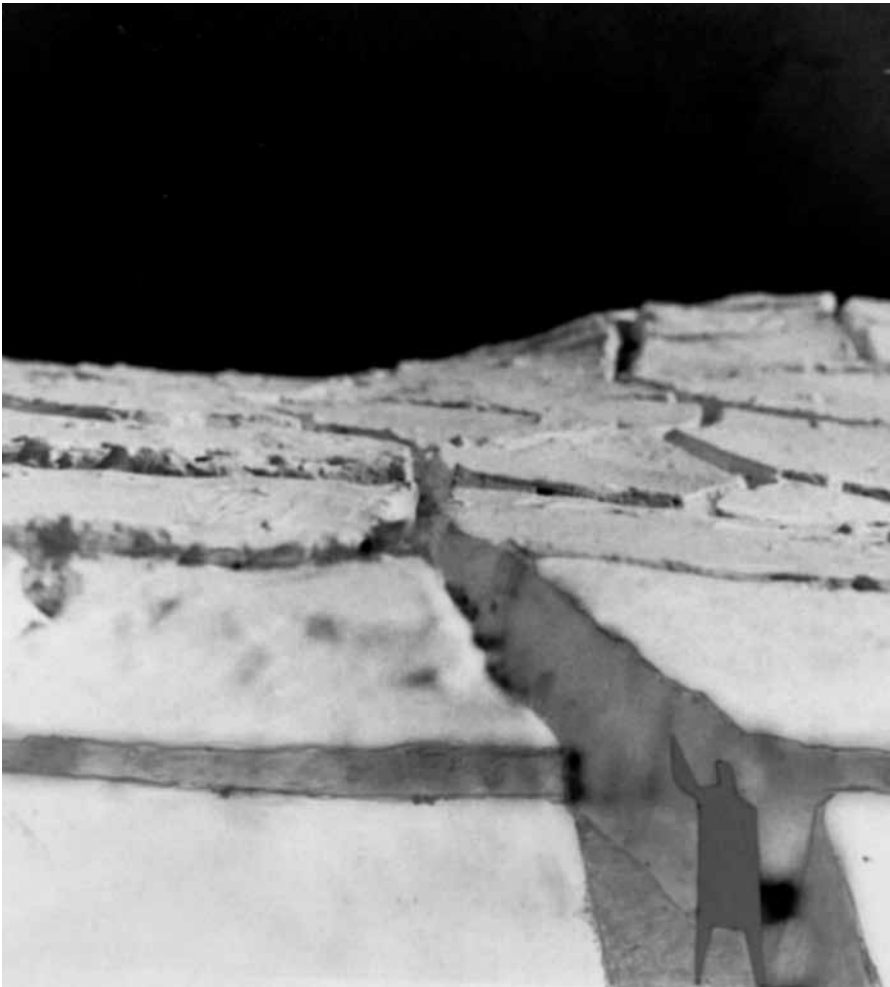


Black-and-white images (*left and top*)
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All other images
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Sketch, model views and aerial
view demarcating complete proposal
Courtesy Alberto Zanmatti

Colour image (*left*)
Photo Adrian Forty

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Contemporanea, Gibellina

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Hilla Becher is a photographer who was born in Potsdam in 1934. After six war years that saw her repeatedly evacuated across northeast Germany, in 1954 she managed to leave the East for Hamburg before moving again to Düsseldorf in 1957 to work in an advertising agency. There she met Bernd Becher (1931–2007) whom she married in 1961. Known collectively as 'The Bechers', the two of them proceeded to engage in a continuing project to photograph a whole series of industrial buildings. The resulting images have been exhibited all over the world and published in numerous titles by Schirmer/Mosel.

Tom Brooks is an architectural writer and historian. He studied the history of art at the University of Bristol and then the Courtauld Institute, where he specialised in twentieth-century British architecture, completing his master's thesis on Brian Housden's house at 78 South Hill Park. He currently works in the building conservation team at Alan Baxter & Associates.

HT Cadbury-Brown (1913–2009) was educated at the AA, where he later taught, in addition to academic positions at the Royal College of Art and Harvard University, and served as AA president, 1959–60. He worked with Ernő Goldfinger for a number of years and was also closely involved with the Modern Architecture Research Group (MARS). He is perhaps best known for the Turntable Cafe at the 1951 Festival of Britain and the RCA building on Kensington Gore with Hugh Casson and Robert Goodden, 1962–73.

Mark Campbell teaches history and design at the AA, where he also directs the 'Paradise Lost' research cluster. He will shortly defend his PhD dissertation on Geoffrey Scott's *Architecture of Humanism* at Princeton University. In addition to the AA, he has previously taught at the Cooper Union, Princeton University and Auckland University, and served as the managing editor of *Grey Room* and the Cooper Union Archive.

Ryan Dillon is an architect and currently teaches at the AA as the programme coordinator for the DRL and as a history and theory tutor in the undergraduate school. He studied at Syracuse University and the AA, and previously worked for Safdie Architects on projects such as the Peabody Essex Museum and the Khalsa Heritage Centre.

William Firebrace teaches design and theory at the University of Westminster, specialising in film and architecture. He is the author of *Marseille Mix* (2010), the first part of a planned trilogy of books published by the AA. The second part, *Memo for Nemo*, examines undersea inhabitation, and the final part, *Hop Baltic*, explores the architecture and culture of a number of Baltic cities. His extended essay here on the London Planetarium will also reappear as part of a forthcoming AA series of books on specific, unheralded buildings.

Adrian Forty is professor of architectural history at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL. He is president of the European Architectural History Network and the author, most recently, of *Concrete and Culture: A Material History* (2012).

Mathew Holmes studied at the AA and has been living in Mexico since 1991, where he runs a small architectural practice working on largely domestic and sustainability projects. From 2010, he has also been responsible for conservation work at Las Pozas, Edward James' sculptural garden in Xilitla, Mexico, in conjunction with the Fundación Pedro y Elena Hernández AC.

Joshua Mardell is an architectural historian, and recently completed his MPhil at Cambridge on the 'multiple modernisms' of certain key AA graduates practising in the immediate postwar period. His present research is concerned with the role played by antiquaries in the formation of neo-medievalism up to 1840. He currently works at the RIBA Drawings Collection cataloguing the papers of architects William Hayward Brakspear (1819–1898) and Rex Hawkesworth (1939–).

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969) was born Maria Michael Ludwig Mies in Aachen, Germany. He began his architectural career in 1908 as apprentice to Peter Behrens, leaving in 1912 to set up his own office. Over the next 25 years he progressively established his pioneering architectural aesthetic, moving from the neo-classicism of his first villas to his European masterpiece, the Villa Tugendhat in Brno in 1930. In 1937 he left Germany for the US, as head of the architecture department of the newly established Illinois Institute of Technology, and through his offices in Chicago went on to enjoy an even more productive American career, with buildings like the Farnsworth House (1946), Seagram Building (1958) and Neue Nationalgalerie (1968). His appearance at the AA in 1959 was on the occasion of his second visit to the UK to receive the RIBA Gold Medal.

Moshe Safdie is an architect, urban planner, educator and author. Born in Haifa, Israel in 1938, he went on to study architecture at McGill University in Montreal, and then moved again in the mid 1970s to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he still lives. Embracing a comprehensive design philosophy, some of his most notable works include Habitat 67 in Montreal, Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem, the National Gallery of Canada in Alberta, Marina Bay Sands Integrated Resort in Singapore and the United States Institute of Peace headquarters in Washington, DC. He also the author of *Beyond Habitat* (1970), *For Everyone a Garden* (1974), *Form and Purpose* (1982) and *The City After the Automobile* (1998).

Irénée Scalbert is an architectural critic based in London and a member of the AA Files editorial board since 1998. He taught at the AA between 1989 and 2006, has been a visiting design critic at the GSD, Harvard and currently teaches at SAUL in Ireland. In addition to his academic work and frequent guest lectures he has published articles and essays on a wide range of issues. In 2004 he curated an exhibition on Jean Renaudie and he is the author of *A Right to Difference: The Architecture of Jean Renaudie* (2004).

Laurent Stalder is professor of architectural theory at the ETH Zurich. His research focuses on the intersection of the history and theory of architecture with the history of technology. His publications include *Herman Muthesius: Das Landhaus als kulturgeschichtlicher Entwurf* (2008), *Valerio Olgiati* (2008), *Der Schwellanaltas* (2009, with Elke Beyer, Anke Hagemann and Kim Förster), *GOD & CO: François Dallegret Beyond the Bubble* (2011, with Alessandra Ponte and Thomas Weaver) and *Atelier Bow Wow: A Primer* (2013, with Cornelia Escher, Megumi Komura and Meruro Washida).

Helen Thomas studied architecture at Liverpool University and has a PhD in art history and theory from the University of Essex. A specialist in Latin American and post-colonial history, she has been an editor and lecturer at the Victoria & Albert Museum, Phaidon Press, the AA and London Metropolitan University.