Chapter 8
Exhibit Design for Architecture: A Non-Digital Method for the Inclusive Communication of an Architecture

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ABSTRACT
This chapter introduces a novel method of communication, based on an analytical and analogical fact-finding journey, aimed at comprehending an architectural design for a more extended and inclusive usership, in particular for visually impaired and blind people. The study focuses on the communication aspects of architecture and the methodology considered effective in architectural criticism, with the aim of attaining deep and real understanding of those principles that represent its tangible expression. Starting from an in-depth theoretical fact-finding analysis, the research suggests a slow and completely non-digital exhibition, available to normally sighted, visually impaired, and blind people, and also for an informed and a non-informed audience. The study was carried out with the support of Public Engagement Department of the MAXXI Museum in Rome (National Museum of the 21st Century Arts) as part of the plan for the accessibility of museum collections.

INTRODUCTION
Graphic representations, photographic reproductions and, gradually, virtual reconstructions and augmented reality have laid the foundations for a system to popularize works, that allows the public audience to increase exponentially, by pointing to a more extensive and universal communication: today, virtual reality seems to be the main tool for communication in the cultural heritage field. Notwithstanding the importance of the aforementioned tools, the design research described in this paper suggests a different approach.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7555-9.ch008
Starting from an in-depth theoretical fact-finding analysis, the research suggests a slow and completely non-digital exhibition, available to normally sighted, visually impaired and blind people, and also for an informed and a non-informed audience.

The research examines the “Palazzina Girasole” apartment building by Luigi Moretti, an extraordinary example of experimentation on the topic of Roman residential housing during the post-war period. The aforementioned choice, in addition to the importance of the work, derives from the desire to give credit to its images, created by the great photographer Gabriele Basilico. The pictures are kept in the photographic section of the MAXXI Museum.

The project research proposal involves a slow set-up path which, through gradual learning about the context where the work was created, the designer’s background, and comparison with contemporaries, allows visitors to assimilate those “codes” constituting the key to a real understanding of the work, which would be showed only at the end of the path, as in our example with the large photograph of the main frontage of “Palazzina Girasole,” taken by Basilico.

What the authors propose is a slow journey, punctuated by the work’s progressive reading phases, through which the visitor can appreciate its full complexity. As Umberto Eco speculated in 2001: a Third Millennium Museum, it is no longer organized around a collection of countless objects but rather as a specific exhibition about a single artwork, a “memorable” visit which would allow the visitor to truly “get inside” the work and understand it deeply.

At first the problem was faced in terms of communication, thinking if and how architecture follows the logic of a communicative system. If that system can be considered as also applicable to the deep comprehension of an architectural organism in an exhibition setting, it is necessary for users to know the codes through which the work expresses itself. For this reason, the semiological approach, through the identification of an architectural language, produces an explanation of the “architectural system” which involves syntactic and grammatical aspects of the language comparable to the form one’s own – that

Figure 1. Palazzina Girasole, front on Viale Bruno Buozzi
Source: The Authors (2017)
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