

Built to Vanish: When Landscape Made Architecture and Authorship Disappear

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Introduction

In the last chapter of *L'architecture au future depuis 1889*, Jean-Louis Cohen mentions one of the challenges left by 20th-century urbanization: the emergence of “new peripheries, the areas no longer suburban but exurban, produced by sprawl.”¹ This article explores a peculiar kind of sprawl – holiday villas – that emerged in post-war Italy as a result of a new necessity of middle to upper-class Italian families: the ownership of a second dwelling, located away from their primary residence, yet within a reachable and manageable distance guaranteed by the rise of extensive infrastructural networks. It goes without saying that such needs soon became a commodity, proving highly profitable for many players in the building sector at the time. To be clear, *otium villas* or *villae suburbanae* did not emerge as a new phenomenon during the renowned Italian boom. Since Ancient Rome and throughout the entire history of architecture, commissioning a villa outside the city has been one of the most common requests from the elite. For them, owning such a villa was a symbol of social status, closely connected to the value of the land on which the building was erected.² What dramatically changed in the 1960s, leading to the hypertrophic growth of this phenomenon, were two key factors: first, the implementation of land reforms and lax urban planning legislations, which resulted in excessive land parceling; second, a dramatic increase in the number of clients who could afford this type of second residence. These unparalleled conditions fueled a surge in such projects, benefiting not only a generation of architects but also various actors of the building sector who could meet the high demand and assist with planning documentation submissions, including engineers, building contractors, entrepreneurs, and surveyors. While these conditions often provided fertile ground for architectural experimentation (i.e. new typologies and technology), they were also at the root of regulatory loopholes, speculation, and illegal building activities.

Under these circumstances, the Italian engineer architect Luciano Rubino (1926-2005) and his wife at the time, Danish interior designer Inge Pedersen (1930-2017) undertook the design and construction of a set of four holiday villas on the hilly side of the Bracciano Lake in Trevignano Romano, fifty kilometers away (one hour drive) from another building site where Rubino at the very same time was serving as project manager, *direttore lavori*. This task was assigned to him – and to him alone, although Pedersen was a native Danish speaker – by the Danish architect Kay Otto Fisker (1893-1965) and consisted of coordinating the construction of Det Danske Institut i Rom (DIR) – the Danish Academy in Valle Giulia, Rome. Despite the undeniable professional success of this collaboration,³ the dominant historiography following the inauguration of DIR on October 24th, 1967, framed it as a single-authored masterpiece of Danish modernism

1 Jean-Louis Cohen, *The Future of Architecture, Since 1889* (New York: Phaidon, 2012), 472.

2 James Ackerman, *The Villa: Form and Ideology of Country Houses* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

3 Fabia Masciello, “Accademia Di Danimarca,” *Abitare Magazine* (August, 2001), 172.

– Fisker’s final project before his passing and the only building he ever designed in Italy. This narrative overshadowed other historiographies and collaborators for a long time. This lack of recognition extends across multiple aspects: authorship – particularly the pivotal role of Pedersen as a female designer and the only one on-site fluent in both languages; production studies – regarding the transnational Italian-Danish building site; and the existence of other concurrent commissions, including the four villas designed by the couple on the side.

The scope of this article is to suggest an alternative historiography of these very four buildings — Villa Schiavetti, Villa Rubino/Pedersen, Villa Lentini and Villa Cecchini⁴ — interpreting them as a single entity, namely the “Foursome”, and contextualizing their construction within a set of specific and systemic conditions. As such, the Foursome was situated between the urban and rural realms, blending the man-made with the wilderness to seamlessly melt into their surroundings – designed to observe without being observed. These were projects that vanished into the landscape, and eventually – like their architects – faded into architecture history. This article argues that the architectural couple Rubino/Pedersen (R/P) acted with intent, designing a transnational project whose historiography is linked to the DIR. Their work followed the same Danish design principles rooted in a welfare culture, principles that they actively promoted in Italy through both professional and popular magazines. As they crafted a monument to Danish modernity in Rome, the same team of workers and building techniques was employed to create structures that seamlessly vanished into the lake and forest. Through archival review, oral history, and fieldwork, this article demonstrates how a new Italian mannerism *à la Danoise* propelled a novel relationship between architecture and landscape, one in which the landscape itself became the horizon. This was made possible by the integration of Danish building expertise with Italian labor. The article explores the transition from monumentality to invisibility, publishing for the first time a series of materials concerning the Foursome. To achieve this, it unfolds in three main sections: (1) first, it rebuilds both the specific and broader contextual conditions; (2) second, it closely analyses the Foursome and its overlooked historiography, framing its relationship with the surrounding environment; (3) finally, it traces some of the shortcomings of this transnational architectural transfer.

The Context

To understand the genesis of the Foursome, it is necessary to step back and introduce Det Danske Institut i Rom (DIR). Interpreted as the embodiment of the Danish-Italian transnational and cross-cultural dynamics, DIR was built from scratch using a mono-material building technique that – according to the dominant historiography – followed the Danish architectural building traditions to reify Danish national identity on foreign ground. Designed as a *soft* diplomatic building, DIR was conceived as a monument whose construction was strongly supported by many influential figures in both Denmark and Italy.⁵ It was to be located in in Rome’s Villa Borghese Park, specifically in Valle Giulia, an area that, after hosting the Beaux-Arts Expo in 1911, became a site for several soft diplomatic legations from the 1930s onwards.⁶ Although the dominant narrative surrounding these buildings is often stylistic and typological, in recent years scholars have introduced new historiographies on such national outposts abroad. Moving beyond the concept of a *grafted body* – a building in which one country “transplants”

4 The individual names of the Villas were not assigned by R/P but derived from the respective public cadastral records (Agenzia delle Entrate, 2024).

5 Angela Gigliotti, “The Byggesager Dossier and the reclaim of a plural authorship for Det Danske Institut i Rom,” in *Netzwerk Architekturwissenschaft: The Power of Sources – Forum 8*, eds. Eva Froschauer et al. (Berlin: Universitätsverlag der TU Berlin, forthcoming).

6 Federica Dal Falco, “Valle Giulia, the Valley of the Academies. From the International Exhibition of 1911 to the New Cultural and Academic Complex,” in *The Academia Belgica in Rome. Building for the Arts & Sciences in the Eternal City*, eds. Sabine van Sprang and Charles Bossu (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2023), 31–40.

its architectural identity onto a host country with little regard for local context – scholars have instead proposed the idea of a *hybrid body*.⁷ This new interpretation represents a building shaped through continuous negotiations between incomers and hosting conditions (e.g. labor, building techniques, actual know-how of the local builders, availability of materials). In the process of reorganizing and reassessing DIR's historiography, several key findings emerged, shaping the foundation for this article. Among them, the "re-discovery" of the Foursome proved the most striking, bringing about a reinterpretation of DIR as a blueprint and the Foursome its aftermath. Pertaining such interdependency, it is crucial to unfold: (a) where the Danish impact was more decisive; (b) who were the main drivers; (c) which were the favorable urban legal conditions.

Det Danske Institut i Rom as a blueprint: conceived in Denmark, made in Italy.

At the level of tectonics and construction – first with DIR and later with the Foursome – a distinct Danish craftsmanship in brick technology was channeled into the Italian building culture and reinterpreted to align with the practical skills of the Italian labor force on-site. For instance, the most emblematic material intended to evoke Danish national identity for the local Italian population – the yellow brick – was reinterpreted as a cladding, hiding a reinforced concrete backbone. While this choice aligned with Italian construction practices of the time,⁸ where reinforced concrete structures were cast on-site, it was less common in Denmark, where Kay Otto Fisker was still employing load-bearing brick. Indeed, it was precisely this Danish-crafted gesture of laying mortar between bricks that the Danish Majesties were invited to perform during the Cornerstone Ceremony, much to the delight of photographers.⁹ Nevertheless, DIR's structure can be assessed as a rather typical Italian concrete structure of the 1960s, featuring a hollow brick infill clad with facing bricks to emulate Danish architecture. This approach required masons to lay each facing brick by hand, preserving the traditional craftsmanship. This technical choice was not the only option available to Italian masonry. An alternative would have been to use walls of tuff and lime of pozzolana, clad with bricks – similar to the approach taken by Swedish architect Ivar Tengbom, a colleague of Fisker, for the neighboring Swedish Institute.¹⁰ Nevertheless, reinforced concrete was preferred at DIR from the very beginning¹¹ and, even though the Italian Parliament had signed a tax exemption on the import of building materials from Denmark,¹² eventually the yellow facing bricks were not produced in a Danish furnace and dispatched to Italy. The project management requested Italian brick suppliers to replicate the bricks produced in Denmark at the time. Among the many samples submitted, the most successful were those manufactured by the Fratelli Proietti Santini kiln. They were then hired as the main supplier for an order so substantial that the furnace later decided to discontinue its operations. Instead, at the Foursome, the Campagnano Romano kiln was commissioned for the similar scope.¹³ As Rubino reported, the task involved laying more than 500,000 bricks

7 Charles Bossu, Rika Devos, Fredie Floré, Angela Gigliotti, Anne-Françoise Morel and Charlotte Rottiers, *Building for the Nation Abroad*, conference held at the Academia Belgica and Det Danske Institut, Rome, September 2023.

8 See the architectural projects designed and built by several Italian engineers in the second post-war period mainly deploying casted concrete, such as Pier Luigi Nervi, Riccardo Morandi, Sergio Musmeci and Eugenio Montuori.

9 See the recordings committed by Carlsbergfondet to the Danish photographer Allan Moe for the Grundstensnedlæggelsen on April, 22nd, 1964.

10 Angela Gigliotti, "Ceci N'est Pas Béton Armé: Unveiling the Backbone Behind the Bricks at Det Danske Institut in Rome," in *Urban Corporis – To the bones*, eds. Mickeal Milocco Borlini, Andrea Califano, Anna Riciputo (Conegliano: Anteferma, 2023), 94-103.

11 Kay Fisker Arkitektkontor to Rubino. Specification of the Project (1960), Det Danske Institut Arkiv, B46-F3, Rome.

12 Italian Law n. 1605 of October 28th, 1962 published on "La Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana," no. 304, anno 103 (November 29th, 1962).

13 Luciano Rubino and Inge Pedersen. "Tre realizzazioni di Inge e Luciano Rubino," *L'Architettura – cronache*



Fig. 1: Det Danske Institut i Rom, Accademia di Danimarca

by hand with recessed mortar — no small challenge for Italian masons who were entirely unaccustomed to this technique.¹⁴ Yet, they managed; they learned the “Danish way,” and once the building was inaugurated, the details of its construction were soon forgotten. For nearly 60 years, only a pervasive fiction of Danishness has endured — hidden by narratives that celebrate the facade while overlooking the structure beneath, thus perpetuating the myth of a majestic load-bearing monumental brick building that has never been questioned. (Fig. 1)

Unsung Workers: The Dream Team

Precisely the subsuming of Danish know-how and building cultures by some Italian workers — who even applied these techniques to side commissions — raises questions of authorship that require a reframing of a long-standing myth. This prevailing account has centered exclusively on renowned Danish *male* architect, Kay Otto Fisker, framing his final years,¹⁵ as a sort of ultimate recognition to a life-long eminent career. Precisely this single-author narrative has overshadowed many unheard workers. Nevertheless, the historiography of DIR cannot be limited to the genius of its renowned master. Rather, a collective process should be acknowledged in which many actions were decided on site and negotiated between multiple actors at different power levels. Thus, although a partial and concise colophon — “Formam Kay Fisker Descripsit” — is literally engraved on a travertine stone still mounted in the vestibule of DIR,¹⁶ a closer examination of the drawings’ colophon, meeting minutes, financial records, and correspondence clearly demonstrate that Fisker did not work alone. Moreover, the misconception about Fisker’s singular authorship was already being questioned at that time. During the inauguration Per Krarup — the Institute’s director during the construction — was urged to acknowledge not only Fisker but also his partner, Robert Duelund Mortensen, who had been involved as project leader from the very beginning.¹⁷ However, Krarup adamantly dismissed this suggestion. Similarly, the canonical story of the smooth transnational cooperation has also been overly emphasized. In reality, negotiating cultural values, work ethics, standards, and building techniques — let alone aligning bilateral expectations — was never an easy task. On the one hand, archival records show that decisions were made in Copenhagen among stakeholders, architects, and board members. On the other hand, the coordination of the construction was directly ensured on-site in Rome. Between these two decisional groups only few actors overlapped: Krarup and more rarely, Rubino, as the Italian project manager. It was to the latter that Fisker entrusted the freedom to organize his own team, managing both Italian workers. Rubino was also responsible for interpreting Danish instructions — often improvising and applying considerable creativity to bridge the gap between Danish expectations and Italian reality. These two aspects should be reframed, knowing that Rubino’s office, founded alongside Inge Pedersen, was running in the same years. Circling back to the hiring contract, while Rubino’s signature is dated on November 6th, 1961, the exact circumstances

e storia 133 (1966), 440-47.

14 Luciano Rubino to Carlsberg Foundation (19th October 1966), Det Danske Institut Arkiv, Box 1 – Byggesag 1966-67, Folder Green-Byggesag 1966-67, Document047, Rome.

15 Due to his passing in 1965, Fisker did not manage to see the topping out in Rome and, likewise, many key actors died between 1962 and 1967. To mention few: the same Duelund Mortensen, Stig Iuul — the former head of Carlsbergfondet the philanthropic fund that generously supported the construction of the building — and Leonardo Parducci — the Italian contractor — all passed before the inauguration ceremony.

16 “HVIC ÆDIFICIO ACADEMIÆ DANICÆ AD MCMLXVII EXSTRVCTO FVNDAMENTA FREDERICVS IX REX ET INGRID REGINA FECERVNT FORMAM KAY FISKER DESCRIPSIT IMPENSAS INSTITVTVM CARLSBERGICVM FECIT” [In the year 1967, the King Frederik IX and the Queen Ingrid placed the foundations for the construction of the Danish Academy, Kay Fisker draws the shape, the economic endeavors offered by the Carlsberg Institute]. Translation by the author.

17 One of the initial drafts suggested to the director Per Krarup by an unknown collaborator was “(...) hanc novam sedem a Kay Fisker (et a Robert Duelund Mortensen) descriptam (...)” [this new venue by Kay Fisker and by Robert Duelund Mortensen]. Translation by the author. In “Iscrizione Latina,” Det Danske Institut Arkiv, Box 4 – Byggesag + Grundens – Grundstensnedlæggelsen, Rome.

of his initial contact with Fisker are still blurred.¹⁸ In an interview, Rubino mentioned that:

“Fisker was struck by my way of working when he saw some of my work in *L'Architettura* magazine. He asked one of his assistants about me, who also happened to be a friend of mine, and three days later I was invited to a meeting at his office.”¹⁹

Thanks to the digital indexing of the mentioned Italian architectural magazine *L'architettura – cronache e storia*²⁰ (LA) founded and edited (1955–2000) by Bruno Zevi²¹, one might easily verify how this circumstance is incomplete, and thus incorrect. Before the signature of the contract, in fact Rubino had penned only two articles in LA: one about a British project and another about one of his works, published in July 1961.²² Thus, the project Fisker must have seen was Casa Antonelli, a villa in the outskirts of Rome, in Via Cortina d'Ampezzo. However, the published colophon reported not “his” name but rather “their” names. In fact, it was repeatedly credited to the “architects Inge Pedersen Rubino and Luciano Rubino”. Therefore, if Rubino recalled well and did not romanticize the experience, one might assume that Fisker called “him” knowing perfectly well about “her,” Inge Pedersen, his Danish wife, his partner and the interior designer. Moreover, archival records show that Pedersen represented a guarantee that endorsed Rubino for the position.²³ It is crucial to be even more precise in relation to this collaboration: it is not that Fisker wanted to share the hat of DIR's authorship with anybody else. Fisker did not even consider his own Danish partners next to his name in the DIR's colophon²⁴ – let alone Rubino, who was contracted as employee – *medarbejder* – for two years starting on January 1962. Hiring an Italian architect or, more precisely, someone licensed to practice in Italy, was (and still is) mandatory, as architecture is a regulated profession. This requirement exists because the individual who signs the building permit is held directly accountable under criminal law. Another blurred aspect of the collaboration pertains to the linguistic skills of Rubino and the potential misunderstandings that may have arisen in translation. To shed light on this aspect, since most of the actors at stake have passed away, a crucial method has been oral history by reaching out to their heirs (i.e. second and sometimes third generation). It was during one of these meetings on April 22nd, 2022 that talking with Barbara Rubino,²⁵ daughter of Luciano and Inge, led to some unexpected findings propelled by what Carlo Ginzburg²⁶ would methodologically call the following of clues and traces.²⁷ Although the initial scope of the meeting was centered on the DIR's building site and the father's role, the daughter immediately introduced the mother as a partner in the practice of the father and demonstrated a strong knowledge about the DIR's building details, past and current maintenance issues. Therefore, since she was only twelve when DIR was inaugurated and having only been once at DIR without even participating in any public tour, it was clear that she must have read or seen something else. Once she clarified that the Rubino/Pedersen archive does not exist,²⁸ it seemed obvious that her

18 Kay Fisker Arkitektkontor to Luciano Rubino, Korrespondance med Kay Fiskers Arkitektkontor (1961–65), 1612 Bestyrelsen for Det Danske Institut i Rom 1953–75, Materiale, Pakkenr 6, Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen.

19 Masciello, “Accademia Di Danimarca,” 172.

20 *L'architettura – cronache e storia* was a monthly magazine founded in 1955 by Bruno Zevi and edited by him until his passing. It was the journalist and center left-wing politician Furio Colombo who took the editorship of the magazine until 2005 when the magazine was discontinued after 600 issues.

21 Bruno Zevi (1918–2000) was a very influential Italian architect, historian, professor, curator, author, and editor.

22 Luciano Rubino, “Casa Antonelli in Via Cortina d'Ampezzo a Roma,” *L'Architettura – cronache e storia* 69 (1961): 150–161.

23 Hans Baeberoth to Kay Otto Fisker (Date Unknown), Det Danske Institut Arkiv, B43-F1 p. 38, Rome.

24 Angela Gigliotti, “The Byggesager Dossier,” forthcoming.

25 Dr. Barbara Rubino, former Professor in Building Design in the Architecture and Civil Engineering Department at Chalmers University of Technology, Sweden.

26 Carlo Ginzburg (1939–) is an Italian historian and a proponent of the field of microhistory.

27 Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

28 The Rubino/Pedersen Archive was never established, mostly his materials got lost when the family sold

knowledge about the constructive principles of the DIR must have derived from elsewhere. The daughter mentioned the existence of the four villas in Trevignano Romano, one of which she inherited, and how these villas share similar construction details and maintenance issues with DIR (e.g. grout lines of the bricks, teak ceilings, doors and windows, chimneys...). Until then, both the significant contribution of the Pedersen agency to DIR and the “rediscovery” of the Foursome had remained completely unknown to both Italian and Danish architectural historians. Therefore, returning to Rubino’s language skills, as confirmed by his daughter: he barely spoke English and German, and no Danish, rather a “picturesque Scandinavian,”²⁹ contrary to his correspondence written in fluent Danish, most likely by Pedersen. For all these reasons, Pedersen’s agency should be formulated as that of a *ghostwriter* operating behind the scenes.

However, Pedersen was not the only architect “mistreated” by Rubino; many others shared the same fate of being silenced or unacknowledged, either by him alone, or by the two of them together. From the pages of *LA* to the numerous other publications he curated as professor at La Sapienza University,³⁰ his writing often carries a tone of criticism that verges on the judgmental. He criticized many coeval actors with sarcasm and irony, often blaming many of them in a tone that would be unacceptable today, but which must be contextualized within the cultural context of the time in which these articles were written. Rubino/Pedersen accused their architecture colleagues of “posing as celebrities” and suffering from an “intellectual drama,”³¹ while praising those who refrained from such behavior, such as the Danish architect C.F. Møller. The latter – who had partnered with Fisker in a “strongly engaged agency”³² – was praised for the contrast to Fisker as somebody “more attracted by his cultural interest in Copenhagen,”³³ meaning the direction of the Danish architectural magazine *Arkitekten* and the rectorship at the Royal Danish Academy. These assertions seem mild compared to the titles of “overpaid Nordic masters”³⁴ given to two Swedish colleagues.³⁵ Similarly, Rubino/Pedersen blamed those Italian peers who used to theorize about “everything that is above, below, beside, behind, ahead or follow, rarely ‘within’ the real work (of the architect),”³⁶ contributing with “a heavy theoretical stimulation, but not a single space, not a single object that one might have realized to get the situation better in concrete.”³⁷ That said, Rubino was remarkably generous in acknowledging and even defending his dream team of workers against accusations in any critical instances, such as when Italian workers were blamed for not respecting Danish standards. This must have driven Rubino mad, since he answered with a long letter and a full list of faults operated by the Danish counterpart and instances in which Rubino had to intervene with on-site improvisations (e.g. building structure, materiality, ventilation systems).³⁸ In this regard, Rubino showed great respect for the workers he coordinated: the dream team was composed by Leonardo Parducci (structural

the studio – something was donated to La Sapienza University after a long-life career there as tenured scholar – but also those were accidentally lost.

29 Hans Baeberoth to Kay Otto Fisker (Date Unknown), Det Danske Institut Arkiv, B43-F1 p.38, Rome.

30 Luciano Rubino collaborated with Edizioni Kappa publishing several monographic books (1980-1985) about foreign architects for an Italian audience among the many: Arne Jacobsen, Pierre Chareau and Bernard Bijvoet, Aino and Alvar Aalto, Ray and Charles Eames, Frank O. Gehry.

31 Luciano Rubino and Inge Pedersen, “Il costume danese nelle opere di C. F. Møller,” *L’Architettura – cronache e storia* 93 (1963), 180.

32 *Ibid.*, 172.

33 *Ibid.*

34 Luciano Rubino and Inge Pedersen, “La retorica del disgelo: Farsta,” *L’Architettura – cronache e storia* 79 (1962), 53.

35 *Ibid.*

36 Rubino and Pedersen, “Tre realizzazioni,” 441.

37 *Ibid.*

38 “(...) if what I described are aligned with the Danish standard, then I am confident in declaring that in each works operated by companies Parducci, Giannoli, Marconi, Rossi, Vitali, Ravogli, SICIT, SABIEM it has been, and it will always be, applied a different ‘standard’ that we can call Italian.” In Luciano Rubino to Carlsberg Foundation (19th October 1966), Det Danske Institut Arkiv, Box 1 – Byggesag 1966-67, Folder Green-Byggesag 1966-67, Document047, Rome.

engineer and general contractor); Franco Giannoli (ventilation and hydraulic engineer); Impresa Marconi (carpenter); Ditta Rossi (painter); Vitali (electrician); Ravogli (plant maintenance technician); SICIT (waterproofing roof technician); SABIEM (mechanical technician). This appreciation of his fellow collaborators extended to the point of selectively granting performance bonuses, as in the case of Salvatore Loré, the DIR's headmaster rewarded for his craft.³⁹

And so, the dedication and hands-on learning of the Italian workers at the DIR construction site is an aspect that Rubino highlighted with pride in his reports, and it is also evident in the very physical presence of the DIR as a completed artifact. Whether the Danish way was meant to be applied in any other side commitments officially unrelated to DIR – as it was at the Foursome – is what this article aims to enlighten. However, the archival material pertaining to the Foursome is very limited. Since it is undeniable that visiting the buildings alone cannot fully answer all questions about the labor force, some of these research inquiries might remain hypothetical, yet they still deserve to be formulated: who were the agents able to build as if they were Danish-trained and as if they had been in Denmark? Were they skilled or unskilled workers? What was their Italian training and profession? Was it only an exceptional case of craft virtuosity or was it a steady group that moved from DIR to the Foursome? If so, were these non-Danish actors free to operate on any building in Italy? One aspect that can surely be clarified relates to who trained and coordinated them, or better who facilitated the assimilation of Danish building know-how by Italian labor force. In this particular instance, the Rubino/Pedersen practice would have probably not succeeded without the latter's input. Therefore, although Pedersen was rarely credited in L'A by Rubino and her name appears only once in the DIR archive – on official letterhead –⁴⁰ her role deserves recognition. She was instrumental in facilitating daily communication with Danish stakeholders in Rome, ghostwriting all the correspondence and specifications that were ultimately signed by Rubino. Moreover, she played a key role in transferring Danish principles and building techniques to the Italian workers in Trevignano Romano.

From welfare to wealth: new procurement, old loopholes

A last crucial passage to contextualize the Foursome is the one related to the two systemic conditions mentioned above: the increasing demand for holiday houses among a growing number of clients and the loopholes in urban planning regulations, which were either delayed or inadequately implemented during the fifty years of Christian-Democratic government in Italy. While such conditions facilitated the proliferation of building permit approvals in highly protected natural locations – such as the area where the Foursome is situated – they also contributed to the hypertrophic expansion of holiday villa areas. This sprawl was not limited solely to the coastline,⁴¹ but extended to any area where there was a potential to build a secondary residence with a scenic view, including hilly lakesides. The Foursome can thus be interpreted as a speculative venture, a practice quite frequent during those years, aimed at boosting the land value of rural areas either unused or deemed unsuitable for agriculture due to their location.⁴² However, once a villa was built on such land, its value immediately surged.

Ultimately, the task of Rubino/Pedersen was not so different from that of their colleagues, whose wealthy clients were criticized because “the economic resources of a client are inherent-

39 Per Krarup to Stig Iuul (27 February 1968), Det Danske Institut Arkiv, Box 1 – Folder White – Byggesag 1968, Document068, Rome.

40 Luciano Rubino to Carlsberg Foundation (19th October 1966), Det Danske Institut Arkiv, Box 1 – Byggesag 1966-67, Folder Green-Byggesag 1966-67, Document047, Rome.

41 Pisana Posocco, *Progettare La Vacanza: Studi Sull'architettura Balneare Del Secondo Dopoguerra*. (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2017).

42 Alessandro Bonanno, “Theories of the State: The Case of Land Reform in Italy, 1944-1961,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 29, 1 (1988), 131-47.

ly a toxic factor.”⁴³ Rubino possessed the foresight to recognize the developments unfolding around him, even though he might not have fully grasped the profound consequences of an emerging phenomenon that has continued to affect the Italian landscape until today. At this point, it is enough to note that in many instances, particularly when clients employed less conscientious and knowledgeable professionals, Rubino/Pedersen commented those outcomes as “environment rife with haphazard conglomerations, shapeless structures, and architectural neglect”⁴⁴ characterized by “ostentatious buildings of opulence and poor taste.”⁴⁵

Furthermore, it's also essential to briefly examine how the Italian landscape reached its state in the 1960s, particularly regarding the loopholes in urban planning regulations. Two key aspects need consideration: firstly, a series of land reforms occurred (1944-1961); and secondly, the regulatory response to the repercussions of these reforms, specifically the phenomenon of allotment, known as *lottizzazione* (1962-1985). In Italian planning codes, “allotment” refers to the process of dividing land into individual portions or lots, each becoming legally distinct units in terms of ownership and requiring cadastral subdivision administratively. Essentially, through land reforms, Italy transitioned from vast agricultural plots and extensive stretches of territory (*latifundia*)⁴⁶ owned by a small number of individuals to fragmented parcels distributed among a much larger number of individuals.⁴⁷ This subdivision often occurred without adequate urban regulations to control the process. Thus, while the process of land reform was a complex but “important case of redistribution of wealth and productive capacities in a society (...) triggered by a popular demand for land in areas of high concentration of land tenure”⁴⁸ and “was crucial to the sociohistorical formation of modern Italy,”⁴⁹ it also yielded numerous political, social, and urban consequences. In the urban terms here at stake, it took almost twenty years and many debates to eventually regulate the allotment phenomenon, from the first attempts of regulation in 1962 and 1964⁵⁰ to its culmination in 1985.⁵¹ Although the Legge Sullo proposed a national planning framework for Italy at the beginning of the sprawl phenomenon, it faced opposition from large landowners, developers, and political parties concerned about potential loss of support.⁵² The significant phenomenon of allotment resulting from the redistribution of land tenure led to the fragmentation of land ownership, becoming a powerful tool for value extraction and extensively utilized for speculative gains, fostering the rise of self-made entrepreneurs. This speculative opportunity attracted both developers and some of the most renowned Italian architects, uniting them under a shared agenda of profit-driven expansion.⁵³ Consequently, it shaped the Italian countryside of today, a fact particularly evident when examining cadastral documents: the cadaster plan of Bracciano, where the Foursome is located, perfectly illustrates the allotment phenomenon (Fig. 2). Moreover, at a broader national level, questions persisted regarding the official recording of parcels, their connection to corresponding ownership, the protection of private property, and taxation based on land and property value. These issues highlight many loopholes in the legal system that persist to this day. As a result, cadastral records are often outdated and unreliable evidence, with updates typically occurring only in cases of inheritance.

43 Luciano Rubino and Inge Pedersen, “Costume danese nelle opere di Knud Friis ed Elmar Moltke Nielsen,” *L'Architettura – cronache e storia* 108 (1964), 394.

44 Rubino and Pedersen, “Tre realizzazioni,” 441.

45 Ibid., 444.

46 Bonanno, “Theories of the State,” 136.

47 Ibid., 139.

48 Ibid., 132.

49 Ibid.

50 Italian Law n. 167 of April 18th, 1962 and Italian Law n. 756 of September 15th, 1964.

51 Italian Law n. 47 of February 28th, 1985. Articles: 18 and 52.

52 Ada Becchi, “Decisione Politica,” *Meridiana* 29 (1997), 107-34.

53 See the doctoral research of Michela Bonomo, a critique of the building typology and ideology of the villa in Italy of the Postwar period investigating concepts of privilege, domesticity, ecology, and subject production at the EPFL, Switzerland under the supervision of Prof. Christophe Van Gerrewey (Lab ACHT) and Prof. Pier Vittorio Aureli (Lab TPOD).

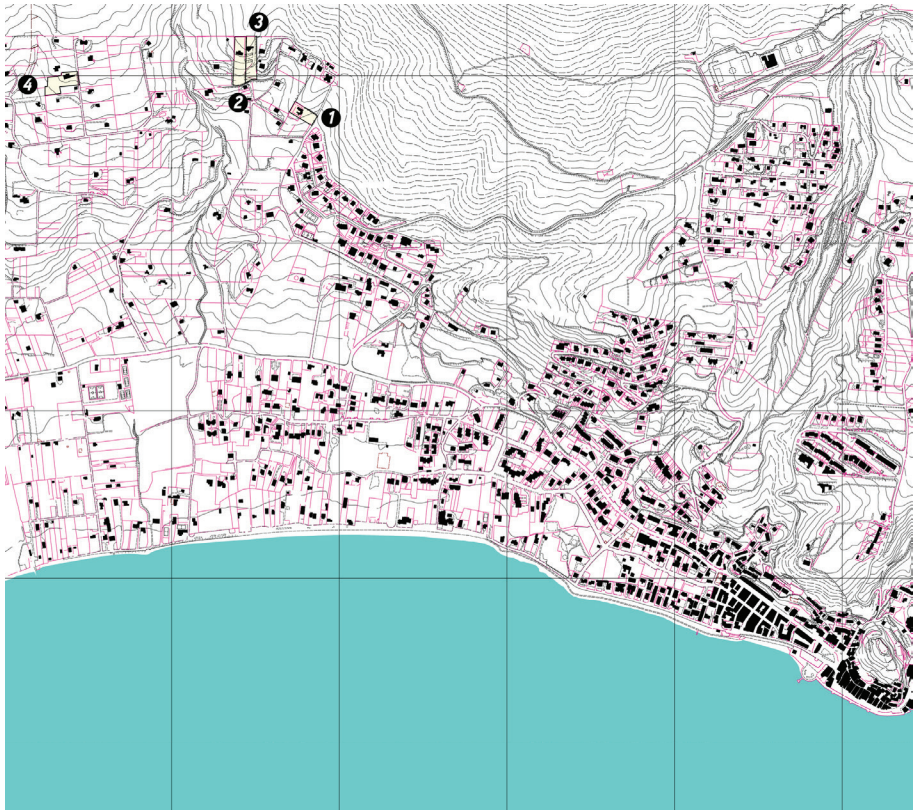


Fig. 2: The Allotment in the Cadastral Register and Location of the Foursome: Villa Schiavetti (1); Villa Rubino/Pedersen (2); Villa Lentini (3); Villa Cecchini (4)

In conclusion, the transition from Danish welfare architectural principles,⁵⁴ originally intended for the benefit of all, to their Italian adaptation primarily serving the wealthy few is not only a result of employing the same labor force (the unheard workers at DIR) coordinated by the same practices (Rubino/Pedersen), but it also involves various facilitators in the construction process (such as politicians, local administrators, civil servants within municipalities, building surveyors, and others). Operating at the local level, these facilitators enabled an over-privatization and appropriation of the fertile ground, thus altering the countryside landscape. The fact that the land properties of the Foursome were first recorded in the cadaster only on November 5th, 1984, and that the buildings – despite being constructed in the same years – appeared on the cadaster at three different times in 1969, 1987, and 1992, is noteworthy, especially considering that photos of the villas of the Foursome were already publicized as early as 1966.⁵⁵

À la Danoise: The Know-How Transfer at the Foursome

Since cadastral recordings are unreliable sources for determining construction dates, the question of which of the four villas was built first remains a mystery. Furthermore, even their

54 See Katrine Lotz and Jannie Rosenberg Bendsen, *Forming Welfare* (Copenhagen: Danish Architectural Press, 2017).

55 Rubino and Pedersen, "Tre realizzazioni," 440-47.

architectural reception offers little insight. Until recently, the very existence of the Foursome remained largely overlooked, likely due to the fact that only a few commentaries and photographs were published at the time. Nevertheless, during the same years, Italian architectural discourse experienced a sort of Nordic epiphany, a phenomenon well-documented by scholars. Nordic architectural trends were extensively at the center of the discourse in postwar Italy: first, propelled by dominant historiographers like Bruno Zevi in 1945⁵⁶ and Leonardo Benevolo in 1960;⁵⁷ and second, by many articles published by specialized art and architectural magazines,⁵⁸ among those also the ones written by Rubino/Pedersen, who presented to an Italian public three Danish architects: C.F. Møller,⁵⁹ Friis and Moltke,⁶⁰ and Kaare Klint.⁶¹ Given this context, the omission of the Foursome from the Italian architectural coeval discourse – especially at the Sapienza University's Faculty of Architecture in Rome, whose premises face DIR in Valle Giulia and where Rubino himself was teaching – stands as a peculiar case. Publishing the Foursome would have been coherent with the overall editorial line of *LA* for instance, Zevi's magazine. However, only the Villa Schiavetti was published along with a short commentary penned by Rubino/Pedersen in 1966 in a triptych along two of their other projects: another villa in Genzano Romano, again on the hilly side of the Nemi Lake, and an office refurbishment in Rome.⁶² Interestingly, on that occasion, Rubino/Pedersen also listed the involved workers in the colophon, revealing some overlaps with DIR as a blueprint, particularly the collaboration with engineer Franco Giannoli.⁶³ The other three villas of the Foursome were pictured and commented on by Rubino ten years later, in 1976, without naming them, but only as visual support for a book he co-edited.⁶⁴ Its scope, rather than contributing to specialized architectural discourse, was instead to popularize the modern lifestyle for Italian housewives, sharing insights on how to arrange a modern home. This effort was not much different from what other architects were doing during the same years.⁶⁵ The lack of coeval reception is even more incomprehensible, knowing that another close neighbor of the Villa Rubino/Pedersen and Villa Lentini is still a prefabricated wooden housing module, never transformed into a proper villa, owned at the time by Zevi himself.⁶⁶ It can be argued, then, that such neglect was initially intentional, perhaps even connected to very private reasons, but it was certainly perpetuated in academic circles.⁶⁷ The possibility of being overshadowed was something that Rubino mentioned referring

56 Bruno Zevi, *Verso un'architettura organica. Saggio sullo sviluppo del pensiero architettonico negli ultimi cinquant'anni* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1945). Zevi was the first one to acknowledge Nordic architects: the Swedish Erik Gunnar Asplund (1885-1940) and Sven Markelius (1889-1972) and the Finnish Alvar Aalto (1888-1976).

57 Leonardo Benevolo, *Storia dell'Architettura moderna* (Bari: Laterza, 1960). Benevolo included two chapters on Swedish, Finnish and Danish architecture and planning practice.

58 Monica Prencepe, "Building exchanges (1895-1953). *International Exhibitions and Swedish resonances in Italian Modern Architecture*" (PhD diss., Università Politecnica delle Marche, 2018).

59 Rubino and Pedersen, "Il costume danese," 170-80.

60 Rubino and Pedersen, "Costume danese," 386-96.

61 Luciano Rubino and Inge Pedersen, "Il precursore dell'arredamento contemporaneo danese: Kaare Klint (1888-1954) 1. Il colloquio con la tradizione (1914-20)," *L'Architettura – cronache e storia* 110 (1964), 562-66; Luciano Rubino and Inge Pedersen, "Il precursore dell'architettura contemporanea danese: Kaare Klint (1888-1954) 2. L'imballaggio come condizione del design (1930-40)," *L'Architettura – cronache e storia* 111 (1965), 632-36; Luciano Rubino and Inge Pedersen, "Il precursore dell'architettura contemporanea danese: Kaare Klint (1888-1954) 3. Dal mobile alla configurazione architettonica (1940-54)," *L'Architettura – cronache e storia* 112 (1964), 632-36.

62 Rubino and Pedersen, "Tre realizzazioni," 440-47.

63 "Impresa: Stefanelli, Trevignano Romano – Mattoni: Fornace di Campagnano Romano – Impianti idraulico e aria calda: ing. Franco Giannoli, Roma." Ibid.

64 Luciano Rubino, Gino Pugnetti and Maria Minati, *I miei libri della casa*, vol.1 (Roma: Rino Fabbri, 1976).

65 Michela Bonomo, "Rogue and Trickster: Luigi Moretti, Real Estate and the Villa Triptych," *Burning Farm* (2023), <https://burning.farm/essays/rogue-and-trickster>, accessed April 24, 2024.

66 Cadastral Plot Recording: Foglio 3; Particella 55. Cadastral Building Recording: 470. Agenzia delle Entrate. Municipality of Reference: B114.

67 Luciano Rubino and Inge Pedersen divorced in 1966. In the next years, Pedersen started a long-life close

to C.F. Møller, and one might understand how that remark may be also valid for Rubino/Pedersen's own practice:

"there appears to be a preponderant presence of other contemporaries, whose works are perhaps more easily placed within the various "isms" and critical schemes, less problematic (...), less entrenched and tenacious (...). This lack of notoriety is probably attributable to this architect's personal resistance to embracing different currents (...) he is not an easy figure."⁶⁸

This article addresses the neglect of the Foursome by examining the assimilation of the above-mentioned Danish principles and theorizing the emergence of a distinct "Rubino/Pedersen style", an Italian Mannerism *à la Danoise*. Within the framework of this "style", workers were able to reproduce Danish techniques and principles and to build the Foursome. While those Danish principles adopted by the Italian workers did not necessarily align with the Danish welfare architecture and the architect's social mission at that time,⁶⁹ the work-, social-, and culturally democratic, and horizontally oriented principles that attracted Rubino/Pedersen may help explain the high regard in which Rubino held his dream team. He noted:

"... it is necessary to emphasize the profound 'democraticness' implicit in (Danish) solutions, which raises to an equal level of dignity any type and any profession, typically expressing a society in which the choice of work no longer obeys class barriers."⁷⁰

A theorization of such new "style" *à la Danoise* is not supported by a canonical narrative (e.g. typological, functional, material...); on the contrary it introduces an alternative historiography, combining oral history and fieldwork.⁷¹ This "style" emerged not at the intellectual level, but at the productive level of the building site. In the context of this article, this new "style" is thus not methodologically related to a typological and stylistic analysis but rather rooted in the cross-cultural and transnational knowledge transfer, driven by the workers. It concerns a new mode of collaboration between architects and their clients; specific technology and materiality; new indoor domesticity and an unusual outdoor relationship with the surrounding. For the scope of this article, only the fourth one is detailed.

Seeing without being seen

The Foursome perfectly answers what Cohen formulates as "the aspiration to greater site-specificity (and how this) has necessarily implicated architecture's relationship to the landscape."⁷² It is situated in what thirty years later would become a protected zone known as the Parco Naturale Regionale di Bracciano-Martignano (1999). Specifically, the four villas are located on the edge of the forest on the slopes of Monte Riccio (419 m) and of Monte di Rocca Romana (612 m). The villas were built on different levels above sea level — 280 m for Villa Rubino/Pedersen and Villa Lentini; 270 m for Villa Cecchini; and 260 m for Villa Schiavetti. All of them face the urban-

relationship with Zevi. The bond between the two families Rubino/Pedersen and Zevi can be also reflected in the messages of condolences published on the Italian newspaper "La Repubblica" on March 1st, 2017 when Pedersen passed by Adachiara and Matteo Zevi, the daughter and son of Bruno "With sadness, affection and gratitude Adachiara and Matthew remember Inghi a woman of great dignity and courage." And also by the Fondazione Zevi that remembered her as "one of its most convinced founding member".

68 Rubino and Pedersen, "Il costume danese," 170.

69 Katrine Lotz et al., *Forming Welfare* (Copenhagen: Arkitektens Forlag, 2017), 32.

70 Rubino and Pedersen, "Il costume danese," 175.

71 Two of the four villas have been visited by the author: Villa Rubino/Pedersen and Villa Lentini thanks to the extreme generosity of the current owners Barbara Rubino, Lorenzo Iacchia and Luigia Bertelli. Pertaining the naming of the Villas, the source is the cadastral register based on the first recorded ownership. Villa Schiavetti – Cadastral Plot Recording: Foglio 3, Particella 61. Agenzia delle Entrate. Municipality of Reference: B114; Villa Lentini – Cadastral Plot Recording: Foglio 3, Particella 348. Agenzia delle Entrate. Municipality of Reference: B114; Villa Cecchini – Cadastral Plot Recording: Foglio 3, Particella 348. Agenzia delle Entrate. Municipality of Reference: B114; Villa Rubino/Pedersen – Cadastral Plot Recording: Foglio 3, Particella 60. Agenzia delle Entrate. Municipality of Reference: B114.

72 Cohen, *The Future of Architecture*, 473.



Fig. 3: Villa Rubino/Pedersen and the Lake View seen from the forest at the end of construction (1960s)

ized lakefront of Trevignano Romano and “involve a more modest definition of architectural intervention.”⁷³ This definition stands in stark contrast to the monumentality of DIR, as the Foursome instead dissolves into the wilderness of its surroundings. At times, its boundaries blur into the forest, and as it disappears into the landscape, it often becomes an involuntary host for wild tenants like foxes and wild boars. The Foursome is born to be perfectly mimetic; its green flat roofs, when left unaltered by the owners over the years, seamlessly blend with the surrounding landscape. They serve as intentional terraces, with their views carefully oriented towards a vanishing point in the water surface of the lake (Fig. 3). Rubino/Pedersen intervened with a detailed attention to the site and especially to its ecological systems, that “avoid the narcissism of overpowering edifices.”⁷⁴ The shift from DIR as a monumental project to the Foursome as an almost invisible one is activated by the Rubino/Pedersen’s respect for a delicate balance between the natural and their own artificial presence.

In their determination for understatement and anti-monumentality, Rubino/Pedersen aligned with coeval villas built on the Italian coastline by other renowned architects over the same years that, while “distancing from the technological attitude of the Modern Movement, which was seen as too close to the Fascist regime, led to the endorsement of an anti-technological attitude – close to the vernacular building practices.”⁷⁵ Such vernacular practices, however, in the case of Rubino/Pedersen were *à la Danoise*; as such, they developed a respect for the landscape and for the local building materials learning from their Danish peers. Once again, the same phrases that Rubino/Pedersen used towards their Danish colleague C.F. Møller could also apply to their own practice that

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Michela Bonomo, “Patronage as Collaboration. Dante Bini’s Villas in Sardinia,” *Dimensions of Architectural Knowledge* 3:5 (2023), 199.



Fig. 4: Villa Rubino/Pedersen and its materiality (1960s)
 Fig. 5: Villa Cecchini at the end of construction (1960s)



“... succeeded in achieving a perfect symbiosis between buildings and nature: so that the original romantic isolation has come to be transformed into a fully integrated nature-architecture ensemble that is, in itself, unprecedented and modern.”⁷⁶

The reverence for the topography and natural ecology of the site is multifaceted, reflected in the diverse relationships each villa establishes with its surroundings: through their façades and the way their volumes interact with the land; in the internal organization of spaces as dwellings; in the careful provision of privacy for inhabitants; and in the landscape design that shapes the indoor-outdoor thresholds. It seems evident from the fieldworks that Rubino/Pedersen deployed a recognizable pattern of consistent material and technological choices, which explains how the Foursome was not an isolated case. In the other two published villas (in Rome and Genzano), the authors particularly noted the speed and the simplicity of the building construction:

“rapid construction by means of a 10-cm reinforced concrete infill, cast-in-place, styrofoam cladding on cold asphalt with an anti-condensation plastic frame, interior facade of modulated wood pressings to eliminate waste. All in the simplest way possible.”⁷⁷

Similarly, for Villa Schiavetti they commented:

“we wanted to express with the utmost poverty of means and rapid execution the real possibility of establishing a (new) domestic architectural tradition based on technological exactitude and compositional autonomy.”⁷⁸

Once again it is crucial to point out an almost exact correspondence between the Rubino/Pedersen design strategies and their Danish references, in this case, Friis-Moltke's practice. The same key principles evident in the Foursome can also be found in projects built 2,000 km north in Denmark's Jutland region, where they were originally conceived. They are the “exaltation of traditional materials such as rough brick and wood, liberation of the wall box, adoption of flat roofing”⁷⁹ and the “brick walls that strictly punctuate the housing module; glazed enclosures, flat roofing, small additive wooden elements (railings, brise-soleils, floor-to-ceiling sliding fixtures); renunciation to any facile color elements (white facades, fixtures and railings made of fir protected with black impregnating stain that enhances durability): all done with the utmost fairness, and in an economic key” (Fig. 4).⁸⁰ For Rubino/Pedersen these descriptions of Danish projects composed a visual manifesto for the new Italian Mannerism *à la Danoise*. A “style” shaped first and foremost by that dream team of overlooked workers hired by Rubino and Pedersen, who adhered to their design, accepted their supervision and their coordination for the completion of the Foursome alongside the DIR's building site. As Rubino stated, their office designed “simple and highly functional solutions not only with respect to educational needs, but also with respect to local labor force and construction production.”⁸¹ In terms of educational needs, they explicitly emphasized elsewhere the importance of Danish architecture “for all European students who, though less fortunate by birth and modern traditions, can perhaps precisely because of this aspect, better draw on and even better understand the Danish architectural itinerary, and use its latent germs for an expressive revival.”⁸² However, despite dreaming of a Danish revival among European aspirant architects, in the above statement Rubino testified to being conscious of the key role of their construction workers, and thus was operating towards establishing an Italian Mannerism *à la Danoise*, not in theory but in the very practical daily management of the building site. Rubino even justified their material and technological choices as means to train the dream team: “the adoption of durable, simple and locally available materials, which can be as-

76 Rubino and Pedersen, “Il costume danese,” 175.

77 Rubino and Pedersen, “Tre realizzazioni,” 441.

78 Ibid., 444.

79 Rubino and Pedersen, “Costume danese,” 386.

80 Ibid., 387.

81 Rubino, “Casa Antonelli,” 158.

82 Rubino and Pedersen, “Costume danese,” 395.



Fig. 6: Villa Lentini from the forest (2024)

sembled by normal practice, even by small local craft enterprises.”⁸³ (Fig. 5) Lastly, circling back to the other villas designed by coeval Italian colleagues, the “style” *à la Danoise* embedded the buildings in the natural context surrounding the plots, so it was very different from those who conceived the landscape “as a tool for class differentiation, aiming to create a sense of desirability and exclusiveness.”⁸⁴ At the Foursome, neither cyclopean walls make the villas inaccessible to prying eyes, as was the case with other Italian counterparts “creating an aura of anticipation and mystery about what lies beyond;”⁸⁵ nor is non-autochthonous vegetation used to reinforce the exotic otherness of the villas. Rubino/Pedersen meticulously designed everything to blend seamlessly and vanish amidst the lake and the forest surroundings. The inaccessibility of the plots to unwanted guests is controlled by natural barriers: to the south, the villas’ elevation and physical distance from the urban setting, and to the north by their direct adjacency to the untamed forest (Fig. 6). The material chosen by Rubino/Pedersen for the thresholds between indoor and outdoor spaces enhanced their cross-scale design approach – allowing for seeing without being seen. In this way they established clear indoor-to-lake axes; adopted the Danish “use, indoor and outdoor, of white paint on both reinforced concrete and brick;”⁸⁶ or even, deployed “raw terracotta paving (...) which outside is transformed into tree slices.”⁸⁷

Conclusion

To conclude, the practice of Rubino/Pederson was a brief collaboration that ended with their divorce; yet it operated with fervent intentionality in deploying Danish architectural principles and those “durable traditional, bluntly Danish materials”⁸⁸ beyond DIR’s commission, catering to various forms of patronage, including some of the most private kind. However, with a slight distinction, everything was meticulously designed, produced, and assembled in Italy by a dedicated team of Italian workers. The *à la Danoise* “style” was thus applied at an extensive level, spanning from the smallest details to the broader relationship between domesticity and the surrounding landscape. Furthermore, these operational choices proved successful despite being directed toward buildings designed to disappear – a stark contrast to the monumentality of DIR, a transnational cultural diplomatic institution intended for public audiences and meant to host Danish researchers. When those Danish principles – reinterpreted by Italian workers – were applied to the more private and intimate typology of the single-family house immersed in nature, they demonstrated how the Foursome can also be interpreted as one of DIR’s successes in making a lasting impact on Italian culture, which has been one of its aims since its foundation. While this article presents DIR as a blueprint for the Foursome, it can also be framed as a “projet-phare” – a lighthouse project – within the broader Italian architectural discourse of the time, capable of exerting a broader influence on local architectural design.

However, it is necessary to acknowledge two shortcomings of Rubino and Pedersen’s vision of a Danish revival – and, even more so, of an exact architecture in which “it is possible to leave the completion of the interior to the client being the setting of spaces, materials, and functions so precise that it would be very difficult to distort or alter the features.”⁸⁹ The first shortcoming, at a specific level, was that the architects’ *à la Danoise* approach involved designing everything to such an extent that they even initiated a joint venture with a cabinet maker named Scandia (Fig. 7) to launch a furniture line in the same style. This approach left little room for the client’s individuality, as the gap between intent and execution allowed minimal opportunity for cus-

83 Rubino, “Casa Antonelli,” 158.

84 Bonomo, “Rogue and Trickster.”

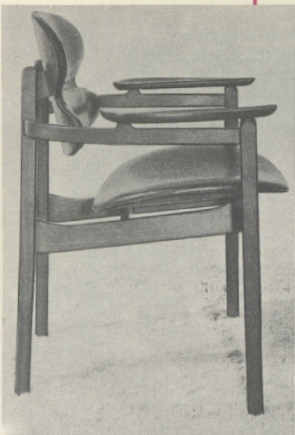
85 Ibid.

86 Rubino, “Casa Antonelli,” 158.

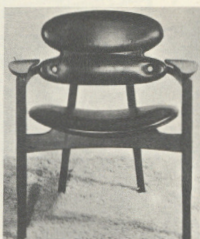
87 Rubino and Pedersen, “Costume danese,” 388.

88 Rubino and Pedersen, “Il costume danese,” 173.

89 Rubino and Pedersen, “Costume danese,” 390.



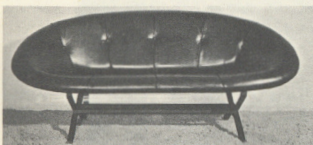
Inge
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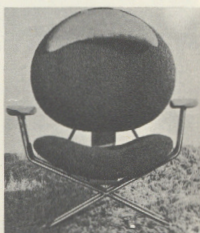
Designers a Roma



Luciano
Rubino



Pubblichiamo tre esempi della produzione della ditta « Scandia » di Roma, su disegno originale. Sia nelle sedie in legno che nei mobili in metallo, la medesima esattezza di concezione e realizzazione.



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Fig. 7: Scandia. Furniture Production implemented at Casa Antonelli

tomization. At the Foursome, most of the furniture was built-in, crafted from bricks and wood, mirroring the design of DIR. This choice even hindered the possibility to move items as basic as a sofa. Consequently, the Danish revival dream proved to be quite dogmatic in many respects. Over the years, however, owners found eccentric ways to personalize their spaces. For instance, at Villa Lentini, the clay roof tiles were replaced with a bituminous layer featuring printed tile patterns. The second shortcoming, on a broader level, circles back to what Rubino and Pedersen failed to anticipate in their design. Essentially, it pertains to the fact that in the following years the hilly lakeside and the plots around the Foursome saw an increasing number of single-family houses built and small row houses being built. These villas were designed by other architects who prioritized exploiting the later, more lenient planning and environmental regulations over maintaining precision. Rubino criticized colleagues who accepted such cheaper commissions, arguing that with the rise of neoliberalism, they were “faced with the abolition of limits; everything is feasible, everything allowed, everything welcomed.”⁹⁰ Interestingly, as the area evolved from a rural landscape into a sprawling holiday villa settlement, some of the subsequent villas replicated certain material elements from the *à la Danoise* approach, such as raw brick façades and wooden finishes. Rubino and Pedersen remarked on this phenomenon, writing that the “masonry partitions remain, the window cuttings enlivened by black wood; but it is only a method, the house does not live and, once built, one breathes there the same posthumous atmosphere of a plastic model.”⁹¹

This article has demonstrated how the deliberate effort to create architectural projects that blend into the landscape not only overshadowed key historiographical aspects - such as authorship, instances of abuse, and land exploitation - but also inadvertently popularized an aesthetic pattern embraced by various actors in the construction sector. Through this speculative approach, the *à la Danoise* aesthetic was gradually adapted and transferred from affluent clients to the broader middle class in more affordable versions. Some developers might even perceive this phenomenon as a democratization of elitist design principles originally meant at DIR for everyone, then applied for a select few at the Foursome, and ultimately reaching a growing majority of clients. However, considering the effects of over-privatization and allotment which transformed a once-rural area between the forest and the lake into a chaotic urban sprawl settlement of holiday villas - this interpretation remains highly contentious.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

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ILLUSTRATION CREDITS:

Fig. 1: Photographer: Luca Chiaudano.

Fig. 2: Diagram by the author.

Fig. 3, 4, 5: Photographer: Luciano Rubino.

Fig. 6: Photography by the author.

Fig. 7: First Published in "Casa Antonelli in Via Cortina d'Ampezzo a Roma," *L'Architettura – cronache e storia* 69 (1961), 161.