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A Total Experience: The Constructed Environment  
of Romaldo Giurgola's "Casa di Campagna" in  
Australia

Paola Favaro and Cyrus Manasseh

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# A Total Experience: The Constructed Environment of Romaldo Giurgola's "Casa di Campagna" in Australia

Paola Favaro, The University of New South Wales, New South Wales, Australia

Cyrus Manasseh, The University of New South Wales, New South Wales, Australia

*Abstract: In 2004, at the age of eighty-four, the Australian architect of Italian origins, Aldo Giurgola, designed his very first home, a country house, una casa in campagna, in Australia, in the regional inner country site, one hour north of Canberra, overlooking the extraordinary natural beauty of Lake Bathurst. A lake with a particular nature: a changing attitude, now dry adapting to the dry season, afterwards full of water to accept the rainy season. The condition of this lake with its constant mood of adapting to atmospheric circumstances raises a number of questions in relation to Giurgola's adaptation to a diverse culture and place. Arguably, la casa in campagna responds to these issues with its architectural constants of forma and contenuto.*

Keywords: Form and Content, Design, Architecture Experience, Environment Experience

**I**N 2004, AT the age of eighty — four, the Australian architect of Italian origin, Romaldo Giurgola, the architect responsible for Canberra's New Parliament House designed *la casa di campagna*, a country house as his first home in Australia. Situated in the regional inner country an hour north of Canberra and overlooking the extraordinary natural beauty of Lake Bathurst — a lake with a particular nature comprising a changing attitude which follows the seasons, often dry due to the dry season, and full of water due to the rainy season. The condition of this lake, with its ongoing adaptation to the atmospheric circumstances, would perhaps be the main quality which attracted Giurgola to choose that site. It is a site from where one can observe the environmental changes, admire the texture, the colors of its context and quietly rest the mind. Sitting on the cliff in front of the house where a stone seat is carved on the rocky ground Giurgola explained that "I designed a house, more a room, for my daughter, myself, and a dog up here on the hills of the Great Divide."<sup>1</sup> His preference for this site for his very first home raises a number of questions related to his adaptation to a diverse culture and place. Arguably, *la casa di campagna* responds to these issues with the architectural constants of *forma* and *contenuto* or following the words of the architectural historian Joseph Rykwert it creates **a total experience** through its. *conchetto, magistero, effetto*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Personal conversation with Romaldo Giurgola, January 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Rykwert, *The Judicious Eye*, The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2008, p.13.



Figure 1: Romaldo Giurgola 2006



Figure 2: Casa di Campagna

### **Brief Introduction to Romaldo Giurgola**

Romaldo Giurgola was born in Rome in 1920 and educated at the School of Architecture at Rome University where he graduated with a Bachelor of Architecture degree in 1948 *summa cum laude* (with highest distinction). He then studied architecture at Columbia University as a Fulbright Fellow, receiving a Masters in Architecture in 1951. He founded his own firm in partnership with Ehrman B. Mitchell, Jr. in 1958 in Philadelphia and together opened an office in New York in 1969. Under his leadership in design, the firm would complete a large number of projects throughout the world, with major clients including IBM in the US, Volvo in Sweden and sixteen major American universities including Princeton, Columbia, UCLA and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1969 he was appointed Ware Professor of Architecture at Columbia University, where he was also Chairman of the School of Architecture.<sup>3</sup>

### **Visiting la casa di campagna**

*La casa di campagna*, as Giurgola refers to it, has a geometric footprint of a square intersected diagonally by a wall that runs between two large trees. The geometry of this square is the main place of habitation. It is a 'room' which is covered by a stainless steel metal roof

<sup>3</sup> Extract from Romaldo Giurgola's personal curriculum vitae, Giurgola's archive.

punctured by two round dormers from where the daylight or the moonlight invade the larger living space of the house. The ‘room’ which is oriented towards the lake and the outline of the Norton Hills, is surrounded on two sides by smaller rooms looking towards the direction of the hills behind.

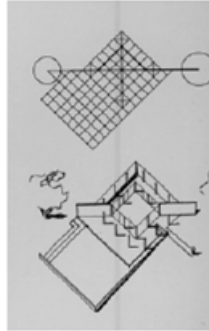


Figure 3: Plan (Source: Giurgola archive)



Figure 4: *Casa di Campagna*, The ‘room’

Two bedrooms, a studio, a bathroom and a kitchen are screened off by sliding panels dressed with colourful yellow and deep red felts.

Louis Kahn’s description of a room seems an appropriate referent here. For Kahn, “The room is the beginning of architecture. It is the place of the mind. You in the room with its dimensions, its structure, its light respond to its character, its spiritual aura, recognizing that whatever the human proposes and makes becomes a life.”<sup>4</sup> Many critics have made this connection between Giurgola’s and Kahn’s architecture. Giurgola worked with Kahn for a period of his life when he had first moved to Philadelphia, but as the former has mentioned in an interview with the architectural journal *Transition*: “Not only myself but a whole generation of American architects is indebted to Kahn”.<sup>5</sup>

The constructed ‘spiritual aura’ of Giurgola’s room and its morphological characteristics, enhances the beauty of the natural environment that would surround it. This can best be observed from the elevated position of the hill behind the house. Traversing towards the shining water-tank within the still ambience of summer time, in a particular time of the day, a late

<sup>4</sup> Louis Khan, *The Room, the Street and Human Agreement*, 27 June 1971

<sup>5</sup> ‘Interview: Aldo Giurgola’, *Transition*, Spring 1988, Transcript edited by Conrad Hamann, p. 51.

afternoon when the weather can change into a summer storm is the ideal moment to appreciate the relation of the house, this squared room, to its landscape. Strolling over rocks, barks, leaves, through ghost gums and over brownish earth, dark red, olive green, over the dryness of branches and moving between the vertical slender of white gum trees the only sound one often hears is the dry sound of steps over broken bits of dry leaves and sticks—the still landscape before the tempest. Within this zone of apparently limitless nothingness, nothing moves, or appears not to move without an apparent sign of anything having the authority to break the stillness. The only interruption is the cold metal of the water tank which creates a reassuring presence of water inside. The house from the hill exposes a perfect square—a squared stainless steel roof affected by the light and play of the colors of nature as the often mutant sky, grass and leaves reflect on to the metal roof.



Figure 5: *La Casa di Campagna*

From this height, one appreciates the geometry of Giurgola's architecture understanding how this place defines the meaning of an architecture which reveals the extent to which Giurgola has constructed his environment. From this, one is given the impression that the plateau below the hill calls for a cultural man-made gesture, for a constructed element and consequently, the pleasure of being able to frame the horizon, dry lake and far away outline of hills.

Due to this, the following questions are raised,—to what extent did the natural environment of the whole place including the wind and sun make that architecture possible? And from this, where should we be to initiate the discourse? Should we begin from the geometric shape of the square or from the small perimeter rooms with their low ceilings, which are enhanced by high framed views of the top of trees, bush, or from the double height living space overlooking the reminiscence of the lake now dry and empty?



Figure 6: Lake Bathurst

One feels that the whole of Giurgola's architectural gesture takes its shape from the landscape. The Australian landscape, described by Giurgola as "life and death, luxuriance and destruction together," is celebrated through his architecture here, which achieves its continuity between inside and outside space.<sup>6</sup> The experience of the external space is one of contemplation of the architectural form set against the vibrancy of the natural space.

Overall, the notion of a changing natural context reminds us of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus' doctrine of the 'flux and fire', which describes the view that nothing in the world is permanent or fixed or the same at different moments.<sup>7</sup> Yet, Giurgola's *la casa in campagna* at Lake Bathurst seems rather to embrace Plato's view that within the flux of ever changing elements a form does not change but endures with an undying and timeless perfection.<sup>8</sup> In this regard Giurgola's architecture reflects the spirit of Plato's timeless perfect geometrical form of the square in contradistinction to the ever-changing flux of the atmospheric conditions of the site during the day and over the seasons. Giurgola argues "*I greci dicevano cose che sono ancora valide*". (The Greeks used to say things, which are still valid.)<sup>9</sup> Through this architecture, Giurgola validates the spirit of ancient Greek philosophy making universal ideas related to human nature and its relation to the natural and built environment. From inside the house, one can sense the multiple impressions of the land and its relation with the architectural space through the rectangular frames of the openings.



Figure 7: Fred Williams, 1970 Rectangular Guaches of Bega (Source: Zdanowicz)

<sup>6</sup> *Migrant Architects and Their Contribution to Australian Culture and its International Significance*, workshop organized by Paola Favaro, 21 June 2007 UNSW, Sydney Australia.

<sup>7</sup> In Greek philosophy's pre-Socratic period Heraclitus had observed, that everything is flowing and is in a perpetual flux believing that there was a unity in the world which came from its diversity. See Russell, B., *History of Western Philosophy*, Routledge, 2001, p. 125.

<sup>8</sup> Although influenced by Heraclitus, in some ways Plato was critical of his doctrines and would show his love for a static universe. For example, Plato states in the *Timaeus* that each form should "...always be called the same because it never alters its characteristics. For [a form] continues to receive all things, and never itself takes a permanent impress from any of the things that enter it...". Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, Penguin Classics, translated by Desmond Lee, Middlesex, 1983, p. 69.

<sup>9</sup> Personal conversation with Romaldo Giurgola, January 2006.

These openings frame the landscape in such a way that invites a comparison with the landscape paintings of the Australian artist Fred Williams. In particular, Williams's 1970s oil paintings of gum trees, and his series of rectangular guaches of Bega.<sup>10</sup> In Giurgola's case his rectangular canvases frame the real bush. While the landscape at Lake Bathurst can be defined as changeable, it is at the same time, according to Fred Williams's description of the Australian landscape in general, also 'monotonous'. In 1978 Williams, during an interview with Australian National Gallery curator, Irena Zdanowicz argued: "It's perfectly true, [the Australian landscape] is monotonous... There is no focal point, and obviously it was too good a thing for me to pass up... the fact [that] if there's going to be no focal point in a landscape [then] it had to [be built] into the paint..."<sup>11</sup> Yet Giurgola's architecture appears to confer a focal point to the 'monotonous' Australian landscape—a distinct geometry formed by a square plan, a triangle roof, a diagonal rectangular wall and the two circles of the dormers.

Here on this hill, in front of the geometry of the *casa di campagna*, listening to Giurgola's utterances regarding 'his Australian landscape' and the problems of living in the Australian bush, the lack of water, the difficulty of reaching the telephone line up to the house, being far away from other properties, relying on the car to reach the first village, one cannot stop wondering why he had decided to build his first house in this place?

### **Adaptation Place/identity/culture**

For Giurgola, who would move from Rome to the United States, living in Philadelphia and New York working in various cultural contexts—American, European, Asian and central Australian the practice of adaptation would be something innate. In his conversations, Giurgola always suggests that adaptation is part of being Italian, "It is the result of historical circumstances, of the many adaptations of Italy to so many different political dominations. We had the French, the Spanish, the Austrian domination... so it is not difficult for us to adapt to new aspects of life."<sup>12</sup> This special ability to adapt is comprised of many different things including his sense of identity, of belonging to a certain place and a culture. The writings of Rappoport and Christian Norberg Schulz during the 1970s, and 1980s, had questioned the significance of place/identity/culture to architecture.

Norberg Schulz noted in his 1977 lecture entitled '*Dwelling, Participation, Place* that: "To dwell implies belonging to a place and that place is in fact used to define one's identity. Hence we say: 'I am a Roman', or 'I am a New Yorker'. To be on the earth means to be 'located', and human identity presupposes the identity of the place."<sup>13</sup> For Martin Heidegger, in his 1951 lecture, *Building Dwelling Thinking* 'dwelling' etymologically means to stay in place, that is, it is related to defining locale, belonging to a place and sharing its particular intimacy and intimate space in terms of 'indigeneity'. Yet this notion of dwelling, can be challenged and tested through Giurgola's life and work. As he originally came from Rome then lived and worked in New York, it begs the question whether he should be described as

<sup>10</sup> Irena Zdanowicz, Stephen Coppel, *Fred Williams: An Australian Vision*, The British Museum Press: London, 2003, p. 96, 108.

<sup>11</sup> Irena Zdanowicz, Stephen Coppel, *Fred Williams: An Australian Vision*, p. 77.

<sup>12</sup> Personal conversation with Romaldo Giurgola, June 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Christian Norberg Schulz, lecture *Dwelling, Participation, Place*, International Laboratory of architecture and urban design-association of European and American Architecture Schools, Urbino, 1977.



Roman or New Yorker? As he now lives in Canberra, would this also make him a ‘Canberrian’? Certainly Giurgola’s life experience makes Heidegger’s and Shultz’s propositions increasingly difficult to accept and are their propositions still valid in 2010? Arguably, Giurgola’s sense of adaptation and the place/identity/culture convergence seem to answer this question. In a general sense, and through history, in the settlement process of an immigrant there is a continuous (re-)negotiation of place, identity and culture. But this triple convergence doesn’t, perhaps reveal the full story or explain some of the more subtle mechanisms in the settlement process of an immigrant architect.

### Place/making/culture

To be sure, Giurgola’s *la casa in campagna*, belongs to that place in which it stands—to Lake Bathurst, to Carrawang as the aboriginals call the land. And one can’t dismiss the fact that he also now belongs to Canberra and in particular, to its country-side. In September 2006, while driving along gravel roads after his 86<sup>th</sup> birthday lunch in an old house transformed into a restaurant in the beautiful setting of Collector, near Lake Bathurst, Giurgola would tell the story of the site of his work, and the stories of the people, of the locals who live here. In doing this, he would recount that he belongs to this site, and that he fully knows what to expect from the changing aspects of the land, is part of its landscape, and is familiar with its secret paths, its local history, the hotel that inspired the well-known Australian writer and poet Henry Lawson’s story<sup>14</sup> and with the routes that would surround the best views of Lake Bathurst and its nearby hills. His feeling of belonging, which is to find oneself at home, is the result of his contribution to the ‘making’ of this particular place. Adaptation to a place and its culture seem to run parallel with the concept of ‘making’ that place and culture through architecture. From this assumption, the place/identity/culture triple convergence or proposition is challenged by another proposition the place/making/culture convergence proposition.

In relation to this Giurgola states that: ‘I found myself at home in many places. I feel at home in every place where I have my work and where I work with a culture.’<sup>15</sup> In the same spirit for the last twenty years he would make Australia his home. Among the most significant buildings he would design in Australia during this period are the New Parliament House in Canberra (1987), St. Thomas Aquinas Parish Church in Charnwood (1990), the Red Centre, University of New South Wales 1997, John Niland Scientia Building also University of New South Wales (1999), Adelaide University’s South Campus (2003) and St. Patrick Cathedral in Parramatta (2004).

<sup>14</sup> Henry Lawson, (1867-1922) *The Lost Souls’ Hotel*, Short stories.

<sup>15</sup> Personal conversation with Romaldo Giurgola, February 2002.



Figure 8: Canberra Parliament House 1987 (Source: Giurgola Archive)



Figure 9: St Thomas Aquinas Charnwood 1990



Figure 10: St. Patrick Cathedral Parramatta 2004

In observing this, however, questions arise,—should Giurgola’s architecture be described as Australian? Does his sense of identity now arise from being located in Australia since his life is certainly not typical of an immigrant architect who had decided to leave his country to find better opportunities in another place? Always working at an international level, he has lived and worked in very diverse contexts, places and cultures adopting Canberra as his home from 1988. Much has been written about his architectural contribution to so many diverse urban and natural spaces around the world, to the extent that he once described himself as the ‘victim of globalization’.<sup>16</sup> Yet his story is different from those architects who design in different places. Rather, he physically assimilates himself into various cultures, and in a

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<sup>16</sup> Personal conversation with Romaldo Giurgola, February 2002.

sense, ‘becomes the place’ he constructs his work in. Because of this, his life seems more similar to that one of a ‘nomad’.

The notion of a nomad, who moves from one country to another as a continuous traveler, adds another component to the triple convergence theme or proposition of place/identity/making. This aspect of the immigrant architect as nomad can be analyzed through Robyn Davidson’s ‘No fixed address, nomads and the fate of the planet’.<sup>17</sup> In this article Davidson celebrates the nomadic culture for its humanistic qualities:

The world [of a nomad] is approached as a series of complex interactions, rather than simple oppositions, connecting pathways rather than obstructive walls. Nomads are comfortable with uncertainty and contradiction. They are cosmopolitan in outlook, because they have to deal with difference, negotiate difference... They are less concerned with the accumulation of wealth and more concerned with the accumulation of knowledge. The territorial personality—opinionated and hard-edged—is not revered. Tolerance, which accommodates itself to things human and changeable, is. Theirs are Aristotelian values of ‘practical wisdom’ and balance. Adaptability, flexibility, mental agility, the ability to cope with flux. These traits shy away from absolutes, and strive for an equilibrium that blurs rigid boundaries.<sup>18</sup>

The nomad feels at home everywhere by not being attached just to one country. Their story is made of constant change, adaptability, restlessness and an enthusiasm for the ‘accumulation of knowledge’.<sup>19</sup> The immigrant architect in this case is not a local, he does not embrace regionalism as his doctrine and the conditions of his story fit with the idea of a nomadic existence.

Arguably, this relates to the case of Giurgola. Davidson’s words and the role she gives to the aforementioned Aristotelian values can be applied to understanding Giurgola’s story and architecture, raising two questions—one related to Giurgola as an individual, the other, to his architectural language. Interestingly, Giurgola’s personality is also not territorial, opinionated or hard-edged, but tolerant, balanced. His identity is perhaps aligned with what can be called cosmopolitan modernity and rather than being ‘located’ in one place he is related to the world. What perhaps has been missed by some critics is his sense of wisdom, serenity and certainty, which transpires and radiates from his projects, writings, lectures and conversations.

### **Giurgola’s Humanism**

It could also be argued that if one is to create a superior architecture, one requires an extraordinary amount of self-belief in order to generate and transmit it to the clients, collaborators and consultants. Giurgola has been successful because of the confidence, serenity and ability he has for describing his architecture and inspiring confidence in others.<sup>20</sup> This perhaps derives from his sense of himself as an individual ‘located’ in the world in general as his architecture does not struggle always to be endeavouring to say something, nor does it appear

<sup>17</sup> Robyn Davidson, “*No fixed address, nomads and the fate of the planet*”, Quarterly essay, issue 24, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Davidson, “*No fixed address, nomads and the fate of the planet*”, p. 49.

<sup>19</sup> Davidson, “*No fixed address, nomads and the fate of the planet*”, p. 49.

<sup>20</sup> Personal conversation with Romaldo Giurgola from February 2002.

to attempt to create a particular polemic, but rather, his architecture is able to furnish what people need to inhabit as the inhabitant, and the human being is always Giurgola's central concern.

In a recent symposium, related to Giurgola's work promoted in Sydney by the Institute of Architects, a shared belief among various architectural critics is his particular humanist approach to architecture.<sup>21</sup> His 'Platonic' geometry, as it were, the timeless shapes of his rectangular, square and curved formal designs of his small buildings, towers, and other innumerable more complex buildings, are primarily concerned with their inhabitants. In this regard, Giurgola's designs are grounded in the humanist philosophy of the Renaissance cultural movement, which had revived an interest in ancient Greek and Roman thought by positioning the human being as an essential and central essence.

### **Does Giurgola Humanism Conclude here or can we go Beyond this?**

By circumventing the distinction between aesthetical and empirical values Giurgola's architecture adopts a humanist approach adapting deep into the place itself, contributing to the making of that place with a great sense of ease. His descriptions of his projects, assure one of the basis of his ideas with the charisma of someone that has a consistent vision. His humanist approach or classicism, derives from his recognition of what people wish to inhabit and his designs touch upon universally human aspects, which are also fundamentally architectural. The inhabitants, the viewers and visitors can identify with his architecture, with its space and with its ethos in the many countries around the world where he as an itinerant, 'nomadic' architect 'makes' his architecture. In fact, because he has an intuitive ability for being able to identify broadly with a universal human aspect, we contend in our paper, that his architectural language is related to the universal order of architecture. The place/making/nomad proposition originates from the fact that the eternal state of the nomad relates to someone who journeys with his baggage.

Kevin Lynch's 1988 publication *What time is this place?* further helps us to understand this idea of the nomad who carries his baggage, his goods with him, moving physically to a different place, yet travelling with the ideas of what a particular environment and its culture means, in his mind. For Lynch, "Changes caused by migration to a new environment are more apparent than those caused by disaster—but not for the nomad, who moves about a familiar territory in a regular cycle, carrying with him his goods and his society and thus changing only part of his environment and in unchanging way."<sup>22</sup>

### **Forma and Contenuto (Form and Content)**

According to Giurgola, as an immigrant itinerant architect, this baggage, as described by Lynch as unchanging goods and society, consists of a series of constant architectural principles that can be defined as universal, which are mediated with the new environment and thus the architectural language of local expressions. Giurgola noted at a workshop held at the Faculty of Built Environment at the University of New South Wales in 2007 that "...the external

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<sup>21</sup> Tuesday Talk, 5 September 2006, promoted by RAlA, NSW Chapter: "*Romaldo Giurgola: Departing, Arriving & Arriving yet again*". Speakers: Peter Kohane, Harry Margalit, Stephen Burstow and Ann Cleary take a look at Giurgola, his work and his life. Introduction by Gevork Hartoonian.

<sup>22</sup> Kevin Lynch, *What Time is This Place?*, The MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1988, p. 215.

form, the appearance of a building related to the place, thus changes according to the context, and the form adapts to the local situation. On the other hand, the *contenuto*, the content, in the buildings remains a constant factor in architecture in any place and culture, thus, the *contenuto* is universal.” According to Giurgola, the term *contenuto* holds more than the English translation of content and he is always concerned that English elucidations may not easily always grasp its entire meaning. *Contenuto* in Italian implies the tangible materiality of the inner space as well as the more intangible message, a more profound meaning contained inside the external form, appearance or style.

Through his innate understanding of this Giurgola goes straight to the truth of the project, apprehending the essence of the architectural space and capturing in his being the *contenuto*, from the beginning of the design process, knowing that from this the form, the external solution will no doubt emerge.

In the preface to *The Judicious Eye* (2008), the English architectural historian Joseph Rykwert writes about a threefold process which the artist/architect moves through when producing a work of art and of the ‘**total experience**’ that the viewer/user is also exposed to in relation to it. First comes the *Concetto* (the product of the artist’s intellectual *habitus*); second the *Magistero* (the craft of mastering); third the *effetto* (the relation of the artist or architect with the viewer or visitor).<sup>23</sup> Rykwert’s critique of avant-garde artists/architects is based on the simple statement that the *effetto*, the third step of the threefold sequence, is the only real concern of many contemporary artists and architects and that the *concetto* and *magistero* have certainly been excluded from the process of a current architectural style that Rykwert defines as ‘the Emirate style.’<sup>24</sup>

Yet from looking at Giurgola’s *la casa in campagna* it would seem that it adheres to Rykwert’s threefold process of *concetto*, *magistero* and *effetto*—Giurgola’s house was conceived for cultivating *otium* away from the *negotium* of the busy society. In relation to the process of *concetto*, *la casa di campagna* has been associated with Palladio’s *Villa Rotonda* due to the way the house “is located on a platform that opens up to the landscape in much the same way as the *Villa Rotonda* embraces and gathers up its surroundings”<sup>25</sup> and to Palladio’s reference to the form of the temple as a precedent. But at the same time, *la casa di campagna* has been associated with Le Corbusier’s villa Savoye as its overall centrality has been dismissed for a diagonal layout.<sup>26</sup> Giurgola’s house challenges the second aspect—the *magistero*, by adopting the typology and the craftsmanship of the Roman house and in particular the definition of the atrium. “The atrium of a Roman House” as modernist Finnish architect Alvar Aalto has suggested “at the same time forms the termination of the entrance area and the central space of the whole house. Its ceiling is the sky and the roofed rooms inside open up towards it.”<sup>27</sup> The complete building, in Giurgola’s case, is the atrium and the lower roofed rooms along its two perimeter sides which open up towards it. Aalto can assist here again, “The visitor who enters this room immediately gets a clear idea of the entire internal construction and room arrangement of the home. This hall is completely unfurnished,

<sup>23</sup> Rykwert, *The Judicious Eye*, p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> Rykwert, *The Judicious Eye*, p. 370.

<sup>25</sup> Haig Beck, Romaldo Giurgola: RG House, Lake Bathurst, NSW Australia, UME17, p.2, 2004.

<sup>26</sup> Beck, Romaldo Giurgola: RG House, Lake Bathurst, NSW Australia, UME17, p.10, 2004.

<sup>27</sup> Goran Schildt, *Alvar Aalto, the Early Years*, Rizzoli: New York, 1984, p.218.

but the furnishing of each room in turn can be glimpsed through the open doors, produced by the required feeling of warmth.”<sup>28</sup>



Figure 11: *La Casa di Campagna* The Interior ‘Room’

Giurgola’s *magistero* is visible in his choice of the main structure comprised out of his selection of specific materials and collaboration with Australian craftsmen. The ‘room’ has a glazed steel frame structure while the exterior walls of the small rooms, continue the modular repetition of the main structure, made out of stained marine plywood. Other details include the pivoted Huon Pine door by Tasmanian craftsman Kevin Perkins and the specific choice for Jarrah timber and Silver Ash used for the kitchen and studio counters. Within the third aspect of Rykwert’s proposition, the *effetto in la casa di campagna* is the search for immutable forms which hold on to the timeless architectural shapes against the ‘mutable landscape’ of Lake Bathurst.

From this, we can see that perhaps even paradoxically, via even contradictory motions—Giurgola’s work helps to create perceptual changes in us—where time, sound and matter create this **total experience**. To achieve this, Giurgola’s architecture comprises an assemblage of various dynamics, sensations and aspects such as other corporeal and spiritual dynamics sensations and information, which transform and liberate the spiritual conditions of his environments so that the locale (while the country is often isolated) no longer exists in isolation because all our senses are affected. Therefore, from this, we may conclude that Romaldo Giurgola’s *la casa di campagna* and its simple geometric form, the simplicity of the scheme, its *contenuto*, its internal distribution of spaces, the reductivism adopted in this design, serves only to promote the fact that the whole construction is more than the sum of its parts achieving a ‘**total experience**’ within the Australian environment.

## About the Authors

*Dr. Paola Favaro*

Dr. Paola Favaro is a graduate of the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia (IUAV) and she has more than twenty-five years experience in architectural practice and education in an international context. She holds a PhD in architecture from the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. As a sessional academic at the Faculty of the Built Environment, architecture program, Paola teaches architectural design, history and communications. Her recent publications include the book *The Contribution of Enrico Taglietti to Canberra’s Architecture*, (co-editor Royal Australian Institute of Architects, ACT Chapter, 2007).

<sup>28</sup> Schildt, *Alvar Aalto, the Early Years*, p.218.

*Dr. Cyrus Manasseh*

Dr. Cyrus Manasseh is an experienced Sydney-based writer, musician and academic, and is author of the book *The Problematic of Video Art in the Museum 1968-1990* (2009). He is a specialist in art, architecture, film history and critical theory. He has published numerous articles and essays on aesthetics, film, video and museology and has presented his research on film, video and spatial aesthetics in international forums in Venice, Prague, Sydney, Beijing and at Harvard University. Dr. Manasseh lectures in the School of Design at the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia. His publications include 'An Inquiry into the Design and the Aesthetics of the Venice Biennale Pavilions' 'The Art Museum in the 19th Century: J. J. Winckelmann's Influence on the Establishing of the Classical Paradigm of the Art Museum', 'Changing Museum Environments: Global Articulations of the Video Text [1968-1990]', 'The Cairo Museum, the National Museum of Athens, the Ancient Iran Museum and the Louvre: Curatorial Practices from East to West and Back', 'Connecting disciplines and tracing an educated imagination', *Art, Language & Machines: the Interrelationship between Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia & Raymond Roussel (under Roussel's spell)*, 'Art without the aesthetic?: Defining conceptual & post-conceptual practices', 'From Passive White Cube Viewer to Active Black Cube User: Tracking Changes in Museum Environments via Installation Art', 'Playgrounds of Disturbance: Bruce Nauman's "Existentialism" in a Modernist Gallery Space & the Problems of Analogue Video Art in the Gallery'.





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