

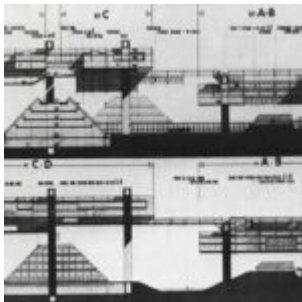
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

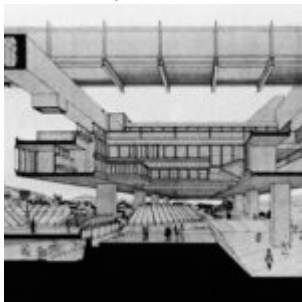
PELLEGRIN

Rick Meghiddo · Wednesday, May 20th, 2020

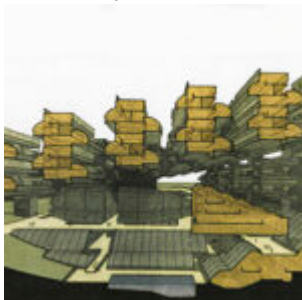
Luigi Pellegrin was a visionary architect for way ahead of his time. He realized that the human settlement, as created 35,000 years ago, must be reset now at a geographic scale and become an integral part of the planet. His vision transcended Wright's philosophy of organic architecture both in scale and time. His fantasy was grounded on a prolific professional practice and experience in prefabricated technology. His territory was that of the Earth's crust. His history was the history of the universe. It is my belief that bringing Pellegrin's work to public awareness during the time of global illness and uncertainty is important for the re-invention of a post-pandemic world.



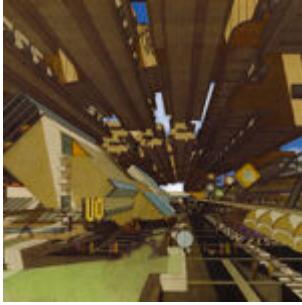
University of Barcelona Competition, 1969



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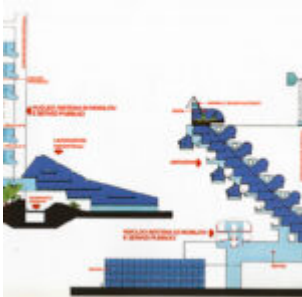
Palermo – Zen Neighborhood Competition, 1970



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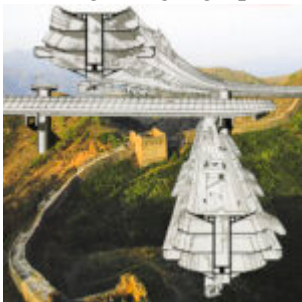
Palermo – Zen Neighborhood Competition, 1970



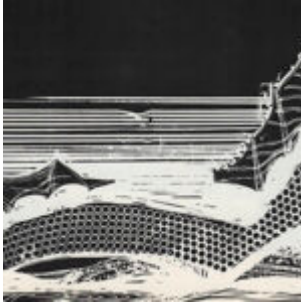
Studies for Housing



Housing at a geographic scale



Housing at a geographic scale



Vision of integrated habitat

The 20th Century produced a large number of highly skilled architects, yet few with a transformative message. Le Corbusier's social program utilized exposed concrete – *béton brut* – as its basic material. He saw the detachment of buildings from the ground as a way of expanding green open spaces; Frank Lloyd Wright's interpreted the laws of nature, including human nature, and translated them into Organic Architecture design principles; Buckminster Fuller transcended land use by endorsing a planetary vision of geography; and Paolo Soleri attempted to demonstrate an alternative human habitat by creating a walkable, social city that could meet the needs of future societies. Pellegrin, the least known of this small group of thinkers, believed in process and in open-minded architectural research.

PROFILE

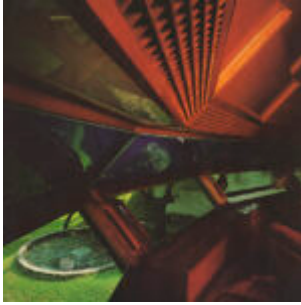
Throughout his professional life, Pellegrin's architecture was an expression of his will to change the world from the bottom up. He studied architecture at the University of Rome, but, fundamentally, he was a self-taught person, an acute observer of reality, visible or hidden. For him, Wright was not only a genial architect but also a thinker that transcended the Judeo-Christian and Greek philosophies that dominated Europe. Wright understood Buddhism and Taoism, Japanese art, and pre-Columbian civilizations. Wright believed in exploring the highest and best use potential of materials and technologies. He would have understood Pellegrin's innovative productivity.

Pellegrin's work habits were anomalous. He worked until 4:00 AM, seven days a week. His teaching method was indirect, not explicit. He gave clues to stimulate self-discovery through hard work. He thought that artists understood the world better than architects.

WORK



Bi-family house, Rome, 1964



Bi-family house, Rome, 1964



Apartment building, Rome, 1966



Schools



School



School – Buon Pastore



Two unified high schools, Pisa, 1972-75



Two unified high schools, Pisa, 1972-75



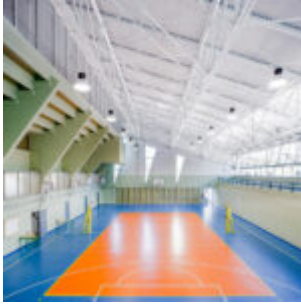
Two unified high schools, Pisa, 1972-75



Two unified high schools, Pisa, 1972-75



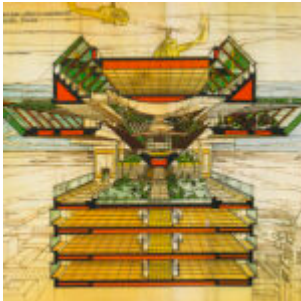
Two unified high schools, Pisa, 1972-75



Two unified high schools, Pisa, 1972-75



Mixed-use, San Antonio, Texas



Mixed-use, San Antonio, Texas



Emergency Housing

Pellegrin assumed his social commitment through the design of popular housing and schools. His first period, 1955-1965, is characterized by a poetically organic approach to design on low budgets and simple construction materials. Yet his artistic creativity, constrained by limited programs and regulations in the design of public works, exploded in the design of the via Aurelia bi-familiar house in Rome (1964). The traditional box is crushed. The round living room is suspended in space like a bridge and rests on two multi-functional pilasters. The bedrooms, enclosed within triangular prisms, are perforated by windows that direct views and light as needed. This is an organic architecture expression, not-mimetic of Wright's style.

During the 1965-1976 period, Pellegrin turned his social commitment toward education through the design of prefabricated schools. From kindergartens to high schools, he laboriously invested most of his energy in the design of articulated interior spaces, even when, given limited budgets, he had to simplify the buildings' exteriors.

The accumulation of knowledge and creativity in prefabricated technology generated a gigantic

design-jump in 1969, with the International Competition for the Design of the New University of Barcelona. Pellegrin's concept had no precedent. He designed the common areas, such as libraries, sports facilities and cafeterias on the ground, and suspended from the top, above these, classrooms to be used by the students as a circuit. The project won second prize. The jurors were not ready for such an outbreak.

The spatial concept for the University of Barcelona leads to another revolutionary project in 1970. The subject was a design competition for the ZEN Cardillo neighborhood in Palermo. While the ground was dedicated to commercial, social and cultural activities intertwined with green areas, the housing for 17,000 inhabitants was suspended in the space 30 to 90 feet above it. The structure was defined by 30 hollow pylons supporting the housing above, and its total footprint was 35% of a conventional project for the same number of inhabitants.

The ideas for the Barcelona and Palermo projects found their way in the design competition of two unified schools in Pisa, which he won. The program was complex. His design concept included the roof as a ramp that would become an open space accessible to the neighborhood; flexible classrooms on the top, and on the ground floor all the common services that could be used by the neighborhood when the classrooms were closed. It was a design way ahead of his time that was misunderstood by its users. Conservative teachers and city authorities asked for its demolition which was fought by many committed architects.

During the twenty-five years that followed the Pisa school building, Pellegrin's prolific production moved in three parallel directions:

1. He continued to design and build prefabricated schools. It is notable to observe that out of 300 built buildings he produced, 200 were schools, 72 of which were built in Saudi Arabia.
2. He focused his research on the industrialization and mobility of components (roofs, walls, column-beams, residential tubes, emergency housing units) in many materials (concrete, aluminum, steel, fiberglass, bamboo.)
3. He expanded his research on integral urbanization at a geographic scale (habitat, services, commerce, mobility) through multi-directional and multi-use "vectors." These complex structures were elevated like freeways not only over country fields, mountains and historic places without altering them but also over artificial islands in the sea.



Design of jewelry



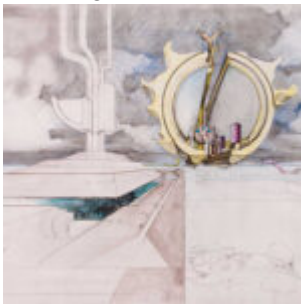
Design of jewelry



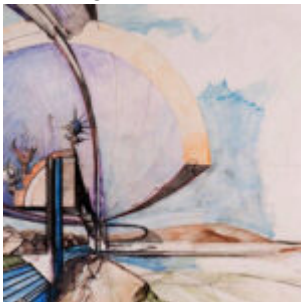
Wolverine CAMERA



Drawing



Drawing



Drawing



Drawing



Drawing



Drawing

DESIGN FOR A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

Pellegrin's message for the re-design of the world has become more tangible now than ever before. The tragic pandemic has created the conditions for a radical transformation of life on Earth. The young generation of architects and those following it would benefit in studying Pellegrin's work thoroughly, not as a template to copy but as a way of thinking. I can't be objective, and I don't want to be objective. My relationship with him expanded through an arch of thirty-two years, first as my tutor and then as a fatherly-brotherly counselor and critic. Yet I know that he opened a road in the right direction.



Luigi Pellegrin

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