From Within: Redefining Domesticity and Cultural Heritage

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i. present in person (with a written paper)

Abstract (300 words):

‘From Within’ explores the tensions between the planning of the modern dwelling and the patterns of inhabitation of its domestic interiors, providing a more nuanced reading of culture and the past in the context of domesticity. It focuses on existing, inhabited modernist housing estates and places itself within the current discussion around the value and future of these buildings. This is a present-day concern since due to their age and pressing interests around land use, there is a push for the renewal of the city fabric and their subsequent demolition. However, some of them are considered of cultural value and are protected under heritage status. This paper will, therefore, positions itself within the current debate around the heritage value of modernist housing projects, proposing new criteria for the assessment of significance of modernist heritage and its interiors, filling the theoretical gap between the preservation of material and immaterial heritage. This gap has been defined as the ‘paradox of preservation,’ i.e. the paradox
of a static, architectural object with an emotional or historic value versus a changing demand and continuous, everyday life transformations that affect, in this specific case, domestic interiors. The ‘intangible changing factors’ that are at the core of such changes are culture, identity, traditions and rituals, to name few. These are the lenses through which patterns of inhabitation will be analyzed. In fact, there seems to be a discrepancy between the modern lifestyle proposed at the time and the manner in which these architectures are occupied nowadays: the traditional figurative code of interiors persists within the domestic layout as the appropriation of its interiors replicates traditional structures, rituals, and forms. In specific, domestic objects will be seen as the elements of connection between the architecture and the individual, bridging the gap between material, architectural heritage and immaterial, cultural values.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Francesca is an architect and PhD candidate in Architecture at the Royal College of Art (RCA) in London under the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Scholarship. She is Fulbrighter and alumna of the Harvard Graduate School of Design with a Master in Design Studies in Critical Conservation, degree with Distinction. She previously studied at the Architectural Association (AA) in London (MPhil Projective Cities), the ENSA Paris-Belleville and graduated in Architecture with Distinction from Sapienza University, Rome. Francesca is currently working as Research Assistant (RA) at the RCA, and previously worked as Teaching and Research Assistant in both Harvard GSD and Sapienza University. Her research work has been presented at the New England chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians (Boston University), at the ICOMOS conference “Places of Memory” held in Florence and at MaXXI in Rome. She has published in architecture journals such as the AAA (Associazione Nazionale Archivi di Architettura), AArchitecture, Open Letters, Masks and Oblique. She has also been invited as guest critic at the AA, RCA and the School of Sustainability (SOS).
Francesca is interested in the history, theory and philosophy of architecture, in architecture/art criticism and curation, in preservation and conservation theory and practices.