

POLYTECHNIC OF TORINO
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Honors theses

Reima Pietilä: inquiry about some works

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The choice of studying Reima Pietilä (1923-1993) is founded on the importance that his work had in the definition of the characteristics of Finnish Architecture after Alvar Aalto's death. The thesis suggests four keys of reading, which are considered at the same level for their importance.

The first key lets define the most important moments of the Finnish Architecture during the twentieth century and it points out the plural contribution both cultural and architectural, which characterized the Finnish debate, since the Pavilion at the Paris World Fair in 1900 to the most recent projects made by Leiviskä and by Heikkinen-Komonen. It lets place also Reima Pietilä in this debate, without reducing the importance and the influence of Alvar Aalto.

The second key lets read the Pietilä's architectural culture, searching the University period, the relationship with Aalto and his theoretical approach, in his cultural reference models and in his not univocal relationship with the international architectural debate.

For Pietilä, each everyday experience is functional to think and produce Architecture. We tried to evidence Pietilä's *modus operandi*, which suggests a circularity of the knowns between practice and theory, through a cyclic proceeding way, the so-called "*Writing - Exhibition - Projects - Building Cycle*". For this reason we made a comparative study about the Reima Pietilä's theoretical contribution and the most relevant works of his professional career, like the Finnish Pavilion at the Brussels World Fair (1958), the Kaleva Church ('58-'66), the Students' Center Dipoli ('61-'66), Suvikumpu Housing ('62-'69), the project for Kuwait ('70-'82), Hervanta in Tampere ('74-'79), the Lieska Church ('79-'82) and the Finnish Embassy in New Delhi ('63-'85). We searched into his interest in Morphology of the form, that is one of the most important *red thread* in his poetry, the basis of his whole work.

In a second moment we study the connections between the Pietilä's theoretical researches about form morphology and the ones by Aulis Blomstedt and Le Corbusier about Modulor. For this reason, we investigated the collaboration between Blomstedt and Pietilä during the Fifties, that has its top in the foundation of the review *Le Carré Bleu* in 1958.

The third lets us define at least partially, the uncertain boundaries in the Reima Pietilä and his wife Raili Paatelainen Pietilä's (1926) roles - Raili and Reima Pietilä Arkkitehdit Office (1960-1993)-, their collaboration appears equally distributed between them and it is essentially based on the integration of their specular creative personalities and the sharing of the same architectural ideas: we always deal with the professional activity of the Pietiläs, never with just one of them.



Raili and Reima Pietilä in the 60ies - photo from Pietilä Archive

The last but not least key, lets analyze the fortune of Pietilä Office in Finland and at an international level, in particular in Italy.

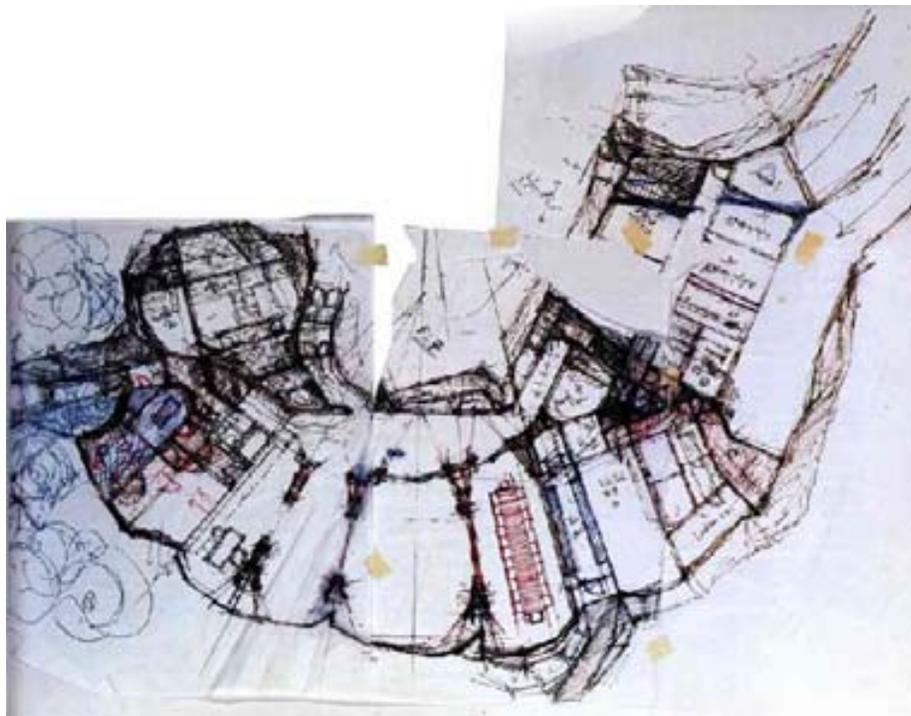
At last, we analyze in details three Projects made by Pietiläs, like the Main Library in Tampere, Metso (1978-1986), the Official Residence of the Finnish President, Mäntyniemi (1983-1993), and Vesterinen Villa (1980-1986).

The choice of these three Projects is motivated, first of all, to establish connections among the latest productions made by Pietilä Office. Then, they are significant examples; Metso is the first project, the most complete, accurately documented by Pietilä; Mäntyniemi is the most important competition of their professional activity, and Vesterinen Villa is a particular element in their production: a private purchase.

The analysis is on the whole project development, from the first sketches for the competition to the final realization.



Main Library in Tampere, Metso, 1978-1986
Aerial View



Official Residence of the Finnish President, Mäntyniemi 1983-1993
Sketch of a part of the Plan

To conclude, we evaluate the Pietilä's work, ordered in a regesto: a catalogue of all their works, since 1958 until 1993. The appendix includes also the hole index of the Exhibitions made by Pietilä Office since 1960 to 1985, a Raili Pietilä biography, the index of the review *Le Carré Bleu* since 1958 to 1995, and a Glossary of Names, which includes a summary of the professional life of Finnish architects, mentioned in the thesis.

The thesis is completely translated in English, but in the Italian version there are three articles, still unpublished in Italy -the translation in Italian of two Reima Pietilä's texts, "Morphology of Expressive Space"(1958), "Genius Loci: personal interpretations" (1982), come from Pietilä Archive, and "Space Garden"(1971), in the version that Pietilä used as a reference guide during his lessons at the Technology Institute in Oulu.