

POLYTECHNIC OF TORINO
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Toward a play space

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“Toward a play space” represents an experience through creativity, the planning “with” and “for” children, the architectural composition, the contemporary discussion about playgrounds.

This experience developed in four phases:

- the research;
- the planning of a space “for” children;
- the experimental laboratory conducted “with” the children;
- the project of a play area in an urban park of Turin.

The research concerned:

- playing and its pedagogical, psychological and social values;
- creativity, analyzed through different approaches (in psychology; through the analysis of the works of Gianni Rodari, Bruno Munari, of the didactic method used in the day care centres of Reggio Emilia, the working methods of the participated planning.);
- the industrial and artistic production of play equipment;
- the contemporary research about playgrounds and their deep need of renewal.

The travel to Scandinavia has been very helpful for our research.

The collaboration with SITREC, Stockholm International Toy Research, at KTH of Stockholm, allowed us to observe a great number of recent and different playgrounds.

The direct dialog with people working in the fields of architecture, design, pedagogy, sociology, industrial production of play structures, developed in us a critical sense and provided us stimulus for the future planning.

As much the research as the planning are based on continuous analyses of the materials found and the ideas produced through grids of interpretations based on some elements that we have identified as “ingredients” of planning: the archetypes of space, the operations of architectural composition, the senses.

A collaboration with the “*Laboratory of the sustainable town for children*” of the Municipality of Turin, permitted us to lead a pilot laboratory about composition with a group of children of the play center “Drago Volante”.

During the first part of the laboratory, children took knowledge of the natural area of the project, through an exploration based on the use of all the senses and with a particular attention paid to shapes, light, and movement. In the laboratory, the children made an exercise of composition using the materials they captured in the park and other ones given to them: through their personal interpretation of the reality and the confrontation with the architects they realized material compositions with different levels of abstraction.



Afterwards we applied another time our grids of interpretation to the compositions of the children.

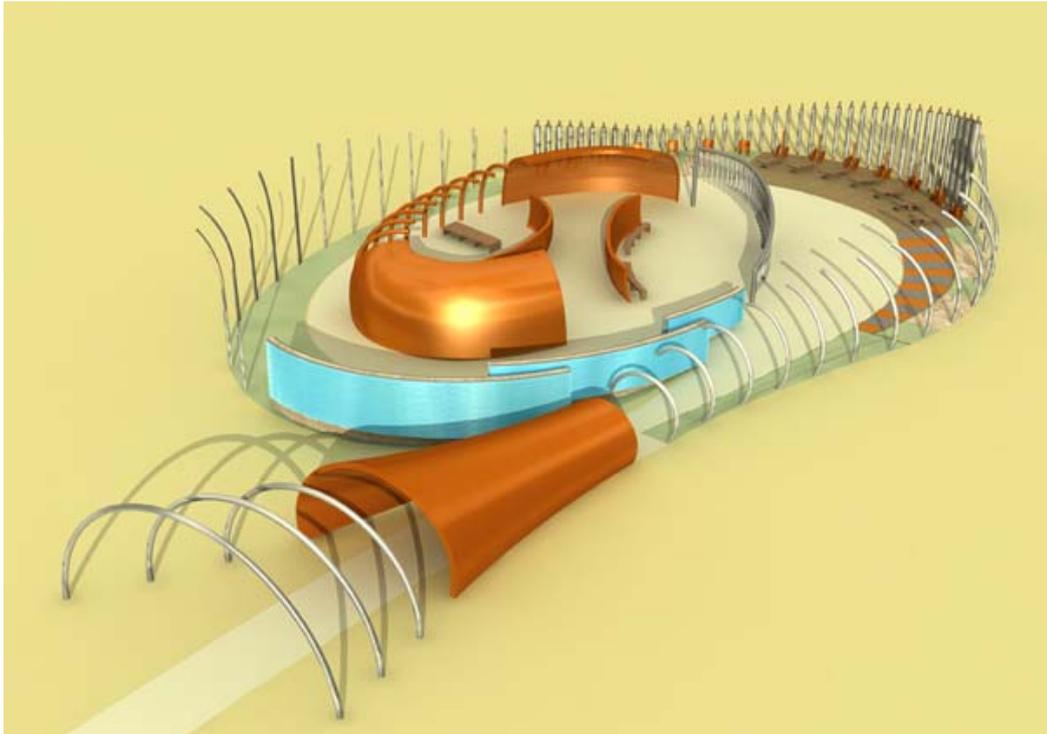
The final project derived from the elaboration of the main elements emerged from this analysis joined to play functions and architectural values.

Planning with children helps the architect to rediscover his own creativity as a never ending process, free from stereotypes.

The project showed that it is possible to keep a link of continuity between the child creativity and that of the architect.

In this process the technical problems linked to production and safeness do not represent a limit to the expressive potentiality of ideas, but an “income datum” of the system.

This planning method has led us to get over the concept of “playground” and to plan a “*play space*”: metamorphic, that stimulates all senses, comfortable for people of every age and gender, that allows the interaction with the surroundings, that help the imagination grow.



Thanks to a convention stipulated between the Association KIWANIS INTERNATIONAL of Turin, the Polytechnic of Turin and the Children's Hospital Regina Margherita of Turin, we realised also a project of improvement for a children therapeutic space.

The elements of innovation of this project are:

- the fragmentation of the spatial isolation that characterizes the department of the hospital: the project wants to create more communication between the spaces of the stay in hospital and those of internal distribution of the department and between the units (rooms). Obviously in the total respect of privacy.
- The diffusion of spatial elements that the child can transform and move, that stimulates the imagination and all the senses, that transforms space in something metamorphic.
- The project of a space that lets the child running away from suffering, even if only for a few time, through the use of creativity and imagination: the abstractness of the graphics lets the child give different interpretations to space.



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