

POLYTECHNIC OF TORINO  
FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE 1  
Degree in Architecture  
**Honors theses**

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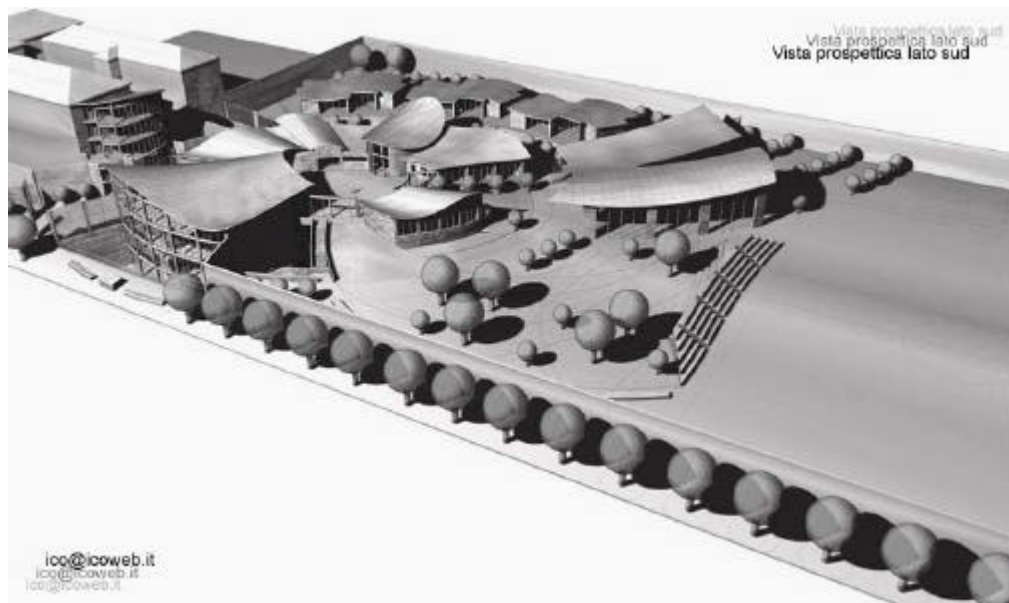
**House of Arts: a project for a sheltered juvenile centre**

by Enrico Moiso

Tutors: Sergio Santiano, Cesare Burdese

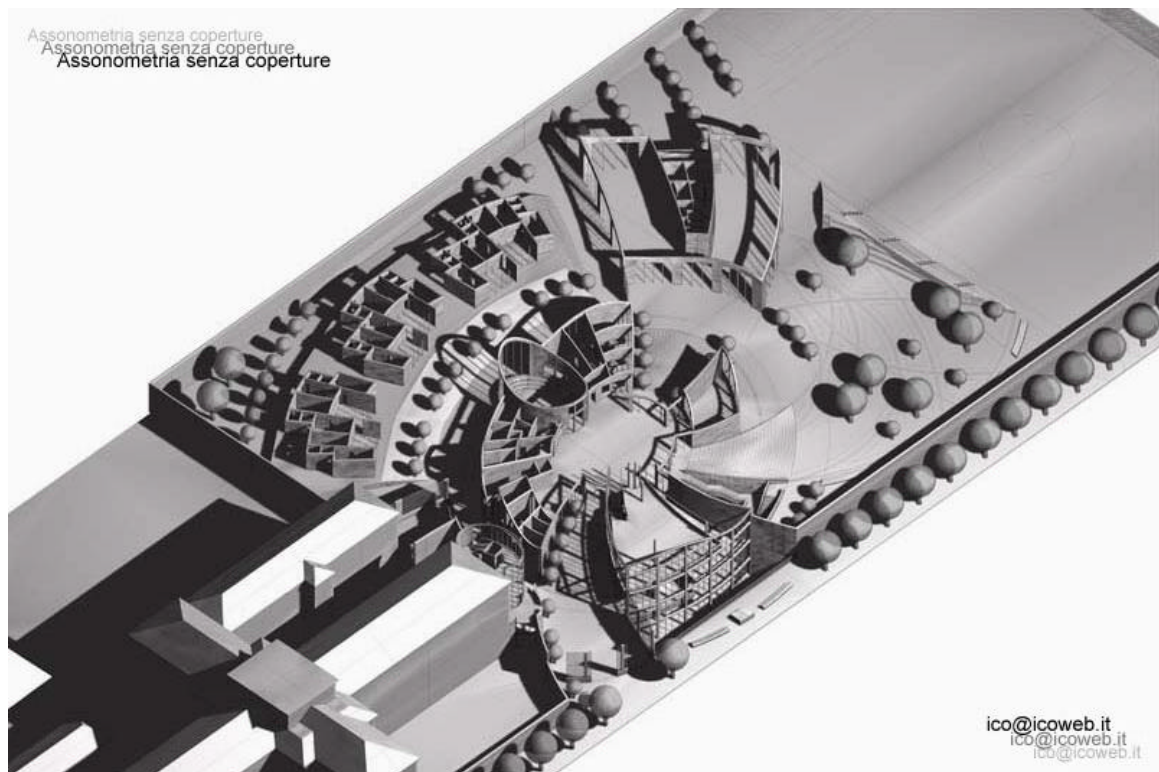
The project characterising the present thesis regards the young offenders' institution of Turin, named after Ferrante Aporti, and aims to develop a new *multifunctional area* within the reformatory, in order that new recreational activities are hosted in its available free spaces. In this way, a part of the *outside* artistic world gets *inside* such a closed structure, providing potential modes of expression into a detention centre. The reason for this choice is partly connected to the very good results deriving from the cultural project "*Arte contemporanea al Ferrante Aporti*" (Modern Art at the Ferrante Aporti), based on an idea by Mr. Cesare Burdese. This project dates back to October 1996 and was organised by VELAN-Torino under the direction of Mr. Vezio Tommasinelli with the cooperation of four artists like Santo Cinalli, Pier Luigi Meneghello, Fabrizio Sibona and Eraldo Taliano, who took on the task to create works with the participation of the convicts. Artistic production was obviously followed by a public exhibition, the latter being eloquently commented on by one of these "infant artists" as follows: "For the first time I had the impression that people coming from the outside did not look at me as an animal inside a zoo". Perhaps, for the first time in his life, that boy had had a chance to regain his own self-esteem, undoubtedly useful for his redemption.

These necessity and desire result from a clear necessity to update the facilities destined for the rehabilitation of people under age – such facilities being unfitted for their aims. This lack is evident in both juvenal penal institutions and detention centres for adults.



By *Casa dell'Arte* (House of Arts) I mean a place that already is or is eventually going to be fitted out for permanent activities that are carried out by the boys of the Ferrante, on the one hand, and for occasional events, such as temporary exhibitions and theatrical plays based on their works, on the other hand. This also entails the provoking practice of interrupting some activities inside the Ferrante, to which convicts regularly participate - such as the work carried out in the machine shop, the latter being used to repair the vehicles owned by the Municipality of Turin.

The area including the different artistic activities has to be "shareable." The formal image of the intervention may be visualized as a wedge bursting forth through barriers and gates and allowing everybody to go *in* and *out*.

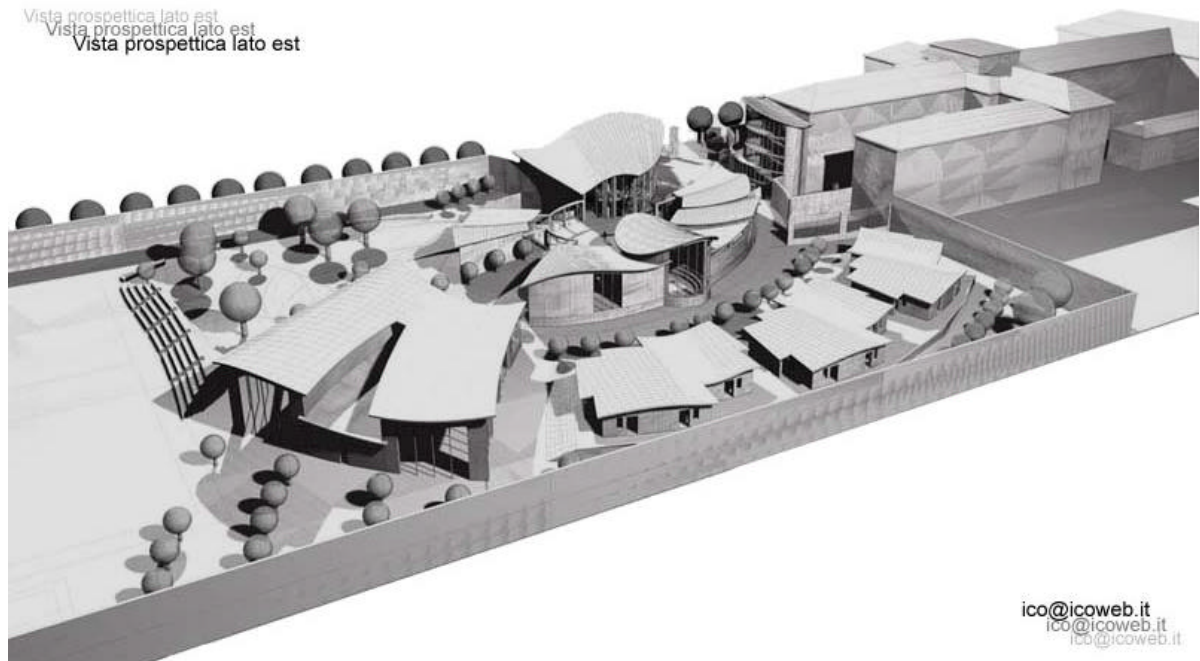


Carrying on the project, I chose to re-design a "fenced-in" area situated within a complex of autonomous buildings, which are strictly connected to each other. In order to do so, I decided to link the whole complex to the outside, thanks to the creation of a "shape," breaking the monotony and severity of the existing structure, that tears the existing fencing wall. The elliptical basic form thus becomes autonomous and breaks up in a whirl of curve lines. As a consequence, its development on the East-West axis aims to provide a longer exposure to the sun. This planimetric lay-out matches with the buildings hosting the elementary school "Collodi", located in the adjoining block, and clearly demonstrates the intention to break with the traditional town-planning rules. As a result, this complex, on the one hand, and the street line and unremitting axial line (formed by the surrounding blocks) on the other hand, are not symmetrical.

All this has to do with the desire to construct something different from a simple architectural setting. This project therefore aims to produce a higher positive influence of the building on its users and to provide an additional architectural section

that underlines the changing will and attitude and does not need to merge into the previous landscape, as the former was not there before.

A further significant idea regards the physical division between day and night activities that helps convicts achieve a psychological detachment from the state of forced standstill, when they are allowed to leave custody and to participate to the artistic productions.



High walls definitely prevent people from escaping; yet, they also fend off those "free" individuals who would like to get to know and understand other realities. If we desire to improve the whole society, we should first try to improve the areas devoted to rehabilitation practices, so that the whole city is also led to get involved into such a process spontaneously.

On the one hand, my project suggests that attitudes toward juvenile penal institutions should change, as these are not mere places of confinement, but they are basically places of recovery of the self. On the other hand, it aims to make people socially aware of this problem. I firmly believe that only a place that stimulates fantasy and provides a lot of artistic input can contribute to the rehabilitation process.

*[...] Rudolf Steiner noticed that lie and crime in a society are the consequence of a lack in artistic stimuli; [...] the former tendencies might be eradicated in an environment made up by shapes and spaces inspiring vital stimuli.*

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