

#MAESTRO



The term “Maestro” derives from the eponymous Italian word meaning “master” or “teacher”. It also refers to mentoring and respect. Not surprisingly, it is often applied to visual artists, musicians, and – above all – conductors (hence the image of Arturo Toscanini in this announcement). Today, the role of the conductor has changed. The same is true of such musical notions as rhythm and ‘tempo’. For one thing, the aura of a single, authoritative (sometimes even authoritarian) figure on the podium has dissipated in favor of other, more open and creative forms of teaching, leading, and rhythm-giving.

The architectural journal ‘Il Quaderno’ invites paper submissions on the manifold connotations of the word “Maestro” in this field of the visual arts. Rather than focusing on “dead masters” we seek contributions that creatively reflect on the idea of the “Maestro”: as a teacher, for instance, as a form of inspiration, and as a way of learning. The “Maestro” can thus be either a person (a teacher by profession or by vocation, if not both at once), a mere idea or an experience as well.

In their project titled “Cultura Materiale Suburbana”, Superstudio met with a seventy-year-old man from the Tuscan countryside named Zeno Fiaschi. In many respects, Zeno was an ordinary person (a farmer and a craftsman). Yet, he proved to be – at the same time – an extraordinary mentor, showing Superstudio experts a whole series of local tools and materials. The latter were all meant to serve practical purposes, not for display. More importantly, they were all based on (and, as such, the product of) centuries of ‘vernacular’ knowledge and experience.

The following question thus springs to mind: “Who is your Zeno?” Is it someone from the academia or a teacher in a broader sense, not a ‘professor’ strictly speaking? Maybe someone who operates outside of schools and conventional teaching institutions? Besides, is a “Maestro” a person to begin with? Or could we think of a city – or even a landscape – as a “Maestro”?

We suggest that all architects, architecture students, faculty, and other members of the community be seen as teachers and scholars. In many ways, teaching is a kind of magic, a form of trust between teachers and students (whose roles may be interchangeable and, in doing so, become reciprocal). To a certain extent, the magic relates to the idea that we can only guess what the future will be like. Similarly, in this case, trust relates to the idea that a “Maestro” must be convincing (even charismatic) in his or her ability to challenge students to imagine a distant, very different future.

Rather than seeking laudatory, hagiographic pieces, we are interested in thoughtful, playful, and critical contributions that approach the notion of “Maestro” from new, innovative perspectives. Submissions can take the form of scholarly essays (3,000-4,000 words long) or shorter reflections documenting particular episodes of ‘intersections’ with a “Maestro” figure. Essays can also be of a visual kind, experimenting with still frames and documentaries that work together with various forms of creative writing. All papers must be original contributions. They must be written in English and should not have been published before. They will all go through a peer review process. The ones selected will be published in the forthcoming issue of ‘Il Quaderno’, the ISI Florence architectural journal. Authors will be fully responsible for securing image rights and covering any related costs. All contributions must be sent by email to the journal’s editor-in-chief, Professor Franco Pisani, at fpisani@isiflorence.org. Files must be in Rich Text Format (RTF); all images should be in 300dpi (JPEG format). The submission deadline is October 1st, 2017.

Il Quaderno - the Architectural Journal of the International Studies Institute, ISI Florence, is a peer reviewed topical journal published twice a year which features and collects original contributions and ideas on architectural education.

