

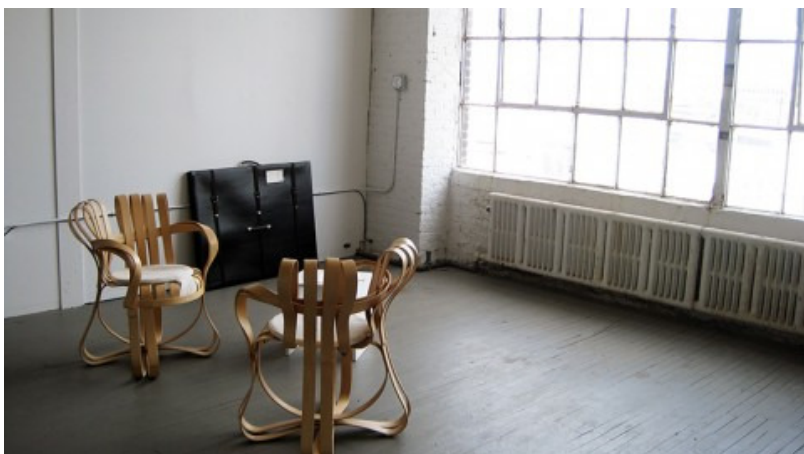
The architecture is research. Interview with Elisabetta Terragni.

Scritto da [Marta Veltri](#) | lunedì, 12 agosto 2013



The architecture is research. Interview with Elisabetta Terragni Written by Marta Veltri | Monday, August 12, 2013 ·

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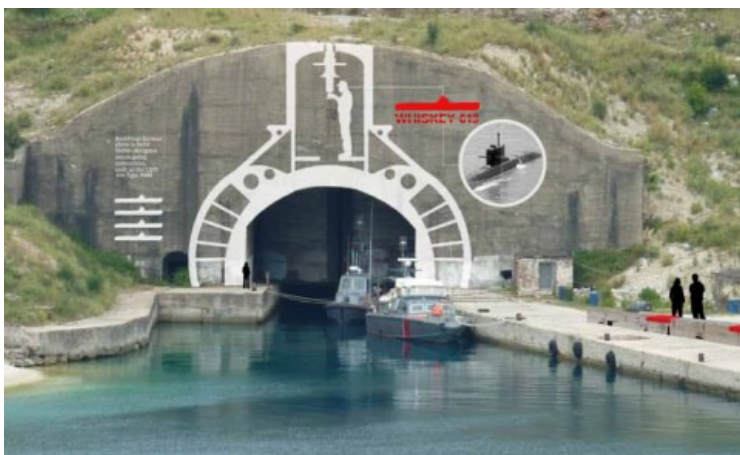


View Elisabetta Terragni and the study of Kurt Forster with chairs designed by Frank Gehry-Bogart Building, New York, 2013

First, What is Draw? It's an acronym that stands for Architecture Design and Research Writing and gives its name to the studio that I opened with my husband Kurt: he is a historian of art and architecture, I am an architect and I teach. The idea is to launch research that may become architectural projects, but also something else. We arrived in the U.S. in late 2007, at a time of severe crisis that has collapsed, were looking for a place to have our library. In America there is a strong possibility of doing research: you are an interesting idea, looking for a sponsor and you have the

freedom and the ability to write, the basic idea of Draw is that the architecture is not the individual building - for me it has never been - but a collaboration and integration between different fields that cross each other, and can become a platform for other disciplines. For now we only Kurt and I, but we would like to grow and bring in other studies in our path, to set up new projects, as indeed we are already doing.

What projects? What are you concentrating on at the moment? Kurt is working on a book about Schinkel. I'm writing an article for *Perspecta*, the journal of the faculty of architecture at Yale University. The theme of the number is *Money* and they asked me to write an article on *visual studies* of ancient coins that I'm carrying on through the creation of a *cast* of coins on contemporary architecture. It is an intellectual pursuit but also fun, because you have to re-invent the thing from scratch. I'm also working on a publication on Albania, which is part of a wider research, which began with the design of the museum on the Cold War in the submarine base for submarines of Porto Palermo. Publish the book now, for me, is to take a step forward in this research, and in the meantime the project goes ahead of New York, Harvard University, Milan and Como. I'm also about to launch - with Toni Griffin, director of the J. Max Bond Center in New York - a new research on the *Legacy Cities*, designed as a city whose populations have declined drastically. We have just proposed a parallel research on Detroit and Rome. Rome, after the end of the Roman Empire, has grown from two million to fifteen thousand inhabitants, covering an area of 18 million square kilometers and Detroit has the same ratio of area and population. We wanted to understand, making overlays, what it means to have a transition of this kind. I am interested in the gaps, the *gap*, not before or after, so I think that this is the perfect theme.



Elisabetta Terragni - Project of the Museum of Gjiri or Panormes: Porto Palermo, Albania - Courtesy Elisabetta Terragni

Let's go back to talk about the project in Albania and Porto Palermo. part of the new project is called *No Concrete Project* and is on the same site as the Cold War museum in Porto Palermo. It is twenty-four military facilities abandoned, and our proposal is to put them back without conservative restorations, which in this case would be absurd, in my opinion, but to reuse them as support facilities and hospitality - a hostel, a restaurant, a school of sailing and more - while maintaining the appearance of ruin and military base. The idea is to work with light and reversible elements of metal and wood, in some cases by inserting them inside, from

one side or the other of the structures, in other still not intervening own but creating paths that pass through, as if were any archaeologies. I think it's very nice to leave the walls of the structures as they are chipped and damaged, are very attractive. Also for this project, such as Porto Palermo, there is a strong graphic component: we are using paints that capture sunlight during the day and release the colors at night: The concept is to cultivate the darkness as the theme of the project within the a museum. It is very difficult to work in Albania, are destroying the coast building with concrete everywhere, and it is an extremely delicate political-historical moment (we have just had the elections), but we just handed the feasibility of the projects so complex and advanced to convince anyone, by the military government to the people.

At what stage is the project? The second phase is the executive, if you do it will take a year to accomplish everything. I wanted to bring *No Concrete* and *Porto Palermo* at the same level, so if you are part of the two projects will be implemented together. Even the graphic apparatus will be uniform: the paths and signage will be unified from any access, by sea or by road. The curator is Jeffrey T. Schnapp, director-founder of the Stanford Humanities Lab, who oversaw the Galleries of Piedicastello in Trento. I conceived *No Concrete* graphic enough to deliver it to "empty", we have now finished the first part and we passed to Daniele Ledda, our graphic designer, who "clothe." no longer work without Daniel, with whom I became very friend. When I presented the project for the Museum of *Porto Palermo* Festarchhof Perugia, two years ago, Pippo Ciorra asked me who the graph, and from there came the collaboration with the Maxxi Ledda, with the realization of the product graph exhibitions of *Italy by Le Corbusier*, *Re-Cycle* and *Energy*.



Elisabetta Terragni - Fifty - Salone del Mobile 2013

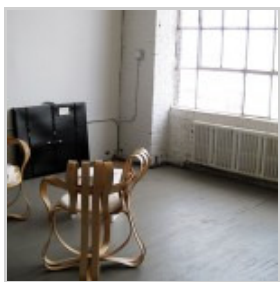
In April, he presented at the Salone del Mobile Fifty, a collection of Fifties style handles of Officine Meccaniche Porro and outcome of his research *Twist and Shout*, which was conducted in collaboration with the company. There speaks? For me it was a beautiful work, in which it was possible to combine the research and work in the workshop. *Officine Meccaniche Porro*, with the acquisition of the company Enrico Cassina, also inherited hundreds of prototype handles and me commissioned a survey of documentary and a part of research has been done in the State Archives in Rome and another in trade

magazines of the fifties, which opened a window on this period in my opinion very attractive. The fifties were a period of crisis in a series of values, in which the emergence of new ways of seeing things, a little 'in parallel to what is happening now. Besides the obvious aesthetic and architectural interest of the handles, it was interesting to try to understand the dynamics of that period, what happens when everything collapsed, there is no money and you have to reinvent a new way of working. After the first part of the research, published in *residential*, we started working on ergonomics and the birth of the discipline, starting from *Designing for People*, a beautiful book based on body movement - albeit with a confidence eternal in the machine definitely *passée* - written by American designer Henry Dreyfuss. We are now developing a second piece of research that investigates the movements of the muscles of the body rotation of the hand, which are activated with the opening of the handles. *Officine Meccaniche Porro* is a very serious matter, the whole chain of production is internal to the firm in Italy, exporting to over twenty countries and are very engaged in the research area. The third phase of work will be in the autumn, the presentation in New York, and has already been presented in Paris.

Let's talk about his experience of teaching at the City University of New York. What are the differences between teaching in Italy and in America? My experience of teaching in Italy dates back more than twenty years ago, as an assistant to Enrico Mantero at the Milan Polytechnic. After I no longer taught because it was impossible, I went for a course of Museum lasting one semester. I must say that the quality of students is the same, but in Italy there are the tools to have the same education that you can have in America: I have here twelve students, is another world. With students in Italy I worked a lot in the course of Museum we found parts of the Museo di Castelvecchio, we collaborated

with the Center Palladio, at the same pace that I have here. Confrontation is not sustainable even in terms of funds but the real problem in Italy is that they allow you to do research. I have gone mainly because I had enough to make a conference publication, but the university did not want to because I was not structured: this gives you the idea of the Italian paralysis. I remain a consultant, America, evaluations of research in Italy. Since I have been here I have learned that I have to write a lot: any American university asks you to produce much. Teaching well here is normal, otherwise you teach, but I always ask for a report on my activities outside of teaching, which is a bit 'approach opposite to that of the Italian university, where if you do something you sawing the legs.

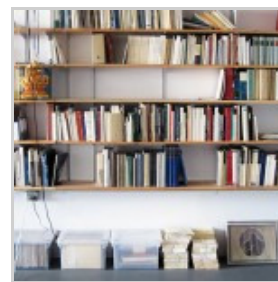
Marta Veltri



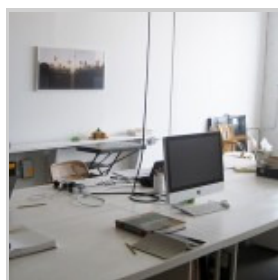
Veduta dello studio di Elisabetta Terragni e Kurt Forster con le sedie disegnate da Frank Gehry- Bogart Building, New York, 2013



Veduta dello studio di Elisabetta Terragni e Kurt Forster – Bogart Building, New York, 2013



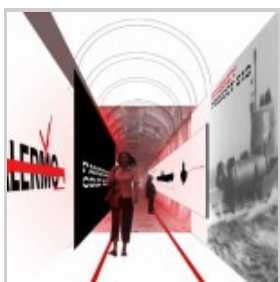
Veduta dello studio di Elisabetta Terragni e Kurt Forster – Bogart Building, New York, 2013_2



Veduta dello studio di Elisabetta Terragni e Kurt Forster – Bogart Building, New York, 2013_2



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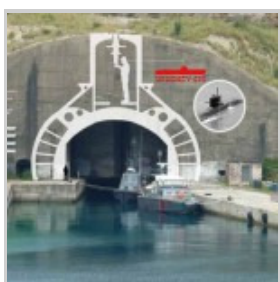
Elisabetta Terragni – Progetto del Museo di Gjiri o Panormes:Porto Palermo, Albania – Courtesy Elisabetta Terragni



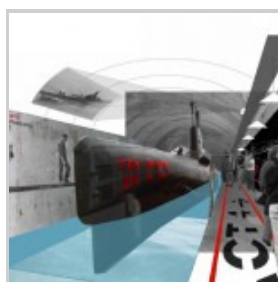
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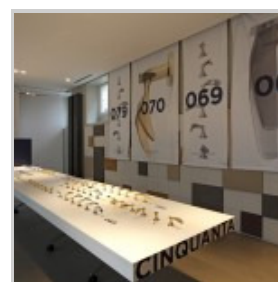
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Elisabetta Terragni – Cinquanta – Salone del Mobile 2013

