

Nottingham Contemporary

Sat 16 July
6-7.30pm

Keynote: Beatriz Colomina and Mark Wigley

KEYWORDS

architecture, Lina Bo Bardi, building, question, museum, modern architecture, Milan, plants, writes, exhibition, architect, guess, idea, art, São Paolo, moment, Brazil, radical

SPEAKERS

Beatriz Colomina, Mark Wigley, Canan Batur

Canan Batur 00:03

Good evening. My name is Canan Batur and I'm the Curator of Live Programmes here at Nottingham Contemporary. It's my pleasure to welcome you to this season's Keynote presentation with Beatriz Colomina and Mark Wigley on forms, histories and methods of radical pedagogy, and trans-species imagination at the intersection of architecture, performative and alternative practices of the Lina Bo Bardi. Titled 'Radical Pedagogy in the Jungle: Towards the Trans-species Architecture of Lina Bo Bardi', the presentation will highlight Lina Bo Bardi's practices and experimental pedagogue making a radical call for a trans-species architecture that remains very urgent and relevant in the here and now. For those of you who are with us for the first time, we often invite artists, thinkers, scholars, to collaborate with us on opening up our curatorial research and programme and artistic propositions within our current exhibitions. These interventions and subversions of dominant modes of thought allow us to dwell on complex questions, and eventually make new methodologies for rewriting the artistic canon, the dominant historiographies and for making critical thought public. Before introducing our guests, I would like to share a brief housekeeping note. Our Live Programmes open up different interventions and propositions within our curatorial research across the organisation. And this event expands on our current research strand, 'Emergency and Emergence',

Talk

Nottingham Contemporary

a multi platform programme that looks into transdisciplinary, sensorial and speculative practices of radical sense making and wayfinding. To think about and investigate how to move from crisis to renewal, from emergency to emergence. This event is also an extension of our current series 'The Adventure Playground: Architecture of Contemporary Play' of exploratory talks and propositions that investigates processes of play and imagination and their role in built environments and design spaces of playgrounds. Bringing forward architectural and political history of playgrounds as dedicated spaces for children across contemporary cities, and centres on the idea of 'creating worlds'. I like to take this opportunity to show our gratitude to the University of Nottingham, Nottingham Trent University and Paul Mellon Centre for generously and graciously supporting today's event as well as acknowledging my colleagues, Philippa Douglas, Shannon Charlesworth, Andy Batson Tom Chamberlain, Paul Buddle and Amalia, as well, for making this event possible. Although we will keep an informal atmosphere throughout the evening, our talks, performances and screenings seek to create challenging environments where openmindedness and respect for each other's approaches and perspectives can foster growth. So please be mindful and respectful of each other's opinions and views. So without further delay, I would like to introduce our speakers today. Beatriz Colomina is the Howard Crosby Butler Professor of the History of Architecture at Princeton University, and the Founding Director of the Media and Modernity Program at Princeton University. She writes in curious on questions of design, art, sexuality and media, and her writings have been translated into more than 25 languages. Her books include 'Sexuality and Space', published by Princeton Architectural Press, in 1992, 'Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media' published by again, MIT Press, in 1994. 'Domesticity at War' published again by MIT Press and Actar in 2007. 'Clip/Stamp/Fold: The Radical Architecture of Little Magazines 196x 197x, published by Actar in 2010. 'Manifest Architecture: The Ghost of Mines' published by Sternberg Press in 2014. And I mean, there are so many more actually, Beatriz. I'm just going to talk about your recent publication, 'Radical Pedagogies' that was just published in June 2022, a month ago so if you happen to find it in a bookshop, which will also available in our bookstore in the upcoming days, please do get your hands on a copy because it's a brilliant ontology of so many different practices, especially in relation

Nottingham Contemporary

to radical pedagogy. In 2016, she was chief curator with Mark Wigley on the third Istanbul Design Biennial. In 2018 she was made an Honorary Doctor by the KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm and 2020 she was awarded the Ada Louise Huxtable Prize for her contributions to the field of architecture. And I'm also delighted to introduce Mark Wigley, who is the Professor of Architecture and Dean Emeritus of Columbia University. He is a historian, theorist and critic who explores the intersection of architecture, art, philosophy, culture and technology. His books include 'Konrad Wachsmann's Television: Post-Architectural Transmissions published by Sternberg Press in 2020. 'Passing Through Architecture: The 10 years of Gordon Matta-Clark' published by Power Station of Art in 2019. 'Cutting Matta-Clark: The Anarchitecture Investigation', published by Lars Muller in 2018. 'Are We Human? Notes on an Archaeology of Design', written with Beatriz Colomina, as well and published by Lars Muller in 2016. 'Buckminster Fuller Inc.: Architecture in the Age of Radio', published again by Lars Muller, in 2015. 'Constant's New Babylon: The Hyper-Architecture of Desire', published in 1998, and it goes on so I do recommend checking his bibliography out as well. He has curated exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, the Drawing Centre, Columbia University, Witte de With Centre for Contemporary Art, HEt Nieuwe Instituut, and the Canadian Centre for Architecture. Most recently he curated 'Passing Through Architecture: The 10 years of Gordon Matta-Clark' at the Power Station of Art in Shanghai, from 2019 to 2020. So without further ado, after this long introduction, I'll ask Beatriz and Mark, to deliberate further, thank you so much for being here and accepting our invitation this evening.

Beatriz Colomina 06:40

Thank you very much for your very generous introductions and for inviting us to be here to speak with you. We were very excited to hear that it was this exhibition on from Assemble, it was inspired by Lina Bo. And we normally don't collaborate, we did collaborate for the 'Are We Human' exhibition in Istanbul, but we have been recently collaborating also on Lina Bo Bardi so, we jump on the occasion, for that reason, as well, right. So we're very happy to be part of this, of this event that celebrating this fantastic place and this great exhibition, and thinking a little bit about this question of what Lina Bo is for all of us today.

Nottingham Contemporary

Mark Wigley 07:30

Yeah, well, maybe Lina Bo is like the least boring person in architecture. So we have to be really careful not to be boring with you on a Saturday afternoon. So I think the idea is we're going to, Beatriz will talk a bit and then I will talk a bit we try to show you in which way maybe you could think about Lina Bo as a radical pedagogue, right as a really hardcore, experimental thinker. Even not just when she's teaching or organising teaching, but in the architecture itself. And in that story, children are like at the absolute centre of everything. So it was great to walk into the gallery, and the kids were totally in control, as architects. So we talk a little bit about that.

Beatriz Colomina 08:17

It's interesting that in the book that you mentioned, the 'Radical Pedagogy', of course, which is about radical pedagogy in architecture, Lina Bo also has power, because she was actually a pedagogue in architecture too, and wrote this thesis about the teaching of architecture to get the chair of architecture in São Paulo, which she didn't get, by the way because you know. There was no prepare for her I guess. But what we were going to focus more is in this other aspect of her work that is more related to her architecture and to the pedagogy that the work itself implies. And then maybe in the discussion, we can bring some other aspects.

Mark Wigley 09:00

I leave you to her. But so this is the theory, not boring, but also not a historical figure, like a figure for the future. So what's interesting about Lina Bo is she might be in a certain way more active now than ever before.

Beatriz Colomina 09:14

Right. Areas of making noise. So, first question is why Lina Bo all of a sudden right? Because for a long time we, in the history of architecture, she was such a neglected figure. And all of a sudden there's this continuous flow of publication exhibitions in more recent years, that has made it possible for us to look at her, with in a way, fresh eyes. And, you know, here you have for example, this remarkable architect of one of the most or some of the most influential buildings of the 20th century that

Nottingham Contemporary

was nevertheless neglected by all historians of architectures here you have on top of the MASP, the Museum of Art in São Paulo guiding in the construction right. Here in the current celebrated Casa de Vidro the glass house that she built for herself and Pietro Vardy in São Paulo and again in the house. But how is still alone an isolated figure not understood somehow perched on the edge of the building and balanced on the edge of the discipline but never quite entering that space. And as I say that they continuous on the other hand, flood of publications and exhibitions in the last two decades have made it possible in a way to look at her to look at her world with fresh eyes and to see not just what is relevant, but almost revelation of everything that we are concerned with these days. Whether is gender, sexuality, race, interspecies relationships, plant life, it is as if this loan is you want cruel, silence in architecture had incubated a radical diversity of points of view, and new ways of thinking about architecture new questions, none of which even began to be answered. And that's why I think we're all interested in with how this long silence perhaps Lina will simply have been added to the canon, as a talking female architect of course, usually, we will have been playing a supportive role and you can imagine all the support in our full support in of P M Bardi, Pietro Bo Bardi because she was married with him and they were always collaborating is supportive of Gio Ponti whom she has have collaborated also in her early years in Milan, as an architect with Bruno Zevi, with whom she had an affair as well and there were some collaboration and all of these but also, you know, always playing the supportive role of somehow reinforcing certain stereotypes of Latin American architecture so a really uninteresting chain of of roles and on the other hand, cause shocking absence because it's really shocking from all the the economic histories of modern architecture and you can look at them now it doesn't matter whether it's Manfredo Tafuri or Kenneth Frampton or Ana or any of the great historians of the of the 20th century and even the relatively recent ones writing in the 90s even reveal review in their own history is lacking a sense of direction regularly you know? The next edition and where is Lina Bo? None. Nowhere right? And so I think it's in a way this absence has liberated her. She doesn't fit the narrow moralistic stories, see breaks free. She confuses the disciplines, she opens new questions and keeps opening them because the reason of the work is not yet, it's just only the beginning. For all the sudden celebrations in books, catalogues, activity on finances excetera

Nottingham Contemporary

in the last 20 years, Lina Bo sticks with prizes all of us perhaps because she really challenged this architecture itself. I don't think it's by chance that artists were the first to sense this otherness of Lina Bo. It was as if she was speaking to them directly and it's not by accident that we are here in an art museum and that the work is by Assemble here for example you have the exhibition that Madlan recently did deal with Assemble of Lina Bo or the series of exhibition organised by console like always with Gilberton jars here or ISOOGG Julian and so many other artists, contemporary artists that have been inspired by Lina Bo Bardi. I think if she was speaking to them before even architect were able to receive the methods. And art of course, here for her is not something high art because she's actually an artist to right? It's not something high or the task or global but something that is very much interlinked with the everyday like in these designs of these chairs for the must be with the local with all these toys for children, with the political in all this collaboration with anthropologists with with activists of every kind with the interspecies excetera. The products of Lina Bo's is that she produced some of the most iconic works of modern architecture, you know the Museum of Modern Art in San Paolo, her own, Glass House, excetera. But it's still in a way she threatens with these kinds of things, the very idea of modernity and of architecture itself. And this life long if you want seeking of the foundations of architecture, you can argue that was actually incubated in the literal seeking and destruction of buildings during World War Two in Italy. Lina Bo lived through a period of intense bombardment in Milan, immediately after graduating in architecture in Rome, she moved to Milan and Mussolini have entered the war precisely in June 10th 1940. So it's exactly one month after the arrival of Lina in Milan, and the city was bombed 10 times, 10 times between then, between her arrival and December. So 10 times in a few months, right? A time when nothing was built, she's rise, but by destroy. Bo describes the city in flames, the city of Milan with crumbling buildings, and the terror of constantly running to bomb shelters. And this is by the way, an image of Milan during this moment. Here, she writes that should have been of sunshine, and blue skies, and happiness, I spent underground running and taking shelter from bombs and machine guns. And this is one of the magazines that she was doing at the time, 'A' Attualità, Architettura, Abitazione, Arte. Which also she's writes in the first edition 'A is for anxiety', of course, the anxiety of these years, as you can see is a

Nottingham Contemporary

lot of these is dedicated, of course to the destruction of works of art that is happening in this moment, but also the horror of the atomic bomb, even bunker quarters that were kind of appearing apparently in Milan, in those years. It will make it really more poignant. On the morning of August 13th, the building where Bo had her own office with Carlo Pagani, was completely demolished burring all their work. Carlo Pagani was her partner, also her intimate partner and all their work was buried in the in the rubble. This is Lina in front of their studio, that's where they lived and where they work. And this is this destruction of her space, of her house and her study. In A synthomatic mixing of architecture, art, media, intimate relationships really is more an anxiety, Bo records that she an architecture schoolmate and surrealist painter Fabrizio Clerici, a friend of ours who had also studied architecture in Rome, were at her house and the house of Lina one night and they were caught in a bombing that killed their neighbouring building and after they have missed themselves, the alarm and they will run into their studies towards the centre, holding hands with Clerici suddenly stop and laugh at the way they must have look, you say like Rossi, these are strathy which means like children in like, you know, travelling through the streets to the bomb streets of the city that apparently the painter or key level trammimg has illustrated during the First World War in the cover of the magazine la Domenica their career. Here's the other medical career and this is built from me and the kind of illustrations he was doing in this case of course of the destruction of London. As she keeps saying these projects have a sudden sheer sense of calm in the moment of deep panic, which remain until they arrive at the escala shelter, the bomb shelter, only to find that the door had been already locked. But Clerici successfully negotiated for them to get in and even eventually, and he apparently Clerici strike occurred for hours until the attack ended, this is what Lina Bo describes, right. So there is no really line between realism or anti realism Murthy as they never will be actually with the work of Lina Bo. She finds a way for architecture in a way to stroke animals it's always very much into cats in the face of danger. The war made Lina Bo answers, how could it not make our answers? And yet this seems to have baffled her contemporaries in her classes, colleagues and friends like Carlo Pagani, who himself had been deployed to Corsica and injury in a torpedo attack that sank his ship and he was deeply injured in a hospital and nevertheless he keeps complaining and seeks answers what I mean

Nottingham Contemporary

shouldn't you be answers to right as he nevertheless he's expressing this frustration with boats, kept preachers and erratic behaviour whilst he was in charge of the office and this magazine Estlie that they have been co editing together along with the old magazines that they were working on with Gio Ponti like 'Domus', and 'Quaderni de Domus', and 'Tempos de Grossura', 'Cordelia', all these magazines that she was working in a lot of different magazines during this period. The tired goddess 'la dea stanca', is how Valentino Bombiani, who was an influential Milan publishers say of Bo Bardi. Our godess then a powerful figure of force in a hyper masculine war that was now somehow threatened by the severity of war. She was overwhelmed with anxiety, as were so many soldiers and so many citizens and countless as you know, artists and intellectuals have suffered numerous nervous breakdown. But we don't counter this against them right? We will read about all these artists that were in encode in the middle of World War Two or World War One and they suffered or cancelled never. We, you know, write about them with respect. And everybody talks about her as if there was a problem because she was suffering from this brutality. Aquilina, here is actually at the end of the war, where she made a documentary of the devastation of war in Italy, together with the photographer Federico Valentino, and they went to along different places in Italy, documenting the the huge destruction of Italy. And here's this actually with children in the streets of Milano after the deliberation of the photography, the photographer is the same Valentino, and he's during the time that he's doing this report on the destruction of Italy. But anyway, going back to her childhood, Aquilina Bo, that's how she was born, has already been an anxious child growing up in Rome, and she's even of Rome itself, afraid of what she called her is damaged beauty. As a kid she'd write I was afraid of all the beauty in Rome and I asked myself why is everything in ruins? All her life she seems to have been obsessed with ruins, ruins of the past civilizations, ruins of wars, ruins of earthquakes. She claimed actually to have lived through an earthquake when she was still inside her mother. She writes 15 days before my birth, I experienced the earthquake of Avezzano, in my mother's womb. This is Avezzano and the destruction that this really strong earthquake caused. Apparently she was already born when the earthquake happened. And maybe she was six months old, and this inequality is repeated by all the scholarships about Bo, which strangely enough, take the form of a police

Nottingham Contemporary

interrogation is really amazing. I encourage you to look at any of these historians that claim to like Bo, but unlike other architects that of course, they fantasise about their own powers and they just they take the form of a police interrogation. If she writes an article, they question 'Did she write it or did Pagani help her? Or did she write it or was it Gio Ponte?' I mean, her signature is there. And if it is, you have a manuscript, they still take the form of a police interrogation of whether it's that she possibly could have written that. Other than, the work is really extraordinary. And one of the things that struck me more is this thing that she made this remark about living through this earthquake inside the her mother, and it turns out that she was already born and they all claim or when you see she invents things, you know. So it's continually repeated. So it's strange to me because we don't ask the same questions of our male architects who of course all romanticise their own histories as part of their self construction part of the work itself with Lina Bo, it is as if poetry itself was illegal. But, you know, and then in fact, I think the association of earthquake and bomb is really interesting and takes her to the truth of Bo. It depends the emotion or intellectual position earthquake, in a way is birthing. Destruction as the beginning of something. Or you have her arriving in Brazil, with Pietro Maria Bardi. What Bo was like about Rio de Janeiro arriving in Brazil in 1947, and here they are standing from the plane, was the absence of ruins precisely. She says 'I felt I was in an imaginable country where everything was possible, I felt happy and Rio had no ruins.' So what she likes about Rio de Janeiro, so there are no ruins here. Brazil in the sense, it's her new starting point. The Bo of Brazil was born out of an anxiety of ruins let's say this case that will keep returning in a way in her war, like some sort of a trauma right. Think for example of all the jagged holes in SECS, Pompeii, which are so reminiscent of the holes left in buildings after bomb blasts. The same holes that she would have seen all over Italy, when she did this report. Think of the way she presented her work as if it was in drawing. And as architecture they showed the plants, the animals, the insects, interim become the real clients of her architecture. The strict line between inside and outside this way to the new kind of hospitality, to everything that architecture normally keeps out. So when Lina, and here is the interior to Perak realities, which is like a theatre for kids. And you see this little kid, which is her actually, is a photograph of her and this cooker atrocity, details then that all the insects with such fantastic care, right?

Nottingham Contemporary

When Lina designed her famous glass house, suspended in the forest, like a tree house, she draws every insect every plant, and every animal that is living in the side with the same proficiency, draw the building. For her these animals are part of the building. Or if all architecture you can say it's always about keeping the box out, Lina Bo embraces this trans-species architecture, where insects are not the enemy, but are treasured intelligent members of the community. These are some of her drawings of insects and her models of insects. And perhaps this is a beautiful drawing to illustrate this idea that those are the real clients of architecture, and that humans are just temporary guests of these of these buildings. The other mass of Lina Bo is how she renders the human order. And then of course, there is this beautiful photographs of her in her house, or kind of emerging from these plants that Lina planted herself. And with this I will leave you with Mark that will elaborate more on this question of the plant in Lina Bo and all of this.

Mark Wigley 28:48

Maybe starting with this drawing which Assemble used to make the exhibition for you here. Or did Assemble make it, or did Lina Bo make it, or did the children make it or did Nottingham make it, or do we make it when we walk in? I mean, this is the kind of thing that she's encouraging this is what a trans-species architecture would be. And, but just looking at the drawing, and since you just came from this idea of a human being not as interesting, or part of a plant, which is also part of a building here, the structure of the house coming up out of the plant is also true of this drawing. If you look at the edge of it, it's all plants. So there's a kind of a playground, but the playground is defined by plants. And if you don't know the building, so well you can see that actually the plants are, the building is much bigger than it looks. It's not just this red thing over a plaza. The Plaza was actually the top of a building, which is defined by plants on the front. And already in the year before the building opened in 1968 Lina Bo spoke about the need for children to be the real owners of the building and the real kind of future of the building. Of course, children perhaps are the future by definition. So if you're an architect, and you're thinking of making spaces for the future of humanity, then you think of children. And this is where she said that she hoped to recreate what she called an environment. It's interesting she doesn't say create an environment, but recreate, a kind of a garden, where she said

Nottingham Contemporary

that the public would go there, they would see exhibitions in the open air. So a museum is not an interior, or the interior is something you find in the city itself as a kind of garden. And they would discuss things you would listen to music, you would watch films, and she said, I would like children to be playing in the morning in the afternoon. So always the children are there, as a reference. She called this concept the Living Museum. So it means it's a museum that self alive, like a plant, because everything there is kind of alive. And actually this idea that this plaza, that you should think of maybe as a garden, would be a place for children was already realised in 1969 by this exhibition called 'Playgrounds', which was a solo show by the artist, Nelson Leirner, and you can get the feeling for it, something similar to what's happening here in Nottingham. And even the way the building here sort of flies up above the ground at one point, is a kind of echo. I mean, this is, as Beatriz said, this is there's not a single architect on the planet that is not deeply, deeply jealous when they see this building. Everyone wants to have designed this building, but they didn't. This is maybe part of the reason that people don't want to talk about Lina Bo, she was too good. Right, she says dangerously good. So everybody dreams of this space, which is an indoors which is really an outdoors of have kind of play and encounter. And of course, the photographs show better than the children who were really somehow in charge. And you and here we actually looking at the same exhibition. If you look at the space below the famous floating galleries, you can see another gallery, which is a sort of inside, which is also an outside you can see the children are they're kind of playing. So in a way, she makes a gap, she opens up a kind of gap and architecture in that gap, which is the serious work of play. She at one point, for example, designs, this 1972 Circus, which actually happened a performance. It was the 50th reunion of a famous clown who would perform there. So in a way the whole museum expands out of this little gap and as a kind of subversive gap. Circus is not exactly high art, high culture, circuses popular culture is colour, is play, and so on. But if you look closely at her image of the circus, you could also see that it's a kind of exhibition of art, in that sort of sense. If you go back and look at the sort of early history of the building, because she's already thinking about it in 1951, she starts drawing it in 1953, she has the real project for 57, but doesn't they don't start construction till 1960. And it's not open till 1968. So this project is really has this long kind of life. And at the beginning, you can see that,

Nottingham Contemporary

that Plaza was really not just sort of like a garden was meant to be a garden complete with water, and everything. And this is the moment where it floats up. But if you go even earlier, the whole building that kind of gap between the floating object and the Plaza was meant to be sort of oozing plants, you see that the plants are kind of coming out of the building. So it's a kind of a radical idea. Now there are humans in the image. And by the way, always children, if you look. But the humans are kind of infantilized, they're kind of small, kind of temporary, kind of vulnerable, even fragile. If you're under this building, there is always the thought that it will fall down. It really actually makes no sense. And what's kind of an engineering miracle when you are there. It's really have this feeling like this shouldn't be flying. And if you have the feeling that it's flying that you also probably have the thought it could come down. So when you're in the middle there, you're in a kind of fragile space and nowhere could you be more human than when you experience your own fragility. This is a little bit of what Beatriz and I are trying to argue. But just to give you the feeling, it's really kind of like a big kind of garden, big kind of pergola. And look at the space, that gap between the sort of primaevial thing again, notice that there are always children there, and there's all also art there. But art seems to go from the deep past like the forest and the trees and the liquids. So it's kind of a confusion of the adult and the child of what's inside and what's outside what's past and what's the future. And in a sense, Lina Bo is a relentless kind of she relentlessly undoes all the kinds of binaries again, there's a couple of kids in the middle consulting, one of them I have a feeling the one on the right might be Lina Bo. This seems to be an architect, she's holding her sort of, 10 year old holding her scheme for the for the building. And again, a kind of a general confusion as to what constitutes even what constitutes a space and what constitutes an object. And of course, part of the project of the MASP was of course, that there would be also this encounter between the children and kind of higher up in that space. So what goes on in a way is a kind of classroom below the flying plinths, and then that's leading to a classroom above, she's not walking away from high art, or from high culture, or from kind of refinement and narratives and all of this, even from Europe, where this art is coming from. But she's creating a kind of, let's say, confusion. The project takes the shape that we know it already in 1951, in this magazine that she was editing, where she called, she conjures up the concept of the Living Museum, and you

Nottingham Contemporary

see it a project, for a museum by the sea. By the way, the idea that a museum could just go to the beach, you could say it's a super Brazilian idea or kind of cliche idea about Brazil. But it's true. That the very idea that the the museum itself, travels that it moves is part of the living idea. But also notice that there are kind of plants on top and plants on the bottom. Are these things in the foreground artworks are not? You're not quite sure. Is the building itself a kind of art object? You see it has a kind of garden on the inside of it, which you look through. So if I'm inside, so who's looking at who? Like, for example, if I'm in this position, am I being looked at by the sculptures in the garden? Certainly, I'm the stranger here, right? So a little bit what Lina Bo does is to make the human feel like not the all powerful figure, but the stranger, or at least the guests. So she creates, in a certain sense, a form of hospitality. And you know, if architecture is a form of hospitality, which would be a really good thing, then maybe Beatriz and I share the fascination that so many people have with Lina Bo, because she's invented another way of thinking hospitality. If you look at the plans in the sections, you see that the trees go up through the museum. So again, it's and you could say, okay, but if a tree goes up and through the museum, have you kind of domesticated, have you turned it into an artwork? So this kind of question for us to ask, is this really about human subservience in the face of nature? Or has nature itself been framed as a kind of a picture? This question will never fully go with Lina Bo, but you can see it there. There's a space for lectures, a space for exhibition, there's a space for plants and there's a place for education. Right, and every time Lina Bo ever talks about museums, she talks education, it's always about education. 1951 is the same year that she designs this project, her own house, is identical to the museum, right? It's just as it's just a little version of the same thing. Instead of going to the beach, you go into the kind of forest you see again, are we inside or outside. Actually here, we're actually inside the hole through which that we have taken the tree, this is the trees view of her project. We are actually positioned in this drawing where the tree is that comes up through the house, looking through the house to trees in the distance. You can see that there are paintings, there are sculptures and there are humans, but they don't know if the human is a sculpture, or it's a painting and who's looking again, at who. So a kind of confusion of museum, of school, of cultural centre, just simply unclear, who's in charge. Floating, actually in a kind of forest that simply wasn't there.

Nottingham Contemporary

When she made the house, she said there should be a forest. So she returns the forest. Remember with the museum, she talks about recreating so there's a kind of recreation of something that was, in certain sense already there. But we have to go back even further. 1947 is the first version of the Museum of Art for San Paolo, the MASP. Here is a drawing for the entrance. It's in a kind of building. And again, at first it looks like a museum, you know, sort of typical museum, you go into a space, that's kind of perfect, perfect air, perfect light, perfect air conditioning, you're not allowed to cough, you're not allowed to sneeze, you probably shouldn't talk, you certainly shouldn't behave. You don't behave like a human but something like a church and you distance yourself right looks like this from the start. But were you to go in there, all these things would go into your brain lectures, cinemas, movies and songs, already this concept of the Living Museum. And she constructs in the first images of his again, a kind of a garden in which the children, which there's art, it's not clear, again, if it's a House and Museum or living room, or so on. And there is a programme of education to take place and plants. Plants are always there, you can be pretty sure that if you're looking at a space and it doesn't have a plant in it, then it was not by Lina Bo. Plants are always there. So even when you get into a more or less classical part of that space, the plants are sort of hanging out there is not very interesting the way they are there. But they're sort of there. It's as if they just walked in, right, or across the edges. And these panels were what they call didactic. So these are ways of educating yourself into the history of European art, you see in the distance there's a lecture theatre where you could go and listen to a lecture or you could study so there was a programme of School of Education. And you can train it was at first the first school of industrial design in Brazil. Very modern, you could see explicitly based on the Bau Haus model. So it's exactly what you think a school of art would be in that kind of sense. But Lina Bo insisted on that there would be an art club for children in this space. So, there was a huge programming for students, young kids to learn about painting, about sculpture, about movies, but also to participate, but also high art. In this case, for example, Van Gogh. 1957, as Beatriz referred to before, she's teaching at the University of São Paolo. So she's making all these buildings, which are forms of education, which take the form of a kind of a garden in which the human is made to feel a little bit fragile, right. And then she writes this thesis to become a professor at São

Nottingham Contemporary

Paolo. She doesn't get the job because she's a woman. She's interesting, she's strong, there's every reason for her to not get the job. This thesis is about as sophisticated theoretically, and philosophically, as anything I've read by any architect of the 20th century, it's explicitly influenced by Gramsci, the kind of Marxist theorists from Italy. It's an incredible tour de force. But despite this fact, everybody that writes about Lina Bo treats her as beautiful, romantic, colourful, kind of woman's woman in the world of architecture. But she's more of a guy than the guys, that is to say, she's full force philosophically and theoretically. she bases her argument on Leonardo's drawings of the Cataclysm, it relates very strongly to Beatriz's argument about the earthquake. Leonardo himself remembers as a child, being in the middle of these unbelievable storms that ravaged the countryside in Italy. And he did these very famous drawings. And Lina Bo writes about the idea that the human is a stranger in the face of nature, nature that could destroy everything that human has made. So architecture, whatever architecture it is, it appears as a kind of provisional, temporary way of making yourself a little bit at home in a kind of strange world. She doesn't get the job, she starts teaching in the northeastern Bahai, and very quickly, she's asked to become the director of a museum there, and she starts to design a museum. In fact, this is a renovation of a theatre that burned out, like three days after it opened. And she made this kind of a lecture room again, you see, you know, it's her because she's got the plants in there. So the children and the plants and the art and the lecturing, and education, everything is inserted into this space. You can see on the top that the girl who will sit in that chair can draw, you don't just listen to lectures, everybody is an artist. She insisted, by the way in her book on pedagogy in 1957, that the teacher must sit alongside the student, an equal not to look down. So this is a chair to enable the student to be as creative and as effective as the teacher. There were exhibitions, of course, in the kind of typical sense. She then goes to make the final museum in this space in Salvador de Bahai., and this is the famous MOMA the Museum of Modern Art of Bahai. Here she is renovating the building, even her decision to renovate a historical building already marks the kind of incredible shift, by which she's seeing incredible wisdom and truth, in the so called popular culture, vernacular culture, largely the descendants of the enormous slave communities that were in the millions that were dominant in that region of Brazil still. She's seeing in their lives and in their art and in their

Nottingham Contemporary

craft, and in their languages, and in their behaviours, and in their politics, the real kind of as it were a future. So it's not a nostalgia for kind of folk art. And she renovates an existing space, and makes a kind of minimal theatre set, because everything she's doing is in a certain sense about theatre, not by chance. This is the space in which as Beatriz showed you, Isaac Julian will film a dance. And she was totally influenced by this 1950 project to finish with, which is the Parque Escola, The School Park, there was this idea to revolutionise education in Brazil in 1950. Which is that the kids would go to a park and in the park would be a series of pavilions, and they would not only get traditional education, but they would kind of hang out in the park, and it would be sort of like a kind of craft school. So here it is from 1950. This is in Salvador de Bahai, and you could see it's kind of committed to give and it's not so, if you squint your eyes a little bit, you start to see in some of these tables covered with objects, literally the way that Lina Bo thinks collaborative construction, the future, new generations and so on. And she writes with incredible passion about the brilliance of this kind of concept and she uses this concept to revolutionise museums, and she will do this with everything. So this is a house of Lina Bo, you know it's by Lina Bo, because it's not really a house, but some sort of confusion of building and plant. But it could also be a museum, it could be a cultural centre, in a certain sense doesn't really matter. But it's amazing what she's doing here, right? It's not sort of architecture plus plant. It's not simply plants as ornaments. It's not even clear that this is as it were designed, right? This is just sort of a blur. At a certain point. It's the one of the very, very last projects a huge project that she does for São Paolo, for the government of Sao Paulo. Literally buildings will now be as it were made of plants. These days by the way, if you make a facade that's all plants, you can become a famous architect in Italy, by the way. It's a good friend of ours. It's done already here, so amazingly, so carefully, and so thoughtfully. And I just wanted to note that this didn't just sort of start, it's not like she's this European kid hits Brazil, wow, everything's tropical, it's all plants, there's this other culture this other life. No, it was really in the work from the beginning. This is these are very, very early works of Lina Bo, when she was first collaborating with Carlo Pagani. Again, this house, is this a house for plants or house with plants looks pretty much like a house for plants, right? A plant, a kind of plant house, at least it's totally confusing. I mean, certainly, you would imagine if you were to sit down at that table,

Nottingham Contemporary

anything might happen to you, at any moment from these plants, right. And it's complete confusion, and it's super interesting. I mean, I could go on and on but I have to stop. We see she's fascinated with this sort of situation, where architectures are sort of miraj in the middle of plants. But it's astounding work. So basically, her entire life from a very, very young architect all the way through, she was looking for ways of confusing, that kind of a living world of the plant, with the living world of the human. Right, and making an architecture, here in Milan, again, that's half architecture, half an art. Kind of a provisional temporary, architecture, beautiful, amazing. And that that's what will finally lead to this sort of trans-species attitude that Beatriz is showing. So I guess all I'm trying to add to the discussion is that this other way of thinking about architecture, which is a relentless attack on binaries, between the adult and the child, between the past and the future, between inside and the outside, between the plant and the human, and it just goes on and on and on. You name it any binary and architecture, she dissolves it. She's like a superhero, against binaries. And if you do this, what opens up is a kind of more kind of radical space. Or at least it's no longer clear what solid and what's not. And so much we think of architects as kind of making something solid, because life itself is weird and it's true it's weird. And then we kind of ask architects to be boring. This is why I was saying at the beginning, she's against boredom, and we sort of understand that ourselves are weird. By the way, think about the inside of your bodies. If just for a moment, I would show you the inside of my body, some of you would pass out, including me right? In other words, we are weird, entirely weird, but I wear this so it doesn't look so weird. We ask architecture to make things even less weird. Then you get an architect by Lina Bo says 'What if we just turn it inside out? And just sort of go with the living, live with the weirdness' and so on. And this is a radically subversive gesture, and I think it's part of our explanation for why Lina Bo has not been considered for so long, as actually the work is even more radical than the people that say that they love it have, and that would be itself pedagogical, right? If she could teach us in this way, that would already be pedagogical, but it is the idea that that Lina Bo might be in a certain sense the teacher that we need in this kind of next couple of decades or so, there's who knows what we need, right? And you didn't come here to be told what you need. We just this is like confessions, why we are obsessed with this architect something like

Contemporary

this. Anyway, we are happy to talk with you in a more relaxed way about your questions and so on.

Canan Batur 49:37

I mean, where do I start? Thank you so much for this such compelling, I mean, imaginative account of Lina Bo Bardi. I mean, you took us through a journey that I think has given us a lot to think about but also allowed us to kind of reactivate the concept and I guess the practice of radical pedagogy to such an imaginative and compelling and fascinating way. And of course, I've prepared a couple of questions to kind of, you know, let you digest this presentation and so that you can gather your thoughts and comments. I guess what will be quite interesting to start with, because I can see, I mean, in preparation for this conversation, of course, I have been looking into quite a lot of accounts on the Lina Bo Bardi, and it felt quite reductive, as you kind of started this present, as you said, in the beginning of this presentation. I mean, looking at Lina Bo Bardi's practices almost endevor towards, you know, trans-national, trans-historical, trans-temporal, trans-species, kind of, I guess, endover. And I guess my, my question will be, about your research and methodology in terms of how you kind of brought this research forward? What's kind of, I guess, systems that you kind of follow in a sense that, you know, you also mentioned in your book in 'Radical Pedagogy' in terms of how archives are actually these structures that creates this hierarchy, versus, you know, well preserved authoritative, I guess, polished and selective resources, versus, you know, oral histories, personal accounts and narrative. So, I guess I'm just quite curious about that process of developing that's, you know, I guess, research and also putting her account forward in such a brilliant and imaginative way.

Beatriz Colomina 51:35

I'm not sure I mean, she was handed by chance, right? I mean, I was asked to write for this catalogues, that you actually have it in the bookstore, here, The Habitat. One, it was an exhibition in São Paolo, in the MASP precisely, to happen precisely during COVID, it was supposed to go all over Europe. I never know where it went the end, but it was in MASP, and actually, we did see it in MASP. And, you know, at first he was like, 'okay, I'm not a scholar of of Lina Bo', but start thinking about it and looking into it. And at first I was, you know, you're always somehow

Nottingham Contemporary

driven by your own obsessions, right? So war has always been, for me, an obsession, right? I mean, I wrote the book Domesticity or War, but it's more like war is always key. I guess this is still this trauma of your parents, the generation of my parents, of course, that went through the war in Spain, but also, you know the disasters of World War Two. This is not my generation, but somehow, I do believe that somehow you can kind of inherit this trauma, because I've always been obsessed with war in a way that doesn't actually reflect anything that has happened to me personally. And of course, the moment that I start thinking about that, I saw these years of Lina Bo in Milan, and the destruction of Milan, and this magazine that she was editing 'A', and this whole anxiety and the whole ruins. Understanding one aspect of it, but as the whole thing, and we were both on sabbatical at The Clark, right? And, The Clark, which is this art institute, and somehow we start as always happens when one starts a project, talking with the other and before we knew it became a collaboration, in which this whole question of the war and the neglect of Lina for so long, and the disappointment that I felt with what had been written about Lina Bo and that I kept communicating to Mark and the more we start talking about, the more we start seeing other aspects. So it kind of grew. Do you remember it like that?

Mark Wigley 54:14

Yeah, something similar. So I suppose the answer to your question obsession, right? So Beatriz is obsessed with war. So you see war, everywhere. I was getting into plants. It appeared to me when you were saying, because The Clark is this place in the middle of beautiful trees, you spend the whole day walking around. There's basically nothing about plants. And then if you look at this image, right, and just, it's a little bit another answer to your question as a question of method, why not just look at the image and see what the image is saying. In this image, the architect is about the size of one of these leaves. So it just immediately says it's the photographer and she's choosing this picture and she's letting us see it, seeing her there, like all of us are very careful about who we show. You know, she knows she's being photographed. So she's being photographed as a plant, where there's a confusion between her the plant and the building. So this is something interesting for an architect to say so as a method, I think the first thing is just to listen to the architect. I mean, but really listen, like and most of the people

Nottingham Contemporary

that write about architecture, maybe they are afraid of it. Architecture I mean. Because architectures is very is very strange. I give you an example, like I was saying before when you're underneath that building why you don't think it's going to fall. Why you don't think this is going to fall? You have no information, because you have nothing tells you this is not going to fall. You just think very very boring people in Nottingham made sure that this was going to happen. If you said 'Oh an artist did this', nobody would come to this lecture you have to say 'no, there was an engineer.' So, we really call on architecture to repress things to keep things away. And every now and then you get an architect like Lina Bo that's that's reversing things. And the same with historians every now and then you get, Beatriz is a good example of somebody that's always interested in what's hidden. What's behind, you know? So it's not so much a method. It's just curiosity.

Canan Batur 56:25

Yeah, I guess I mean, historiography has its own way of working right. I mean it can omit or include, and it's also another narrative. So it's, we know now in 2020, that it's rarely reliable. And I guess, when you were talking about how Lina Bo Bardi was reductive, in a certain way that, you were saying also, she was romanticised, and she was also someone that was not exactly in so much education. And someone was kind of looked, you know, from someone that people push aside somehow. So I guess I was quite interested in this curiosity that you develop of her practices aswel because of that. And as I said, I have been reading quite a lot about her and I found one, I guess it goes to this kind of, you know, harmonised binaries within her practice that you were talking about. One account was saying something that her practice was at the intersection of different railways, north and south, city and hinterland, privilege and deprivation. And I think it's a quite beautiful way of presenting who she is, because it's everything in between. And more than that, I guess. And so on that note, I guess, I would like to ask a bit more about her general passion when it comes to pedagogy. And, you know, museum as school and as you know, our exhibition upstairs very much, you know, trying to kind of create this playground, in the purpose of, I guess, pushing a different discourse and different methods of, you know, teaching forward rather than teaching creativity. It's about teaching with creativity, and what that might be possible. And also, you

Nottingham Contemporary

mentioned that she was in Bahia, between 1960, and 64. And she very much tried to embrace this concept of museum at school. And then she also was creating shows, there she was teaching, as you mentioned, so maybe we can talk a bit about, you know, like that period that she was there, and then how, I guess that might potentially change and alter her perception about, you know, what's museum could look like that was manifested, maybe in a more much more materialised and solidified way, in Museum of Modern Art in São Paolo.

Mark Wigley 58:35

You know, I'll say a couple of things and then Beatriz also. But it's interesting when she was asked to make this museum in Bahia she said, 'well we don't have any art, but we should have it. But the art that we should get, we should get it because of some sort of educational idea.' So she has really this, for her, it's just clear, a museum is a school. But a museum is not a mausoleum, right. So she's, really the enemy of the sort of stiff, monumental story. But there's some kind of shift that you're right. There's a shift from the São Paolo moment to this Bahia moment and I think there's partly she's rejected, of course, to not get a teaching position, but she must have known she was not going to get it like, you know, in a way, she's one of the least stupid people you could think of. She knew what was going on. But I think she took, Bahia was like, embraced her for the very same reasons that she was rejected in São Paolo. They really, really, she loved it there and she was much love. So I think she had this idea that the last thing to arrive is the object that you see in an exhibition, like there's all this other activities. So I think she sort of said, 'okay, let's put in motion, the production of theatre or film of collections. Let's work with making things and then some kind of museum will come out of that.; So another way to say it is that she thought it was a question. Like somebody said, you should make a museum she was like, okay, that's a question. And a really good question. You don't just give the answer you kind of keep the question floating. So she invented sort of systems that just keep it, I mean, nobody to this, I don't think anybody knows really what happened when the man even all the experts didn't really know is it's a question. She just turned everything into a bit of a question. And Beatriz and I we are teachers, right. And as teachers, we're also looking for teachers to, we're looking for people that keep questions alive. And I think her ability

Nottingham Contemporary

to keep it unclear what is a museum, this was something special. So maybe what she did in Bahia was more interesting than what she did in São Paolo, maybe.

Beatriz Colomina 1:00:53

Because São Paolo is still you know, I mean, the way the São Paolo museum came up and was the idea of bringing Western for the most part art to Brazil, right? I mean, this collaboration with Bo Bardi, is still very much in the old concept of what a museum needs with a collection. Bo Bardi was a collector. I mean, he had access to all these different places where he could basically bring art works to to Brazil. But what is fantastic about, is such a contemporary idea of what a museum is, right? I mean it's so much ahead of time, right? The museum without a collection with all these activities, events, involving multiple artists that then create this new form of an institution. And I think in that sense you have to also think about her in a way as a pioneer of this idea of the museum as a pedagogical institution, a collaboration, the idea of the collaboration. She always collaborated, but in Bahia much more, I mean, okay, in São Paolo too, because she's collaborating with Bardi, with that other guy, Desponse or whatever his name's Chateaubriand, who was the sponsor of the museum. But in Bahia she is collaborating with the kids, she's collaborating with local people, she's collaborate with anthropologists, she is collaborating with all kinds of characters. In a way you can see her work is soul collaboration. And also that's very significant undermining of the idea of the genius architect, the solo architect, and here is my building, you know. She is on the one hand, extremely talented, and on the other hand, is very much open to collaborations with all kinds of people, in all the works that she did, there's collaboration.

Canan Batur 1:03:02

I guess, this is a good kind of way of like, going to the next question I had in mind. In your book, 'Radical Pedagogy', that's just on the table, now. You talk about this moment with Giancarlo Carlo in 1968 when he was directing Milan Triennale, and there's a picture that I'll try my best to show you, but I'm more than happy to just give it to you as well, and then you can take a look. Just give me a second sorry. Yes, this one. So this is a moment where you will see that the students are outside, of course,

Nottingham Contemporary

I'm sure you'll do much better job explaining it because the way it has been explained in this book is just brilliant. Is that the students that are sitting outside are basically revolting against Milan Triennale and I don't know if you know, if Giancarlo practice and who he is. He's an architect that already anarchist affiliations, pre 1950s. And in this moment, you see this kind of, you know, clash between the radical teacher you say, and then radical students. And even though the radical teacher is someone who's actually trying to kind of, you know, push the boundaries further, the students are still revolting against it for the sake of you know, going against the current conditions and situations. And there's this moment, specifically captures Giancarlo listening attentively, and then trying to kind of, you know, like, observe and understand the needs and desires of the students. And I mean, I think one thing that you say here is this kind of, you know, the idea of radical pedagogy being an almost oxymoron, that kind of fascinated me because, I mean, I want to quote you actually, because I think it's so brilliant. Sorry, let me just tried to find it. You say that the very nature of education cannot forego either authority and tradition. Within the context. I mean, and then it's basically being something that somehow has to, you know, the soul in the kind of, you know, assimilation due to the kind of generic mainstream education that's been imposed to the structures. And, I guess I'm quite interested in thinking of the conditions within the UK, because when we're talking, and a lot of the education that we received that I mean, we receive right now do not even talk about the colonial discourse. And it's not even kind of, you know, have the vocabulary necessary to kind of address the atrocities and violence that happened then. So I'm just kind of quite, I guess, it's more like a question of provocation as well. I'm just quite interested in this kind of idea of what it would mean to be this, you know, I guess, radical figure that can potentially undermine those conditions, and what does it mean to function within the current conditions? And be the radical pedagogue, now, I guess.

Beatriz Colomina 1:06:04

Well, I'm super happy that you have this reaction to the book, because, in fact, the book was supposed to be, in a way a provocation, right? I mean, to go back, not only to this moment of the 1960s, and 70s, where there was an incredible creativity in all parts of the world, from Latin America to Australia, New Zealand, I mean, there, how many countries

Contemporary

are there represented, 100 and more than 100 countries 116, against the studies. So a moment in which whatever architecture education, was thought about was, is completely, But the impulse behind it was also the idea that, that we seem to be in a moment that there was a lot of confirm his mother, we were still and this I think he has changed because now you mentioned a couple of things that are happening actually, in the schools that there is been particularly in more recent times with Black Lives Matters, and all of these little movement. Do, you know, I used to think the schools in which we teach that were very passive, you know, all kinds of things could happen. And the students will not react and all of a sudden, this is changing. But it's interesting to go back to this moment of the of the 60s and see how the students, from the bottom up in most cases, because the AA for example, in London has fantastic teachers, if you think about it, the whole Archigram were teaching there the whole the you know, there's meetings were teaching there, etc, etc. And nevertheless, there was this incredible proliferation of students initiative, little magazines, little ideas, this idea of the bars that will take a student from the AA to bridge them to I don't know where, to different schools in which they will exchange ideas that completely transform architecture education. And the problem, because this is also pedagogical issue for me, this was the PhD programme, the Ivy ranked at Princeton, and I do these kinds of collaborative again, research project with my own students in which the distinction between the.

Canan Batur 1:08:30

And this is a project since, that you you've been conducting since 2010, I guess?

Beatriz Colomina 1:08:34

I taught this seminar at Princeton and then I taught it again and then we did it as an exhibition in the Lisbon Triennale and then it was picked up by Rem Koolhaas, etc. And he was part of the Biennale of Venice of 2014 completely transform and expanded and then he went to Warsaw to Poland in another iteration, and the project kept going the number of cases that is kept growing because we have a very good website. And people from all over the world who start writing you know, as a, you know, you may not know but when De Junta in Argentina threw away all the best faculty, they mounted this alternative school called

Nottingham Contemporary

La Escuelita, and they invited people from Italy, like Rosie was the or whoever and we didn't know about this case, and this person from Argentina wrote the case or somebody would write from other places in Australia, in New Zealand, you know, South Africa, everywhere, right? And all of a sudden, instead of being a book written by a bunch of students from Princeton, it became more like a crowdsourcing. I'm because they will contact us. We haven't seen many of these authors, there are 160 authors, we don't know many of them, or we probably will never, we'll never meet them in person. But we have this collaboration by email we edited their texts, they send images, we give some advice, and they end up in the book. So in a way the book represents this collective research into this explosive moment of the 60s and 70s, which I hope it brings also something to think about what could happen today in a moment in which so many things have changed in our lives, right. And I do see clear parallels between what is happening now and what was happening then to, you know, De Andres, for example of the 1960s has been clearly with us. Recently, the first preoccupations with the environment, with recycling, with experimental or emergency architecture, cardboard architecture, this is from this period. In this English, these students where claiming that their school shouldn't be teaching about martyrs, but should be getting on with the programme. And now we have similar questions and new ones, as you're saying, because we see them all with new.

Canan Batur 1:11:31

I mean, I have so many more questions. But I'm very conscious of time. So we have only 15 minutes left, and I want to open the floor to our audience, to see if there's any comments, questions and thoughts.

Audience member 1:11:54

Thank you, and thanks for the talk. I'm very naive to all, this is a completely new to me. So my question may echo that. I was struck by the fact that the building, are located in nature, surrounded by nature, they've got nature contained within them, but the building themselves extremely geometric, no curves. Everything very, very square. And very, very definitely, therefore, seem to me a statement of a building a human intervention. So I don't know if this is a question. But is there anything to say about that, but why did you not go organic? And try to sort of link

Nottingham Contemporary

these things in some way?

Mark Wigley 1:12:33

I think it was a super sharp observation, but it sounds like I'm going to metric you. I mean, I think it's a really, I think I don't know the answer. Firstly, I think it's a really great question. But I would be tempted to answer something like, just because she thinks the human is something small, doesn't mean we don't have the right to make our, so I think that you're right, absolutely right. The geometry is, if you think about it, for example, the right angle, which is even called normal. Like, is the one thing you cannot find in nature. Right? So our species has used the right angle a lot to say, hey we are pretty important. So I think your reading is exactly right, when she makes these right angles in the middle of the forest, that that's the mark of the human. So she's not saying we should dissolve ourselves. For example, in this picture, she was a really tough cookie. So if you think he or she is a flower, like watch out, this is a this is a kind of, you know, so think she preserves the right, the human has the right to make these marks, but they're in the end gonna get overwhelmed. Like in the end, and sometimes at the beginning. And that's what's interesting, see sort of saying, we're going to make our mark, and it's going to be infected, and it's going to become unclear who came first. What's the chicken and what's the egg? So I think the question is terrific, and would lead to a really good answer. I just don't have it yet. But I'm sketching for you sort of what it would be. Like, you know, you know, people who make gardens they often do the sort of pergolas, right, where you make a very geometric shape as a kind of form of hospitality to something that will maybe in the end, make the pergola disappear. So I think it's like this. It's like and the other thing is that sometimes you didn't quite say but almost say it, right. It's kind of it's not just a geometric it's they're quite heavy, like concrete and stuff like that. And I think she does have the idea that concrete doesn't stand a chance. Like, you know, don't worry. If you look at that, the image of the children's play equipment one year after the building open, there are already plans coming up through all the cracks in the terrorists there. So for her it's sort of like, bring it on, let's dance. But I don't know, I'm just meandering around here because I thought the question was too good. It's interesting, smooth surfaces also, you don't find so much in nature, right? Everything that's architecture, it's like architecture has

Nottingham Contemporary

the word human written on it humans, humans, human. So when you get an architect, and she's an amazing architect, who puts the human in this more modest position, that's radical. Right? I think. What do you think?

Beatriz Colomina 1:15:42

Somebody has another questions?

Canan Batur 1:15:46

Sorry, can you wait for the mic to be with you?

Audience member 1:15:54

Would you say that her kind of architectural vision was fully realised? Or would you say the kind of anxiety and fear caused from the war, limited the kind of potential she could reach with her vision?

Mark Wigley 1:16:07

I missed the end of it. Give another shot?

Audience member 1:16:15

Would you say that, like her kind of architectural vision was fully realised? Or would you say the kind of anxiety and fear from her experience of the war limited the extent to which she could kind of fulfil the potential of her vision?

Mark Wigley 1:16:29

You're saying is, was her vision fully realised? Or did the anxiety that she was feeling also constrained her in some ways?

Beatriz Colomina 1:16:37

That's a very, very interesting question, which I think affects a lot of artists too. You know, and I think in a way, is probably a positive. I suppose trauma is all over in our lives. And, a lot of creative people as Lina was, is one of the ways in which they deal with this trauma, whatever the trauma is, whether it's the trauma of war, or whatever other thing. So in many ways, in her case, it doesn't seem to have been a limitation. But it had been like something that brought in other cases, obviously, it doesn't work out that way. Right. All kinds of other problems.

Nottingham Contemporary

Canan Batur 1:17:33

And also one thing that I was reading, I mean, I'm sure you know, this already, the proximity of violence and like destruction was so close to her when she was living in Rome. And apparently, she was the building that she was staying in, was sharing the same wall, with Mussolini's Villa Torlonia. So I'm imagining, sometimes her, you know, like, just walking down from her school, coming to her home and knowing the fact that Mussolini is just living next door to you. And it must be quiet, of course, like anxiety driven driven relationship, I guess. Your own locality, and I guess, household, right.

Beatriz Colomina 1:18:08

Yeah, I mean, I think I think there are all these unconscious things, I mean, about the war itself and about the destruction, she's very vocal about it, and not so much about the political thing with Mussolini. I mean, this also the complication of the surname Bardi. And Bardi was actually a very complicated figure, you know, which on the one hand, he was totally in favour of fascismo, and he published his magazine Quadrante on the one hand, he's in favour of modern architecture, but he's also in favour of fascismo, why does he marry this guy? It's completely crazy, it's a very contradictory relationship, right. And in fact, I think her best years is when she, they split basically and she went to live in Bahia. I think that was the best moment. But the complication politically, I think we cannot avoid that either.

Mark Wigley 1:19:16

I mean, yeah. If you think about your question, right, which is interesting. There's no good answer. It's not like what, for us either right? For anyone like, is anxiety good or bad? We certainly have friends right that they should be anxious about what they're doing, and they're not like you don't want them to be and then there are others who say, you're just too anxious. So there's no good answer. I think Beatriz has shown the way in which anxiety was feeding the work and you're asking in which way was it holding back. We'll never sort of know. She was amazingly productive. Like when you said was her work kind of held back. I mean, I said before everybody's jealous of her right, but we'd be even more jealous if this is what she was held back. Like, what would be the full on? I was really

Nottingham Contemporary

tempted to a similar answer to Beatriz like, this is a bit weird that she's living with this person. And he's not boring, but might be a little bit evil, right? Like in a Batman movie or something, it's like, you know, you're not a good person. But it's interesting. And maybe she used this. But there seems to be sort of a dependence thing that she wanted that guy to be there. And maybe if we knew her, which none of us do, maybe he totally pissed her off and that actually kept feeding the energy. But all the information suggests that there was quite a mutually respectful collaboration between the two. Like, actually, you know, but it's a weird and for most of us embarrassing relationship. By the way, that's why we always insist on calling her Lina Bo, not Lina Bo Bardi, as if, why attach the guy's name you know. Once again, does she become the property of this person. But my sense is, if there are many people in Brazil, that were really close to her, and can confirm that she was really feisty, she was, you know, take no prisoners kind of person. But they're very loyal to her. And maybe they would be the ones that could say, you know, what, there was certain things that she could have done that maybe she didn't.

Beatriz Colomina 1:21:31

We don't know enough. I mean, there's all this moment also of dictatorships in Brazil, I mean I will need to know more about what was her position there. You know, speaking about living close to Mussolini, I mean, she married this guy that has been supporting Mussolini, you know. There is this famous magazine Quadrante, that he was the editor with La Casa del Fascio they are in, you know, that's pretty intense.

Mark Wigley 1:22:07

So these are sort of paradoxes. Right?

Beatriz Colomina 1:22:09

That's the paradox of her.

Mark Wigley 1:22:10

The house is a kind of elite playground for artists and musicians and cultural figures, international figures. In that sense, kind of aristocratic, the rich and famous, the influential. And then there's Bahia the kind of popular, revolutionary, more Marxist kind of environment. Maybe it's like with the other question, we don't have answers, because she's

Nottingham Contemporary

interesting. She's complicated, she's complicated.

Beatriz Colomina 1:22:42

It's complicated.

Mark Wigley 1:22:43

But kind of by the desire to be kind of close to the fascist thing that most of us are uncomfortable with. But it may have been sort of good for her, Super useful.

Canan Batur 1:22:57

Yeah. Can you wait for the mic?

Audience member 1:23:03

Thank you. Would you consider maybe that actually, that same architecture is like a critique of this fascist modernism? Like she's somehow maybe saying, because the glass house is very modern, but then, from some facades, you can see that she's bringing in the colonial architecture, plants. So would you consider that she's maybe answering back also, to that kind of male dominated modernism? Also, I'm thinking on the majors, like the about the question of like this architecture not being organic, and in comparison to the majors kind of organic museums architecture.

Beatriz Colomina 1:23:55

Yeah, it's true that the glass house has two sides. I mean, you were talking about the fact that the most canonic images present these kind of glass to the and those are the beautiful images. But if you go back, I mean, it's a completely different story, in the back of the house, that is much more vernacular, and with all these structures that were already there, and this you cannot reconcile, right. So there is this confusion there. Which I think is very beautiful.

Mark Wigley 1:24:32

Yeah, we've done a kind of obsessive study about this house, which really connects to your question a lot and try to argue actually, the important part of the house is the closet in the bedroom, rather than this thing that hangs out the front. So totally with the spirit of your question,

Nottingham Contemporary

but your bigger question like, is it a critique of modern architecture and also this sort of macho dimension of? Well, actually, I'm really obsessed with it, and I don't. I can trace you again a little bit, if you look, there's a very, very big sort of plant finish in modern architecture. So all you just name your master that you want to kill, look, Rosier, Mies van der Rohe, all of them, and they actually got really a plant thing going. And then you can be like the police and say, okay, but are you letting the plants really take over, or are you domesticating them? And it's complicated in every case. But Lina Bo is very close to figures like Radofski and Gio Ponti that were thinking that there was a new kind of architecture that was, you know, where there was confusion about was nature or architecture in control. And then we could decide whether that was modern or not modern architecture night, but you're right, it didn't look that modern, it was more, you know, kind of like the back of the house of the Casa Lina. But is there like a secret life of modern architecture that was kind of a plant life. And this is a little bit where I would want to go, because, you know, the boring guys that were running modern architecture. There, yeah, they were psychopaths and all of that. But they were also we're not necessarily in control. So when thinking about, of old pavilion, 1925

Beatriz Colomina 1:26:31

Yeah, totally trapped by the by the pavilion?

Mark Wigley 1:26:36

So, there's two ways to go say, okay, let's cut with modern architecture, because it's like, doing things we don't identify with and made by people we don't identify with. Or you can say, No, we don't have to throw it out, we just had to look more closely at it and it was much weirder than we thought and it's not doing the things that it says it was doing. Almost everything that modern architect said about their work is not true. So we don't necessarily have to throw it away, we can say, okay what was it really doing and stay with that. And so I think that Lina Bo is more in that spirit. She doesn't want to throw away modernity as such, but she wants to uncover this repressed dimension of it. And you're right in the end that will undo it right? In the end, it's like, okay once you've got into the plans, after a while, you get less and less interested in what they were doing. And there was in Milan in those years in the 40s, unbelievably interesting experiments with architecture and plants. And I think she

Nottingham Contemporary

found a way in Brazil, of really perfecting them. And sorry for the long speech, but I prefer the idea that she was working on this kind of project already in Italy and then Brazil was this great laboratory, rather than this sort of exoticism that she arrives in this tropical environment, and she becomes a little bit tropical, and I think she was, I don't know. But again, it's not a good answer it's a great question. So far, three great questions. Three lousy answers, you're the winner. This is Saturday so this is sport. We're like almost finished. So I guess we have time for one last question.

Audience member 1:28:21

Just on what you just said, actually I'm from Milan originally, that really makes me think of Milan as an image because Milan is, I mean, that's a nice argument is not the Milan periphery where I grew up, which is different here. But in the centre, you get this beautiful courtyards, which are so it's very much it's got this kind of austere architecture from the Austro Hungarian empire, you know, when they were there, it's a very solid kind of buildings in the centre, but it's beautiful, very green courtyards, and it really makes me think of that anyway. So it's just but again, about Milan, so you know, the, when you were referring to the big green wall that you'll mate has built. Is that the big high rise building, okay? So I love that building, lots of people love it. But it's also kind of I've mixed feelings about, you know, how it actually works and what it is because it's kind of like this pinboard image for how we could do housing and social housing in particular, lots of people have commented on that instead of having very green vertical gardens and beautiful idea. But actually, the reality of it is that it's an extremely exclusive building, you have to be minted to live there is not a social housing, high rise building thing. And I don't know how much of it is, is due to the fact that the actually the maintenance of the vertical garden is extremely expensive, and how much it's to do with just the social conditions of who look gets to live in nice places. But where would you say that kind of contemporary architecture, modern architecture, but contemporary I suppose, sits in relation to her legacy, for example, which, you know, it sounds like what she was about was much more inclusive and about engagement and collaboration, as you said. So, any thoughts on the relationship between those, that example and what she was trying to do?

Nottingham Contemporary

Mark Wigley 1:30:15

Okay so, Stefano Boeri, the architect, he's great. But you're right, that that building is actually to maintain the tree is basically it's a building in which, instead of terraces, there are trees growing all the way up the building. So it's kind of you live inside that kind of vertical forest. Right? So yeah, you're right, if you do the math, it doesn't really work out, they're spending more money to keep those trees there than the trees are providing oxygen. But most architects are trying to convey an idea. I guess, don't care about humans, that much. I mean, the you know, look at the pictures of architecture you very rarely see people, right. But they like to make an idea of a possible future. And what Stefano saying is a possible future in which we kind of make buildings in this more intimate relationship with trees. He's also the director of the Triennale de Milan, as he makes exhibitions, for example, one of them was on the intelligence of trees, so and then, so suddenly, it goes from that situation where you raise rich people living in a tower, to an incredible exhibition that shows how trees communicate with each other. Right? So he's really very serious about treating plants as a kind of model. Maybe the current version that he has is more on Instagram, then, you know, the solution that's needed. In terms of Lina Bo's work, it seems to me you what you don't, maybe I'm wrong about this, but she's never saying like, this is the future. Stefano's saying this is the future, we should be doing this. She's never telling anybody what to do. Right? She's a tough cookie, she's opinionated, she has a single project, I think, going her whole career. But she's never saying the whole world should be like this. And that since she's more of an artist, she's really making this remarkable work. I mean, SECS Pompeo building, which we showed a little bit of a few times. It's amazing. It's just you know, ridiculously good. Would she say that there should be schools like that, because it was a kind of a school also, everywhere? She probably would say yes, but she would definitely not want to look like that. Right. And she wouldn't do it the same. So, of course, were fans, you can get that. Right. So she could do no wrong. Other than marrying that guy.

Beatriz Colomina 1:32:44

I think he's so contemporary to have pay attention to a whole you know, when she's doing the house and he makes a list of all the animals living in the side. It's just incredible if you think about the tribe, because it

Nottingham Contemporary

includes all the insects of the different you know, I mean, that is and to make space for for these plants. And this insect. Well, in this moment that is, is is actually unbelievable.

Canan Batur 1:33:14

Yeah, I guess come in the way she breaks through those hierarchies that are already established and imposed by human the way she does that is so I think brilliant, and I guess that's the reason why it's the title of, you know, your presentation today that her approach is, you know, like this very much focusing on her surrounding and this very much trans-species, trans-national, historical approach is very much was visible in the whole presentation. I guess this is a great point to finalise it. Thank you so much for your generosity and time Beatriz and Mark. I mean, it has been so brilliant to have you here. And if you would like to trace back this conversation, hopefully it will be available on our website and our socials in the next few day. But again, I mean, a round of applause of course, for our speakers. Thank you so much again.

Colophon

Curator: Canan Batur

Assisted by: Shannon Charlesworth, Philippa Douglas

Technicians: Tom Chamberlain, Paul Buddle, Andy Batson, Catherine Masters

Event Assistant: Amalia