Casa Zentner in Zurich: an Italian Villa in Switzerland

Casa Zentner by Carlo Scarpa was built in Zurich between 1964 and 1968. It is the only work built abroad by the Venetian architect. The villa was designed to the very last detail, including furniture, and it has always been inhabited by the original clients, who have never proceeded to any significant variation.

Set on the Doldertal’s slope, in a panoramic position, Zentner house is characterized by monumental and shifting spaces: large rooms interconnected to each other, with a double height or with very long perspectives, the views continuously changing. The precious treatment and the design of the materials contribute to this “domestic” monumentality, and so do the translucent stucco lustro plasters and the floors composed with different colours of wood. All is purpose-made for special clients, living there with their art collection and their salon. The villa represents a cultural and material testimony of the highest value and it has never been the subject of a monographic study.

Goals of the project are to identify and document the architectural and cultural significance of Casa Zentner in relation to the peculiar history of the clients, and to the work of Carlo Scarpa, setting this house within a broader context between Venice and Zurich.

The research will study the drawings at the Archivio Carlo Scarpa and the documents in different private archives using the exceptionally rich documentation recently made available. An important part of the project is the collection of information through oral history, including the unique possibility of interviewing some of the original participants in its designing and building.

Zentner house itself will be analysed to understand the constructive and material features contributing to its particular character (from the use of prefabricated cast concrete elements to the more precious hand-made details).

Publications

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