



Giuseppe Perugini, Uga de Plaisant and Raynaldo Perugini, *Casa Albero*, Fregene, Italy, 1968,
the "Palla" after restoration, 2020. © Photograph of Silvia Segarra Lagunes.

The Home at the core of Modernity, an optimistic architecture

The architecture of the Modern Movement encompasses a century of fast-paced innovation accompanying the creation of our modern lifestyle. Architects have always been at the forefront of this innovative conception of daily living space, which changed radically during the last century. From *Art Nouveau* to the *Arts and Crafts* movement or the work of the *Deutscher Werkbund*, the spatial and material experimentation from Victor Horta to Adolf Loos, the research into the idea of comfort from Frank Lloyd Wright to Alvar Aalto, and the innovative spatial proposals from Le Corbusier to Mies van der Rohe, just to mention a few, the design of the House and Home became a progressive tool reflecting on society. Experiments on transparency and the inside-outside relationship, along with key books at the end of the 1920s, led to a shift in the architectural approach to living space. 1929 was an especially fertile year on these topics: Sigfried Giedion published *Befreites Wohnen*, stressing the importance of *licht, luft, oeffnung* [light, air, opening]; on the scope of the 2nd CIAM (*Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne*) that took place in Frankfurt, the book *Die Wohnung für das Existenzminimum* was published, focused on Frankfurt's ambitious housing program directed by Ernst May, known as *Das Neues Frankfurt*, and including a collection of international attempts to define the minimum habitable dwelling. The book cover and poster advertised an exhibition of plans that addressed the conference theme, submitted by modernist delegates from different countries, all drawn to the same scale. Ernst May's minimalist floor plan for houses on *Frankfurt's Praunheim* estate, which included the standardized kitchen designed by Grete Schütte-Lihotzky, was selected as an outstanding example. The same year Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich designed the Tugendhat House in Brno, and Le Corbusier, in his celebrated *Villa Savoye* in Poissy, was about to perfectly apply *les cinq points pour une nouvelle architecture*, defined while designing a house for the Weissenhoff Estate in Stuttgart, as part of the *Deutsche Werkbund-Ausstellung* of 1927.

Entitled "Modern Houses" this issue of the **docomomo** *Journal* is devoted to the theme of single-family houses, given the key role they played in the ideal definition of the Modern Movement architecture, as a symbolic and functional affirmation of the utopian turning of dreams into reality. The aim of this issue is to consider the transformation of daily life, and to address the architectural

challenges that arose from the joy contained in what we might call the "architecture of happiness." As we continue to endure a pandemic that has now lasted for more than a year, **docomomo** wishes to declare that "till the moment, the best vaccine to prevent contagion was invented by architects: the house".

Thus, in response to the question "How should we live?", the goal of this **docomomo** *Journal* 64 is to debate the house and the home agenda as an important topic at the core of Modern Movement architecture. Nowadays, the growing emphasis on wellbeing goes beyond the seminal ideas that modern houses were "*machines à habiter*" and is closer to an idealistic vision of a stimulating shell for humans, which is shaped by imagination, experimentation, efficiency, and knowledge.

Presenting thought-provoking essays, this journal makes a link between the ideas of the Modern Movement and the current use of these precious houses, taking into account the passing of time and its effects, and combining questions of design, maintenance or even rehabilitation. A variety of reflections from professionals and scholars is presented: from essays dedicated to the avant-garde experiments of the 1920s in Japan, under restoration to reassert their original innovative and sustainable construction systems, to the most innovative modern achievements in São Paulo, Brazil, going through the optimistic atmosphere after WWII echoed in mid-century design and architecture, and imbued in everyday living with softer and organic forms. From Mexico to Puerto Rico and Argentina, from Australia to Kenya, from Portugal to Italy and France the future was envisaged as something better than the present, with the home being the architectural canvas through which comfort, domesticity, and beauty were expressed. If the 1950s can be said to embody optimism, the 1960s represented a maturity of design that should represent the best in us, and most of all inspire us!

docomomo is deeply grateful to Louise Noelle and Horacio Torrent for accepting the challenge to act as guest editors of this **docomomo** *Journal*, and for proposing this challenging topic for discussion. Thanks to their commitment, underpinned by the meticulous and rigorous work and skill of the wide range of professionals, scholars, and researchers who have contributed with their knowledge and research, it is with great pleasure that we are able to present this journal.