



Vesima (GE), 26 July 2019 | Andrea, Eirinaios, Valentina, Raül, Lukas and Paul Antoine. Photo by Elisa Cavaglion

Travelling, understanding and returning Lunch with Renzo Piano for the final of the RPWT 2019

After 40 frenetic days of discovering architecture around the world, the third edition of the Renzo Piano World Tour 2019 has come to an end in Genoa. From Europe to Oceania, from Asia to America, passing through Africa, after more than five weeks the Renzo Piano Foundation welcomes the six young architects in their final stage of the journey.

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Fernando Pessoa said that *"the real journey is the traveller"*, and he was right. Just as Verne's *Around the World in 80 Days* would not have been the same without the characters of Phileas Fogg and Passepartout, so the **Renzo Piano World Tour 2019** was a unique experience thanks to the architectural eyes of **Valentina, Andrea, Raul, Lukas, Eirinaios and Paul-Antoine**, six very young architects who arrived in Genoa after a 40-day architectural marathon.

We met them for the first time in Paris as perfect strangers, and day after day we followed their story on social media, and found them in Genoa as a compact group, fresh from the Entebbe visit and ready to let us relive the most intense moments of this long journey.

It will take weeks, perhaps months, to fully understand what will stay with them from this long journey of architecture, different cultures and relations between people and places. There will also be time to develop and catalogue the memories in their mental archives, to put every detail in the right place. But now, waiting for them at the Renzo Piano Foundation, is an air of celebration, that of the **great family of the Renzo Piano World Tour** that in just 3 years has already grown to include 10 participants. Around the large square table are **Renzo Piano, Milly Rossato Piano** (Director of Education Program Renzo Piano Foundation) and

Giovanna Giusto (Communication Manager of the Renzo Piano Foundation), **Giorgio Grandi** (fellow at RPBW), **Roberto Bosi** of ProViaggiArchitettura and **Marcello Bacchini** of Habitat 2020, **Silvia Pellizzari** (first edition), **Thomas Pepino** (second edition) and finally ourselves from **professionearchitetto.it**, with notebooks and cameras, to tell the story of the two days. From the architectural works created, to the Foundation, to the RPBW studio and the Archive that preserves the original projects: **this last stage represents for the youngsters a journey into a journey**, to weave memories in front of the projects hung on the walls, to further investigate with the project leaders the details of some of their favourite works, and finally to discuss with Renzo Piano the importance of the profession.



Paul-Antoine, Raul, Eirinaios, Thomas, Silvia, Renzo Piano, Valentina, Andrea and Lukas



photo by Elisa Scapicchio © professionearchitetto.it

From historical memory to the archive: the Renzo Piano Foundation

From Uganda to Liguria, the Renzo Piano Foundation is metaphorically the ideal landing place to reorder ideas and retrace, thanks to the drawings of the projects hanging on the walls, the path they have just travelled.

Shunji Ishida, a fellow and key figure in the RPBW universe, who has been working with Piano for over 40 years, accompanies the youngsters during the Ligurian weekend: he has a passion and dedication for architecture, which he managed to convey in the few hours spent together, generously providing his historical memory to retrace an itinerary backwards. Here the six youngsters find models, drawings and mock-ups of the works seen in real life, among neatly arranged rolls and wooden boxes, which preserve over 50 years of the architectural history of Renzo Piano and his partners.

Now in its fifteenth year of activity, the Foundation is the keystone that links the archive with the RPBW design studios, constantly working in close contact with both, with the aim of **preserving and enhancing, training the younger generations and disseminating architecture as a technique and art of construction.**

"Putting the archives in order means making the documents accessible and then being able to share them today and in the future." - explains Milly Rossato Piano. *"There is a constant exchange with the office, the exhibitions are organised together, but also all the work of pre-archiving and selection is somehow assisted by the archivists".*

A painstaking work that leads to continuous mutual contacts and frequent trips to the studio in Paris, with great commitment to supporting designers in the selection of materials, necessary for the creation of major exhibitions, and for the drafting of monographs, updated from year to year.

The Archivia Foundation | Narrate | Teach | Welcome. .. these are the objectives it sets itself every year. *"Through the study of these materials we understand not only the stories of each project, but also the unique working method of the Renzo Piano Building Workshop. A wealth of knowledge that should not be confined to the archive, but handed down to the younger generations.* [taken from fondazionerenzopiano.org]





Archive Renzo Piano, Voltri | photo by Elisa Scapicchio © professionistaarchitetto.it

From the archive at Villa Nave, delving into memories with RPBW partners

Just as in an archive you need to know what to look for, so in architecture you need to be clear about the result you want to achieve. *"Piano's buildings teach that there are no limits"* - say the students - *"it is enough to have a clear idea of the project and work with great attention, pursuing the objective"*. One example is the large construction sites visited, such as the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles, a "forest" of scaffolding, where the grand idea is the spark that triggers the desire to surpass limits.



Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, Los Angeles | rendering and construction site

A further training opportunity for the youngsters was the time spent with some RPBW partners. With them, they studied the design phases of complex structures, from the revealed secret of the covering of the Fundación Botín, an inspiration born from collecting some stones on the beach, to the value of the staircase and the flow of traffic, which brings us back to one of the fundamental principles of Piano's poetics, *according to which "in a museum you have to lose yourself mentally but never physically"*.

In response to the partners' questions about their best moments, the youngsters' suggestions take us from Paris with the **Pathé Foundation**, elegantly set in such a structured urban context, to the **Ronchamp Monastery**, a kingdom of quietness: buildings that differ in theme, function and context, but that contain the same principles of paying great attention to what surrounds them. Like the recurring mastery of light management, an element that also strikes in the **Menil Collection** in Houston, where light beams can filter through without interfering with the works on display; and the **Stavros Niarchos Foundation** in Athens, which is special for being a place that has already become a symbol of culture for the city, experienced by the youngsters both by day and by night.

The reference to the **Jean-Marie Tjibaou Cultural Center**, for its relationship with the uncontaminated nature of Noumea, and to the **Emergency Hospital in Entebbe**, an opportunity to discuss the construction techniques applied with Giorgio Grandi, an RPBW fellow and project leader of this extraordinary building, is unavoidable.

From the quality of each architectural work - from the structure to the detail - for the youngsters the "artisan" dedication that follows the project from the model to its creation is evident, together with the almost imperceptible border between public and private, where every building always tries to fit into the city and never close in on itself.

Overall, despite everyone's considerations, they all agree on one thing: seeing architecture with their own eyes means debating the end users, and **Renzo Piano's architectural works are beautiful to live in, where everything is planned according to people and the relationship with the context.**

This is a concept that is reinforced by the affirmation of Piano himself: ***"In the profession perhaps you do not change the world, but you change the lives of some people, and this happens because being an architect is a serious job !***



Studio RPBW | photo by Elisa Cavaglion © professionearchitetto.it



Photo by Elisa Cavaglion © professionistaarchitetto.it

The teaching of travel: "the architect is not a tourist, he doesn't travel superficially, he understands!"

The last occasion spent together with the RPWT family is a lunch organised by the Foundation, a direct meeting between Piano and the young people to discuss together the importance of travelling, while enjoying tasty traditional Ligurian specialties.

It immediately emerges that the tour was the best condition to observe carefully and identify traces of what is significant, but goes unnoticed: the construction details are an example, their understanding is not immediate, but one soon realises how much these are the key to success of an architectural piece.

Another great lesson left by this trip set to the rhythm of time zones, planes, trains and long car journeys, is surely to have **become aware that everything is possible if you have a goal to achieve**. And also the importance of sharing, understood in its dual value, that is, the continuous comparison between fellow travellers who spend 40 days together and the sharing of an itinerary, narrated daily with their own eyes through social media channels, which has certainly taught them to carry out a continuous work of selection in broad lines comparable to that of an archive.

"Inspiring and life changing" are the main concepts with which the students have summed up their experience during the chat with Renzo Piano, underlining the desire to continue to travel to collect new ideas for the profession. Thus, the emphasis once again falls **on the importance of travel as a fundamental experience for the training of an architect**, for his maturation, his growth and above all his knowledge.

In conclusion, it is Piano himself who draws attention to the importance of the role of the architect, unfortunately not considered as it should be today. ***"Architecture is not seduction [...] The task of architects is to understand the building and the spirit of the place where it is located."*** And referring to his projects around the world, he adds, ***"When you design you have to experience the place: if you build in New York you become a***

***new Yorker, if you build in Berlin, a berliner [...] this is what I mean by understanding!
Architects aren't tourists, they don't travel "superficially", rather they understand."***



Genoa, Porto antico | photo by Elisa Scapicchio © professionistaarchitetto.it

"During our 40 days of travel, we visited 22 cities, around 200 buildings (20 of them museums), took 16 flights (41,800 miles), walked more than 320 kilometres (632,777 steps), stayed in 13 different hotels and 12 time zones, rented 4 cars, lost (and found) 2 suitcases, had 1 almost deadly experience, filled 425 pages in our notebooks with sketches, took almost 20,000 photos and shot 8 hours of video material. [Raul, Andrea and Lukas]

As in the circularity of classical literature, also Valentina, Andrea, Lukas, Raül, Renos and Paul Antoine - defined by Piano as *"young heroes"* - have returned home. Coming full circle, we greeted them at the old Port of Genoa, with the promise to meet again somewhere around the world.

by E² [Elisa Scapicchio and Elisa Cavaglioni]

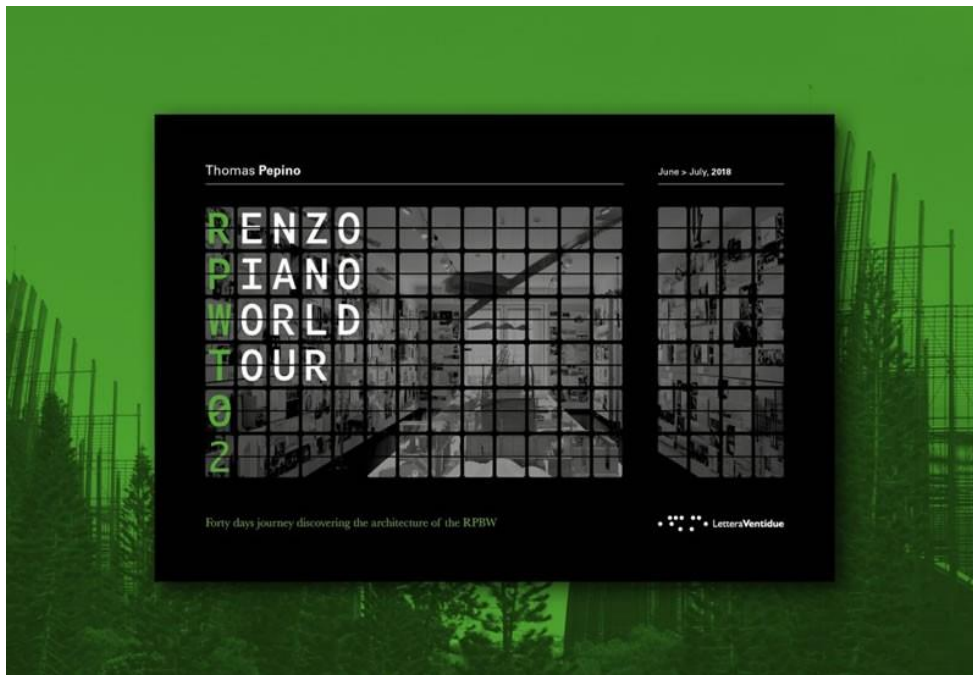
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THE STORY OF RPWT18 HAS BECOME A BOOK

*Published by LetteraVentidue and supported by Habitat2020, just like last year, the book that collects thoughts, photographs and drawings from last year's **Renzo Piano World Tour** has been produced. The book will be presented for the first time to the public on 8 August in Gavorrano (GR) and then on 28 August in Cervia (RA), on the occasion of the screening "THE POWER OF THE ARCHIVE", directed by Francesca Molteni, organised by **ProViaggiArchitettura**.*



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RENZO PIANO WORLD TOUR 2019

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RPWT 2019 Renzo Piano World Tour in 40 days

Award Art of Construction: the importance of structural details

