

Transforming Hospital Architecture (Milan, 15–16 Jun 22)

Istituto Svizzero, Milan, Jun 15–16, 2022

Deadline: Apr 22, 2022

Adam Jasper, University of Technology Sydney

Istituto Svizzero, in collaboration with the Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture at ETH Zurich, and the Department Architecture, Built environment and Construction engineering (ABC) at Politecnico di Milano, is hosting a workshop in Milan on the 15th and 16th June in 2022.

The workshop focuses on the hospital as both object and hyper-object of architecture and design, in the light of its historical and contemporary transformations, from the scale of the bed to the scale of the city.

The architecture of the hospital presents irresolvable dilemmas for both cities and individual patients. At the scale of the city, an urban planner, seeking to optimize logistics and accessibility, might seek to place the hospital in the center. A different planner, concerned with rehabilitation and contagion, might argue that it should be far outside the city. Their two approaches cannot be resolved by a single plan. In order to satisfy the complex regulations that define hospital design, one architect might argue for a megastructure. Another might propose a precinct of buildings, a city within a city. Either way, technological change, upgrades and expansions will break apart single coherent buildings on the one hand, and slowly merge individual buildings into a single complex organism on the other. Hospitals owe their existence to multiple actors and interdisciplinary endeavors. As recent anthropological research demonstrates, the hospital is best thought of in its thick multiplicity (Kehr/Chabrol 2020). What is the designer to do in the face of such overwhelming complexity? This complexity also has a historical dimension. Since the Middle Ages, the hospital has been an institution in constant flux, continually shifting both its procedures and its architecture in response to societal changes, transformations in medical knowledge and political and epidemic events. This workshop invites architects, architectural historians, and historians of medicine to reflect on this tangled history.

The keynote will be held by Prof. Stefano Capolongo, Architect, and Professor for Hospital Design and Urban Health at Politecnico di Milano.

Papers may deal with (but are not limited to) questions like:

- How have hospital spaces been organized, built, and rebuilt according to changing needs, functions, and transformations in medical knowledge?
- How has urban hospital architecture used pre-existing spaces and extant relationships, how have rural sanatoria interacted with local environments?
- How does hospital architecture mirror the political condition of a specific historical time and

place?

- How has the process of hospital design itself been subject to innovation in recent decades?

Please send us one-page abstracts (maximum 500 words) in either English or Italian, by April 22nd. We will respond promptly.

The workshop will be held at Istituto Svizzero, Milan (Via del Vecchio Politecnico 3, I-20121 Milano) from the 15th to the 16th of June 2022. Travel costs and lodging will be covered for presenters.

Presenters will be asked to pre-circulate drafts of their presentations. The workshop will lead to an edited book containing selected contributions.

Contact:

Dr. Maria Boehmer, Head of Science, Research and Innovation at Istituto Svizzero
maria.boehmer@istitutosvizzero.it

Reference:

CFP: Transforming Hospital Architecture (Milan, 15-16 Jun 22). In: ArtHist.net, Apr 4, 2022 (accessed May 6, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/36317>>.