

HPA, Special Issue: Ecclesiastical Architecture in and around Post-war Rome

Deadline: Jul 31, 2026

Giulia Boller

Special issue "Constructing Churches in Concrete: Ecclesiastical Architecture in and around Post-war Rome" - Histories of Postwar Architecture.

This issue of the peer-reviewed journal "Histories of Postwar Architecture" (HPA), edited by Giulia Boller, Alberto Bologna, Tullia Iori, and Laurent Stalder, addresses post-war ecclesiastical architecture in Rome as a crucial site of architectural, structural, and urban experimentation between the 1950s and the 1970s. In the context of rapid metropolitan expansion and the institutional transformations initiated by the Second Vatican Council, religious building programmes became key places for new collaborations between architects, engineers, religious orders, and public authorities. Often located within complex institutional ensembles—comprising churches, schools, housing, and landscaped areas—these projects remain marginal to dominant architectural historiography, despite their significant role in shaping Rome's expanding peripheries, social infrastructures, and technical cultures. As such, they offer a rich lens through which to reconsider the relationship between architecture, civil engineering, and institutional agency in the post-war period.

These conditions fostered innovative uses of reinforced concrete, including the adoption of thin shells, expressive structural forms, and flexible spatial configurations that responded to evolving liturgical practices and community needs, while moving beyond established design conventions. While individual figures such as Swiss-Italian architect Silvio Galizia (Muri, 1925–Rome, 1989), who dedicated his career to ecclesiastical compounds, offer a useful entry point, the issue adopts a broader perspective, examining how Roman ecclesiastical projects participated in transnational networks of knowledge exchange and reflected wider debates at the intersection of urban change, institutional reform, and structural innovation.

Today, however, much of this built legacy is under threat: many structures suffer from neglect, inappropriate alterations, or demolition, compounded by the technical challenges of maintaining ageing reinforced concrete. By foregrounding these concerns, this issue also seeks to prompt critical reflection on questions of preservation, adaptive reuse, and the recognition of post-war ecclesiastical architecture as a fragile yet essential component of Rome's architectural heritage.

Scope and Objectives

The issue invites original contributions that investigate ecclesiastical architecture as a site of architectural, engineering, institutional, and urban experimentation. It redefines current historiographical perspectives on post-war architecture by foregrounding the role of religious commis-

sions, technical innovation, and transnational networks in the period right before and right after the Second Vatican Council. While Rome and its surroundings form a central geographical focus, comparative and transnational perspectives are explicitly encouraged, especially where they discuss cross-border professional networks and shared ecclesiastical policies.

Contributions may address (but are not limited to) the following themes:

Technologies

Ecclesiastical architecture as a testing ground for post-war architectural and engineering debates;
Collaborations between architects and structural engineers and their impact on design culture;
Reinforced concrete, shell structures, and material experimentation in sacred architecture;

Planning

Ecclesiastical institutions as active architectural clients, fostering new technologies and materials;
Ecclesiastical institutions as urban actors in post-war Rome;
The effects of the Second Vatican Council on architectural form, spatial organisation, and patronage;

Networks

Rome as a crossroads for transnational exchanges between Italian and international cultures;
Lesser-known architects, engineers, and religious clients in post-war architectural historiography.

Submission Guidelines and Dates

Abstracts (max. 2,000 characters) should be submitted by 31 July 2026 using <https://hpa.unibo.it/user/register>.

Selected authors will be invited to submit full papers (20,000–80,000 characters, including footnotes) with up to five high-resolution images (300 dpi), each accompanied by a caption and free of copyright. All submitted papers will undergo a double-blind peer review in accordance with HPA editorial standards.

If you have any questions, please direct them to the editors at bollert@arch.ethz.ch.

Reference:

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