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SHArch: The Research

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Abstract

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This paper talks about the results of the “SHArch – Second Hand for confiscated property” group has set the goal of investigating aspects of a complex but fascinating subject that sums up a series of issues to which architecture and academic research today is necessarily obliged to provide answers. If unfinished architectures, through new good practices, to some extent find a place in the debate on contemporary architecture, the theme of confiscated architectures continues to be a red flag of the critical issues strongly present especially in Italy, with a strong predominance of the phenomenon in southern Italy. The decision to use confiscated architectures led the research team to question not only the possible function that the space could acquire, but the objective was to be able to translate the artefact into an object that could avoid further consumption of land – in addition to that already used – so as to be able to maintain a minimal impact on the demolition of the pre-existence.

Keywords: Reuse; confiscated property; unfinished; pre-existence; upcycling.

1. Introduction

«If there were any truth in the theory that the viewer must repeat in himself the creative process, this could not happen more energetically than when the spectator’s imagination must complete what is unfinished, transferring to him the productive movement between the work as it appears and what should be its final effect» (SIMMEL, 2007), thus George Simmel wrote in his essay dedicated to Auguste Rodin, proposing his poetic vision of what is incomplete as a device to be interpreted, but, as is evident, contemporary art has delivered a multitude of themes that await a reflection and that do not only involve the theme of the incomplete but other critical issues. The research group SHArch – Second Hand for confiscated property has set the goal of investigating aspects of a complex but fascinating subject that sums up a series of issues to which architecture and academic research today is necessarily obliged to provide answers. If unfinished architectures, through new good practices, to some extent find a place in the debate on contemporary architecture (TAVOLETTA, 2023), the theme of confiscated architectures continues to be a red flag of the critical issues strongly present especially in Italy, with a strong predominance of the phenomenon in southern Italy. In the era of the Anthropocene (CRUTZEN, STROERMER, 2000, confiscated architecture can be the space for architecture’s revenge, the manifesto of new compositional and social strategies that renew the idea of the remainder as a relic, a precious and transformable material.

Confiscated architecture tells the story of a mistake, of a virus that has spread through an area, and the task of the project is to reactivate that artefact and return it into the hands of the community. The Agenzia Nazionale per l’amministrazione e la destinazione dei beni sequestrati e confiscati alla criminalità organizzata (ANBSC) through the Open Re. G.I.O. catalogues all Italian confiscated assets divided into assets under management and assigned as sets. The national scenario does not find, except in very few cases, virtuous conditions, and this makes the problem in question plastic: it is necessary to reinterpret the territory with its scars with a new planning, the result of a wide-ranging vision that puts the role of the architect back at the centre as the main actor in the critical reinterpretation of the phenomenon. The case study is in southern Italy, in Campania, in the municipality of Villa Literno, in the province of Caserta. The artefact to be reactivated is a former sugar refinery which, together with numerous properties, was confiscated from the family that used the place for ‘other’ for which it was designed. The research SHArch. Second-hand architecture for confiscated property aimed to focus on a number of structures that are currently dormant in Italy. The work produced, financed by the University of Campania ‘Luigi Vanvitelli’, has highlighted critical issues and actions that have the possibility of hav

ing a virtuous second life, all designed for the community. The future objective is to focus on other confiscated areas to create a manual of good practices that can become an important tool for the community.

2. Material and Methods

The intervention area for the SHArch project is located in Villa Literno (Italy) in a place near the two neighboring municipalities, Casal di Principe and Casapesenna. The state of the places describes a condition of potential beauty, especially thanks to the presence of the four silos that appear as Landmarks of the territory. The research unit, composed of professors belonging to numerous disciplinary sectors such as ICAR/08, ICAR/14, ICAR/19, ICAR/17 and ICAR/22, has produced a multidisciplinary research with the aim of carrying out both structural-seismic and economic and design analyses on the artefacts confiscated from the mafia currently in possession of the Municipality of Villa Literno or that are about to be acquired. The main aim was to demonstrate the possibility of giving new life and new functions to the structures starting from the hypothesis of zero demolition and following the circular economy spread by the European Construction and Demolition Waste Guidelines 2018. The need to fight against the consumption of new land is the starting point of a research that tried to demonstrate how eco-sustainability can start from the pre-existing by transforming it in an economic way but also by basing the principles of the project on a strong design experimentation. One of the most virtuous examples regarding the theme of zero demolition is precisely the Restyling of the New Rectorate of the University of Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli" which, thanks to the remodeling of the pre-existing structures, has allowed the rebirth of a place that to date, thanks to the re-adaptation of the structural system, has produced waste materials and that has a recognizable and, above all, eco-compatible appearance. The works were carried out through:

- Verification of pre-existing artifacts and their structural condition
- Verification of the Regional Strategic Address Document - PROGRAMMING 2021/2027 of the Campania Region for the areas under study and the intended use of the Municipal PUC.
- Technical Table with the Municipality of Villa Literno to define the needs of the administration
- Forming of the project hypothesis of the area
- Presentation of the research result at National and International Conferences.
- Publication of the works.



Figure 1. Ex Sugar Farmer, ph. Luigi Arcopinto.

3. Results

The design hypotheses proposed by the students of the Living Space Design Laboratory focused mainly on the intrinsic potential of the territory, known for its agricultural vocation. In some cases, rather provocatively, the original function of the place was revived, but in a contemporary key. The compositional strategies have therefore changed the traditional image of the space, trying to highlight a new approach to the theme of pre-existence. A new Green Wild, the first project presented, is a hybrid between a restaurant and a greenhouse for the community but also to highlight the agricultural potential of the area. The aim is to create a sensory trail that allows visitors to become aware of the food they consume by rediscovering the entire production chain. The second project, entitled 'A Fera, aims to be a stimulating and engaging space that will attract citizens of all ages, thanks to the possibility of buying and selling zero-kilometres organic food. It also includes activities that can be carried out on site by children, young people and families. SUGARVILLE 7, the last project selected, is the result of the desire to reconstruct the sugar refinery, to return to the history of the site and breathe new life into it, with the idea of exploiting

con temporary trends alongside a museum reality that includes traditional and in teractive exhibitions to recreate a sugar refinery in a new guise. All the projects celebrate the past, minimise demolition and highlight the traditions of the place, transforming an abandoned space into a new place of rebirth for the community.



Figure 2. A New Green Wild, digital Collage by Rossella Sacco.

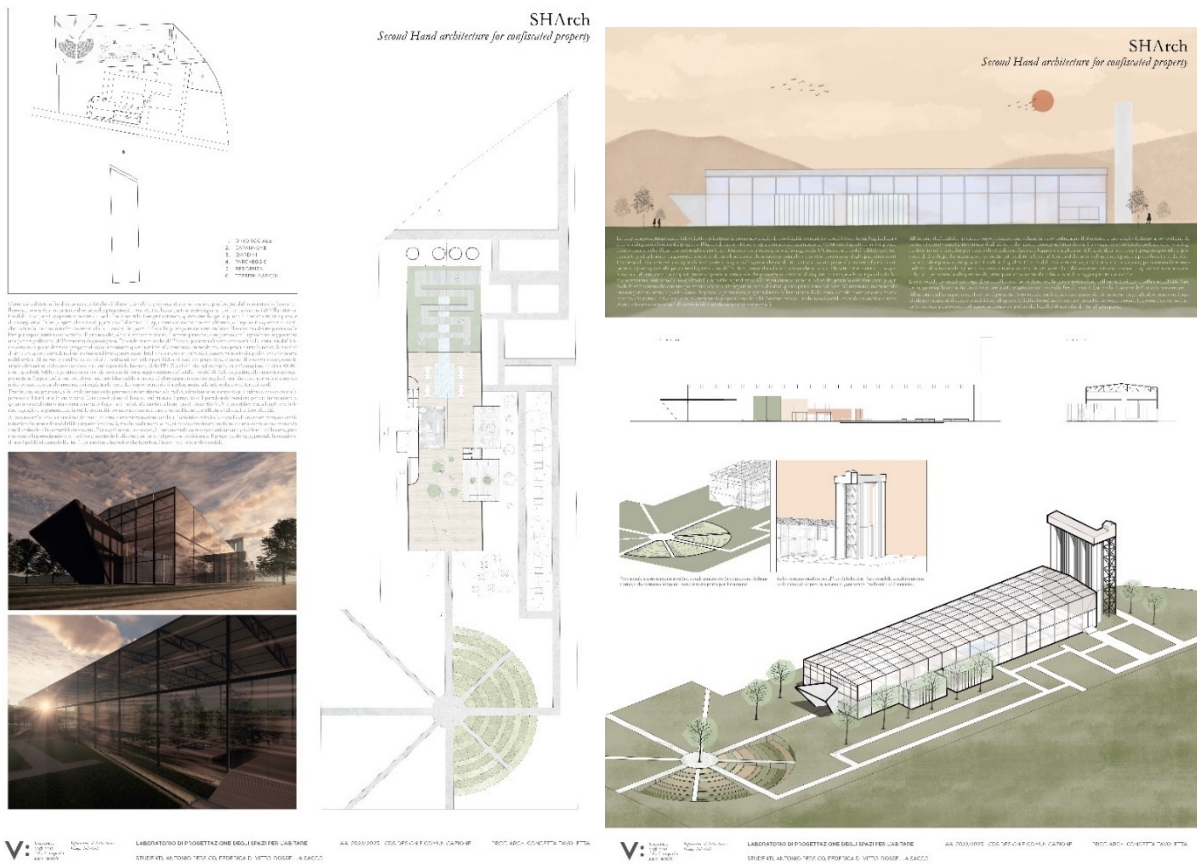


Figure 3. 4. P A New Green Wild. Project plan, renderings and drawings.



APPLICAZIONI DEL LOGO

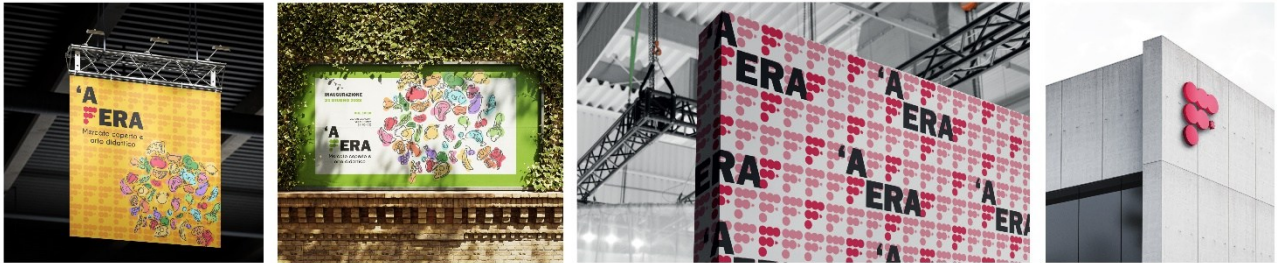


Figure 5. 'A Fera. Concept logo and photomontage.

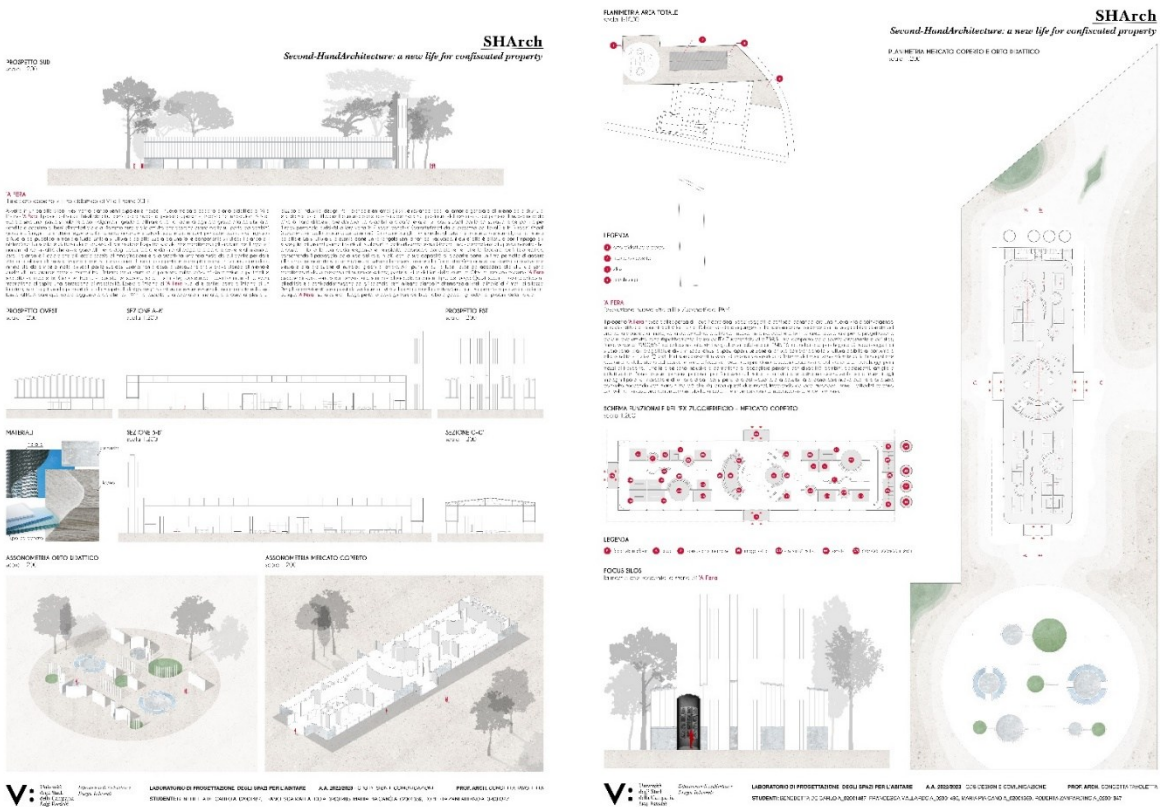


Figure 6. 'A Fera. Project plan and drawings.

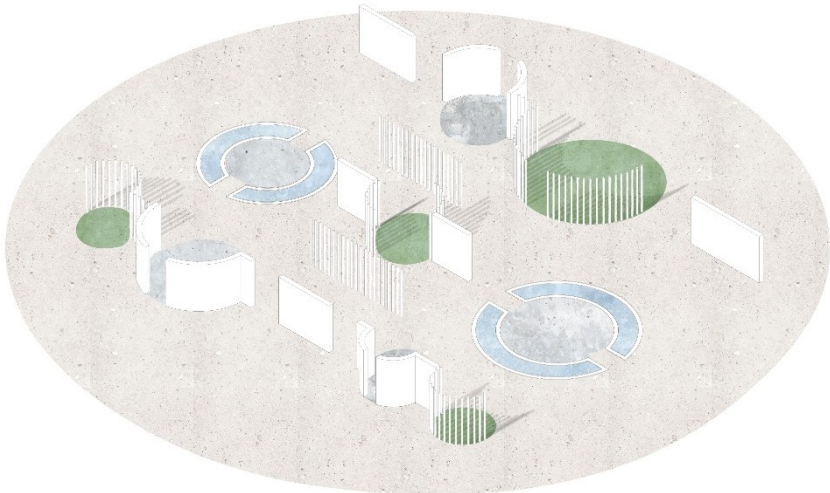


Figure 7. 'A Fera. Axonometric view of garden.

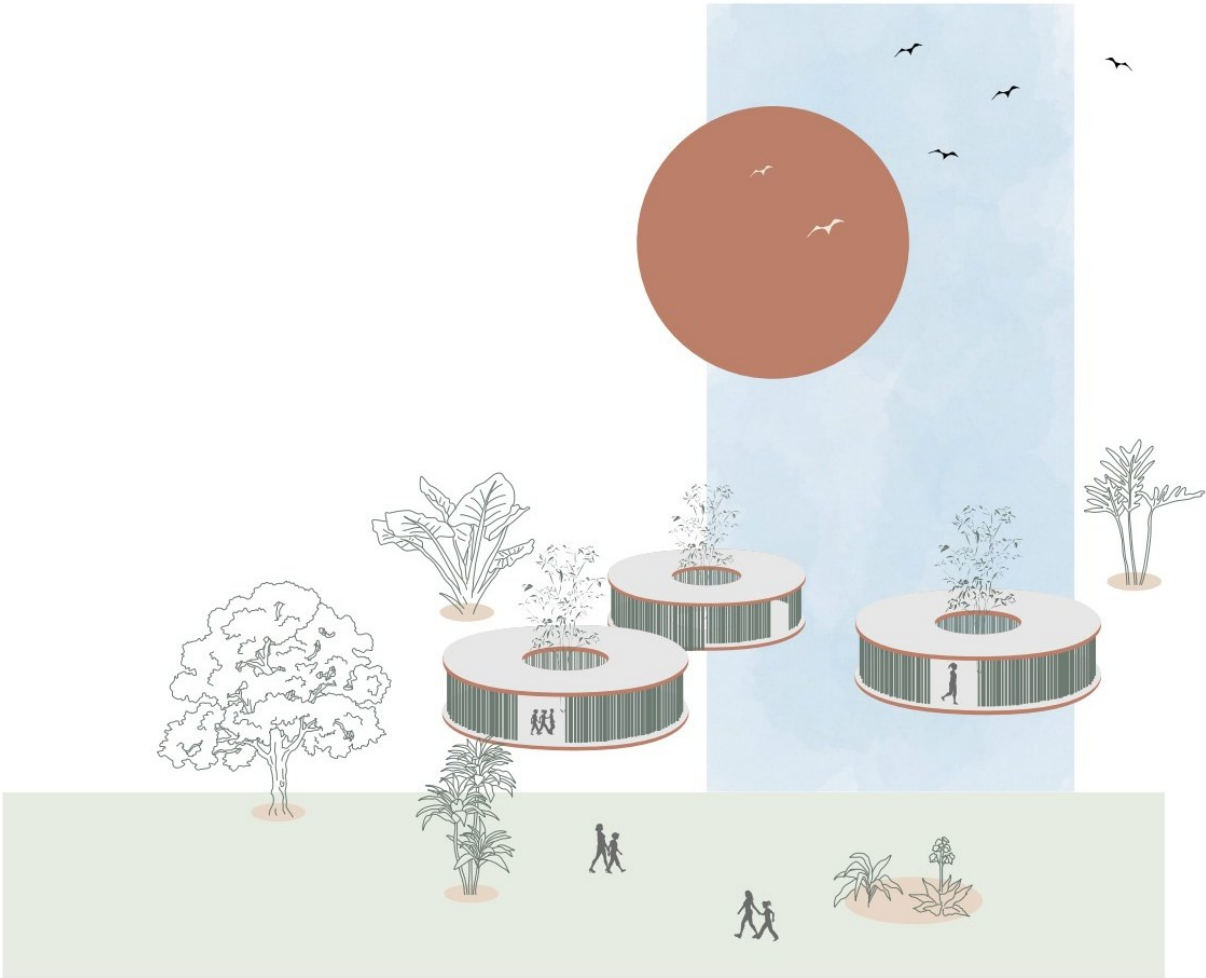


Figure 8. Sugarville 7. Garden, illustration.

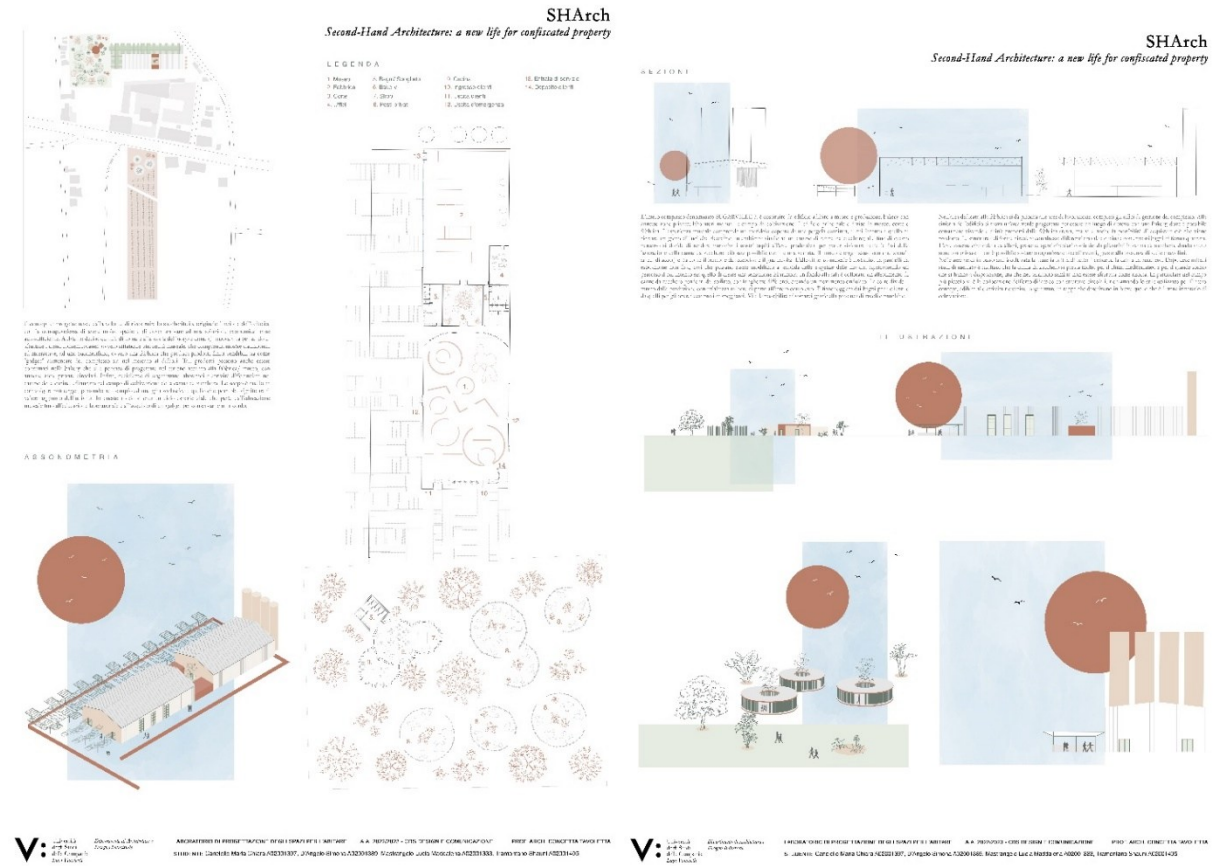


Figure 9. Sugarville 7. Project plan and drawings.

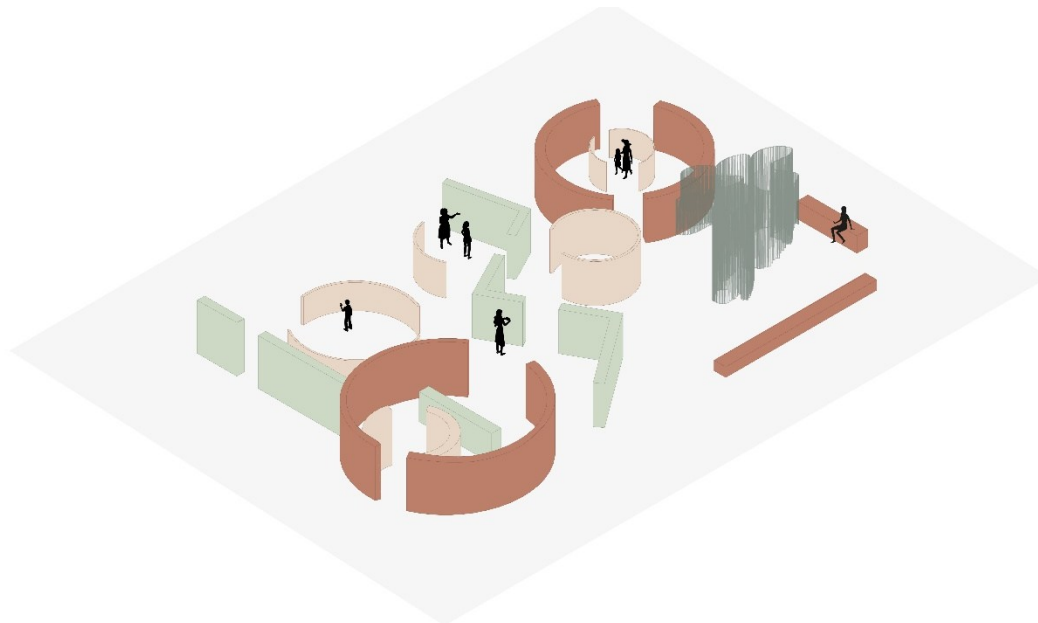


Figure 10. Sugarville 7. Museum set-up.

5. Conclusions

The SHArch. Second-hand architecture for confiscated property research aimed to refocus a number of structures that currently remain dormant in the Italian territory.

The work produced has highlighted critical issues and actions that have the possibility of having a second virtuous life, all designed for the community.

The future goal is to focus on other confiscated areas so as to create a manual of good practices that can become an important tool for the community.

To date, numerous degree theses have focused on the theme of research and the analysis of possible new case studies on which to develop new projects continues.

At a time when it is necessary to focus on virtuous recycling, the choice to reinterpret a space that is the symbol of bad practices is, from our point of view, a way of observing the future that can try to be smiling.



Figure 11. SHArch setting-up, project by Cherubino Gambardella, Maria Gelvi, Concetta Tavoletta, Department of Architecture and Industrial Design, Università degli studi della Campania “Luigi Vanvitelli”, San Lorenzo ad Septimum, Aversa - Italy. Ph. Mario Ferrara.



Figure 12. SHArch setting-up, project by Cherubino Gambardella, Maria Gelvi, Concetta Tavoletta, Department of Architecture and Industrial Design, Università degli studi della Campania “Luigi Vanvitelli”, San Lorenzo ad Septimum, Aversa - Italy. Ph. Mario Ferrara.



Figure 13. SHArch setting-up, project by Cherubino Gambardella, Maria Gelvi, Concetta Tavoletta, Department of Architecture and Industrial Design, Università degli studi della Campania “Luigi Vanvitelli”, San Lorenzo ad Septimum, Aversa - Italy. Ph. Mario Ferrara.



Figure 14. SHArch setting-up, project by Cherubino Gambardella, Maria Gelvi, Concetta Tavoletta, Department of Architecture and Industrial Design, Università degli studi della Campania “Luigi Vanvitelli”, San Lorenzo ad Septimum, Aversa - Italy. Ph. Mario Ferrara.



Figure 15. SHArch setting-up, project by Cherubino Gambardella, Maria Gelvi, Concetta Tavoletta, Department of Architecture and Industrial Design, Università degli studi della Campania “Luigi Vanvitelli”, San Lorenzo ad Septimum, Aversa - Italy. Ph. Mario Ferrara.

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Research fellow: Dr. Luigi Arcopinto.

Consultant: Dr. Barbara Bonanno, Dr. Giovanni Allucci, CEO of Agrorinasce srl.

Conflict of Interests

The Author declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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