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Casa del Portuale [Port House]

Italy

Interno Porto
Campania 80133 Naples

Commission

1968

Completion

1980

Original name

Casa del Portuale e Servizi Sociali Culp [Port House and Culp Social Services]

Original use

Transportation and infrastructure/control tower and Administrative purposes/office spaces

Current use

Partially abandoned / Administrative purposes/office spaces / partially unused

Architects

Aldo Loris Rossi

Concrete by reinforcement

Reinforced concrete

Construction method

Cast-in-place concrete, in-situ concrete

Architectural concrete

Architectural concrete

Structural types

One-dimensional/concrete frame, One-dimensional/[mushroom] column, Two-dimensional/Slab, Vertical wall structure

Description

This project by Aldo Loris Rossi has become a symbol of the current renewed appreciation for Brutalist architecture. The building has been partially abandoned, however. In the port of Naples, surrounded by cranes, shipping containers and railway lines, it is used in connection with the port's industrial and logistic activities. Although some offices are still in use, a large part of the activity has been moved to other areas of the port.

The architecture critic Bruno Zevi described this building as "a pioneering, spectacular, subversive object, which seems to claim an environmental redemption". Rossi's architecture has always been difficult to fit into the official rhetoric of modern architecture. His futuristic and unclassifiable designs contain references to late work by Frank Lloyd Wright, German Expressionism and Italian Futurism.

The building is formed by a base, used as a car park; from there, a tall, fragmented centrifugal volume emerges at one end. Its function, apart from hosting a varied program, is to provide a high point for observing activity in the port.

Twelve vertical cylindrical concrete towers play a structural role and serve to distribute people and building systems. A series of volumes are fit onto them or strung together along them. Their varying shapes and curved geometries, both concave and convex, are deliberately contrasted, as occurs in the Baroque architecture that is so present in the city of Naples. At the top, the pillars recall the cylindrical concrete silos present in the landscape of the port. Concrete and glass are the only two materials used in the building, but it is the concrete, with its plastic qualities, that creates the expressive variety of forms that make Casa del Portuale famous internationally.

Links

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